

Continuity and Change in Women's Occupations Following First Childbirth*

Haya Stier, *Tel Aviv University*

Objective. This paper focuses on the effects of parenthood on women's occupational choice. In particular, the paper examines the effect of occupational characteristics on the likelihood of returning to the labor force after giving birth, and remaining in same occupation. *Method.* The analysis is based on a sample of young Israeli mothers. Using multinomial logistic regression, the paper analyzes the likelihood of mothers to interrupt employment, change occupation, or return to same position following the birth of a child. *Results.* The findings indicate that women employed in female-type occupations are more likely to resume market activity and less likely to change their occupations. Moreover, women who change their initial occupations tend to move into a female-type occupation. This pattern of stability and change in employment is attributed both to economic factors and to employment conditions. *Conclusions.* The study suggests that the organization of work within occupations affects women's employment decisions. Female-type occupations which offer relatively high prestige and convenient working hours attract women to the labor force. While increasing the continuity of employment, these market structures also contribute to the ghettoization of females in the labor force.

The employment pattern of women along their life cycle is highly affected by motherhood. Child care responsibilities induce mothers to reduce the amount of time spent in paid employment or to withdraw from the labor market altogether. Whether women discontinue their employment or maintain a career is of substantial consequence to the issue of gender inequality. Intermittent employment has significant implications for lifetime earnings, types of jobs held, and the occupations chosen (Polachek, 1975; Corcoran and Duncan, 1979).

That women tend to exit the labor market following the birth of a child is well documented in the literature (Moen, 1985; Felmlee, 1984, 1993; Desai and Waite, 1991). Of those who return to market activity, some tend to change their job, change their employer, or change their occupation (McRae, 1993; Desai and Waite, 1991). Occupational

*Direct all correspondence to Haya Stier, Department of Sociology, Tel-Aviv University, Ramat-Aviv, Israel 69978. An earlier version of the paper was presented at the ISA Research Committee on Social Stratification, Trondheim, Norway, May 1993. I would like to thank Judah Matras, who gave me unrestricted access to the data, and Hanna Ayalon, Noah-Lewin Epstein, and Moshe Semyonov for their helpful comments.

change generally takes the form of downward mobility (Brannen, 1989; McRae, 1993; Stewart and Greenhalgh, 1984). Recent studies, however, show that women in high-status occupations are more likely than others to retain their original occupation (McRae, 1993). Likewise, the claim is made (Mincer and Ofek, 1982) that among women who interrupt their employment, some are more successful than others in restoring the level of human capital they may have achieved had they not disrupted their continuous employment. Accordingly, those who return more quickly to the labor market and those who return to the same occupation regain their former level of skills faster than other women.

The current paper focuses on the employment decisions of young Israeli mothers following their first childbirth. The first childbirth is considered an important determinant in the decision on labor force participation (Desai and Waite, 1991; Cramer, 1980). Several studies have looked at the decision of women to drop out of the labor force (e.g., Moen, 1985; Felmlee, 1984; Glass, 1988; Desai and Waite, 1991). Their findings suggest that individual, household, and occupational characteristics all influence the likelihood of quitting the labor force. This paper goes beyond an examination of the decision to interrupt employment; it also analyzes the decision to return to wage employment but in a different occupation. The main emphasis here is on the effect of occupational characteristics on women's employment decisions. Occupations represent differences in the organization of work; thus, some occupations offer conditions that make it easier to combine home and market activities. Women who are employed in such occupations are expected to maintain a continuous employment; others either drop out of the labor market when they enter parenthood or move into a different occupation, alternatives which both entail high economic and social costs.

Determinants of Employment Behavior

Economists explain the decision to participate in paid employment by forces of supply and demand, or, as Goldin (1990) termed it, by choice and constraint. Economic factors and attitudes (or preferences) toward gender roles govern the individual woman's decision of whether to participate in paid employment (Mincer, 1962). In particular, women take into account the opportunity costs of staying out of the labor force, which is determined by their wage rates, their education, and the economic standing of their family (Killingworth, 1983). Education is a major determinant of women's labor force participation, as it affects market wages, the likelihood of entering white-collar occupations, and the attitude toward women's employment in general

(Ferber, 1982; Goldin, 1990). Among the constraints, the most salient is the presence of preschool children (Moen, 1985; Lehrer and Nerlove, 1986; Desai and Waite, 1991). Women tend to withdraw from paid employment or to move into part-time jobs when they give birth. They tend to return to full employment only later in life.

