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*Longitudinal studies have shown the long-term impact of attitudes, values, and aspirations on labor market behavior and outcomes. However, sociological theory has so far failed to incorporate this new knowledge. Preference theory does so, positing that recent social and economic changes give women genuine choices for the first time in history. A 1999 national survey in Britain shows that women choose three distinct combinations of market work and family work: They have home-centered, work-centered, or adaptive lifestyle preferences. The survey confirms that lifestyle preferences are a major determinant of fertility, employment patterns, and job choice. However, lifestyle preferences no longer determine occupational choice.*

## **Lifestyle Preferences as Determinants of Women's Differentiated Labor Market Careers**

CATHERINE HAKIM

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**T**he United States was one of the first countries to develop large-scale longitudinal studies of labor market participation, including the groundbreaking National Longitudinal Surveys (NLS) and the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), both initiated in the 1960s and subsequently copied in many European countries (Hakim, 2000a, pp. 109-126). In the 1970s and 1980s, these studies started to reveal the major, long-term impact of attitudes, values, and aspirations on labor market behavior and outcomes, especially on women's employment patterns. These results were obtained despite the fact that the longitudinal studies were primarily designed by and for labor economists and sociologists with relatively little input from social psychologists. So the questions on attitudes included in the interview surveys were parsimonious rather than extensive. Nonetheless, they were found to have substantial predictive power, even at the level of a single question on future work plans. These discoveries have not been given the attention and weight

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they deserve, perhaps because sociologists and economists tend to be wary of attitude data and their notorious volatility.

So far, there has been no attempt to incorporate these findings from longitudinal studies into sociological theory—particularly into theorizing on women's labor force participation. There is still a tendency for researchers to keep attitude data at arm's length, to focus on apparently objective and factual information about the characteristics of individuals, households, employers, and industries. Sociological theory and research on female labor force participation has remained stuck between human capital theory and institutional explanations of labor market outcomes, especially pay. Textbooks typically present human capital theory, then go on to challenge it with the motley collection of references to institutional constraints, social networks, historical change, cross-cultural comparisons, and feminist theories that currently provide the substance of sociology of work and employment courses (Blau & Ferber, 1992; Crompton, 1997; Grint, 1991; Jacobsen, 1994; Reskin & Padavic, 1994). The dividing line between economic textbooks and sociology textbooks on female employment seems to be getting fainter over time. The classic journal article, or sociology student project, seems to be to compare and contrast human capital and institutional theories in relation to a particular data set, social process, or case study, with neither contender gaining ascendancy—as illustrated by the contributions to Glass (1999).

In Europe, the expansion and consolidation of the European Union (EU) has stimulated cross-national comparative studies of EU and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) member states. These comparative studies of modern societies generally focus on macro-level theories and classifications of societies that purport to explain institutional and cultural differences between countries on a broad level. In the process, micro-level theories that focus on individual motivation and preferences are overlooked or even sidelined—as illustrated by Van Doorne-Huiskes, van Hoof, and Roelofs (1995); Blossfeld and Hakim (1997); O'Reilly and Fagan (1998); Rubery, Smith, Fagan, and Grimshaw (1998); and Blossfeld and Drobnic (2001). On the rare occasions when institutional-structural theories are pitted against theories focusing on individual choices, preferences, and intentionality, the latter tend to win—as illustrated by Gambetta's (1987) study based on Italian data sets, *Were They Pushed or Did They Jump?*

The apocryphal definitions are that economics is about how people make choices, whereas sociology explains why people have no choices to make. Preference theory breaks with the sociological tradition of giving primacy to social structural and institutional factors. It also rejects the economist tradition of assuming that preferences are stable and homogeneous enough not to require direct empirical investigation and that preferences are revealed

through behavior. Preference theory builds on the important research findings from U.S. and European longitudinal studies to give a central role to lifestyle preferences and values as determinants of women's and men's employment decisions. Preference theory provides a new explanation for labor market participation and outcomes, especially for women.

This article first summarizes key findings on the impact of values and personal goals from the U.S. longitudinal studies. It then outlines preference theory and explains why the United States and Britain currently provide the main case study settings for tests and development of the theory.<sup>1</sup> Following this, the article describes a 1999 British national survey used to operationalize, test, and develop the theory. The subsequent sections assess the utility of the theory for predicting female employment patterns, occupational choice, and fertility. In the process, the article challenges the utility of human capital theory and argues that institutional constraints are important only at the margins.

### THE IMPACT OF VALUES AND PERSONAL GOALS

From the 1960s on, the NLS provided longitudinal data that allowed the long-term influence, or insignificance, of work orientations and work plans to be measured rigorously. Of particular interest is the cohort of young women aged 14 to 24 in 1968 who were interviewed almost every year up to 1983 when aged 29 to 39 years. These women were asked in 1968, and again at every subsequent interview, what they would like to be doing when they were 35 years old—whether they planned to be working or to marry, keep house, and raise a family.<sup>2</sup> Compared to the length and complexity of work commitment questions included in some surveys (Bielby & Bielby, 1984), the question is crude and conflates preferences and plans. But presumably, because it asked about women's personal plans rather than generalized approval/disapproval attitudes, the question turned out to have astonishing analytical and predictive power and was used again in the second youth cohort study initiated in 1979.

There are a number of independent analyses of the extent to which early work plans were fulfilled by age 35. They all show that women achieved their objectives for the most part, resulting in dramatic "mark-ups" to career planners in terms of occupational grade and earnings (Mott, 1982; Rexroat & Shehan, 1984; Shaw & Shapiro, 1987). Furthermore, career planners were more likely to choose typically male jobs, had lower job satisfaction than other women, and adapted their fertility behavior to their work plans (Spitze & Waite, 1980; Stolzenberg & Waite, 1977; Waite & Stolzenberg, 1976).

**TABLE 1: Young Women's Work Plans and Outcomes in the United States (in percentages)**

|   | <i>Distribution</i> | <i>Working at<br/>Age 35</i> |
|---|---------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Homemaker careers:</i> Consistently indicate no plans for work: aim is marriage, family, and homemaking activities | 28                  | 49                           |
| <i>Drifters and unplanned careers:</i><br>Highly variable responses over time, no clear pattern in plans for age 35   | 47<br>(35)          | 64                           |
| Switch to having future work expectations at some point in their 20s  | (12)                |                              |
| <i>Career planners:</i> Consistently anticipate working at age 35 throughout their 20s                                | 25                  | 82                           |

SOURCE: Derived from Shaw and Shapiro (1987, Tables 2 and 3, reporting National Longitudinal Surveys data for the cohort of young women first interviewed in 1968 when aged 14 to 24).

Work plans were a significant independent predictor of actual work behavior. After controlling for other factors affecting labor force participation, a woman who consistently planned to work had a probability of working that was 30 percentage points higher than did a woman who consistently planned not to work. Of the women who held consistently to their work plans, four fifths were actually working in 1980, at age 35, compared to only half of the women who consistently intended to devote themselves exclusively to homemaker activities. Women who planned to work at age 35 were likely to do so unless they had large families or a pre-school child. Women who had planned a "marriage career" nevertheless were obliged to work by economic factors in half the cases: Their husbands' low income, divorce, or the opportunity cost of not working led half to be in work despite aiming for a full-time homemaker role.

