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WORK COMMITMENT, SEX-ROLE ATTITUDES, AND WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

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This article integrates the concept of work commitment—the centrality of the work role as a source of intrinsic satisfaction—into the study of sex-role attitudes and women's employment. Limitations of previous attempts to operationalize work commitment are reviewed and a measurement model approach based on multiple indicators of a construct that is not directly observable is presented. Five hypotheses are derived and tested with a statistical model of the relationship between work commitment, early socialization, school experiences, family roles, and employment behavior. Applying the model to longitudinal data on female college graduates shows work commitment to be both stable over time and empirically distinct from sex-role attitudes. In this population, intermittency of employment was not a consequence of unstable work commitments, and subjective investments in the work role remained stable at the same time these women adjusted their employment behavior to accommodate the demands of child rearing. These findings suggest the viability of studying work commitment in more recent cohorts and in other populations.

Since World War II the most dramatic increase in female labor force participation has been among married women with young children. Today, their participation rate differs little from that of other married women (U.S. Department of Labor, 1975:3, 1979). Concomitantly, both men and women have become more egalitarian in their sex-role attitudes. In the course of two generations, for example, normative proscriptions against maternal employment have virtually disappeared (Oppenheimer, 1970; Mason et al., 1976; Thornton et al., 1983). Thus, combining work and family roles has become a viable lifestyle for Ameri-

can women. Despite these trends, it is often assumed that contemporary women have weak and unstable commitments to the work role (Polachek, 1976). We argue that the evidence supporting this view is inadequate.

Conventional research on labor force participation and sex-role attitudes is unable to address women's work commitment for two reasons. First, subjective work orientation cannot be inferred from patterns of labor force participation. Familial responsibilities are unchanging despite women's increased presence in the labor force (Hartmann, 1981). A role has been added in women's lives, and personal resources are allocated to both work and family responsibilities. In addition, employment opportunities remain highly sex segregated (England, 1981; Bielby and Baron, 1984). Consequently, even women strongly invested in work outside the home may not have the chance to realize the cumulative, orderly progression of jobs typically associated with a career. Second, work commitment cannot be inferred from opinions about sex roles. Sex-

role attitudes represent an individual's judgment of appropriate roles for men and women in general, and tell us little about a woman's intentions, aspirations, and expectations for paid employment as part of her own constellation of work and family roles. Addressing the importance of the work role in women's lives requires a definition of work commitment that is independent of sex-role attitudes and employment behavior. The relationship between commitment, attitudes, and behavior can then be examined empirically.

This article presents: (1) a conceptualization and operationalization of the construct of work commitment; (2) estimates for a measurement model that assesses whether work commitment can be differentiated from sex-role attitudes in a cohort of female college graduates; and (3) an explanatory model to examine how family, school, and work experiences shape commitment and how commitment in turn influences subsequent work behavior in early adulthood.

WORK COMMITMENT: DEFINITION, MEASUREMENT, AND HYPOTHESES

Definition

Several overlapping definitions of work commitment and related concepts appear throughout the literature on women's employment. Safilios-Rothchild (1971:491) defines *work commitment* as ". . . the relative distribution of interest, time, energy, and emotional investment in work in relation to other life sectors and notably to family life." Haller and Rosenmayr (1971:501) identify the same concept, applied to working mothers, as "feelings about work or the 'meaning' it has for her." Almquist and Angrist (1971:263) speak of *career salience* as ". . . a central feature of adult life." Finally, from a more psychological perspective, Masih (1967:653–54) defines the same term as ". . . (a) the degree to which a person is career motivated, (b) the degree to which an occupation is important as a source of satisfaction, and (c) the degree of priority ascribed to occupation among other sources of satisfaction."

Two features of these definitions are particularly important. First, work commitment concerns the importance of a work role as a source of identity in adulthood. Second, work commitment involves a *distribution* of subjective investments among adult roles. We therefore define work commitment as the centrality of the work role as a source of intrinsic satisfaction relative to other adult roles. While it may be expressed alternatively as plans, expectations, preferences, or aspirations for particular combinations of work and family roles, we assume that work commitment is a unidimensional construct underlying these expressions.

In the abstract, our definition and the others quoted above apply equally to men and women. Concretely, however, the constraints and normative expectations of home responsibilities make the tradeoff between work and family—the distributional aspect of our definition—more salient for women than for men. As others have recognized, *female* work commitment reflects a more complex lifestyle choice in which both occupation and family involvement are embedded (Angrist and Almquist, 1975; Almquist et al., 1980; Coombs, 1979). Consequently, the measures proposed below capture both the centrality and tradeoff components of women's work commitment.

Measurement

Operationalizations of work commitment in previous research are typically inadequate for one of three reasons. In most applications commitment either: (1) is not operationalized at all, as in unmeasured "tastes" invoked by neoclassical economists (Becker, 1976:133); (2) is identified with behavior, so that intermittent labor force participation is presumed to reflect unstable commitment (e.g., Polachek, 1976:5–6); or (3) is measured with a face valid but unreliable indicator, confounding measurement error with instability in commitment. In each case, limitations of measurement procedures lead to an attribution of unstable commitment to the work role among adult women.

Most sociological research does measure commitment independently of work behavior, typically assessing plans, expectations, or preferences regarding work and family roles (Angrist and Almquist, 1975; Haller and Rosenmayr, 1971; Sobol, 1974; Spitze, 1978; Spitze and Waite, 1980). However, with one exception (Angrist and Almquist, 1975), these studies do not attempt to separate unreliability in measurement from instability in commitment. As a result, findings typically report that work commitment is unstable and has weak and inconsistent effects on behavior.[1] Explic-

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[1] Unreliable attitudinal measures appear unstable when response errors are not taken into account (Alwin, 1973). That is, random response errors reflect differences in an individual's *report* of an attitude when the underlying trait is unchanged. When they are ignored, response errors are attributed to changes in the underlying trait. Of course, behavior can be measured unreliably as well, but the behaviors examined here (e.g., working part or full time, enrolled in graduate school) are measured much more reliably than subjective attitudes.

itly modeling the measurement properties of indicators is becoming standard practice in attitudinal research (e.g., Mason et al., 1976; Thornton et al., 1983) but has yet to be incorporated into the study of work commitment.