Women's employment decisions can also be affected by their occupation. Most women in the labor force are concentrated in a small number of occupations that are dominated by women. Some arguments have been advanced by economists and sociologists to explain the relationship between the sex type of an occupation and women's employment pattern. Proponents of the human capital theory argue that the occupational choice of individuals is based on their longtime career plans. According to the main argument of this approach, women take into consideration their familial alongside occupational aspirations when planning for the future, since they are expected to devote much (if not most) of their time to family and child-care duties. Consequently, women expect, and actually have, an intermittent pattern of employment along their family life cycle. In order to reduce the costs of interrupted employment, women choose occupations in which the penalty for discontinuity is low. Polachek (1979, 1981) argued that female workers are attracted to occupations in which the depreciation of wages while staying out of the labor market is minimal, so they can maximize their lifetime earnings. Men, on the other hand, usually plan to have continuous employment, and therefore work in occupations offering a steeper earnings profile over the life cycle. The result is the crowding of women into a selected number of occupations. Viewing the same problem from a somewhat different angle, Zellner (1975) suggested that women prefer occupations that offer relatively high starting wages, even if the wages thereafter appreciate slowly. In such occupations the penalty for employment interruption is relatively low.

Both arguments were challenged by England and associates (England, 1984; England and Farkas, 1986; England et al., 1988), who found that women's occupations do not offer lower wage depreciation or higher starting wages than do male occupations. Rather, a "normative explanation" for women's occupational choice is proposed (England and Farkas, 1986; Bergmann, 1986; Oppenheimer, 1970). According to this view women choose occupations that offer an extension of their tasks at home, thus are socially conceived as "appropriate" for females, by both men and women. This is the case of occupations such as teaching and nursing. Bergmann (1986:94) argued that by working in "women's jobs" they avoid the social penalties associated with a "deviation" from women's expected roles (as the primary caretakers of their families) and escape from being labeled as unfeminine. The view that some occupations are more "appropriate" for

women than others is transmitted to young girls in their early life socialization (Marini and Brinton, 1984).

Suitability of occupation can be achieved also through employment conditions which make certain (mostly female-type) occupations attractive to women (Desai and Waite, 1991). Because they have to combine family obligations with market activity, many women prefer part-time employment. The availability of such employment is considered a major explanation for the rise in mothers' labor force participation over time (Mincer, 1985). Desai and Waite (1991:561) found that women in occupations offering convenient work environments (mainly female-type occupations) are more likely to return to wage employment immediately after they have had a child. Male occupations, and especially those at the upper end of the occupational distribution (in terms of skill requirements and prestige), tend to place heavier demands on the workers, which interfere with women's obligations to their family (Marini and Brinton, 1984:198). From the above discussion follows that women employed in female-type occupations prior to the first childbirth are more likely to return to the labor force following the birth compared to women in other type of occupations. This pattern is expected as a consequence of both normative considerations and practical arrangements which make female occupations attractive to young mothers.

While many studies focus on women's decision to participate in paid employment, another question still to be asked is, why does an individual who has already invested in a specific occupation opt for change. Other than for reasons of career mobility, one would not generally expect workers, men and women alike, to move (voluntarily) between occupations, since such a move entails high costs in terms of earnings and prestige (Stolzenberg, 1975). Occupational change is also more costly than interrupted employment in the same occupation, as Mincer and Ofek (1982) argued. Change involves new investments in skills; interruptions demand only a readaptation of skills, which is more easily executed.

Although the costs of occupational change may be high, workers, especially women, respond to forces other than pure market conditions or economic considerations. Some women take their future family plans into account when selecting their initial occupation (before they enter marriage or parenthood), whereas many others reevaluate their initial choice in light of alterations in family status (i.e., marriage, childbirth) and their experience in the labor force (Gerson, 1985; Glass, 1988). Those who find employment conditions to be unsatisfactory, especially in the ability to combine home and market activities, tend to move into different occupations, even at the cost of forgone earnings or prospects for promotion. Family obligations, thus, are important determinants of the women's pattern of employment activity.

