

KIN SUPPORT AND WOMEN'S LABOR FORCE EXPERIENCES IN MIDLIFE

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Article:

Introduction

Women in midlife continue to assume the roles of "caregiver" and "mother" in contemporary American society (Hagemann-White, 1984). These traditional roles often clash with new roles arising from ongoing demographic change, especially the increase in educational attainment and the rise in labor force participation. Public policy designed to encourage the care and assistance of kin as a familial obligation thus has the potential to significantly affect midlife women's labor force experiences and strain familial relationships.

Most research on midlife women's kin assistance focus on "caregiving" or the potential "stress" as these women experience (Houser and Beckman, 1984; Lang and Brody, 1983; Spitze and Logan, 1990a; Mancini and Bliezner, 1989). Furnishing care for an aging parent is a significant activity, but other aspects of midlife women's assistance activities have been understudied. For example, childcare or household assistance to kin is time-consuming yet indispensable to those in need. Research has also neglected the gendered distribution of these assistance activities. This research deficiency may also overlook distinct levels and types of assistance which may occur among subgroups of midlife women.

The purpose of this study is to examine midlife women's labor force experiences impact on assisting kin. Specifically, this research will distinguish provision of support by midlife women's labor force attachment, current employment, and human capital investment to their aging parents and adult children. Midlife women's monetary and tangible assistance (time-intensive activities such as household and physical care) will be examined using two distinct theoretical frameworks. The first theoretical framework, Becker's (1980) Theory of the Allocation of Time (1980) considers time constraints and cost with maximization of utility when midlife women provide assistance. The second theoretical framework, a gender perspective, locates midlife women's assistance provision, regardless of background characteristics, as a socialized action which is reinforced by the societal structure.

Labor force participation rates for all women increased significantly since the post-World War II decline of women employees in the paid labor force. Midlife women's, those aged 34 to 44, labor force participation grew profoundly to over 75 percent. The labor force participation by the oldest two midlife women cohorts also increased substantially over the same time period. The growth for women, aged 45-55, was nearly 30 percent and for women, ages 55 to 64, was 16 percent (Rix, 1990). Furthermore, women have developed a stronger labor force attachment as women who traditionally exited the labor force to bear and raise children have remained in the labor force (Bianchi and Spain, 1986; Rix, 1990). Currently, women's labor force attachment nearly mimics that of males, with more women working continuously in full-time positions throughout their adult careers. (Bianchi and Spain, 1986; Hartman, 1987; Rix, 1990). These preceding studies on women's transformed work patterns suggest that midlife women are currently more likely to be employed than previous cohorts and to have been employed continuously from younger ages.

Women, on average, have increased their educational attainment over that of previous generations. Bianchi and Spain's research (1986) showed that raised educational levels for women occurred at all age groups between 1960 and 1980. Greatest gains in educational attainment between 1960 and 1980 were achieved by the 25-34 cohorts, yet significant gains were realized for all ages of women. Between 1960 and 1980, 13 percent more midlife women, aged 35 to 44, and 16 percent midlife women, aged 44 to 64, had completed high school. The increased college completion rates by birth cohort is also demonstrated. About 10 percent of the women born during the early 1930s had college degrees by 1980 while those born in the late 1930s and early 1940s exhibit higher college completion rates. That midlife women are both more active in the paid labor market and are more highly educated than in the past may be an important factor impacting the provision of assistance to kin.

Theoretical Perspectives

According to Becker's (1980) microeconomic "Theory of the Allocation of Time," when an individual is forced to choose between two enterprises, s/he will choose the option with the greatest utility for her/him. Also, as a person's human capital increases, the cost of his/her non-market activities increases when calculating the opportunity cost of market time. The rational individual with a high human capital status is then expected to substitute market goods over time-intensive, self-produced goods (Beck, 1980).

An implementation of this microeconomic perspective for familial assistance processes suggests that women with higher levels of educational attainment, stronger labor force attachment or are employed in the paid labor force will be more likely to engage in monetary assistance. A decrease in the supply of time-intensive exchanges such as personal care or household assistance to their kin should also be visible. Such activity would be regarded as a substitution of tangible time-intensive assistance activities by monetary activities.