An adequate empirical representation requires a specification that separates response error from instability in the underlying construct. This is best accomplished with multiple indicators that capture the expectation, satisfaction, and distributional features of the underlying unobservable construct. With an appropriate measurement model, the construct validity of work commitment can be assessed in two ways. As a measure of commitment, the construct should exhibit stability over time, since preferences and expectations that change continuously cannot be viewed as commitments (Becker, 1960). Further, the construct should exhibit discriminant validity with respect to sex-role attitudes; that is, a woman's own subjective investments in work and family roles should be empirically distinct from her feelings about appropriate roles for women in general.

Hypotheses

The first hypothesis follows directly from the above discussion on measurement of work commitment.

> H1: The latent construct of work commitment correlates more highly with itself over time than it does with contemporaneous sex-role attitudes.

If this hypothesis is supported, empirical assessments can follow for hypotheses about the causal links between commitment, attitudes and behavior.

The second hypothesis concerns the impact of early socialization experiences on adult work commitment among women:

> H2: Socialization experiences prior to the transition from school to employment that are supportive of women's work roles contribute to greater work commitment as an adult.

A woman's subjective orientation toward work arises in part from the educational and occupational goals and values developed during her formative years. Exposure to role models who have successfully integrated work and family responsibilities and access to educational resources that enhance employment opportunities can predispose a young woman to subjectively invest in the work role as an adult (Almquist and Angrist, 1971). As a corollary to the second hypothesis, women who reject or are insulated from traditional sex-role expec-

tations should have greater work commitment (Almquist and Angrist, 1970).

The third hypothesis concerns the extent to which work commitment and employment behavior change in response to family contingencies:

> H3: Work commitment remains stable as women accommodate employment behavior to family contingencies.

Women who are or expect to be wives and mothers typically plan work activities around their family roles. Consequently, many women choose work that can be readily combined with, interrupted for, or viewed as an extension of maternal activity (Angrist and Almquist, 1975). However, the result of discontinuity and accommodation in their work behavior is not necessarily inconsistent with a stable distribution of subjective investments in work and family roles.

Sex-role attitudes concerning appropriate adult roles for women in general crystallize by late adolescence (Thornton et al., 1983). These idealized notions about work and family roles are likely to persist regardless of how a woman decides to reconcile work and family roles in her own life. Accordingly, the fourth hypothesis is:

> H4: Post-secondary school experiences, employment behavior, and family contingencies have little impact on sex-role attitudes.

The final hypothesis concerns the relative impact of work commitment and sex-role attitudes on employment behavior:

> H5: Work commitment has a modest impact on subsequent employment behavior, but sex-role attitudes have no impact on such behavior.

For most women, work *behavior* must accommodate to the demands of the roles of wife and (especially) mother. Accordingly, taking on family responsibilities should have a substantial impact on the likelihood of pursuing employment activities. Nevertheless, subjective investment in a given constellation of work and family roles should have an effect on work behavior as well. In contrast, sex-role attitudes as idealized notions of appropriate work and family roles should not affect subsequent behavior net of commitment.

DATA, MEASURES, AND MODELS

Data

The data analyzed here were collected as part of a larger longitudinal survey conducted by
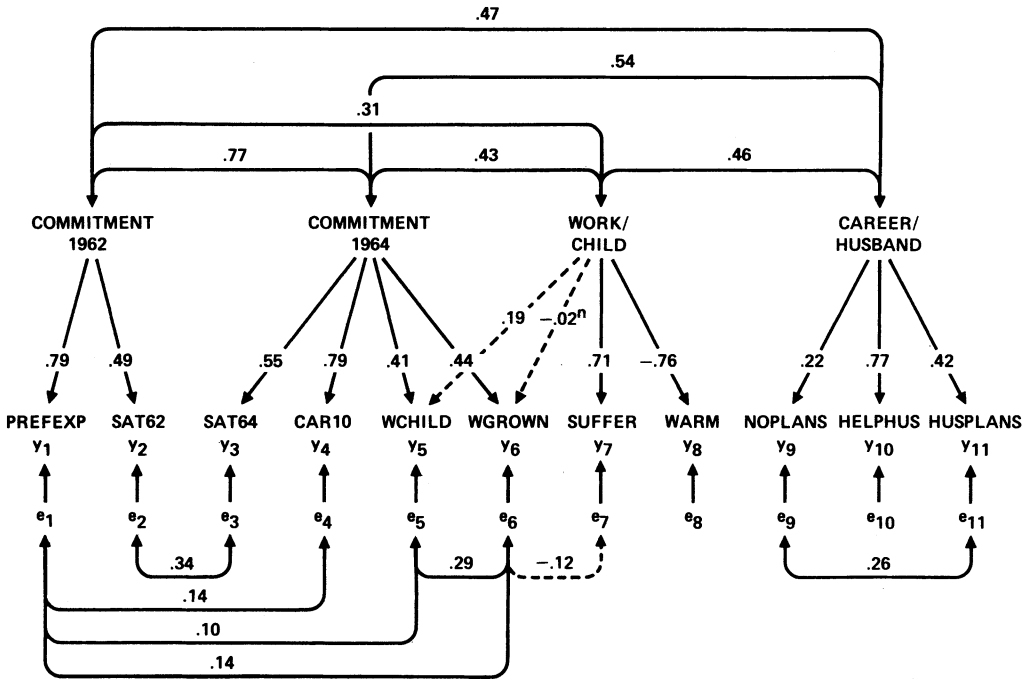
Chi−square = 66.4, df = 29, N = 1799

[n] t=ratio less than 2.0 for effect of WORK/CHILD on WGROWN.

Figure 1. Standardized Coefficients for Final Measurement Model (N=1799)

the National Opinion Research Center on a national probability sample of the 41,116 men and women who received the baccalaureate from American colleges and universities in June, 1961. Through self-administered questionnaires, the future plans of college seniors were assessed in their last year of college (1961), and then again one (1962), two (1963), and three (1964) years beyond graduation. A fifth assessment was made seven years past the baccalaureate (in 1968) on a thirty percent randomly selected subsample of those who had responded to all previous assessments.