Some women, in fact, enter and exit the labor force several times across their life course in accordance with their family life cycle (Moen, 1985); such moves occur in certain occupations more than in others, mainly because of the employment conditions they offer (Glass, 1988; Felmlee, 1993). As a result, occupational demands that compete with familial commitments may result in occupational change. Thus, women employed in female-type occupations and/or in occupations which offer convenient working conditions are less likely to change their occupation when they return to wage employment following a child's birth. By the same token, an occupational move is more likely to occur from male-type or mixed-type occupations to female-type ones.

To summarize, some women invest in occupations that enable them to work in the market throughout their life cycle. Others, who invest in occupations that are more demanding, may reconsider their occupational choice when faced with new familial responsibilities. Depending on their skill level, some of these latter women move into new occupations, while others decide to drop out of the labor force (temporarily or permanently). In both cases they bear the cost of losing their initial investment in specific occupational skills. Hence, a young mother faces three alternative options when considering her market activity after giving a birth: (1) to continue her former employment in the same occupation; (2) to continue employment but change to another occupation; (3) to leave the labor force altogether. The decision between these three options and the factors affecting the choice are at the center of the current paper. In particular, the study focuses on the role occupational characteristics play in affecting the employment decisions of young mothers following their first childbirth.

Data and Variables

The analysis is based on a study of a national probability sample of 500 Jewish-Israeli women born in 1954, which was conducted in 1982. The study contains retrospective life histories in several areas, including schooling, marriage, fertility, and detailed work experience (Matras and Noam, 1987). The work history provides detailed information on the dates of entry and exit of each spell of employment; the type of occupation; type of employer; and other employment characteristics. Combining this information with the date of a woman's first birth enables me to study the pattern of continuity and change in occupation for young mothers following childbirth. Since the main interest of the paper is in occupational change following a birth, the analysis is limited to women who both experienced a birth and had worked prior to it. The sample totals 363 women.

The dependent variable in the study is the employment pattern following a first birth. This variable is composed of three categories representing women's choice of economic activity/inactivity: (1) return to the labor force and to the same occupation; (2) return to the labor force but to a different occupation; (3) exit the labor force. This last category contains the right-censored cases, namely women who had not yet returned to paid work by the survey date. Presumably, some of the women will return to the labor force in the future, either to the same occupation or to a different one.

The independent variables are of two types: individual characteristics (i.e., human capital indicated by education and labor force experience) and occupational properties (i.e., sex composition of occupation, availability of part-time employment, and occupational prestige). Based on the claim that female-type occupations offer a suitable environment for employed mother, I expect women in such occupations to both return to the labor force and stay in the same occupation at a rate higher than that of women in other occupations. A higher rate of return and stability is also expected in occupations which offer work conditions that allow women to combine employment with familial obligations. Women in occupations which offer high rewards are also expected to have higher rates of stability because of the opportunity costs attached to employment interruptions or occupational change. At the individual level, women who have accumulated more human capital are expected to return to paid work immediately following the birth of a child, and to stay in their former occupation.

Findings

All working mothers in Israel receive a three-month fully paid maternity leave. In addition, employers are obligated to retain the job a woman held prior to the child's birth. Women can extend their maternity leave for up to a year, although they are not paid for more than three months. Nevertheless, all their other accumulated benefits (such as tenure, pension) are kept unchanged, including the right to return to the former job after the year of leave. Hence, there are incentives for women not only to resume work but also to return to the same job after the birth of their child. Consequently, the young mother's occupational decision is less constrained by structural factors (i.e., employers' demand for labor) and depends more on her own choice.