Recent intergenerational analysis of kin assistance by employed persons has presented contradictory results. Rossi and Rossi (1990) concluded employed women were less likely to provide tangible assistance their parents. However, Brody and Schoonover's (1986) study determined that employed women did not differ from non-employed women in the provision of housekeeping, transportation or emotional assistance to disabled widows. They did find that personal care for elder parents was more likely to be purchased when the primary caregiver was employed. Currently insufficient research addresses employment of midlife women and provision of assistance to children to draw any explicit conclusions.

Current research shows that educational attainment is related to the level of activity in the provision of assistance. Eggebeen and Hogan (1990a, 1990b) supply evidence that educational attainment is positively correlated with levels of parental assistance. Possessing a college education was positively correlated with furnishing greater advice and monetary assistance to aging parents over individuals with lower educational attainment. Eggebeen and Hogan concluded that individuals with a high school education or less were more likely to be involved in giving care to their aging parents than in supplying financial assistance. However, this particular study was not gender specific and therefore the conclusions may not be applicable to midlife women.

The gender perspective examines how "specific" behaviors are categorized by power and prestige and appropriated to the proper the gender model. Furthermore, the gender perspective concludes that "social structures, not only families, incorporate gender values and convey gender advantages" to numerous activities (Ferree, 1991; p. 868) . The gender perspective would analyze the midlife women's provision of assistance as an extension of their socialization of the "appropriate behavior" as a youth which has been solidified by the social institutions. It would emphasize the provision of assistance as a categorization of activities deemed by those in power as unpleasant and unproductive tasks; therefore to be delegated to an insubordinate class -- women. The perception of a family obligation to assist kin internalized by the midlife women would be reinforced by the societal and family structure which casts women in the nurturing and caregiving roles (Chaftze, 1988, Ferree, 1990).

Therefore, the gender perspective would not anticipate significant decreases in the provision of time-intensive tangible assistance of the midlife women by educational attainment, labor force attachment or current

employment status to their kin. It would, nevertheless, expect gender distinctions of assistance. Midlife women having "internalized" the norms and expectations of their sex-role would be expected to continue assisting kin regardless of human capital or employment status. Those in power would persist to reinforce and reward these gender behaviors.

Research questions

This study will consider the impact of current employment, strength of labor force attachment, and educational attainment on midlife women's assistance provision to non-coresidential parents and adult children. If employed midlife women, midlife women with a strong labor force attachment, or those women with higher educational attainment direct significantly more financial assistance to kin while reducing their tangible assistance support for Becker's Theory of the Allocation of Time will be advanced. However, if differences of assistance provision by employment, labor force attachment, and educational attainment are not discerned, then the gender perspective should strongly be considered.

In addition, the research will evaluate differences that may emerge as a result of the stronger labor force attachment and higher educational level of the younger midlife women. The younger midlife women entered early adulthood during the late 60's unrest and rise of women's liberation impacting careers, marital, and employment decisions (Carroll, 1990). These decisions may reduce assistance provision when contrasted with older midlife women who entered their early adulthood at post World War II and the rise of domesticity. Consequently, the midlife women will be divided into ten-year birth cohorts. Utilizing the microeconomic time allocation perspective, one would anticipate the younger midlife birth cohort to furnish less tangible assistance to kin when contrasted with the older midlife women. Inasmuch as significant distinctions in provision of tangible assistance are not differentiated, substantiation of the gender perspective would be established.

Data and Methods

The first wave of the 1988 National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) was selected for use with research on midlife women. Respondents were drawn from a nationally representative sample utilizing a multi-stage area probability sample design. The survey conducted in 1987 and early 1988 was administered to 13,017 respondents aged 19 and over. It includes an over-sampling of several population subgroups: non-Hispanic blacks, Hispanics, single-parent households, newly-married couples, families with step-children and cohabitating couples.

The primary sampling unit for this study was the individual rather than the family or household. The data were collected verbally using a personal interview with an additional self-administered questionnaire portion. It gathered retrospective household, family, and individual characteristics on the primary respondent. The questionnaire included several sections on the respondent's giving and receiving assistance activities with kin and friends.