Planning to work yielded a significant wage advantage. Women who had consistently planned to work had wages 30% higher than those of women who never planned to work. Those women who had planned to work in the occupation they actually held at age 35 had even higher wages than women whose occupational plans were not realized. Women who made realistic plans and acquired necessary skills fared best in the labor market. Those who fared worst were women who planned an exclusive homemaking career but ended up working for economic reasons. However, career planners were a small minority of one quarter of the young women cohort; a vast majority of the women had unplanned careers (see Table 1), as did women in the older

NLS cohort aged 30 to 44 years at the start of the study in the late 1960s (Mott, 1978, 1982; Shaw, 1983).<sup>3</sup>

As far back as the 1970s, the NLS longitudinal data overturned the results of cross-sectional studies showing that women's work behavior is heavily determined by the number and ages of any children rather than the other way round. Those who work only if their family responsibilities permit them to do so are in effect fulfilling a prior choice of emphasis on the homemaker career. Fertility expectations have only a small negative effect on young women's work plans, whereas work plans exert a powerful negative effect on young women's childbearing plans (Sproat, Churchill, & Sheets, 1985, p. 78; Stolzenberg & Waite, 1977; Waite & Stolzenberg, 1976). Factors that have long been held to determine women's labor force participation, such as other family income, educational qualifications, marital status, and age of youngest child were revealed as being most important in relation to women with little or no work commitment, who have so far been in the majority. Women with definite career plans manifested a rather inelastic labor supply, similar to that of men (Shaw & Shapiro, 1987).<sup>4</sup>

Overall, the NLS results have repeatedly shown the importance of motivations, values, and attitudes as key determinants of labor market behavior, occupational status, and even earnings, an influence that is independent of conventional human capital factors and frequently exceeds the influence of behavioral factors (Andrisani, 1978; Mott, 1982; Parnes, 1975; Sproat et al., 1985). These "psychological" variables are too often omitted from research, so their importance has been overlooked.<sup>5</sup>

Similar results emerge from other longitudinal studies on the rare occasions when researchers address the long-term impact of values and life goals. Attitudes have an especially strong impact on women's behavior because women have genuine choices to make regarding employment versus home-making. But attitudes and values have also been shown to have a major impact on men. For example, two Hungarians, Szekelyi and Tardos (1993), analyzed 20 years of PSID microdata for the period between 1968 to 1988 to show that people who plan ahead and express confidence and optimism about their plans subsequently earn significantly higher incomes than those who do not, after controlling for initial levels of income, education, age, sex, race, type of area, and region. The long-term effects of attitudes were stronger than short-term effects. The impact of optimistic planning on earnings was smaller than the impact of education, sex, and initial income in 1967 (if included), but it was larger than the impact of age, race, and locational variables. Attitudes affected the earnings of both male heads of households and their wives.

Similar results are reported by Duncan and Dunifon (1998) from another analysis of 24 years of PSID data, this time covering men only. Motivation (as measured in men in their early 20s) had a large impact on long-term success (as measured by hourly earnings 16 to 20 years later), and the effect remained after controlling for other factors. Only a small part of the impact of motivation worked through its effect on greater investment in training and education; a substantial part remained after this control. The study showed that values commonly found among women, such as religiosity (as measured by church attendance) and a preference for affiliation (as measured by a preference for friendly and sociable work settings rather than challenging work settings), had negative effects on earnings. Work orientations that emphasized challenge rather than affiliation and a clear sense of personal efficacy boosted earnings in the early 40s.

In sum, there is already substantial evidence that attitudes, values, and life goals have important impacts on outcomes in adult life for men as well as women. However, there has been no attempt to integrate this new knowledge into sociological theory, and empirical studies routinely ignore these substantive findings.<sup>6</sup>

### PREFERENCE THEORY

Preference theory is a new theory to explain women's choices between market work and family work. The theory is historically informed, empirically based, multidisciplinary, prospective rather than retrospective in orientation, and applicable in all rich modern societies. The four central tenets of preference theory are listed in Table 2. The first is that five historical changes have collectively produced a qualitatively new scenario for women in rich modern societies in the 21st century, giving them options that were not previously available. True, small elites of women born into wealthy families or prosperous families with liberal ideas, did sometimes have real choices in the past just as their brothers did. Today, genuine choices are open to women in the sense that a vast majority of women have choices, not only very particular subgroups in the population. The five separate changes in society and in the labor market started only in the late 20th century and are now producing a qualitatively different and new scenario of options and opportunities for women in the 21st century. The five conditions that create a new scenario are

- The contraceptive revolution that, from about 1965 on, gave sexually active women reliable and independent control over their own fertility for the first time in history

- The equal opportunities revolution, which ensured that for the first time in history, women obtained equal access to all positions, occupations, and careers in the labor market. Sometimes, this was extended to posts in the public sphere more generally. In some countries, legislation prohibiting sex discrimination goes much wider than just the labor market, giving women equal access to housing, financial services, and other public services
- The expansion of white-collar occupations, which are far more attractive to women than most blue-collar occupations
- The creation of jobs for secondary earners: people who do not want to give priority to paid work at the expense of other life interests
- The increasing importance of attitudes, values, and personal preferences in the lifestyle choices of prosperous, liberal, modern societies.

The five changes are historically specific developments in any society. They are not automatic and do not necessarily occur in all modern societies. They may not occur together at a single point in time in a country. The timing of the five changes varies greatly between countries. The effects of the five changes are cumulative. The two revolutions are essential and constitute the core of the social revolution for women. The five changes collectively are necessary to create a new scenario in which women have genuine choices and female heterogeneity is revealed to its full extent.

In Western Europe, North America, and other modern societies, these five changes only took place from the 1960s on. The timing and pace of change has varied even between countries in Europe. However, the strong social, cultural, economic, and political links between modern countries suggest that no country will lag behind on any of the changes indefinitely. All five changes were completed early in the United States and Britain, so that the new scenario was well established by the last two decades of the 20th century in these two countries, unlike in the rest of Europe.<sup>7</sup>

A review of recent research evidence (Hakim, 2000b) shows that once genuine choices are open to them, women choose three different lifestyles: home-centered, work-centered, or adaptive (see Table 3). These divergent preferences are found at all levels of education and in all social classes.

*Adaptive women* prefer to combine employment and family work without giving a fixed priority to either. They want to enjoy the best of both worlds. Adaptive women are generally the largest group among women and will be found in substantial numbers in most occupations. Certain occupations, such as teaching, are attractive to women because they facilitate an even work-family balance. A great majority of the women who transfer to part-time work after they have children are adaptive, seeking to devote as much time and effort to their family work as to their jobs. In some countries, and in some occupations, part-time jobs are still rare, so other types of job are chosen. For example, seasonal jobs, temporary work, or term-time jobs all offer a better



**TABLE 2: The Four Central Tenets of Preference Theory**

1. Five separate historical changes in society and in the labor market that started in the late 20th century are producing a qualitatively different and new scenario of options and opportunities for women. The five changes do not necessarily occur in all modern societies and do not always occur together. Their effects are cumulative. The five causes of a new scenario are
  - The contraceptive revolution that, from about 1965 on, gave sexually active women reliable control over their own fertility for the first time in history
  - The equal opportunities revolution, which ensured that for the first time in history, women had equal access to all positions, occupations, and careers in the labor market. In some countries, legislation prohibiting sex discrimination went further to give women equal access to housing, financial services, public services, and public posts
  - The expansion of white-collar occupations, which are far more attractive to women than most blue-collar occupations
  - The creation of jobs for secondary earners: people who do not want to give priority to paid work at the expense of other life interests
  - The increasing importance of attitudes, values, and personal preferences in the lifestyle choices of affluent modern societies.
2. Women are heterogeneous in their preferences and priorities on the conflict between family and employment. In the new scenario, they are therefore heterogeneous also in their employment patterns and work histories. These preferences are set out, as ideal types, in Table 3. The size of the three groups varies in rich modern societies because public policies usually favor one or another group.
3. The heterogeneity of women's preferences and priorities creates conflicting interests between groups of women: sometimes between home-centered women and work-centered women, sometimes between the middle group of adaptive women and women who have one firm priority (whether for family work or employment). The conflicting interests of women have given a great advantage to men, whose interests are comparatively homogeneous; this is one cause of patriarchy and its disproportionate success.
4. Women's heterogeneity is the main cause of women's variable responses to social engineering policies in the new scenario of modern societies. This variability of response has been less evident in the past, but it has still impeded attempts to predict women's fertility and employment patterns. Policy research and future predictions of women's choices will be more successful in the future if they adopt the preference theory perspective and first establish the distribution of preferences between family work and employment in each society.