The pattern of job change following a birth is presented in Table 1. Half of all the women in the sample who had been employed prior to their first childbirth returned to the same occupation. About 31 percent changed their occupation, and another 22 percent had been out of the labor force to the date of the survey. About two-fifths of those who

TABLE 1

Patterns of Job Change Following First Birth, by Sex Type of Occupation of Origin

	Sex Type of Occupation of Origin		
	Total Population	Male/Mixed Occupations	Female Occupations
<i>Employment pattern following childbirth</i>			
Percent in same occupation	47.4	35.6	55.6
Percent in different occupation	31.0	40.9	23.4
Percent out of labor force	21.6	23.5	21.0
<i>Return to work following childbirth</i>			
Percent who returned immediately	41.9	35.3	46.3
Percent who returned within a year	14.7	14.4	15.0
Percent who returned after a year or were out of labor force by survey date	43.4	50.3	38.7
(N)	(363)	(149)	(214)
<i>Of those returning to the labor force</i>			
Percent who changed sex type of occupation	19.8	33.8	13.2
Percent upwardly mobile	16.0	29.9	18.7
Percent downwardly mobile	15.6	9.1	9.6
(N)	(284)	(114)	(170)

were employed prior to the child's birth returned to the labor market immediately (i.e., within the three months which are the mandatory, fully paid, maternity leave in Israel) after giving birth. Another 15 percent resumed paid work within the first year of childbirth.

The second and third columns of the table present the same characteristics for women in two broad categories of occupations held prior to the first childbirth: male- and mixed-type occupations (i.e., occupations with less than 60 percent female employees) and female-type occupations (60 percent or more female employees). The comparison reveals that women in female-type occupations are more likely to stay in the same occupation. More than 55 percent of these women returned to their former occupation, compared to less than 36 percent of those in male-type occupations. Women who held female-type occupations prior to childbirth are also less likely to change occupation upon returning to the labor force, compared to women in male-type occupations (23 percent of the former changed occupation, and 41 percent of the latter). These findings support the hypothesis that women in female-type occupations show higher occupational stability. There is, however, no significant difference between the two occupational groups in the proportion of women who were still out of the labor force by the survey date.

Women in female-type occupations return to work faster than

women in male-type occupations: 46 percent of the former returned to the labor force immediately following the birth, whereas only 35 percent of the latter did so. Women who engaged in male-type occupations are more likely to move into female-type occupations when they return to the labor force than vice versa. Last, a significant number of women, especially those who held male-type occupations prior to childbirth, improved their occupational position after birth. A closer look at the pattern of change (not shown here) reveals shifts into typical predominantly female occupations, of which the most popular were teaching and nursemaid. This pattern (shifting into a few predominantly female-type occupations) is observed for women in general, despite their occupation of origin. For example, some women in secretarial and service occupations became teachers; most had the required education to do so. None of the women professionals left their occupations. Two conclusions can be drawn from these findings: (1) like women in other countries, Israeli women tend to shift into female-type occupations, presumably because they are more "suitable" for mothers; and (2) the shift into these jobs does not always come at the expense of occupational rewards. When women are employed in high-status jobs, which demand a higher investment in skills, they do not leave the occupation. This is similar to McRae's (1993) findings with British women. It is not clear whether the shift from male-type to female-type occupations, although involving upward mobility in terms of occupational prestige, entails a similar or rather downward mobility in terms of income. Unfortunately, there are no data on earnings in each employment episode; male-type occupations, though, usually pay higher income than female-type ones.

The findings in Table 1 suggest that women in female-type occupations are less likely than women in other occupations to interrupt their employment, whereas Polachek (1981) and others contend that women's occupations allow for intermittent employment. Moreover, women shift into female-type occupations when they resume market activity following a birth. Thus, the question that emerges is what is it about female-type occupations that cause them to be associated with a higher stability of employment and a faster return to the labor force. Are these occupations more attractive to women because they are considered as "appropriate" for women's employment? Is it the organization of work within the occupation which reduces the conflict between labor force activity and home responsibilities? Or is it, rather, the higher rewards offered by these particular occupations which attract women to the labor market? In order to shed light on the specific characteristics of female-type occupations that are attractive to young mothers, a multivariate analysis was carried out. The analysis was based on a multinomial logistic regression, in which "employment

choice following childbirth" was the dependent variable. The option to return to the same occupation (coded 0) was contrasted with two other options: to return to a different occupation (coded 1) and to leave the labor force (coded 2). The independent variables and their means are listed in Table 2. The sex type of the occupation held prior to the woman's birth of her first child was measured using four conventional categories (see Cohen, Bechar, and Raijman, 1987): male occupations (less than 40 percent females in an occupation); mixed occupations (40 to 60 percent females); moderate female occupations (60 to 75 percent females); and predominantly female (75 percent and more females) as the reference category.¹ About 40 percent of the women were employed in predominantly female occupations prior to their first childbirth; an additional quarter of the women were employed in moderate female occupations, and another fifth in mixed occupations. Only 14 percent held male-type occupations.