From the NSFH survey's main sample of respondents, 2,506 respondents were identified as women born between the years 1933 and 1952 aged 35 to 54 at the time of the interview. The lower age limit for this study was selected to include the youngest women considered within the midlife age range. The maximum age limit on the older cohort provided ample opportunity for comparing and contrasting assistance activity. A second factor considered in the decision on the upper age limit was the declining labor market attachment of women over age 55 associated with their spouses' retirement.

Dependent Variables

The provision of assistance by midlife women to non-coresidential kin are the dependent variables. While "kin" may include extensive family networks such as step family, in-law relationships, relatives, or dependent residential family members, the current research concentrates on assistance activities outside the midlife women's households. Hence, midlife women's assistance activities include non-coresidential biological parents, and non-coresidential adult children 19 or older.

The assistance activities are defined as the provision of household help, child care or babysitting, financial assistance of at least \$200 as a loan or a gift and physical care to an ill or disabled kin member.¹ For the first two activities respondents were asked whether they had furnished such assistance in the past month. Monetary questions reflected action occurring in the past five years. The period for provision of physical care to ill or disabled kin measured assistance over the past twelve months. Each dependent variable equaled one if giving was reported; otherwise the variable equal zero. Table 1 provides a detailed summary of each dependent variable.²

Table 1: Definitions of independent variables, means and standard deviations

Variable	Mean	s.d.
MIDLIFE 1 = Women aged 45 to 54 0 = Women aged 35 to 44	.43	.465
TRADITIONAL 1 = Midlife women who either never worked or never worked after the birth of their first child (Reference category)	.12	.310
INTERMITTENT 1 = Midlife women with interruptions in the paid labor force of greater than six months	.50	.469
MIDDLE 1 = Midlife women with a single interruption in the paid labor force between the birth of first child and reentry after 35 years of age	.09	.267
CONTINUOUS 1 = Midlife women with no interruptions in the paid labor force greater than six months	.19	.366
OTHER 1 = Residual category of midlife women	.09	.278
EMPLOYED 1 = Currently employed in paid labor force	.72	.429
NON-HIGH SCHOOL GRAD 1 = Did not complete high school or obtain GED	.17	.378
HIGH SCHOOL 1 = High school diploma or GED	.43	.465
SOME COLLEGE 1 = Attended college but does not have a college degree	.21	.380
COLLEGE 1 = Has a college degree	.19	.368

Independent Variables

As previously noted, this research has defined midlife women by birth cohorts to gain an understanding of their diverse experiences as they enter midlife during different historical and cultural periods. MIDLIFE has been coded one for the birth cohort of 1933 to 1942 and zero for the 1943-1952 birth cohort.

Midlife women's provision of assistance are seen as a function of their employment history and human capital accumulation. Information was provided in the survey of the respondent's work history since their first job. Using this data, dichotomous variables were created to capture the midlife women's attachment to the paid labor market and human capital investment. Greater than six months of nonparticipation in the paid labor force was considered an interruption, while breaks of less than six months comprised continuous employment.

First women who (a) never entered the paid labor force or (b) left within six months of the birth of their first child and had not returned are presumed to have the weakest attachment to the paid labor force and lowest

human capital investment by employment. They also have the family life deemed most traditional in the U. S. society. This group, TRAD, is the reference category for the remaining work attachment categories: INTER, MIDDLE, CONTINUE, and OTHER.

A history of intermittent paid labor force attachment is characterized by multiple breaks of greater than a six-month period and reentries in the paid labor force. An intermittent work history was perceived as having greater work attachment than is found for the traditional women. The woman was coded one for the INTER category if she fit the condition; otherwise, she was coded zero.

A third category, MIDDLE, was created for women who began paid employment after they reached midlife at age 35. These women may have worked prior to the birth of their first child but left the paid labor force within six months of the birth of that child and did not return to work for pay until midlife. The woman was coded one for the MIDDLE category if she fit the condition; otherwise she was coded zero.