SOURCE: Hakim (2000b).

work-family balance than the typical full-time job, especially if commuting is also involved.

*Work-centered women* are a minority, despite the massive influx of women into higher education and into higher grades of work in the past three decades. Work-centered people (men and women) are focused on competitive activities in the public sphere—in careers, sport, politics, or the arts.

**TABLE 3: Classification of Women's Work-Lifestyle Preferences in the 21st Century**

| <i>Home-Centered</i>   | <i>Adaptive</i>   | <i>Work-Centered</i>  |
|--|---|---|
| <i>20% of women varies from 10% to 30%</i>   | <i>60% of women varies from 40% to 80%</i>  | <i>20% of women varies from 10% to 30%</i>  |
| Family life and children are the main priorities throughout life.  | This group is most diverse and includes women who want to combine work and family, plus drifters and unplanned careers.   | Childless women are concentrated here. Main priority in life is employment or equivalent activities in the public arena: politics, sport, art, etc. |
| Prefer not to work.  | Want to work but not totally committed to work career.  | Committed to work or equivalent activities.   |
| Qualifications obtained as cultural capital.   | Qualifications obtained with the intention of working.  | Large investment in qualifications/training for employment or other activities.   |
| Number of children is affected by government social policy, family wealth, etc. Not responsive to employment policy. | This group is very responsive to government social policy, employment policy, equal opportunities policy/propaganda, economic cycle/recession/growth, etc.<br>Responsive to things such as income tax and social welfare benefits, educational policies, school timetables, child care services, public attitude toward working women, legislation promoting female employment, trade union attitudes to working women, availability of part-time work and similar work flexibility, economic growth and prosperity, and institutional factors generally. | Responsive to economic opportunity, political opportunity, artistic opportunity, etc. Not responsive to social/family policy.                       |

SOURCE: Hakim (2000b).

Family life is fitted around their work, and many of these women remain childless, even when married. Qualifications and training are obtained as a career investment rather than as an insurance policy, as with the adaptive group. A majority of men are work-centered, compared to only a minority of women. Preference theory predicts that men will retain their dominance in the labor market, politics, and other competitive activities because only a minority of women are prepared to prioritize their jobs (or other activities in the public sphere) in the same way as men. This will be unwelcome news to many feminists who have assumed that women would be just as likely as men to be work-centered once opportunities were opened to them and that sex discrimination alone has so far held women back from the top jobs in any society.

The third group, *home-centered women*, is also a minority, and a relatively invisible one given the current media focus on working women and high achievers. Home-centered women prefer to give priority to home and family life after they marry. They are most inclined to have larger families, and they prefer to avoid paid work after marriage except in times of financial stress. They do not necessarily invest less in qualifications, because the educational system functions as a marriage market as well as a training institution (Hakim, 2000b, pp. 193-222). However, they are less likely to choose vocational courses and are more likely to take courses in the arts, humanities, or social sciences.

The three preference groups are set out, as sociological ideal types, in Table 3, with estimates of the relative sizes of the three groups in societies, such as Britain, where public policy does not bias the distribution.<sup>8</sup> In practice, in most societies, public policy is biased toward one group or another, by accident or by design, so that the exact percentages vary across societies.

These three lifestyles are not merely different. They sometimes bring women into conflict with each other—for example, on whether public child care services are necessary or whether positive discrimination in favor of women for promotion to top jobs is a good thing. In a sense, there is no single, representative group of women in modern society, but three contrasting, even conflicting groups with sharply differentiated work and lifestyle preferences. In the United States, the conflict between work-centered and home-centered women has been expressed through the two women's movements: the feminist "women's liberation" movement and the maternalist movement, with conflict often focused on the issues of abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment.

The United States and Britain currently provide the prime examples of societies that have achieved the new scenario for women. This does not mean that sex discrimination has been entirely eliminated in the two countries. As

definitions of sex discrimination keep expanding, from direct discrimination to increasingly arcane forms of indirect discrimination, this battle is arguably never won. However, both countries have trenchant equal opportunities legislation, backed up and enforced by a system of tribunals, equal opportunities commissions, and other tangible public and political support for converting the letter of the law into reality. Some European countries still have little or nothing to support and actively enforce equal opportunities legislation, so that little has changed in practice.<sup>9</sup> Equally important, Britain and the United States both have large and diverse populations, ensuring that cultural diversity and differences in values become accepted and even welcomed. Many European countries have not yet come to terms with the ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity that generally ensues from decades of immigration.

Identifying Britain and the United States as two countries that have achieved the new scenario for women does not mean convergence can be expected in work rates and lifestyle choices in these countries. Even the most liberal society and *laissez faire* polity still has institutions, laws, customs, national policies, and cultural constraints that shape and structure behavior. Choices are not made in a vacuum. Social and economic factors still matter and will produce national variations in employment patterns and lifestyle choices. In addition, the choices people make are molded by an unpredictable circus of events: economic recessions and booms, wars, and changes of government; as well as events in private lives, individual ability, accidents or ill health, “disastrous” marriages and “brilliant” marriages. For example, Britain and the United States differ in the size and character of their part-time workforces. Universal and free access to health care in Britain means that people are free to choose their job and working hours, and even whether to work at all, without regard to employer health benefits. In the United States, health insurance benefits are a key feature of full-time jobs that bias choice away from part-time work or nonwork. Adaptive women who would take permanent part-time jobs in Britain, or not work at all, will opt for full-time jobs in the United States. As a result, there are differences between the two countries in work rates and patterns of employment.

In sum, lifestyle preferences determine

- women’s fertility, both childlessness and—for the majority who do have children—family size;
- women’s employment pattern over the lifecycle: choices between careers and jobs, full-time and part-time work, and associated job values; and
- women’s responsiveness to public policies, employer policies, and economic and social circumstances.

Preferences do not predict outcomes with complete certainty, even when women have genuine choices, because of variations in individual abilities and factors in the social and economic environment. However, in prosperous modern societies, preferences become a much more important determinant, maybe even the primary determinant of women's employment patterns.

### THE 1999 BRITISH SURVEY

Preference theory is empirically based in that it was built up from a review and synthesis of hundreds of social science studies in several disciplines using a huge variety of research methods. The aim in the project reported here was to pick out the smallest possible number of survey questions and indicators appropriate to a structured interview survey that could be used to identify the three lifestyle preference groups among women. This had previously been done most effectively by qualitative studies based on in-depth interviews, as illustrated by Gerson's brilliant study of how women decide about motherhood and careers (Gerson, 1985, Table C22; Hakim, 2000b, pp. 149-154). The aim was to identify classificatory questions and variables that might be included in any large survey.

The survey was carried out as one of 27 projects selected for an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Research Programme on the Future of Work running over 5 years (1998-2003) in Britain. The interview survey was carried out for the author by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) in Britain in January and February 1999.

The survey was based on a probability random sample of households and face-to-face interviews with one person aged 16 or older chosen randomly within each household. The proportion of households in which the selected informant was the head of household or spouse was 81% in our sample. From a sample of 5,388 eligible addresses, an overall response rate of 68% was achieved, producing data for a nationally representative sample of 3,651 persons aged 16 and older in Britain. Refusals accounted for 24% of the initial sample, and noncontacts for another 8%.

The final sample included 1,691 men and 1,960 women, with a substantial proportion (20%) aged 65 and older. Excluding the pensioners reduces the sample for the population of working age to 2,900, including 2,345 from married and cohabiting couples.