Education and labor force experience serve as indicators for the level of human capital accumulated prior to childbirth. Education at the

TABLE 2
Characteristics of Employment Prior to Birth, by Sex Type of Occupation

	Total Population	Male/Mixed Occupations	Female Occupations
Sex type of last occupation			
Percent in male-type occupations	14.0		
Percent in mixed-type occupations	22.1		
Percent in female-type occupations	24.4		
Percent in predominantly female occupations	39.5		
Education			
Percent high school graduates	18.8	12.3	22.5*
Percent with post-high-school education	38.7	34.7	50.0*
Labor force experience (in months)	43.6	44.1	43.4
	(31.1)	(33.9)	(29.7)
Occupational prestige	39.9	30.7	44.8*
	(22.8)	(25.8)	(19.3)
Percent part-time workers in occupation	25.5	20.2	28.3*
	(9.3)	(8.4)	(8.6)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses are standard errors.

*Differences between the two occupational groups are significant at the .05 level.

¹Cohen, Bechar, and Raijman (1987) defined only three categories of occupations according to their sex type. They categorized as "female-type occupations" any occupation with 60 percent or more women employees. I followed their categorization for the male- and mixed-type occupations, but further differentiated the female category into two. This was done mainly because the vast majority of women in the survey were employed in occupations having more than 60 percent women employees.

time of first childbirth was measured in three educational categories: less than high school (the reference category), high school, and post high school. About two-fifths of the women in the sample had some post-high-school education before they became mothers, 19 percent had only a high school education, and more than 40 percent did not complete high school. The table also shows (in the second and third columns) that women in female-type occupations are more educated than women in male-type occupations. The average woman in the sample worked for about three and a half years (43 months) prior to giving birth. No significant differences between the two occupational groups were observed in the accumulated labor force experience.

In addition to the sex type of the occupation, the effect of two other occupational characteristics was examined: occupational prestige and the percentage of part-time employees in the occupation. Occupational prestige (measured on the Kraus [1976] scale) serves as the main indicator for occupational rewards;² thus prestige denotes the costs associated with leaving an occupation or, alternatively, the incentives to return to work and to stay in the same occupation. Like the education variables, the prestige score of female-type occupations was substantially higher than the prestige of male-type occupations, although the latter had a more dispersed distribution. This finding reflects the fact that women are employed mainly in white-collar occupations, many of which are semiprofessional (e.g., teaching and nursing). Women in male-type occupations have typically a bimodal distribution: whereas some work in blue-collar, low-prestige occupations, others enter high-prestige professions such as medicine and law.

Percentage of part-time workers in an occupation serves as an indicator of work conditions.³ Occupations that offer part-time employment are especially attractive for mothers; thus women in such occupations are expected to show the highest employment stability. On the average, about a quarter of all employees hold part-time employment, but, as expected, the shorter working hours are more common in female-type than in male-type occupations. Overall, the characteristics of female-type occupations (higher prestige, a large proportion of part-time jobs) may account for the higher probability of maintaining a stable employment, as shown in Table 1.

The results of the multinomial logit analysis are presented in Table

²Since income is a major indicator of occupational rewards, the mean income of the occupation was also considered. The income effect was not significant, and parsimonious considerations led to the exclusion of this variables from the final model.

³Part-time employment refers to jobs requiring fewer than 35 hours a week. This information was obtained from the Israeli national labor survey of 1982, conducted by the Israeli Bureau of Statistics.