The next category, CONTINUE, consisted of the women with the strongest attachment and the highest human capital investment in the paid labor force. After their initial entrance to the paid labor force, these women have no work interruptions in the paid labor force greater than a six month period. The woman was coded one for the CONTINUE category if she fit the condition; otherwise, she was coded zero.

A final category, OTHER, consisted of all women who did not meet the conditions above. The woman was coded one if she did not meet any of the previous conditions; otherwise, she was coded zero.

Present employment status, WORK, equaled one if the woman was currently employed; otherwise the measure was equal to zero.

Educational attainment variables HIGH, SOMECOL, COLLEGE, measured the influence of additional human capital on the provision of assistance. The measures were having completed high school, obtaining some college education or a college degree. The reference category was women who did not complete high school. If the educational condition was met the variable was coded one; otherwise the measure was equal to zero.

Since previous studies have shown that total household resources, presence of dependent children and marital status influence the provision of assistance, these variables were included in the models as controls. Also included in the models were measures on the midlife women's adult children, grandchildren, parental measures, ethnicity and geographic proximity (Eggebeen, 1991; Eggebeen and Hogan, 1990b; Lee, 1980; Litwak and Kulis, 1987; Rossi and Rossi, 1990). A detailed description of the independent measures is included in Table 1.

Methods

The means and standard deviations of each measure were also calculated and are reported in Tables 1 and 2. Frequencies and percentages were also determined. Cross tabulations were selected to determine distinctive cohort influences on the dependent variables.

Multivariate logistic models were then selected to predict the influence of each independent variable on the provision of assistance. Logistic regression was selected since each dependent variable is a dichotomous measure and provides the most precise model compensating for heteroskedasticity. Logistic regression models were performed separately for midlife women and their parents, and midlife women and their adult children for each assistance dependent variable. Significance of the models was .05 and was determined by the model's Chi-Square significance level. Significance for the regression coefficients selected was set at .05. Each logistic coefficient was transformed to a relative probability to aid in the interpretation of the probability of an independent variable's influence on the giving or receiving of assistance.

Table 1 provides the pertinent descriptive information on the demographic aspects of the sample of midlife women. Sixty three percent of the 2,506 midlife women in the sample were of the younger birth cohort. Over 70

percent of the women were married. Of the remaining 30 percent, 15 percent of the women were currently divorced and 4 percent were separated at the time of the interview. Only 5 percent of the women had never married and merely 4 percent were widowed. Few midlife women had a child under the age of five in the household, but nearly half of the women had a dependent school-aged child. Over a third of the midlife women, 39 percent, were women with non-coresidential adult children. Nearly three quarters of the women had living parents. Slightly over 80 percent of the sample were non-Hispanic white midlife women. The remaining midlife women were of non-Hispanic black and Hispanic origin, 12 percent and 7 percent, respectively.

The majority of the women were high school graduates and 20 percent had completed college. When examining the midlife women's labor force attachment, we found that only 12 percent of the women either had never worked or after the birth of their first child had permanently remained out of the paid labor force. The modal work attachment category was that of intermittent work characterized by multiple entries and exits in the paid labor force throughout the midlife woman's child-bearing/raising career. Few women, less than 10 percent, were of the middle work attachment category. These were women who had left the paid labor force prior to the birth of their first child and did not return until after they had entered midlife. Nearly 20 percent of the total sample were women with strong work attachment. These women had continuously worked throughout their child-raising/bearing careers.