The research reported here is based on analyses of longitudinal data on all females responding to the final (1968) questionnaire (N=1799).[2] Most members of the cohort were born between 1938 and 1940, at the end of the Great Depression, and graduated high school in 1957. One of the last cohorts untouched by

the women's movement during their college years, the normative adult lifestyle prescribed for these women dictated that they pursue a career that would become subordinated to family roles upon marriage, if not dropped altogether. That work commitment existed to a notable degree in the 1961 cohort is important historically and provides baseline evidence for documenting change. But more importantly, if commitment can be measured in this group, it provides a model for its assessment in more recent cohorts and in populations other than college graduates.

Measurement Model

The measurement model represented schematically in Figure 1 accounts for the associaton among indicators of work commitment in 1962 and 1964 (WC_{62} and WC_{64}) and two sex-role attitudes measured in 1964: (1) the appropriateness of combining child rearing and work roles (SR1$_{64}$ or WORK/CHILD); and (2) the appropriateness of a wife subordinating career interests to those of her husband (SR2$_{64}$ or CAREER/HUSBAND). Only one indicator (SAT62, SAT64) of work commitment was strictly replicated in both the 1962 and 1964 questionnaires. It assesses the allocation of

subjective investments in different life sectors from responses to two questions ascertaining sources of most and next most satisfaction in life. The specific items were: "Which of the following do you expect to give you the most (and next most) satisfaction in your life?" Answers were selected from a list consisting of: (1) *career;* (2) *family;* (3) community or international *activities;* and (4) leisure, religious, or *other* involvements. All possible combinations of "most" and "next most" sources of satisfaction were ranked according to the balance of work versus domestic activity present in each combination. This measure, with scores ranging from 1 (for *family* and *other*) to 12 (for *career* and *activities*), is the reference indicator for commitment in 1962 and 1964 and establishes the metric for work commitment used in the explanatory model. (An Appendix giving further details on all measures is available from the authors.)

A second indicator (PREFEXP), measured in 1962, is based on responses about career preferences and expectations. Respondents answered the following questions: "In the long run, which one of the following do you really prefer and which one do you realistically expect?" Possible answers ranged from housewife only to employment only, with various arrangements of housewife and employment in between. The responses were scaled to take into account whether women expect their preferences to be realized, since preferences alone do not reflect whether women with employment aspirations intend to pursue those goals in the face of familial constraints. The indicator ranges from 2 to 10; it takes on high values for women who both prefer and expect strong work orientation, lower values when a strong work orientation is preferred but a more domestically oriented expectation is expressed, and lowest values for those who both prefer and expect to be housewives.

Three other measures of work commitment were assessed in 1964. Two of these measures were based on women's expectations of the amount of their employment during different stages of a child's life. Respondents were asked: "For each of the following periods of your life, circle whether you expect to be working full time, part time, not at all, or don't know." The model includes responses for when respondent's youngest child is between six and twelve years of age (WCHILD), and after children are all working or married (WGROWN). Responses were scaled from 1 for "not at all" or "don't know" to 3 for "full time."[3] The final measure of work commitment

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[3] A "don't know" response to these items provides

(CAR10) was based on responses to the following question: "Imagining yourself ten years from now, how would you rate each of the following things in terms of their importance to you?" Response to "my work or career" was scaled from 4 for "very important" to 1 for "not at all important."

Sex-role attitudes about the preeminence of a husband's career (CAREER/HUSBAND) and about the impact of maternal employment upon child rearing (WORK/CHILD) index how these women feel *in general* about various options for combining work and family roles. Five indicators of these two dimensions were selected from 32 items administered in the 1964 questionnaire. For each indicator, respondents indicated whether they were neutral, strongly or mildly agreed, or strongly or mildly disagreed with a statement about sex-role attitudes, and responses were scaled from 0 to 4.

The first construct (WORK/CHILD) is indicated by the following: "A pre-school child is likely to suffer emotional damage if his mother works" (SUFFER); and "A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work" (WARM). Items indicating the second construct (CAREER/HUSBAND) are "A man can make long-range plans for his life, but a woman has to take things as they come" (NOPLANS); "It is more important for a wife to help her husband's career than to have one herself" (HELPHUS); and "A married woman can't make long-range plans for her own career because they depend on her husband's plans for his" (HUSPLANS). Reference indicators SUFFER and HELPHUS establish metrics of 0 to 4 for the two unobservable variables. A brief description of each indicator is reported along with descriptive statistics in Table 1.

The a priori specification of the measurement model, represented by the solid lines in Figure 1, includes measurement equations of the form:

$$y_i = \lambda_i \eta_j + e_i, \; i=1,...,11; \; j=1,...4, \quad (1)$$

where the η_j correspond to WC_{62}, WC_{64}, $SR1_{64}$, and $SR2_{64}$, respectively. They account for the association among eleven observable indicators (y's) in terms of four latent factors (η's).

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substantive information; it is not "missing data." It was assumed that women who are undecided about working outside the home are less committed than those planning full- or part-time work. While women who are undecided are probably no less committed than those who plan not to work outside the home, assuming that the "don't know's" were more committed seemed unreasonable.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Indicators of Work Commitment and Sex-Role Attitudes among 1961 Female College Graduates (N = 1799)

Variable (Range)	Mean	S.D.	N	Brief Description[a]
WC_{62}				
1. PREFEXP (2–10)	4.8	2.4	1713	Preferences/Expectations for work and nonwork roles
2. SAT62 (1–12)	5.1	3.3	1742	Most, next most satisfaction in work and nonwork roles
WC_{64}				
3. SAT64 (1–12)	4.9	3.3	1692	Most, next most satisfaction in work and nonwork roles
4. CAR10 (1–4)	2.9	0.9	1738	Importance of career in ten years
5. WCHILD (1–3)	1.8	0.8	1718	Plan to work when youngest child is between 6 and 10 years old
6. WGROWN (1–3)	2.1	0.9	1728	Plan to work after children have grown
$SR1_{64}$ (WORK/CHILD)				
7. SUFFER (0–4)	1.5	1.3	1770	". . . preschool child is likely to suffer . . . if his mother works."
8. WARM (0–4)	1.7	1.4	1769	"A working mother can establish just as warm a relationship. . . ."
$SR2_{64}$ (CAREER/HUSBAND)				
9. NOPLAN (0–4)	2.3	1.3	1770	". . . a woman has to take things as they come."
10. HELPHUS (0–4)	1.0	1.2	1767	"It is more important for a wife to help her husband's career. . . ."
11. HUSPLANS (0–4)	1.1	1.1	1769	"A married woman cannot make . . . plans . . . they depend on her husband's. . . ."