The survey was used to operationalize the identification of lifestyle preferences in the context of a large-scale structured interview survey, to test the classification against women's lifestyle choices and behavior, and to explore

further applications of the taxonomy in sociological research on women's employment.<sup>10</sup>

Apart from Tables 1, 2, and 3, all tables presented here are from the 1999 British survey.<sup>11</sup>

### PREFERENCES AND LIFESTYLE CHOICES

Three questions were used to operationalize lifestyle preferences. Two questions were taken from the Eurobarometer series.<sup>12</sup> The third, a question on work commitment, has been widely used, in slightly different versions, in research on work orientations in the United States and Britain. Table 4 shows the three questions, the index of work centrality produced by combining Questions 2 and 3, and the distribution of lifestyle preferences resulting from the combination of family model preferences with work centrality. All three questions produced results in line with those obtained in Eurobarometer and other surveys.

The family models question identifies home-centered women: those who prefer to focus their time and energy on home and family work and, thus, seek a marriage with complete role segregation. Slightly less than one fifth of the sample fell into this category.

The two questions on work orientations identify people for whom market work is central to identity and lifestyle. The question on work commitment identifies people who claim they would continue with paid work (not necessarily in the same job) in the absence of economic necessity. The introduction of a national lottery in Britain in the 1990s made this hypothetical situation more realistic than previously. The lottery proved enormously popular, and there is substantial publicity for the millionaires it regularly creates, all of whom give up their usual job soon afterwards. Responses to the question are clearly biased by a certain degree of political correctness, as almost two thirds of men and women claimed they would continue in paid work, including those aged 65 and older who were already retired.

Primary and secondary earners were identified by a question asking about the main income earner(s) in the household. People who classified themselves as sole or joint main earner(s) were classified as primary earners; all others were classified as secondary earners. The question was treated as an opinion question, and analyses of responses show clearly that that is what it is. For example, married men adopt the identity of primary (co)earner irrespective of income level and even when they are not in employment. In contrast, women who regard themselves as primary earners when single switch immediately to the secondary earner identity (or even complete dependence)

**TABLE 4: The Identification of Lifestyle Preferences (in percentages)**

|   | Women      | Men        | All        |
|---|------------|------------|------------|
| 1. People talk about the changing roles of husband and wife in the family. Here are three kinds of family. Which of them corresponds best with <i>your</i> ideas about the family? <sup>a</sup> |            |            |            |
| • A family where the two partners each have an equally demanding job and where housework and the care of the children are shared equally between them.  | 42         | 46         | 44         |
| • A family where the wife has a less demanding job than her husband and where she does the larger share of housework and caring for the children.   | 42         | 35         | 39         |
| • A family where only the husband has a job and the wife runs the home.   | 17         | 19         | 18         |
| • None of these three cases   |            |            |            |
| 2. If <i>without</i> having to work you had what you would regard as a reasonable living income, would you still prefer to have a paid job, or wouldn't you bother? <sup>b</sup>                |            |            |            |
| Would still work  | 58         | 62         | 60         |
| 3. Who is the <i>main</i> income-earner in your household?  |            |            |            |
| Is it yourself?   | 33         | 69         | 50         |
| Your partner/spouse?  | 46         | 6          | 27         |
| Both of you jointly?  | 10         | 12         | 11         |
| Or someone else?  | 11         | 14         | 12         |
| Work centrality:  |            |            |            |
| Work-centered   | 26         | 52         | 38         |
| Other reasons for work  | 74         | 48         | 62         |
| Lifestyle preferences:  |            |            |            |
| Home-centered   | 17         | ?          |            |
| Adaptive  | 69         | <48        |            |
| Work-centered   | 14         | 52         |            |
| Base = 100%   | <i>n</i> = | <i>n</i> = | <i>N</i> = |
|   | 1,960      | 1,691      | 3,651      |

a. Tiny numbers of respondents saying "don't know" or rejecting all three family models are excluded from all analyses of Question 1. For half the sample, the order of the three models in Question 1 was reversed.

b. Tiny numbers of people giving a "don't know" response to Question 2 are grouped with those who would give up work.

after marriage, almost irrespective of their income level. Work centrality is defined as a combination of adopting a primary earner identity and having nonfinancial commitment to one's paid work. For married women, this means in practice those who regard themselves as joint main earner and are committed to their employment activities. Less than one fifth of married women passed this test, and overall only one quarter of women compared to half of all men were classified as work-centered.<sup>13</sup>

**TABLE 5: Characteristics of Women in the Three Lifestyle Preference Groups**

|   | <i>Home-Centered</i> | <i>Adaptive</i> | <i>Work-Centered</i> |
|---|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| % employed                                |                      |                 |                      |
| Full-time                                 | 40                   | 35              | 63                   |
| Part-time                                 | 16                   | 37              | 15                   |
| % not in employment                       | 44                   | 28              | 22                   |
| % married/cohabiting                      | 71                   | 80              | 45                   |
| Average number of dependent children      |                      |                 |                      |
| aged 0 to 16 at home                      | 1.28                 | 1.02            | 0.61                 |
| % left full-time education                |                      |                 |                      |
| By age 16                                 | 55                   | 56              | 42                   |
| 17 to 21 years                            | 33                   | 32              | 40                   |
| Age 22+                                   | 12                   | 12              | 19                   |
| Base = 100%                               | <i>n</i> = 171       | <i>n</i> = 870  | <i>n</i> = 194       |
| National distribution of the three groups | 14%                  | 70%             | 16%                  |

NOTE: The sample consists of women aged 20 to 59 who have completed their full-time education. The fertility indicator is shown for women aged 20 to 55 years.

The final variable, lifestyle preferences, works well for women because of the way the survey questions were focused on women's choices but works poorly for men. Work-centered women are identified as those who prefer the egalitarian model of the family *and* are work-centered. Less than one fifth of women in Britain are work-centered, compared to half of all men. Most women (69%) are classified as adaptive. This group comprises those choosing the compromise model of the family with women as secondary earners, plus those choosing the egalitarian model, with symmetrical roles, who do not pass the work-centrality test. Men's lifestyle preferences are less well defined because all three family models involve full-time permanent income-earning roles for men, so home-centered men, who would anyway constitute a tiny minority, cannot be identified. Because the question on family models does not differentiate between men, the work-centrality index alone was used to separate work-centered men from the adaptive and home-centered groups.

The distribution of lifestyle preferences among all adults (Table 4) and women of working age (Table 5) is very close to that predicted by preference theory for women (Hakim, 2000b, p. 6) and for men (Hakim, 2000b, p. 255). The distribution for women varies according to the population base. For example, among wives and cohabitantes aged 20 to 59, the distribution becomes 13% home-centered, 77% adaptive, and only 10% work-centered. Among men, the distribution does not vary between subgroups.

In line with preference theory, Table 5 shows that lifestyle choices differ very substantially between the three preference groups. Two thirds of work-



centered women are in full-time employment. In contrast, two thirds of adaptive women work part-time or not at all. Almost half of the home-centered women are not in employment, and a small minority have never had a job. A relatively high 40% of home-centered women have full-time jobs. The reasons for this unexpected result are explored in the full report and show that in certain circumstances, social constraints and economic factors can override personal preferences (Hakim, in press, chaps. 5 and 8).

Home-centered and adaptive women are most likely to marry or cohabit and to stay married. This is not surprising, as their preferred lifestyle is heavily dependent on having a breadwinner spouse who is in regular employment. Work-centered women are least likely to marry and most likely to be separated or divorced. Women who regard themselves as financially independent anyway have less motive to marry and to stay married. Finally, home-centered women have twice as many children as work-centered women, many of whom seem to be childless. The fertility measure here is simple: the average number of children aged 0 to 16 living at home per woman aged 20 to 55. It does not include older children (who may no longer live at home anyway), so it understates total fertility. Nonetheless, it shows clearly that fertility levels vary dramatically between the three preference groups, along with marriage rates and employment patterns.