TABLE 3
Multinomial Logit Estimates of Job Change Probability

	A. Change versus Stability			B. Leaving Labor Force versus Stability		
Sex type of occupation						
Male occupation	0.716 (.460)	0.886* (.496)	-0.515 (.697)	0.516 (.481)	0.321 (.520)	-0.780 (.740)
Mixed occupation	1.055* (.410)	1.072* (.440)	0.267 (.517)	1.209* (.400)	1.069* (.442)	0.203 (.536)
Moderate female occupation	0.803* (.385)	1.236* (.433)	0.761 (.493)	0.580 (.401)	0.657 (.448)	0.479 (.501)
Education						
High school		-1.829* (.522)	-1.565* (.536)		-1.835* (.473)	-1.332* (.497)
Post-high school		-0.457 (.367)	0.307 (.420)		-2.248* (.439)	-1.229* (.492)
Labor force experience		-0.031* (.006)	-0.030* (.007)		-0.020* (.006)	-0.018* (.006)
Percent part-time workers in occupation			-0.069* (.027)			-0.036 (.031)
Occupational prestige			-0.022* (.009)			-0.043* (.011)
Log likelihood	274.5	239.9	225.8			
df	6	12	16			

NOTE: Figures in parentheses are standard deviations.

* $p < .10$.

* $p < .05$.

3.⁴ Panel A of the table presents the contrast between a change in occupation versus staying in same occupation (for those who resumed employment); and panel B contrasts those who left the labor force and those who stayed in the same occupation. For each contrast, three models are displayed: the first tests the effect of the sex type of the occupation, the second adds the individual attributes, and the third includes the other two occupational characteristics.

The first model in panel A suggests that women in mixed and moderate female occupations are more likely to change their original occupation when they return to the labor force following a birth than are women in predominantly female occupations. Women who held

⁴The table treats as "exits" all women who had not returned to the labor force by the survey date. Women (all 28 years old by the survey date) who had their first birth early in life are more likely to be in the labor force by age 28 than are women who delayed their entry into parenthood. In order to overcome any biases resulting from the timing of parenthood, the same analysis was carried out defining all women who did not return to the labor force immediately after childbirth as exits. The main results were unchanged.

male-type occupations prior to the birth of their first child are not significantly different from women who held predominantly female occupations in their decision of whether to change occupation. The parallel model in panel B, which contrasts the option to exit the labor force with the option to stay in the same occupation, provides some support to the expectation that women in predominantly female occupations are more likely, in comparison to women in mixed occupations, to return to their former occupation. Again, women in male-type occupations are as likely as women in female-type occupations to return to the labor force following the birth of their child.

The effect of occupational sex type remains unchanged when the individual characteristics are introduced. The second column of each panel shows that women with high school education are less likely to change their occupation or to leave the labor force, compared to women having the lowest level of education. The likelihood that highly educated mothers will change their occupation is no different from that of the less educated after they decide to resume employment, but the more educated are significantly less likely to leave the labor force. Also, women with greater labor force experience are less likely either to change their occupation or to exit the labor force. This indicates that higher levels of human capital serve as incentives to stay in the labor force; however, the findings are less consistent as far as occupational change is considered. Highly educated women may have better resources to shift into different occupations that are more appealing to them as new mothers, with relatively lower costs.

The last model adds the effect of occupational prestige and the availability of part-time employment in the original occupation. With the introduction of these two variables, the effect of the sex type of an occupation diminishes. Part-time employment significantly increases the likelihood of staying in the same occupation, but its effect on the likelihood of leaving the labor force is not significant. Prestigious occupations clearly provide an incentive not only to resume employment but also to stay in the same occupation.

Overall, the table suggests that both individual and occupational characteristics affect the likelihood of returning to paid work, either in the same or in a new occupation. The important component of occupational characteristics, however, is not the sex composition per se, which presumably indicates either norms of employment for women (as suggested by Bergmann [1986]) or preferred wage pattern (as Polachek and Zellner argued); rather, it is the employment conditions that are offered. Prestige, as an indicator of social and economic reward, plays a major role in women's occupational and employment choice. Prestigious occupations are usually those which offer (relatively) higher income, thus increasing the costs of either staying at

home or changing an occupation. Moreover, for women, whose economic compensations in the labor market are low, prestige in itself proffers an important value as a main source of reward (Ayalon, 1992). In addition, women return to their previous occupation when they have a convenient arrangement allowing them to cope with their maternal responsibilities (see also Desai and Waite [1991]). Part-time employment is such an arrangement. Since female-type occupations are more likely to offer shorter working hours (see Table 2), part-time employment explains in part why women in such occupations are more likely to return to the labor force, and are less likely to change their occupation.