[a] See text for complete description.

Disturbance properties conform to a conventional confirmatory factor analysis specification (Jöreskog, 1969), and the normalization $\lambda_2 = \lambda_3 = \lambda_7 = \lambda_{10} = 1.0$ establishes metrics for the unobservables.

The original specification included six correlations among measurement error terms. First, errors in reports of the preference/expectation indicators in 1962 (PREFEXP) were allowed to correlate with the three indicators in 1964 that also concern expectations of future labor force participation (CAR10, WCHILD, WGROWN). Second, the model allowed for correlation of response errors across years in the two measures of commitment that assess satisfaction with various combinations of work and nonwork roles (SAT62, SAT64). Ignoring either type of over-time error correlations would lead to an overstatement of the stability of the latent construct, biasing results in favor of the hypothesis. Third, the model allowed for correlation of response error in the two indicators of commitment based on the series of questions on respondent's work plans at two periods in her life (WCHILD, WGROWN). Finally, errors in the two reports of sex-role attitudes that concern making plans for a career (NOPLANS, HUSPLANS) may be correlated. After obtaining estimates of a baseline measurement

model, three additional parameters (two lambdas and one error correlation denoted by dotted lines in Figure 1) were included. They significantly improved the fit of the model and were substantively plausible.[4]

Explanatory Model

Measures of social origins, undergraduate experiences, and work and family statuses in 1961, 1962, 1964, and 1968 are described in Table 2. They are related to work commitment in 1962 and 1964, the two sex-role attitudes in 1964, and employment behavior (working full or part time or in graduate school) in 1964 and 1968 by the following structural equations:

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[4] According to the modified model, there is a small but direct link between feeling that the children of working mothers are not disadvantaged and reporting an expectation to work when one's own children are young. The added error correlation suggests that women who feel that preschool children of working mothers suffer plan to postpone career activity until after all children are grown, and that this association comes about over and above that due to the association between sex-role attitude and commitment.

$$\begin{bmatrix} WC_{62} \\ WC_{64} \\ SR1_{64} \\ SR2_{64} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \gamma_{10} & \gamma_{11} & \gamma_{12} & 0 \\ \gamma_{20} & \gamma_{21} & \gamma_{22} & \gamma_{24} \\ \gamma_{30} & \gamma_{31} & \gamma_{32} & \gamma_{34} \\ \gamma_{40} & \gamma_{41} & \gamma_{42} & \gamma_{44} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} X_{origin} \\ X_{61} \\ X_{62} \\ X_{64} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$+ \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ \beta_{21} \\ \beta_{31} \\ \beta_{41} \end{bmatrix} [WC_{62}] + \begin{bmatrix} \zeta_1 \\ \zeta_2 \\ \zeta_3 \\ \zeta_4 \end{bmatrix},$$

(2)

$$\begin{bmatrix} P(EB_{64}=1) \\ P(EB_{68}=1) \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \gamma_{50} & \gamma_{51} & \gamma_{52} & \gamma_{54} & 0 \\ \gamma_{60} & \gamma_{61} & \gamma_{62} & \gamma_{64} & \gamma_{68} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} X_{origin} \\ X_{61} \\ X_{62} \\ X_{64} \end{bmatrix}$$

(3)

$$+ \begin{bmatrix} \beta_{51} & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ \beta_{61} & \beta_{62} & \beta_{63} & \beta_{64} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} WC_{62} \\ WC_{64} \\ SR1_{64} \\ SR2_{64} \end{bmatrix}$$

The column labeled "Vector" in Table 2 maps each variable into a vector of predetermined variables in the structural equations. Vector X_{origin} includes the four measures of social origins listed in Table 2; X_{61} includes the nine measures of undergraduate experiences; and X_{62}, X_{64}, and X_{68} include measures of family and work statuses in 1962, 1964, and 1968, respectively. Child-rearing roles are indicated by number of children at previous survey date (CHILD) and whether an additional child was born since the previous survey (NEWCHILD). As a result, the effects of number of children can be disentangled from the impact of a recent addition to the family.[5] In order to capture the

[5] The specification had to be modified for 1962 because presence rather than number of children was ascertained. Most newborns between 1961 and 1962

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Measures of Social Origins, Undergraduate Experiences, Family Status, and Employment Behavior (N = 1799)