Educational standards differ between the three preference groups, but not by enormous amounts. Work-centered women are slightly more likely to have higher education: 19% compared to 12% in the other two groups. The difference is small enough to be explained by differential self-selection into higher education. These results undermine, and even overturn, human capital theory: Educational differences between the three lifestyle groups are far too small to justify the thesis that education is normally undertaken as an investment in future careers. This may be true for most men, but it is not true for women. As predicted by preference theory, lifestyle preferences cut across education groups.

Overall, all the key features of the three preference groups are in line with preference theory. In broad terms, preferences predict outcomes. The next two sections consider whether preferences predict choices at a more detailed level: the decision to work full-time and the choice of occupation.

## PREFERENCES AND EMPLOYMENT DECISIONS

The NLS results in Table 1 demonstrate that a single, well-defined variable can have an enormous impact as a determinant of female employment. The NLS data on long-term life goals are loosely equivalent to the 1999

**TABLE 6: Impact of Ideal Family Model and Work Centrality on Full-Time Work Rates Among Couples (in percentages)**

|                         | <i>Ideal Family Model</i> |                             | <i>All</i> |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|
|                         | <i>Symmetrical Roles</i>  | <i>Differentiated Roles</i> |            |
| All wives aged 20-59    | 53                        | 26                          | 36         |
| Work-centered           | 72                        | 60                          | 67         |
| All others              | 47                        | 21                          | 30         |
| All husbands aged 20-59 | 80                        | 87                          | 84         |
| Work-centered           | 79                        | 89                          | 84         |
| All others              | 81                        | 85                          | 83         |

NOTE: The sample consists of married and cohabiting couples aged 20 to 59 who have completed their full-time education.

British survey data on lifestyle preferences. Two quite different variables, but still only two, in Table 6 display an even greater impact as determinants of women's full-time work rates. Family model preferences and work centrality together raise full-time work rates from a low of 21% among women who prefer differentiated family roles and for whom market work is not central to 72% among women who are work-centered and who prefer symmetrical family roles. Work centrality and family role preferences both have a substantial impact on work rates, doubling them among women. There is no impact among men, because all three family models allocate a breadwinner role to them and because the dependent husband in a role-reversal marriage is as yet too rare for this to be a genuine choice for men. McRae (1986) has shown that couples have problems even if the wife's occupation is higher status than the husband's, when he is working.

Preferences predict work rates, but (full-time) employment does not predict women's preferences and values. That is, attitudes are not simply a rationalization of employment decisions already made. The causal impact is one way only.

Lifestyle preferences cut across socioeconomic groups, income levels, and educational levels among men and, with small exceptions, among women. Social, economic, and cultural capital are not important as correlates or predictors of lifestyle preferences.

The impact of lifestyle preferences on employment is separate from and stronger than the impact of education. One of the most often-repeated conclusions in social research is that women with higher education qualifications have higher work rates (in Britain, higher full-time work rates) than women with only secondary school (high school) education. This pattern is repeated in our survey, with a 20-percentage-point difference in full-time work rates

**TABLE 7: The Relative Importance of Lifestyle Preferences and Education (in percentages)**

|                        | <i>Working Full-Time</i> |                    | <i>Distribution</i>     |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
|                        | <i>Highly Qualified</i>  | <i>Other Women</i> | <i>Highly Qualified</i> | <i>Other Women</i> |
| Lifestyle preferences: |                          |                    |                         |                    |
| Work-centered          | 82                       | 56                 | 22                      | 14                 |
| Adaptive               | 46                       | 32                 | 64                      | 72                 |
| Home-centered          | 54                       | 37                 | 14                      | 14                 |
| All women aged 20-59   | 56                       | 36                 | 100                     | 100                |
| Base = 100%            | <i>n</i> = 245           | <i>n</i> = 1,008   | <i>n</i> = 245          | <i>n</i> = 1,008   |

NOTE: The sample consists of women aged 20 to 59 who have completed their full-time education. In the absence of information on educational qualifications, the highly qualified are defined as those completing their full-time education at age 21 and later, because in Britain, first degrees are normally completed by age 21. People completing full-time education at age 20 or earlier are assumed to have qualifications below tertiary education level.

between women with higher education and other women (see Table 7). Because education has an impact on social and political attitudes (Davis, 1982), it is usually assumed that it must have a major impact also on gender ideology and lifestyle preferences. There is evidence in our survey that educational level has a major impact on gender ideology, in particular the rejection of patriarchal values. However, educational level has very little impact on women's lifestyle preferences (see Table 7). Highly educated women are just as likely as others to prefer a marriage with completely separate roles (14%). The only difference between the two educational groups is that there is a slightly higher proportion of work-centered women among the highly educated, 22% compared to 14%, a difference small enough to be the result of differential self-selection into higher education. This means that most women who enter higher education are not "investing" in a future employment career, as human capital theory assumes, but in the marriage market.

Despite the fact that higher education has no important impact on lifestyle preferences, Table 7 shows that lifestyle preferences have a huge impact on full-time work rates, particularly among the more highly educated women. A work-centered woman who does not have higher education qualifications is more likely to be in full-time work than a highly educated woman who is adaptive or home-centered. Among the highly educated, there is a 36-percentage-point difference between the work rates of adaptive and work-centered women, a far larger gap than the 20-percentage-point difference between the two education groups. Women with higher education tend to marry spouses with similar education and high incomes. They are thus even

**TABLE 8: Ideological Influences on Full-Time Work Rates Among Nongraduates (in percentages)**

| <i>Impact of Selection Factors Added<br/>in Ascending/Descending Order</i> | <i>Wives</i> | <i>Husbands</i> | <i>Women</i> | <i>Men</i> |
|--|--------------|-----------------|--------------|------------|
| +4 has a mortgage to pay off   | 100          | 83              | 88           | 87         |
| +3 not a parent of child(ren) aged <17                                     | 72           | 77              | 72           | 80         |
| +2 rejects patriarchal values  | 72           | 82              | 62           | 83         |
| +1 work-centered lifestyle preference                                      | 64           | 76              | 56           | 76         |
| Full-time work rates: all aged 20-59                                       | 32           | 84              | 36           | 80         |
| +1 home-centered lifestyle preference                                      | 31           | 74              | 37           | 65         |
| +2 parent of child(ren) aged 0-16  | 9            | 76              | 10           | 71         |
| +3 in public rented housing  | 0            | 43              | 7            | 41         |

NOTE: Sample consists of people aged 20 to 59 who completed their full-time education before the age of 21 and are not currently studying and are almost certainly nongraduates.

better able to make choices uninhibited by financial constraints. In sum, lifestyle preferences are more important than any impact of education.

Table 8 summarizes the results and shows the relative importance of practical constraints, such as parental responsibilities versus lifestyle preferences, as determinants of female full-time work rates.<sup>14</sup> The aim in Table 8 is to identify the factors that collectively push wives' full-time work rates up to the same level as husbands' full-time work rates or that depress their work rates down to nothing. For illustrative purposes, the exercise is repeated for all men and women aged 20 to 59. However, this exercise is theoretically less meaningful. Women's attitudes and values predate, and anticipate, marriage and childbearing, but women only make hard choices between a career and a family-centered life if, and when, they actually marry and have children. We already know that higher education raises work rates, so the analysis focuses on nongraduates, who make up the vast majority. Table 8 shows that a combination of lifestyle preferences and just two contextual factors can push women's work rates up to 100% or down to 0% among nongraduate wives. Results are a little weaker for all women aged 20 to 59 (graduates and nongraduates combined).

A work-centered lifestyle preference roughly doubles nongraduate wives' full-time work rates as noted earlier. In contrast, patriarchal values have very little impact, and child care responsibilities have no impact at all on work rates among work-centered women. Having a mortgage to pay off has a substantial impact, raising work rates from 72% to 100%. The reasons for this are discussed in the full report (Hakim, in press, chaps. 5 and 8) but include selection effects as well as motivational factors. The attractions of home

ownership, and the financial burdens of associated mortgages, have had a significant impact in raising wives' employment in recent decades in Britain.