Discussion and Conclusions

What determines a woman's employment pattern following her first childbirth? The current study focused on the role that occupational characteristics play in influencing a young mother's decision to maintain continuous, stable employment. The findings suggest that above and beyond human capital resources the occupations that women held prior to the first birth affected their employment decision after the transition to parenthood. It had been argued that female-type occupations provide an appropriate arrangement for those who want to combine family and market activities, both in economic and in social (e.g., normative) terms (England and Farkas, 1986). The findings of this study suggest that women in female-type occupations do indeed have a stronger commitment to the labor market and to their occupation. It is not the gender composition of an occupation *per se* that influences women's employment decision, however; it is the organization of work within the occupation. Many of the predominantly female occupations in Israel offer a relatively high prestige (though low income). Prestige, as indicated by the findings, is an important determinant of women's employment decision. In trying to combine paid work and family work, though, women also combine economic and noneconomic considerations. The availability of part-time employment, although related to losses of monetary and nonmonetary rewards, offers incentives for employment. It also explains why some women change their occupation even at the cost of new investments in human capital. The result of these considerations is a decision to work in a female-type occupation.

The findings lead to the conclusion that the occupational choice of women which results in a concentration in a few occupations carries some benefits since the woman worker can develop her market skills, accumulate human capital through her market experience, and combine her economic activity with maternal responsibilities. Given a situation in which women are viewed by themselves and by others as the

main caretakers of children, the decision to stay in such occupations seems rational for the individual woman. Concentration in a limited number of occupations that typically offer low economic rewards has its own costs, however (Bergmann, 1986; Jacobs, 1989). The question to be asked is: What are the long-term consequences of such short-term benefits? On one hand it had been argued that female-type occupations limit women's opportunities for promotions, being dead-end occupations, and that they offer lower returns for human capital. Also, part-time employment, which is so convenient for mothers, has its own costs in terms of monetary rewards and chances for advancements (Beechey and Perkins, 1987). Moreover, a sexual division of labor is reproduced, since women have "better conditions" for combining market and home activities than men do. On the other hand, continuous employment insures the accumulation of human capital, increased productivity, higher commitment to the labor market, and, as a consequence, appreciation of wage. The data employed in the current study cannot offer an answer to this dilemma. Future research should focus on women's employment pattern along their life cycle in order to better understand and evaluate their options and the consequences of their decisions, both at the micro level (i.e., the individual woman and her family) and the macro level (i.e., gender differences in the labor market). SSQ

REFERENCES

- Ayalon, Hanna. 1992. "School Tracking and Gender Differences in Occupational Aspirations: Economic Aspects." *International Perspectives on Education and Society* 2:259-75.
- Beechey, Veronica, and Tessa Perkins. 1987. *A Matter of Hours: Women, Part-time Work, and the Labour Market*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bergmann, Barbara. 1986. *The Economic Emergence of Women*. New York: Basic Books.
- Brannen, Julia. 1989. "Childbirth and Occupational Mobility: Evidence from a Longitudinal Study." *Work, Employment and Society* 3 (2): 179-201.
- Cohen, Yinon, Shlomit Bechar, and Rebecca Raijman. 1987. "Occupational Sex Segregation in Israel, 1972-1983." *Israel Social Science Research* 5 (1 & 2):97-106.
- Corcoran, Mary, and Greg Duncan. 1979. "Work History, Labor Force Attachments and Earning Differences between the Races and Sexes." *Journal of Human Resources* 14: 3-20.
- Cramer, James C. 1980. "Fertility and Female Employment: Problems of Causal Direction." *American Sociological Review* 45: 167-190.
- Desai, Sonalde, and Linda J. Waite. 1991. "Women's Employment during Pregnancy and after First Birth: Occupational Characteristics and Work Commitment." *American Sociological Review* 56:551-66.
- England, Paula. 1984. "Wage Appreciation and Depreciation: A Test of Neoclassical Economic Explanations of Occupational Sex Segregation." *Social Forces* 62:726-49.

England, Paula, and George Farkas. 1986. *Households, Employment, and Gender: A Social, Economic and Demographic View*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.