Variable (Range)			Mean	S.D.[a]	Vector	Brief Description
Social Origins						
SES			0.0	1.0	X_{origin}	z-scale sum of father's ed. and oc. status
RACE	(0–1)		.94	—	X_{origin}	1 = white
OLDER	(0–1)		.06	—	X_{origin}	1 = 30 or older in 1961
MOWORK	(0–1)		.18	—	X_{origin}	1 = mother worked full time before respondent was 11 yrs. old
Undergrad. Experience						
GPA	(0–8)		4.4	1.5	X_{61}	Grade point ave. (D+=0 . . . A=8)
TEACH	(0–1)		.54	—	X_{61}	1 = anticipate career in teaching
HELP	(0–1)		.08	—	X_{61}	1 = anticipate career in helping professions
WIFE	(0–1)		.04	—	X_{61}	1 = anticipate career as housewife
GRADPLAN	(1–4)		2.2	1.1	X_{61}	plans for graduate work (none . . . most)[b]
FRGRAD	(1–5)		2.6	1.0	X_{61}	close friends plan graduate work (none . . . most)
SORORITY	(0–1)		.36	—	X_{61}	1 = closest female friends from sorority
MARR61	(0–1)		.38	—	X_{61}	1 = married or engaged by senior year
CHILD61	(0–1)		.09	—	X_{61}	1 = raising children by senior year
Marital Status						
MARR61	(0–1)		.22	—	X_{62}	1 = newly married or engaged between 1961 and 1962
MARR62	(0–1)		.15	—	X_{64}	1 = newly married or engaged between 1962 and 1964
MARR64–68	(0–1)		.13	—	X_{68}	1 = newly married or engaged between 1964 and 1968
Children						
CHILD62	(0–4)		.31	—	$X_{64}(lag)^c$	number of children, 1962 (>4=4)
CHILD64	(0–4)		.59	—	$X_{68}(lag)^c$	number of children, 1964 (>4=4)
1STCHILD61–62		(0–1)	.11	—	X_{62}	1 = had first child between 1961 and 1962
NEWCHILD62–64		(0–1)	.29	—	X_{64}	1 = had a child between 1962 and 1964
NEWCHILD64–68		(0–1)	.55	—	X_{68}	1 = had a child between 1964 and 1968
Employment						
PT62	(0–1)		.08	—	X_{62}	1 = employed part time, 1962
PT64	(0–1)		.07	—	X_{64}	1 = employed part time, 1964
FT/SCHOOL62		(0–1)	.84	—	X_{62}	1 = employed full time or graduate school, 1962
FT/SCHOOL64		(0–1)	.66	—	X_{64}	1 = employed full time or graduate school, 1964
EB_{64}	(0–1)		.71	—	na	1 = employed or graduate school, 1964
EB_{68}	(0–1)		.47	—	na	1 = employed or graduate school, 1968

[a] A dash in this column denotes binary (0–1) variable.   [c] See text.
[b] Retrospective report in 1961 of plans in freshman year.

Table 3. Substantive Hypotheses and Corresponding Constraints on Parameters of Statistical Models

Hypothesis	Parameters
H1: The latent construct of work commitment correlates more highly with itself over time than it does with contemporaneous sex-role attitudes.	$\rho_{WC_{62},WC_{64}} > \rho_{WC_{64},SR1_{64}}$ $\rho_{WC_{62},WC_{64}} > \rho_{WC_{64},SR2_{64}}$
H2: Socialization experiences prior to the transition from school to employment that are supportive of women's work roles contribute to greater work commitment as an adult.	$\gamma_{10} \neq 0,\ \gamma_{11} \neq 0$
H3: Work comitment remains stable as women accommodate employment behavior to family contingencies.	$1 < \beta_{21} << 0,\ \gamma_{20}=0,\ \gamma_{21}=0,\ \gamma_{22}=0$ $\gamma_{24}=0,\ \gamma_{54} \neq 0,\ \gamma_{68} \neq 0$
H4: Post-secondary school experiences, employment behavior, and family contingencies have little effect on sex-role attitudes.	$\gamma_{30} \neq 0,\ \gamma_{40} \neq 0,\ \gamma_{31}=0,\ \gamma_{32}=0,$ $\gamma_{34}=0,\ \gamma_{41}=0,\ \gamma_{42}=0,\ \gamma_{44}=0$
H5: Work commitment has a modest impact on subsequent employment behavior, but sex-role attitudes have no impact on that behavior.	$\beta_{51} \neq 0,\ \beta_{62} \neq 0,\ \beta_{63}=0,\ \beta_{64}=0$

effects of timing of marriage, marital status in 1962, 1964, and 1968 is indicated by whether the respondent acquired a spouse or fiance since the previous survey.

In Table 3, each of the five substantive hypotheses is translated into predictions about specific parameters or parameter vectors in the measurement and explanatory models. For example, the third hypothesis implies: (1) a stability coefficient for work commitment close to one ($1.0 < \beta_{21} << 0$); (2) effects of social origins and school experiences on commitment in 1964 that are entirely mediated by 1962 commitment ($\gamma_{20}=0$, $\gamma_{21}=0$); (3) no impact of family and work roles on 1964 commitment ($\gamma_{22}=0$, $\gamma_{24}=0$); and (4) a significant impact of contemporaneous family roles on employment behavior ($\gamma_{54} \neq 0$, $\gamma_{68} \neq 0$).

The measurement model (equation 1) and explanatory model (equations 2 and 3) were estimated separately from unweighted pairwise present covariances[6] using the maximum likelihood fitting function in LISREL V (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1981).[7] Both the full

structural model and the reduced form (including just social origins and undergraduate experiences as predetermined variables) were estimated for equations 2 and 3.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics on Work Commitment

Women who graduated from college in 1961 were not uniformly traditional in their subjective investments in work and family roles. While over half preferred and expected to be housewives (PREFEXP)—with occasional employment at most—another fourth preferred and expected to combine career and family roles. On the indicator of work commitment measured in both 1962 and 1964 (SAT62, SAT64), over half expected that career would provide either most or next most satisfaction in their lives. The modal response on this measure for *both* men and women was home and career as "most" and "next most" sources of satisfaction, respectively.[8] In both the 1962

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were firstborns, so the specifications are roughly equivalent.

[6] Means on all variables were unaffected by weighting, but weighted standard deviations were typically slightly larger. Several models were estimated on both weighted and unweighted data, and differences were very small. With one exception, data were present for at least 94 percent of the cases on each variable. The variable NEWCHILD between 1964 and 1968 is missing for ten percent of the cases.

[7] Each explanatory model is estimated with all measurement parameters fixed at values computed for the measurement model to ensure that the distribution among unobservables and their covariation with measured variables remain constant across models. As a result, standard errors for parameters of the explanatory model are biased toward zero. Limited-information estimates were compared to

full-information estimates for several equations and we found that standard errors typically differed by less than five percent. In addition to LISREL estimates, unobservable variables were replaced with predicted factor scores so that OLS estimates could be computed as well. While biased for the full models, the OLS procedure provides collinearity diagnostics (Belsley et al., 1980) that allow assessment of the stability of estimates that include, for example, several moderately correlated family status variables. Since distributions on dichotomous outcomes (EB_{64} and EB_{68}) are not skewed, there is little danger of biased LISREL estimates of standard errors for equation 3. For the subset of cases with complete data, significance and relative size of OLS and logit estimates were compared and only trivial differences were detected.