It appears that lifestyle preferences may raise work rates but do not always depress them. Full-time work rates among home-centered women are no lower than average, although they are lower for adaptive women. Children, however, have a large impact, depressing work rates from 31% to 9% among home-centered nongraduate women, with a weaker impact on adaptive women, depressing full-time work rates to 17%. Housing has only a tiny impact: Living in public rented housing depresses work rates a little further from 9% to 0% among home-centered women, but it has no impact at all on adaptive women. It appears that lifestyle preferences determine *which* social and economic contextual factors women respond to.

These results corroborate the NLS results for the United States reviewed earlier and summarized in Table 1. Wives who work only if their child care responsibilities allow them to do so are in effect fulfilling a prior choice of emphasis on homemaking as life's central activity. Child care responsibilities have little or no impact on the employment of work-centered women. Similarly, housing can have a major or minor impact depending on which lifestyle preference group is looked at. These results demonstrate how any particular factor can be shown to be important, or unimportant, when case study projects focus narrowly on one or another group of women. The heterogeneity of women's lifestyle preferences renders it impossible to produce universally valid statements about which social factors determine female work rates. It is essential to differentiate between the three preference groups among women.

Ideology has no impact on men's full-time work rates. Parental responsibilities also have no effect, because men's role in most families is primarily that of income earner, not carer. Table 8 confirms the lack of genuine choices in men's lives as compared with women's lives in Britain in the 21st century.

### PREFERENCES AND OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE

The lifestyle preference taxonomy can also be used to test other theories that refer to women's aspirations, motivations, or values as determinants of their behavior. Just one example is Polachek's well-known thesis explaining occupational segregation with reference to the different work orientations and employment patterns of primary and secondary earners.

The essential thesis is that married women (who mostly regard themselves as secondary earners) choose occupations that are compatible with family work, such as (in the United States) occupations that can be done intermittently or (in Britain) occupations that can be done on a part-time basis. The

thesis builds on the observation that certain occupations, such as teaching and secretarial work, employ women almost exclusively, not only in Europe but across the whole world (Anker, 1998, pp. 252-264). Teaching is an ideal family-friendly occupation because it allows mothers to be at home with their children during school holidays, including the long summer holiday. Secretarial work has the advantage of offering plenty of part-time and temporary jobs, with few or no penalties from taking a career break.

This thesis, well grounded in empirical observation, was converted into a somewhat different thesis when it was operationalized and tested by Polachek (1975, 1979, 1981, 1995; Goldin & Polachek 1987), and other social scientists, notably England (1982, 1984). Polachek has argued that few jobs in professional and managerial occupations but most jobs in clerical, sales, and unskilled occupations tolerate intermittent or part-time employment. Those that do attract large numbers of women. Hence, women are generally concentrated in lower grade and lower paid occupations whereas men are concentrated in the more demanding professional and managerial occupations, which must be pursued on a continuous, full-time basis. The attraction of his thesis is that it provides a combined explanation for horizontal occupational segregation (why men and women do different types of work) and for vertical occupational segregation (why men are concentrated in higher grade occupations whereas women are concentrated in lower grade occupations) and, thus, for the pay gap as well as occupational segregation. However, Polachek operationalized the thesis into a statement that married women maximize their earnings, or minimize the wage depreciation resulting from a career break, by choosing occupations that tolerate discontinuous work histories. England stretched the thesis even further into the idea that *all* women in *all* female-dominated occupations experience lower wage depreciation after a career break than women in *all* male-dominated occupations. These reformulations offer the advantage of earnings, or earnings depreciation, being the measure of an occupation's family-friendly advantages. Using these reformulations, arguably distortions of the original idea, research results have been mixed. Polachek's studies based on national U.S. data sets for the 1960s and 1970s confirm the thesis, whereas England's studies based on the same or similar U.S. data refute the thesis. This is not surprising. The advantages of family-friendly occupations are not necessarily tied to earnings maximization. Earnings are often traded off against other convenience factors (Gallie, White, Cheng, & Tomlinson, 1998, pp. 195-205). Teaching is attractive to mothers because the annual timetable fits in with their own children's school (and university) timetable, not because it pays more than other occupations or pays the same after a domestic break. In effect, the thesis was

distorted to test it with earnings data as the sole measure of an occupation's attractiveness to wives and mothers (Hakim, 2000b, pp. 38-39).

A quite different approach to explaining occupational segregation argues that it is man-made: artificially created by systematic sex discrimination by employers who invariably favor men for jobs and only hire women when the supply of men is inadequate, so that men are always first in the queue for the best jobs (Reskin & Roos, 1990).<sup>15</sup> Paradoxically, this thesis, and a related stream of research, gained popularity after the equal opportunities revolution that outlawed any overt or covert sex discrimination when selecting people for jobs or for promotion to higher grades. Reskin and Roos (1990) supported their "job queuing" thesis with 11 case studies of occupations that feminized rapidly over the period from 1970 and 1988 in the United States. Unfortunately, as the authors themselves admitted, their research evidence is equally consistent with the opposite of their preferred interpretation: that men chase money, power, and status harder than women, so that any highly paid or high-status occupation becomes male-dominated, whereas occupations with falling wages or status cease to attract men and become female-dominated (Hakim, 1998, pp. 64-65). For example Reskin and Roos showed that all the feminizing occupations they studied offered the alternative advantages of flexibility in hours worked and part-time/part-year work, options that were of no interest to men but of substantial value to women.

In what follows, I test Polachek's original thesis without focusing exclusively on earnings. Instead, I assess whether sex-role ideology and work orientations determine women's choice of occupation. More specifically, I test whether women who favor the compromise arrangement, who regard themselves as secondary earners, are more likely to choose female-dominated occupations rather than male-dominated occupations.

There is an extensive literature on the advantages and disadvantages of various measures of occupational segregation. A vast majority of these are single-number indices, such as the Dissimilarity Index, that are popular for comparisons across societies and for studying trends over time (Anker, 1998; Hakim, 1992, 1998; Melkas & Anker, 1997, 1998). However, single-number indices are no use to my purposes here, as my goal is to examine the particular types of occupation chosen by different groups of women. Instead, I use the threefold classification of occupations developed by Hakim (1993; 1996, p. 159; 1998) and since used by some other researchers (Blackwell, 2001). The new approach identifies a separate category of integrated or mixed occupations straddling the dividing line between the two dominant categories of male-dominated and female-dominated occupations. Mixed occupations are defined statistically as those with sex ratios close to the average for the

workforce as a whole in any given year. By 1999, women formed 45% of the workforce in Britain, so mixed (or integrated) occupations are defined as those with 30% to 60% female workers ( $45\% \pm 15\%$ ). Do women who prefer to give priority to their homemaker role, or who seek an even balance between paid work and family work, choose particular kinds of occupation? Surprisingly, the answer from the 1999 British survey is a resounding no. Contrary to Polachek's thesis, women's ideal family model does not determine occupational choice in Britain at the start of the 21st century. This result was so unexpected that the finding was thoroughly tested using different population bases and age groups and different versions of the occupational segregation classification. Altogether, four versions of the occupational typology were applied. Integrated occupations were variously defined as those 15% to 45% ( $30\% \pm 15\%$ ), 25% to 55% ( $40\% \pm 15\%$ ), 30% to 60% ( $45\% \pm 15\%$ ), and 30% to 70% ( $50\% \pm 20\%$ ) female. The results were always similar to those presented in Table 9 for people in employment. This finding is not sensitive to the particular typology applied and is robust.<sup>16</sup>

The preferred family model has no important and systematic impact on the occupational choices of men and women, and there are only small variations around the averages for all men and all women of working age (Table 9). Similarly, the type of occupation chosen does not predict or determine the preferred model of marital roles, with relatively small and nonsystematic variations around the average for all persons. There is a small tendency for people in sex-atypical occupations to have more extreme views, but both these groups are small. Because people aged 65 and older are excluded from Table 9, the proportions choosing the role-segregated model are somewhat smaller than when the entire population is included.