Results

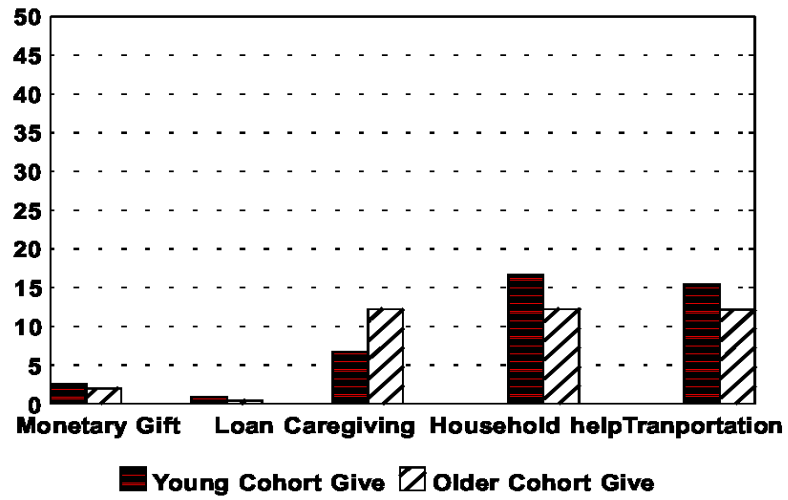
Table 2 provides the means for the provision of assistance by midlife women to kin. As expected from previous research, the mean levels for giving assistance by the midlife women and their kin over the previous month were low (Eggebeen and Hogan, 1990a, 1990b). Providing adult children with childcare ranked as the highest activity. Provision of a monetary loan or gift by the midlife women and their kin over the past five-year period was an infrequent occurrence.

A review of means on the dependent variables illustrates that midlife women were more likely, on average, to provide assistance to their adult children over providing assistance to their aging parents. A single exception to this pattern was found in household help; midlife women were as likely to assist their aging parents as their adult children. Considering only provision of assistance by the midlife women to their elder parents, the midlife women were found to be more likely to be involved in the giving of time-intensive tangible assistance, aid that may have a monetary value attributed to it, than monetary assistance.

Figure 1 demonstrates assistance patterns in the level of helping activities by midlife women's birth cohorts. The younger birth cohorts provided, on average, additional household or transportation assistance to parents. The older birth cohort provided greater care to an ill or disabled parent. Contributing financial assistance to a parent was a rare occurrence for either birth cohort.

Increased assistance activity between the older midlife women's birth cohort and their adult children when contrasted to the younger birth cohort was noted. This finding also included monetary activities. While interesting, the divergent outcome by birth cohorts is perhaps explained by the proportions women in the older cohort who are expected to be grandparents.

Figure 1. Percentage of provision of assistance to elder parents by birth cohorts of midlife women



Percentage of provision of assistance to adult children by birth cohorts of midlife women

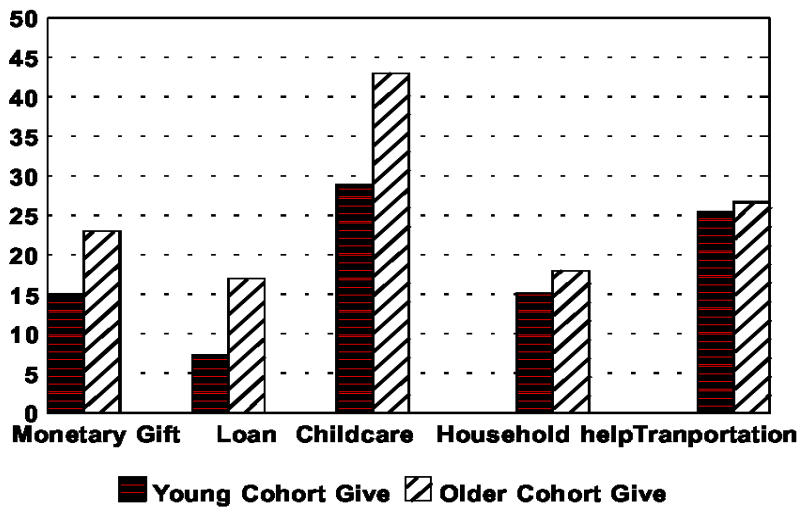


Table 2. Dependent giving or receiving variables: definitions, means and standard deviations