[8] Men were asked the two satisfaction items in both 1962 and 1964 as well as all sex-role questions in 1964. Descriptions in the text are based on supplementary analyses on 3069 males.

and 1964 surveys, just over 40 percent of the women and 45 percent of the men chose this combination. At the same time, about 30 percent of the women selected the most conservative response—home and other—in both surveys.[9] Overall, the distributions on the satisfaction items change very little between 1962 and 1964 (see Table 1).

When the women were asked in 1964 about the importance of a career in ten years (CAR10), the mean response was close to the mode: over 40 percent expected a career to be "somewhat important" and another 28 percent responded "very important." On this item, less than a third gave the more traditional responses "not very" or "not at all" important. However, supplementary analyses showed that at the same time nearly three-fourths expected that "taking care of a home" would be very important. The final measures of work commitment reveal that although a third of the women planned not to work while their youngest child was between the ages of six and ten (WCHILD), the majority did expect to be engaged in either full-time or part-time employment. Only nine percent planned not to work after all their children had grown (WGROWN), but another fourth of the women were uncertain about employment at that stage. Overall, these survey responses suggest that the 1961 cohort of female college graduates was indeed invested in employment outside the home, but definitely not at the expense of traditional family roles.

Hypotheses

H1: Stability and Discriminant Validity of Work Commitment. The hypothesis that work commitment is more highly correlated with itself over time than with contemporaneous sex-role attitudes is strongly supported. Imposing the single constraint that the over-time correlation in work commitment equals the 1964 correlation of commitment and WORK/CHILD on the measurement model in Figure 1 increases the chi-square by 29.8. Imposing the constraint that the over-time correlation equals the correlation between commitment and CAREER/HUSBAND produces an increase of 106.0. In the final measurement model, the 95 percent confidence interval for the over-time correlation in work commitment ranges from .71 to .83, while that for 1964 commitment and CAREER/HUSBAND (the largest contemporaneous correlation among unobservables) is

from .47 to .62. Clearly, work commitment is both conceptually and empirically distinct from sex-role attitudes, and—even after accounting for modest over-time error correlations in its indicators—it exhibits a high level of stability over a two-year interval.[10] Also, the two sex-role attitudes are empirically distinct from one another, consistent with other research showing that sex-role ideology was not highly crystallized among women in the early 1960s (Mason et al., 1976).

H2: Socialization and Work Commitment. Estimates in Table 4 show that insulation from traditional role expectations, positive socialization experiences, and academic success all lead to greater work commitment. Three of the four measures of social origins and seven of the eight measures of undergraduate experiences listed in Table 2 have significant effects on work commitment in 1964. Older, less-affluent women and those untouched by sorority life subjectively invested more in a future work role than their counterparts who were more easily integrated into the upper middle-class lifestyle of campuses in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Peer support (FRGRAD) seems to sustain a work orientation as well, since those whose friends had plans for advanced training were more committed one year past the baccalaureate. Women who performed better as undergraduates (GPA) presumably faced better employment opportunities and were more committed in 1962. Those who entered college with plans for advanced degrees (GRADPLAN) also maintained a commitment to the work role after graduation. The few women (four percent of the sample) who anticipated long-term careers as housewives (WIFE) are probably the most traditional in the cohort. Not surprisingly, they were substantially less committed to the work role in 1962.

Exposure to positive role models and personal experience at integrating career and family roles are also associated with higher work commitment. Women whose mothers worked full time when they were children (MOWORK) were more committed in 1962, as were those who successfully managed to combine child rearing with completion of an undergraduate degree (CHILD61). But those who planned traditional careers in the teaching or helping professions—presumably vocations that facilitate combining work and family roles— were neither more nof less committed to work than other women.

Table 4. Determinants of Work Commitment and Sex-Role Attitudes: Unstandardized Regression Coefficients for 1961 Female College Graduates (N = 1799)

Predetermined Variable	COMMITMENT		COMMITMENT		WORK/CHILD		CAREER/ HUSBAND	
	WC_{62}	(0–12)	WC_{64}	(0–12)	$SR1_{64}$	(0–4)	$SR2_{64}$	(0–4)
SES	−.19	−.18	−.23	−.07n	.03n	.06	.05n	.10
RACE	−.19n	−.24n	−.30n	−.08n	−.42	−.36	.00n	.05n
OLDER	.96	.92	.44n	−.62	−.02n	−.33	.08n	−.11n
MOWORK	.32	.34	.50	.22n	.32	.26	.20	.11n
GPA	.10	.10	.15	.05n	.05	.02n	.06	.03n
TEACH	−.21	−.19n	.08n	.24	−.09n	−.07n	−.08n	−.03n
HELP	−.32n	−.31n	.26n	.51	−.08n	−.03n	−.02n	.06n
WIFE	−1.27	−1.16	−.80	.39n	−.28n	−.02n	−.31	.04n
GRAD	.23	.22	.20	−.00n	.04n	.00n	.09	.03n
FRGRAD	.29	.26	.25	.00n	.06	.01n	.08	−.00n
SORORITY	−.31	−.27	−.56	−.27n	−.07n	−.00n	−.14	−.07n
MARR61	−.51	−.64	−.12n	.14n	−.01n	.11n	−.07n	.15n
CHILD61	.69	.63	1.02	.07n	.44	.08n	.35	.24n
MARR61–62		−.60		−.13n		.11n		.13n
1STCHILD61–62		−.21n		—		—		—
FT/SCHOOL62		.17n		.03n		.02n		−.06n
PT62·		.45		−.04n		.08n		.05n
CHILD62				.26		.17		−.08n
MARR62–64				−.52		.06n		.03n
NEWCHILD62–64				.40		.16		.01n
FT/SCHOOL64				.55		.25		.08n
PT64				.32n		.16n		.12n
WC_{62}				.85		.17		.26
Disturbance s.d.	142	1.39	1.66	1.08	.92	.88	.87	.78
R^2	.22	.24	.18	.65	.07	.15	.07	.25
Dep. var. s.d.	1.60		1.83		.95		.90	

n t-ratio less than 2.0.