Similarly, there is no strong and systematic association between women's, or wives', lifestyle preferences and occupational choice (Table 10). Adaptive women are slightly more likely to choose female occupations. Work-centered women are slightly more likely to choose male occupations, but then, so are home-centered women. None of these associations are strong.

Lifestyle preferences do not determine occupational choice today, as Polachek concluded for the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, but they do determine choice of job.<sup>17</sup> Women's full-time work rates are systematically high among work-centered women, no matter what type of occupation they are in. Full-time work rates are much lower among adaptive and home-centered women, especially if they are in female occupations, where part-time jobs are widely available. Male occupations have almost no part-time jobs, so full-time employment is dominant; however, lifestyle preferences still have an impact, raising full-time work rates from 45% among home-centered women to 75% among work-centered women (Table 10). This is a



**TABLE 9: Occupational Segregation by Ideal Family Model**

| <i>Type of Occupation</i> | <i>Ideal Family Model</i> |                   |                         | <i>Base = 100%</i> |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
|                           | <i>Egalitarian</i>        | <i>Compromise</i> | <i>Role Segregation</i> |                    |
| <b>Men</b>                |                           |                   |                         |                    |
| Male-dominated            | 47                        | 41                | 12                      | 717                |
| Mixed                     | 49                        | 32                | 19                      | 160                |
| Female-dominated          | 64                        | 26                | 11                      | 144                |
| All                       | 49                        | 38                | 13                      | 1,022              |
| <b>Women</b>              |                           |                   |                         |                    |
| Male-dominated            | 53                        | 30                | 17                      | 128                |
| Mixed                     | 45                        | 48                | 7                       | 174                |
| Female-dominated          | 46                        | 43                | 11                      | 696                |
| All                       | 47                        | 42                | 11                      | 997                |
| <hr/>                     |                           |                   |                         |                    |
| <b>Men</b>                |                           |                   |                         |                    |
| Male-dominated            | 66                        | 77                | 66                      | 70                 |
| Mixed                     | 16                        | 13                | 22                      | 16                 |
| Female-dominated          | 18                        | 10                | 12                      | 14                 |
| Total                     | 100                       | 100               | 100                     | 100                |
| <b>Women</b>              |                           |                   |                         |                    |
| Male-dominated            | 14                        | 9                 | 20                      | 13                 |
| Mixed                     | 17                        | 20                | 11                      | 17                 |
| Female-dominated          | 69                        | 71                | 69                      | 70                 |
| Total                     | 100                       | 100               | 100                     | 100                |

NOTE: Row percentages are shown in the top section and column percentages in the bottom section. The sample consists of people currently in work of working age (16 to 65 years).

classic illustration of the joint impact of social structural factors (such as the paucity or abundance of part-time jobs in an occupation) and of lifestyle preferences, which go unmeasured in most surveys.

The sex segregation of occupations cannot be explained today with reference to the different family roles of men and women. Possibly family roles were never in fact important, even if the rhetoric that built up around masculine and feminine occupations and work cultures often referred to family roles as well as to "essentialist" arguments about jobs suitable for men or for women (Hakim, 1996, pp. 162-166). Explanations for the sex segregation of occupations will have to rely instead on benign social processes, such as the tendency for people to choose same-sex friends and hence also to prefer same-sex work groups (Hakim, 1996, pp. 162-166; 1998, pp. 56-59).<sup>18</sup>

Adaptive women can now accommodate their paid work to their family priorities by choosing part-time jobs or by moving in and out of the labor

**TABLE 10: Occupational Choice by Lifestyle Preferences**

| <i>Type of Occupation</i>                               | <i>Home-Centered</i> | <i>Adaptive</i> | <i>Work-Centered</i> | <i>All</i> |
|---|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|------------|
| All women aged 20 to 59 (column %)                      |                      |                 |                      |            |
| Male  | 21                   | 10              | 17                   | 12         |
| Mixed   | 12                   | 18              | 22                   | 18         |
| Female  | 67                   | 72              | 61                   | 70         |
| All   | 100                  | 100             | 100                  | 100        |
| All women aged 20 to 59 (row %)                         |                      |                 |                      |            |
| Male  | 22                   | 56              | 22                   | 100        |
| Mixed   | 9                    | 72              | 19                   | 100        |
| Female  | 13                   | 73              | 14                   | 100        |
| All   | 13                   | 71              | 16                   | 100        |
| Wives aged 20 to 59 (column %)                          |                      |                 |                      |            |
| Male  | 22                   | 9               | 15                   | 12         |
| Mixed   | 12                   | 19              | 23                   | 18         |
| Female  | 66                   | 72              | 62                   | 70         |
| All   | 100                  | 100             | 100                  | 100        |
| Wives aged 20 to 59 (row %)                             |                      |                 |                      |            |
| Male  | 24                   | 63              | 13                   | 100        |
| Mixed   | 8                    | 80              | 12                   | 100        |
| Female  | 12                   | 79              | 9                    | 100        |
| All   | 13                   | 78              | 10                   | 100        |
| % currently working full-time among wives aged 20 to 59 |                      |                 |                      |            |
| Male  | 45                   | 64              | 75                   | 60         |
| Mixed   | 58                   | 49              | 71                   | 52         |
| Female  | 30                   | 25              | 73                   | 29         |
| All   | 37                   | 33              | 73                   | 37         |

NOTE: The sample consists of all women aged 20 to 59, then married and cohabiting women aged 20 to 59, excluding students and people who have never worked. Coding of type of occupation is based on previous occupations of those not in work and current occupations of those in employment.

market at different stages of their lives. Women who regard themselves as secondary earners are most likely to work in female-dominated occupations, where part-time jobs are plentiful and high labor turnover is tolerated. At this point, cause and effect must be disentangled with care. In line with preference theory and research evidence on how women choose their identity as primary or secondary earner, it can be concluded that women who prefer to give priority to their family work, in whole or in part, currently gravitate toward the female-dominated occupations because they offer plenty of part-time jobs and tolerate high turnover rates. However, male-dominated and mixed occupations are gradually increasing their share of part-time and temporary jobs

as well, so that the dividing line between them is getting fainter rather than stronger over time.

These results are testimony to the impact of equal opportunities laws and policies on employers in Britain. Whatever their ambitions and life plans, women can now choose occupations far more freely than in the past. As part-time jobs and other forms of family-friendly flexibility gradually spread into jobs in all occupations, employers will find that they have a combination of primary and secondary earners working side by side in all types of occupation. This new type of employee diversity will pose challenges for human resource management in both the private and public sectors.

### CONCLUSIONS

Preference theory builds on the pathbreaking results of the early American longitudinal studies, which showed just how important life goals and aspirations could be in the long term. Preference theory posits that these motivations only became powerful after the contraceptive revolution and the equal opportunities revolution gave women genuine choices as to the relative balance between market work and family work in their lives. Preference theory constitutes a major break from the teleological theories implicit in the expectation that male and female employment patterns will converge and that sex differentials will disappear in the workforce.

Although the theory is empirically based, the 1999 British survey is the first to attempt to operationalize and test it with freshly collected data. The survey showed that three questions can be sufficient to identify and differentiate home-centered, adaptive, and work-centered women. The resulting taxonomy worked well, displaying sharp differences between the three groups in terms of employment patterns and marital and fertility histories.

There is still scope for the three questions to be developed and refined. For example, the question on ideal family models might be extended to include role-reversal models. This would permit the lifestyle preferences of men to be identified more completely. Second, questions on work centrality might need modification for other cultural settings and to avoid the political correctness bias that gradually affects all survey questions on work orientations.