England, Paula, George Farkas, Barbara Kilbourne, and Thomas Dou. 1988. "Estimating the Wage Consequences of Sex Segregation: A Fixed Effects Model." *American Sociological Review* 53: 544-88.

Felmlee, Diane H. 1984. "A Dynamic Analysis of Women's Employment Exits." *Demography* 21: 171-83.

———. 1993. "The Dynamic Interdependence of Women's Employment and Fertility." *Social Science Research* 22: 333-60.

Ferber, Marianne A. 1982. "Labor Market Participation of Young Married Women: Causes and Effects." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 44: 457-68.

Gerson, Kathleen. 1985. *Hard Choices: How Women Decide about Work, Career, and Motherhood*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Glass, Jennifer. 1988. "Job Quits and Job Changes: The Effect of Young Women's Work Conditions and Family Factors." *Gender and Society* 2: 228-40.

Goldin, Claudia. 1990. *Understanding the Gender Gap: An Economic History of American Women*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Jacobs, Jerry. 1989. *Revolving Doors: Sex Segregation and Women's Careers*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Killingworth, Mark. 1983. *Labor Supply*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kraus, Vered. 1976. "Social Grading of Occupations in Israel." Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

Lehrer, Evelyn, and Mark Nerlove. 1986. "Labor Force Behavior and Fertility in the United States." *Annual Review of Sociology* 12: 181-201.

McRae, Susan. 1993. "Occupational Change over Childbirth: Evidence from a National Survey." *Sociology* 25: 589-605.

Marini, Margaret M., and Mary C. Brinton. 1984. "Sex Typing in Occupational Socialization." Pp. 192-232 in Barbara Reskin, ed., *Sex Segregation in the Work Place*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

Matras, Judah, and Gila Noam. 1987. "Schooling and Military Service: Their Effects on Israeli Women's Attainment and Social Participation in Early Adulthood." *Israel Social Science Research* 5 (1 & 2): 29-43.

Mincer, Jacob. 1962. "Labor Force Participation of Married Women: A Study of Labor Supply." Pp. 63-105 in H. Greg Lewis, ed., *Aspects of Labor Economics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

———. 1985. "Intercountry Comparisons of Labor Force Trends and the Related Developments: An Overview." *Journal of Labor Economics* 3 (1): S1-S33.

Mincer, Jacob, and Haim Ofek. 1982. "Interrupted Work Careers: Depreciation and Restoration of Human Capital." *Journal of Human Resources* 17: 3-24.

Moen, Phyllis. 1985. "Continuities and Discontinuities in Women's Labor Force Activity." Pp. 113-55 in G. H. Elder, ed., *Life Course Dynamics: Trajectories and Transitions, 1968-1980*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Oppenheimer, Valerie K. 1970. *The Female Labor Force in the United States: Demographic and Economic Factors Governing Its Growth and Changing Composition*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood.

Polachek, Solomon W. 1975. "Discontinuous Labor Force Participation and Its Effect on Women's Market Earnings." Pp. 90-124 in Cynthia B. Lloyd, ed., *Sex, Discrimination, and the Division of Labor*. New York: Columbia University Press.

———. 1979. "Occupational Segregation among Women: Theory, Evidence and a Prognosis." Pp. 137-157 in Cynthia B. Lloyd, Emily S. Andrews, and Curtis L. Gilroy, eds., *Women in the Labor Market*. New York: Columbia University Press.

———. 1981. "Occupational Self-Selection: A Human Capital Approach to Sex Differences in Occupational Structure." *Review of Economics and Statistics* 58:60-69.

Stewart, Mark B., and Christine A. Greenhalgh. 1984. "Work History and the Occupational Attainment of Women." *Economic Journal* 94:493-519.

Stolzenberg, Ross. 1975. "Occupations, Labor Markets, and the Process of Wage Attainment." *American Sociological Review* 40:645-65.

Zellner, Harriet. 1975. "The Determinants of Occupational Segregation." Pp. 125-45 in Cynthia B. Lloyd, ed., *Sex, Discrimination, and the Division of Labor*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Copyright of Social Science Quarterly (University of Texas Press) is the property of University of Texas Press and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.