H3: Stability of Work Commitment and Accommodation to Family Contingencies. Reduced form coefficients in Table 4 hardly differ for determinants of commitment in 1962 and 1964. Net differences in commitment that appear in 1962 as a function of social origins and school experiences persist through 1964. Structural coefficients reveal that this pattern is due primarily to the very high stability of work commitment: women who differ by one point in work commitment in 1962 typically differ by 0.85 points two years later, holding constant social origins, school experiences, and work and family roles. The standardized coefficient (not reported in Table 2) of .74 is only four percent smaller than the over-time correlation, indicating that very little of the substantial association between commitment in 1962 and 1964 (see Figure 1) is due to either common causes or intervening mechanisms. In short, the hypothesis of a stable work commitment construct is overwhelmingly supported.

Contrary to the hypothesis, work commitment in the sample *did* change in response to family and employment contingencies, but not by much, and not always in the same direction.

Commitment in 1964 was about one-half point lower for women who married or became engaged between surveys. But women did *not* lower their commitment after becoming mothers.[11] Women who gave birth between the 1962 and 1964 surveys and those raising large families were actually *more* committed in 1964 than other women. Most of the cohort planned to have children, and it seems that many started families early to facilitate their return to work activity. In short, these results show that women shifted their subjective investments in favor of family roles and responsibilities when they acquired husbands, *not* when they became mothers. It may be that for these women the satisfactions derived from the maternal role were anticipated when marriages were formed, and some disinvestment in that role occurred when the actual responsibilities of childbearing came along.

The model provides mixed evidence on whether employment behavior sustains commitment. Women in graduate school or work-

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[11] Similarly, supplementary analyses revealed that men became less work oriented when they married, but children had no effect.

ing full time are one-half point higher in commitment in 1964 than those not engaged in work activity outside the home, while the effect of working part time is about one-third point and not statistically significant. The opposite results are obtained for commitment in 1962: those working part time appear one-half point higher in commitment, and the effect of graduate school or full-time work outside the home is not significant. Though the models are not strictly comparable, they do indicate that subjective investment in the work role did not rise and fall dramatically with participation and nonparticipation in work activities. That is, subjective investments in work relative to family roles remained remarkably stable over the years following college graduation.

As hypothesized, suspension of work activities is typically a response to the contingencies of child rearing. The results show definitively that the single most powerful deterrent to work activity was having a young child at home. Attending to a child under four years old (NEWCHILD64–68) reduced the probability of work activity by .43 in 1968, and raising a child under two (NEWCHILD62–64) reduced the probability by slightly more than that in 1964. Each additional child reduced the probability of work activity by .09 in both years. Regardless of number of children, women who married or became engaged prior to 1964—either as undergraduates or between survey years—were less likely to be involved in work activity in 1964. In contracts, marriage *after* college graduation did not reduce the likelihood of work activity in 1968 (at least until children came along). Presumably, those who postponed marriage had built some momentum in their careers which they interrupted for children but not for marriage per se.

The impact of timing of work and family roles is also reflected in the effect of age at graduation on later employment behavior. Women who were thirty or older when they graduated were substantially more likely to engage in work activities in 1964 and 1968. Many of the older women had already raised young children by 1964 and could continue their work involvements. Presumably, many of their younger classmates would return to their work roles upon reaching the same stage in the family cycle.

H4: Determinants of Sex-Role Attitudes. Findings in Table 4 show that sex-role attitudes are largely independent of school experiences, family roles, and work behavior. Overall, the proportion of variance explained in the two sex-role attitudes is less than half that explained in corresponding equations for commitment in 1964. Attitudes on the primacy of husband's career are independent of all variables except socioeconomic status and prior work commitment. Women from high-status families and those more committed two years earlier held less traditional views. School experiences, family roles, and work behavior have no significant effects.

Results for attitudes about maternal employment are mixed. As hypothesized, these views are affected by all four measures of social origins. Consistent with previous research (Herzog and Bachman, 1982; Thornton et al., 1983), women whose mothers worked (MOWORK) held less traditional views. While women from high-status families tended to be less committed to employment, they embraced more egalitarian views about combining work and child rearing in general. Net of all variables in the model, nonwhite women were substantially less traditional in their views on maternal employment, scoring four-tenths of a point higher on a scale ranging from zero to four. Labor force participation rates among nonwhite mothers have exceeded those of whites for many years, so it is not surprising that combining work and child-rearing roles was more widely accepted among minority women (Landry and Jendrek, 1978). Finally, women who were thirty or older at graduation appear more traditional in their views of maternal employment, but only after controlling for 1962 commitment and 1962–64 employment activity and family statuses. In other words, older women are less traditional on average, and this is because of their experiences and commitments. They appear more traditional only when compared to the subset of younger women who happen also to share the same experiences and commitments.

Contrary to the hypothesis, early adulthood experiences do affect attitudes toward maternal employment. Raising children affects these attitudes the same way it influences work commitment: women who began raising families by 1964 were both more committed to employment and more likely to approve combining work and child-rearing roles in general. However, while women changed their subjective investments in their own work roles upon acquiring a husband or fiance, they did not change their sex-role attitudes. Finally, employment activity (full-time work or graduate school enrollment) has a modest effect on attitudes toward maternal employment. Those engaged in a work role are less likely to disapprove of combining it with child rearing.

H5: Relative Impact of Commitment and Attitudes on Employment Behavior. As hypothesized, employment activity is affected by commitment but not by sex-role attitudes. Further, the effect of commitment on subsequent employment behavior is twice as

strong in 1968 as in 1964 (see Table 5) even though the time lag between subjective investment and behavior is twice as long in the 1968 equation. During the years immediately following the baccalaureate, the responsibilities associated with newly formed families constrain work behavior of most women regardless of their subjective investments. By 1968, however, many had the discretion to plan work activities more in accord with the work role. The standardized coefficient for 1964 commitment (not reported in Table 5) is .23, second only to the standardized effect ($-.43$) of presence of a young child. The effect of a one standard deviation difference in commitment increases the probability of employment activity by .11 ($.06 \times 1.83$), a bit more than enough to offset the negative impact of an additional child in 1968. We suspect that the effect of commitment on behavior continued to increase beyond 1968 as the cohort of women completed their families (and in some cases as marriages dissolved) and followed through on the preferences and expectations expressed in the 1964 survey.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This article has integrated the concept of work commitment—the centrality of the work role as a source of intrinsic satisfaction relative to other adult roles—into the study of sex-role attitudes and women's employment activity. The definition of the concept presented here assumes the work role to be one source of identity in adulthood and acknowledges that for women, work commitment involves a distribution of subjective investments among the roles they fill at home and at work. Shortcomings of previous attempts to operationalize work commitment have been discussed and an alternative approach to measurement has been offered, based on multiple indicators of a construct that is not directly observable. Drawing upon research on women and work, a model of the causes and consequences of work commitment was developed that emphasizes its relationship to socialization, schooling experiences, and adult family and work behavior.