In sum, preference theory can be operationalized with a limited number of tried-and-tested survey questions that are sufficiently simple and self-explanatory to be included in any large-scale survey exercise using structured interviews. The excuse that attitudes and motivations are too difficult to measure easily and reliably no longer holds water. Large batteries of questions are not needed, even though social psychologists usually insist on them.

Preference theory does not deny the impact of social, economic, and institutional factors. These will continue to ensure no convergence of female employment patterns in societies, such as Britain and the United States, that have achieved the new scenario for women. However, the social environment is no more than that. Women's motivations and aspirations are independent factors with causal powers that must now be investigated more thoroughly. Preference theory brings values back into the multidisciplinary investigation of future developments in female labor force participation.

Our analyses show that lifestyle preferences have a powerful impact on women's employment decisions and on the type of job chosen, but not, as Polachek predicted, on women's choice of occupation. Equal opportunities legislation has been effective: Women are no longer excluded from certain occupations because they are (assumed to be) not as work-centered as men. But it does not mean that all women will behave exactly like men in the occupations they share. Case studies of desegregated occupations, such as pharmacy, in the United States, Britain, and Canada (Bottero, 1992; Crompton & Le Feuvre, 1996; Hakim, 1998, pp. 221-234; Hassell, Noyce, & Jesson, 1998; Reskin & Roos, 1990, pp. 111-127; Tanner, Cockerill, Barnsley, & Williams, 1999) show that women gravitate toward employee jobs with limited responsibilities, part-time and short-term jobs, whereas men gravitate toward self-employment and their own business or full-time jobs in large retail chains offering the prospect of promotion into management. If this is happening in occupations that require higher qualifications, it is even more likely to happen in less qualified occupations. Too often, and too glibly, job segregation within integrated occupations is interpreted as "resegregation" forced on women by employers because researchers fail to collect information on or address the substantively important variations in lifestyle preferences among workers in a particular occupation.

Some will balk at these interpretations, particularly the emphasis on lifestyle preferences as having causal powers. But at least these interpretations are theoretically based, unlike the post hoc rationalization of all and any research results by eclectic reference to human capital theory, institutional theories, and anything else going. Preference theory produces predictions that can be tested. In this analysis, all predictions have tested positive. In addition, the theory can be used to test other, related hypotheses, such as Polachek's explanation for occupational segregation.

In sum, preference theory works in societies that have achieved the new scenario for women. One of the benefits of this approach is that it forces a long, hard look at the overall position of women in each society instead of treating all Western European and North American countries as effectively equivalent despite their differences. However, the main theoretical and

empirical development is the insistence that preferences and life goals can no longer be ignored or assumed to be known or homogeneous.

## NOTES

1. A fuller description of preference theory, and the empirical basis for it, is given in Hakim (2000b).

2. Two versions of the question have been used in the National Longitudinal Surveys (NLS). In the initial 1968 survey, respondents were asked, "Now I would like to talk to you about your future plans. What would you like to be doing when you are 35 years old?" From 1969 on, the question was modified to read, "Now I would like to talk to you about your future job plans. What kind of work would you like to be doing when you are 35 years old?" In both versions, keeping house or raising a family was a possible response.

3. The large new youth cohort initiated in 1979 showed that the new cohort of young women entering the labor market in the 1980s had stronger work expectations and work commitment than had previous cohorts. In 1979, young women were only half as likely as young women in 1968 to say they expected to be housewives not in the paid labor force at age 35, with only one quarter planning to be housewives (Sproat, Churchill, & Sheets, 1985, pp. 76-78, 318, 335-336).

4. An even bigger U.S. study, the National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972 (NLS72) produced results that corroborate those of the NLS. It showed, for example, that young women who subsequently became mothers before the age of 25 differed significantly from those who remained childless: They were less work-oriented, were more likely to plan to be homemakers at age 30, were less likely to plan a professional career, and held more traditional sex-role attitudes and aspirations before they gave birth. Parenthood strengthens preexisting traditional attitudes in both young White men and women (Morgan & Waite, 1987; Waite, Haggstrom, & Kanouse, 1986). None of these results are acknowledged or reflected in recent analyses of NLS72, which compare men's and women's occupational aspirations while ignoring sex-role attitudes, to the point that women hoping to be full-time homemakers at age 30 are simply excluded from analyses (Rindfuss, Cooksey, & Sutterlin, 1999).

5. Some studies have shown work commitment to have a much bigger impact among married women than other social structural factors, especially when the husband's attitudes are also taken into account. Geerken and Gove (1983, p. 66) showed that these two factors produce a 50-to-70-percentage-point increase in economic activity rates of wives in the United States. A study of Canadian working wives also found strong associations between work commitment, higher status jobs, and the husband's support for his wife's employment (Chappell, 1980).

6. For example, recent NLS analyses continue to treat child care responsibilities as a key determinant of women's labor force participation, as illustrated by Charles et al. (2001).

7. Within Europe, the Netherlands may be the only other country that had achieved the new scenario by the year 2000. Sweden has so far failed to implement the last two conditions, so genuine choices are still not a reality in that country.

8. The distribution of women across the three groups corresponds to a "normal" distribution of responses to the family-work conflict.

9. For example, in Greece, Italy, and Spain, there is evidence of informal barriers to women's access to the labor market: Female unemployment rates are more than double male unemployment rates, and there is some evidence of the disparity widening over time rather than falling.

10. A full report on the 1999 British survey is given in Hakim (in press).

11. Tests of statistical significance are not reported in the analyses. These tests indicate whether the sample size was large enough for a tiny percentage difference to be reliable. The 1999 British survey was large enough to produce reliable results. More important, this study is only interested in large and substantively important differences between the three preference groups, not in small but statistically significant differences that can be ignored. Too often, researchers use tests of statistical significance as a substitute for addressing the substantive importance of their results (Morrison & Henkel, 1970), which may be minimal.

12. The Eurobarometer series of surveys are run by the European Commission to inform European Union policy making. They cover all EU member states and focus on social and political attitudes.

13. The sex differential in work centrality stands in contrast to the absence of differences between men and women in job values, for example (Tolbert & Moen, 1998). However, when the list of job values is increased from just 5 to 14, sex differentials reappear again (Kirkpatrick Johnson, 2001).

14. Some will argue that this analysis should be based on regression analysis instead, with lots of controls. There is a tendency to perceive multivariate analysis as better for causal analysis, but as Esser (1996), Hedström and Swedberg (1996), and Lieberman (1985, p. 155) have all pointed out, it does not go beyond description and is in fact less illuminating on causal processes. The excessive use of controls can be counterproductive. The initial zero-order association found in cross-tabulation and correlation is often a closer approximation to the true association (Lieberman, 1985, pp. 42, 120-151, 185-211).

15. A more extreme version of this thesis has been presented by Hartmann (1976) and Walby (1986, 1990), who argued that occupational segregation is the primary mechanism for maintaining patriarchy, that is, male dominance in public and private life. However, Hakim (2000b, p. 282) has criticized the thesis as unsupported by evidence from recent research on occupational segregation and the pay gap. A historical analysis by Lerner (1986) showed that patriarchy developed first and foremost through male control of female sexuality and female reproduction, leading to an emphasis on the physical segregation of men and women, not on the sex segregation of occupations per se.

16. This is generally true of all findings in this section. The particular typology of occupations applied makes little or no difference to the results.

17. Similarly, Desai and Waite (1991) found no association between women's lifestyle preferences and occupational choice in the U.S. NLS data for young women. However, women who prefer a full-time homemaker role are most responsive to job convenience factors such as flexible working arrangements.

18. Kalmijn (2002) reviewed the many reasons offered for the dominance of same-sex friendships, which occurs in childhood and adolescence as well as in adult life. He finds that cross-sex friendships seem to demand greater social skills. No doubt this applies also to workplace relationships, so that same-sex workgroups are regarded as easier and more comfortable.

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