Variable	Parents Only		Adult Children	
	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.
MONETARY GIFT 1 = Midlife woman gave a monetary gift of \$200.00 or more in the past five years to kin not residing in the household.	.03	.153	.24	.409
N	(1798)		(953)	
MONETARY LOAN 1 = Midlife woman loaned an amount of \$200.00 or more in the past five years to kin not residing in the household.	.001	.091	.18	.373
N	(1789)		(954)	
PHYSICAL CARE 1 = Midlife woman gave physical care to an ill or disabled parent not residing in the household in the past twelve months.	.09	.269	—	—
N	(1799)			
CHILDCARE 1 = Midlife woman gave childcare or helped with babysitting in the past month to kin not residing in the household	—	—	.39	.470
N			(901)	
HOUSEHOLD HELP 1 = Midlife woman gave help around the house in the past month to kin not residing in the household.	.18	.359	.18	.374
TRANSPORTATION 1 = Midlife woman gave transportation assistance in the past month to kin not residing in the household	.18	.362	.27	.428
N	(1729)		(896)	

Multivariate Results

Multivariate logistic models controlled for the effects of the midlife women's background, parental characteristics, and geographic proximity to kin on the probability of giving assistance.

Table 3 demonstrates the effects of labor force attachment, employment status and education on the provision of monetary assistance. The midlife women's employment status did not demonstrate the predicted pattern of assistance expected by the economic theoretical perspective. Currently employed women were no more likely to provide elder parents or adult children financial assistance over midlife women not in the paid labor market. Labor force attachment was a significant factor only for midlife women when assisting adult children with a gift. Midlife women with an intermittent, interrupted or other labor force attachment were more likely to give adult children financial assistance (17 percent, 18 percent, and 18 percent, respectively). Interestingly, midlife women with the strongest labor force attachment (CONTINUE) were no more likely to give their adult children a financial gift than women with the weakest labor force attachment (TRAD).

Table 3. Determinants of giving financial assistance to elder parents or adult children^{a,b}

Variable	Midlife Women gave to Adult Children		Midlife Women gave to elder Parents
	Gift	Loan	Gift
INTERCEPT	-0.623***	-0.932***	-0.102
MIDLIFE	0.035	0.022	0.007
INTERMITTENT	0.169*	0.094	-0.003
MIDDLE	0.181*	0.065	-0.017
CONTINUOUS	0.160	-0.001	0.008
OTHER	0.180*	0.114	-0.052
EMPLOYED	0.012	0.027	-0.020
HIGH SCHOOL	0.129**	-0.031	0.039*
SOME COLLEGE	0.237***	0.016	0.020
COLLEGE	0.302***	-0.053	0.0353**
Model ChiSq	136.09*** ^b	104.32*** ^b	46.77* ^{a, b}
df	24	24	29

Notes: Significance levels: * 0.05, ** 0.01, *** 0.001

^a. Reported coefficients are transformed logistic coefficients using $P(1-P)b$ where P is the mean of the dependent variable.

^b. Also included in these models were parental, child and women's background variables.

As expected by the microeconomic theoretical perspective, education was found to be a significant predictor for provision of monetary assistance to aging parents and adult children. The probability of providing financial assistance increased significantly with higher levels of education. Women completing high school or college were, on average, 4 percent more likely to give elder parents a monetary gift than were women who had completed either high school or some college. Educational attainment was significant for monetary gifts to adult children, but loans to adult children were as likely to transpire regardless of labor force attachment or educational standing.

Unexpectedly, providing physical care to a parent or childcare to an adult child by the midlife women does not collaborate support for the microeconomic theoretical perspective. Rather surprisingly, the expected decrease in parental caregiving by educational attainment, labor force attachment, or current employment was not displayed. Midlife women with the weakest attachment to the paid labor force, or those not currently working for pay, were no more likely to provide the physical care to an ill or disabled parent than currently employed midlife women or women with stronger attachments to the paid labor force (Table 4). Educational attainment did not have the expected consequence on parental caregiving. Advanced education levels did not diminish the likelihood of furnishing care to an ill or elder parent. Midlife women with a high school diploma, some college, or a college degree were as likely to provide parents with care as were high school dropouts. Physical caregiving was found to be equally required of midlife women regardless of their labor force attachment and human capital investment. Cohort differences vanished with the addition of controls to the logistic models.