When examined within a multiple indicator framework, work commitment appears to be both stable over time and empirically distinct from sex-role attitudes. Women less integrated into the conservative mainstream of college life in the early 1960s tended to be more committed. Regardless of timing of marriage, women who graduated from college in 1961 subjectively "disinvested" in the work role when they acquired spouses. Women who began child rearing before successfully completing their undergraduate work were more committed to employment. It appears that those completing families two to three years after college were more committed as well. Since most of the women in the class of 1961 planned to combine family and work roles, the most committed obtained a head start in family formation and completion in order to return more quickly to their work roles (see also Spitze and Waite, 1980:28).

As hypothesized, work commitment and sex-role attitudes had distinct determinants and consequences. The latter were unaffected by schooling experiences, and attitudes about the primacy of a husband's career were unaffected by work behavior and family contingencies. As expected, work commitment had a modest impact on employment behavior, but sex-role attitudes did not. More than anything else, the demands of raising young children caused the women in the sample to interrupt their employment. In short, intermittency of work activity was not a consequence of unsta-

Table 5. Determinants of Employment Behavior in 1964 and 1968: Unstandardized Regression Coefficients for 1961 Female College Graduates (N = 1799)

Predetermined Variable	EB_{64}		EB_{68}	
SES	$-.02^{n}$	$-.00^{n}$	$-.03$	$-.01^{n}$
RACE	$.02^{n}$	$-.03^{n}$	$-.10$	$-.09$
OLDER	$.31$	$.12$	$.29$	$.14$
MOWORK	$.00^{n}$	$-.01^{n}$	$.05^{n}$	$.01^{n}$
GPA	$.02$	$.01^{n}$	$.02$	$-.00^{n}$
TEACH	$.02^{n}$	$.05$	$-.03^{n}$	$-.02^{n}$
HELP	$-.00^{n}$	$.06$	$.01^{n}$	$.01^{n}$
WIFE	$-.28$	$-.08^{n}$	$-.19$	$-.10^{n}$
GRADPLAN	$.02^{n}$	$-.01^{n}$	$.02^{n}$	$.00^{n}$
FRGRAD	$.02^{n}$	$-.00^{n}$	$-.00^{n}$	$-.02$
SORORITY	$-.05$	$-.02^{n}$	$-.06$	$-.01^{n}$
MARR61	$-.32$	$-.13$	$-.25$	$-.09$
CHILD61	$.10$	$.22$	$.19$	$.11$
MARR61–62		$-.08$		$-.03^{n}$
FT/SCHOOL62		$.20$		$.02^{n}$
PT62		$.10$		$-.02^{n}$
CHILD62		$-.09$		—
MARR62–64		$-.06$		$-.05^{n}$
NEWCHILD64		$-.49$		—
FT/SCHOOL64		—		$.12$
PT64		—		$.06^{n}$
CHILD64		—		$-.09$
MARR64–68		—		$.00^{n}$
NEWCHILD64–68		—		$-.43$
WC_{62}		$.03$		$-.03^{n}$
WC_{64}		—		$.06$
$SR1_{64}$		—		$.03^{n}$
$SR2_{64}$		—		$.08^{n}$
R^2	$.16$	$.46$	$.11$	$.41$

^{n} t-ratio less than 2.0.

ble commitments (as neoclassical economists typically assume), and subjective investments in the work role remained stable while these women adjusted their work behaviors to accommodate the demands of child rearing.

The results reported here demonstrate the importance of applying the family life cycle perspective to the analysis of women's work commitment (Waite, 1980). However, data limited to a short segment of the life span restricted application of this perspective. More recent data on the 1961 cohort would have revealed: (1) whether women postponing child rearing into their late twenties or thirties were more committed than those for whom births were spaced more evenly over the childbearing years; (2) whether the consequences of marital dissolution mirrored those of family formation; (3) whether the stability of commitment was sustained or even increased after the childbearing years; and (4) the reciprocal influences between commitments and the timing of family events more generally.

The women studied here grew up in an era in which a majority of the population held traditional views on women's roles. Nevertheless, results showed that these women did make lasting commitments concerning their subjective investments in work and family roles, that commitment can be measured, and that we can model its causes and consequences. Apart from specific findings, the analysis suggests the viability of studying work commitment in more recent cohorts and in populations other than female college graduates. Indeed, strict replication of longitudinal surveys on successive cohorts of women (and men) is the only way to disentangle the interrelationship of personal biography and sociohistorical context. In our view, two issues are particularly important. The first is whether subjective investment in the work role becomes a normative expectation as the proportion of women employed outside the home increases in successive cohorts. Most individuals no longer disapprove of women combining work and family roles. But are they also beginning to believe that women *should* subjectively invest in their work roles? If so, insulation from prevailing sex-role norms should no longer lead to greater commitment. The second issue concerns the contribution of cohort succession to changes in women's work commitment. Subjective investments in the work role were quite stable in one very conservative cohort. Since cohorts differ in their socialization experiences, changes in levels of commitment probably occur mainly through cohort succession. Indeed, the way a given cohort manages the tradeoff between work and family responsibilities is likely to influence the re-

lationship between commitment, attitudes, and behavior in cohorts that follow. A research program addressing these issues is well worth pursuing, since it can tell us not only how we feel about changing sex roles, but how we incorporate them into our lives as well.

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