Contradictory to Becker's (1980) time allocation theoretical framework, current employment status, labor force attachment or human capital investment of the midlife women did not operate to reduce tangible assistance activity levels with aging parents and adult children as was expected. Becker's (1980) perspective assumes that women who are employed or have a strong labor force attachment will reduce their time-intensive, and therefore costly, activities. However, no significant reduction of provision of tangible assistance was exhibited.

Table 4. Determinants of providing household help, parental care, or transportation assistance by midlife women to their parents^a

Variable	Midlife Women gave to Parent		
	Household help	Physical care	Transportation
INTERCEPT	-0.150	-0.279***	-0.405**
MIDLIFE	-0.048	0.018	-0.049
INTERMITTENT	-0.056	-0.049	0.031
MIDDLE	-0.025	-0.024	0.051
CONTINUOUS	-0.042	-0.004	0.021
OTHER	0.005	-0.046	0.041
EMPLOYED	0.031	0.004	-0.033
HIGH SCHOOL	0.096*	-0.040	0.075*
SOME COLLEGE	0.126**	-0.017	0.111**
COLLEGE	0.127**	-0.007	0.096*
Model ChiSq	177.22*** ^b	224.70*** ^b	185.76*** ^b
df	31	31	31

Notes: Significance levels: * 0.05, ** 0.01, *** 0.001

^a. Reported coefficients are transformed logistic coefficients using $P(1-P)b$ where P is the mean of the dependent variable.

^b. Also included in these models were parental and midlife women's background variables.

Employed midlife women were equally likely to provide their adult children with housework and childcare as were non-employed midlife women (Table 5). They were also as likely to assist aging parents with household needs and transportation (Table 4). On average, it was found that employed midlife women were 10 percent more likely to assist their adult children with transportation.

Table 5. Determinants of giving household help, childcare, or transportation assistance by midlife women to their adult children^a

Variable	Midlife Women gave to Adult Children		
	Household help	Childcare	Transportation
INTERCEPT	-0.405**	-0.579***	-0.223
MIDLIFE	0.020	-0.024	-0.021
INTERMITTENT	-0.044	-0.093	0.015
MIDDLE	0.032	0.053	0.020
CONTINUOUS	0.044	0.119	0.053
OTHER	-0.010	0.250**	0.035
EMPLOYED	0.009	0.064	0.104*
HIGH SCHOOL	0.114**	0.006	0.107*
SOME COLLEGE	0.079	0.047	0.0235
COLLEGE	0.064	0.077	0.131
Model ChiSq	62.14*** ^b	327.23*** ^b	77.54*** ^b
df	24	24	24

Notes: Significance levels: * 0.05, ** 0.01, *** 0.001

^a. Reported coefficients are transformed logistic coefficients using $P(1-P)b$ where P is the mean of the dependent variable.

^b. Also included in these models were adult child and women's background variables.

Human capital investment, measured by educational attainment, was also expected to be negatively correlated with the provision of tangible assistance. Increased educational attainment was anticipated to demonstrate reduced activity levels for time-intensive aid, which midlife women could substitute with purchased services. Again and rather surprisingly, the results of the midlife women's furnishing of tangible assistance to parents were the opposite of predictions. Midlife women with a high school degree or greater were significantly more likely to assist their elder parents with household help and transportation. Tangible aid with adult children was not negatively correlated with educational attainment for women whose education was greater than high school; however, high school educated women were about 11 percent more likely to furnish tangible assistance to their adult children. Providing childcare was the solitary exception. All midlife women, regardless of their educational attainment, were equally likely to furnish their adult children with childcare.

This last finding may be a consequence of the pronounced involvement of all midlife women with respect to grandchildren.

Again provision of assistance differences by birth cohorts were not substantiated in the multivariate models. The younger cohort was as likely to assist aging parents or their adult children in time-intensive activities as did the older midlife cohort.

Discussion

Provision of assistance to kin is infrequent. The data showed that midlife women are more apt to provide tangible assistance than monetary assistance. Midlife women's adult children were more likely to receive assistance from their mothers than did the midlife women's aging parents. Midlife women did find time to assist elder parents, however; but the older birth cohort were not found to have greater caregiving or tangible assistance responsibilities for their elder parents.

Paid employment and escalated labor force attachment are factors which consume significant segments of midlife women's available time. Attention and consideration have been paid to this increased labor force participation and attachment's impact on women's familial assistance activities. Becker (1980) theorized that as one's time became more valuable, the time-intensive activities would be substituted with purchased market goods. If Becker was correct, a decrease in time-intensive assistance by the midlife women should have been observed. The results do not support Becker's speculations. Rather, current employment or a strong labor force attachment do not reduce midlife women's time-intensive caregiving or tangible assistance. Further, support demonstrating a pattern of the substitution by monetary assistance by employed midlife women for time-intensive activities was not found. Moreover, employed midlife women provided additional tangible assistance to their adult children contrary to Becker's Theory of the Allocation of Time.

The human capital investment results displayed partial support for Becker's (1980) Theory of the Allocation of Time. Educational attainment was positively correlated with monetary assistance. This may, in part, illustrate the midlife women's substitution of time-intensive assistance activities by an increase in monetary activities. However, this interpretation deteriorates when time-intensive parental caregiving or childcare activities are considered. Monetary substitution was not observed. Midlife women of all socioeconomic statuses provided equivalent parent care and childcare. Similarly, the elevated caregiving activity anticipated for midlife women in with lower educational statuses, therefore lower opportunity costs, was not noted. Rather, it appears the best way to guarantee assistance in old age is to educate one's daughter!

Clearly, these results indicate a portion of the employed midlife women's "free" time was redirected to time-intensive kin assistance activities. The commitment to family by assisting aging parents and adult children is indicated the dedication by all subgroups of midlife women. In addition, these results support the strength of society's expectations of women's familial responsibilities -- regardless of women's additional roles. It appears the "push" to the appropriate proper gender role is stronger than the "pull" of economic opportunities as midlife women regardless of birth cohort exhibited equivalent aid to kin.

The gender perspective of the midlife women's behavior as a condition of the social structure and socialization is strengthened by this study. Undoubtedly, midlife women attempt to assist family regardless of the "opportunity cost" of their time. Economists would question the "rationality" of this behavior. Feminists would point to the effectiveness of government, society and family in imposing such demanding expectations. Employment of men has been taken for granted while societal institutions appear unable to recognize women's paid employment outside the home (Ferree, 1991). This continuation of provision of unpaid but expected assistance symbolizes lack of power both in the home and society for women. It may also influence their labor force career decisions.

Two caveats are in order when considering the study's results. First, the study was limited in scope. Future research should address the link of men's, as well as women's, behavior between work and familial obligations. Second, precise time measurements of assistance activities were not available. Certainly the strength of the relationships might be improved with such measures.

However, an important link between the midlife women's active role in assistance and kin's well-being has been noted. Additional attention should be directed toward the assistance activities of midlife women with strong labor force attachments because of (a) the potential for role stress and (b) the impact assistance provision has on career decisions. For example, the increased life expectancy of the elder generation is an additional consideration which may necessitate supplementary assistance to be directed upward from midlife or older women. Nevertheless, this factor should not be contemplated only negatively. As long as the elder parents remain reasonably healthy, their increased life expectancy adds additional years for the daughter to seek and enjoy parental resources. However, current economic uncertainty may require adult children to seek their midlife mothers' assistance at higher levels or for a longer time interval, elevating midlife women's assistance activities from those of prior generations. Future research should address and focus more directly on the well-being and role stress of the midlife women who are exposed to normative gender role expectations in light of women's increased labor force participation and the changing family structures.

NOTES

1. The limited number of cases providing childcare or a financial loan to aging parents, or physical care to an adult child required excluding these dependent variables from analysis.
2. It is possible that the monetary measure may understate monetary activity. The selection of \$200 as the level for reporting financial activity may omit the financial exchanges of those with limited household resources. For example, poorer individuals' financial constraints may exclude them from loaning or giving \$200 while an amount of \$50 may be more reasonable to consider. However, a measure of \$200 may be a preferable measure of family assistance in a crisis condition. nevertheless, the NSFH survey's kinship assistance questions appear broad enough for numerous question on the provision of familial aid.

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