Health effects of changes in gendered work and family roles from a life course perspective

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Brunner and Marmot, 2004

Mean BMI between ages 15-53 for women in ‘Homemaker’ & ‘Multiple roles’ groups

Source: McMunn et al. JECH 2006
The aim: To assess cohort differences in the health impact of work and family combinations over the life course in men and women.

We use multi-channel sequence analysis to characterise work, partnership and parenthood in combination across the adult life courses of British men and women in three cohorts.

In relation to biomarker outcomes thought to be related to stress and chronic disease
British Birth Cohort Data (adult cohorts)

- **British Cohort Study 1970**
  - Age 26
  - Age 30
  - Age 34
  - Age 38
  - Age 42

- **National Child Development Study 1958 Birth Cohort**
  - Age 23
  - Age 33
  - Age 42
  - Biomed Age 44-46
  - Age 50

- **MRC National Study of Health & Development 1946 Birth Cohort**
  - Age 15
  - Age 26
  - Age 36
  - Age 43
  - Biomed Age 53
  - Biomed Age 60-64 (BMI & BP throughout)

- **Next year**
  - Age 46
  - Age 55
‘Ideal types’ (i)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideal type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Work, Early Family’</td>
<td>Continuous full-time employment; marriage and children from early 20s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Work, Later family’</td>
<td>Continuous full-time employment; cohabiting mid 20s, married from late 20s; children from early 30s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Work, Cohabitation, Later Parent’</td>
<td>Continuous full-time employment; cohabiting from mid-20s; children from early 30s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Work, Marriage, Non- Parent’</td>
<td>Continuous full-time employment; married from early 20s; no children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Work, No Family’</td>
<td>Continuous full-time employment; not living with a partner, no children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Later Family, Work Break’</td>
<td>Employed full-time until late 20s, caring for children full-time from early 30s; married from mid-20s; children from early 30s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal type</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Early Family, Work Break’</td>
<td>Employed full-time until early 20s, caring for children full-time from early-late 20s, employed part-time from early 30s; marriage and children from early 20s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Part-time Work, Early Family’</td>
<td>Employed full-time until early 20s, part-time employed from mid-20s; marriage and children from early 20s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘No Paid Work, Early Family’</td>
<td>Employed part-time teens, caring for home/family full-time from early 20s; marriage and children from early 20s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Work, Divorced Parent’</td>
<td>Continuous full-time employment; married from early 20s-mid30s, single from late 30s; children from early 20s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Teen Parent’</td>
<td>Homemaker until mid 20s, employed full-time from mid 20s; married from early 30s; children from late teens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Unstable Work, No Family’</td>
<td>Working intermittently; no partner or children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gender convergence in work-family life courses?

Source: McMunn et al. ALCR 2015

N=1487
N=1525
N=4684
N=4932
N=3810
N=4348

Source: McMunn et al. ALCR 2015
Work-family life courses, metabolic risk factors & inflammation

Biological stress responses to weak ties to paid work & partnership, early transitions to parenthood

**Inflammation**
- C-Reactive protein
- Fibrinogen

**Metabolic risk**
- Waist circumference
- Systolic & diastolic blood pressure
1946 COHORT: Association between work-family life courses (16-50 yrs) & METABOLIC MARKER -- waist circumference at age 53

Regression coefficients

Adjusted for early life factors
Fully-adjusted

‘Early life factors’ include childhood social class, adolescent behavioural difficulties & educational attainment. ‘Fully adjusted’ = early life + mediators: smoking, physical activity, problem drinking, social class of head of household
1946 COHORT: Association between work-family life courses (16-50 yrs) & METABOLIC MARKER -- systolic blood pressure at age 53 MEN ONLY

‘Early life factors’ include childhood social class, adolescent behavioural difficulties & educational attainment. ‘Fully adjusted’ = early life + mediators: smoking, physical activity, problem drinking, & social class of head of household, BMI
1958 COHORT: Association between work-family life courses (16-42 yrs) & METABOLIC MARKER -- systolic blood pressure at age 44 yrs

Regression coefficients

Adj gender + early life factors

Fully-adjusted

‘Fully adjusted’ models include gender, childhood social class, childhood health & behavioural difficulties, educational attainment, occupational class of head of household, smoking, physical activity, problem drinking, BMI.

Source: McMunn et al. JECH revisions under review
1958 COHORT: Association between work-family life courses (16-42 yrs) & METABOLIC MARKER -- waist circumference at age 44 yrs

Regression coefficients

- Adj gender+early life factors
- Fully-adjusted

‘Fully adjusted’ models include gender, childhood social class, childhood health & behavioural difficulties, educational attainment, occupational class of head of household, smoking, physical activity, problem drinking.

Source:
McMunn et al. JECH revisions under review
1958 COHORT: Association between work-family life courses (16-42yrs) & INFLAMMATION (CRP 44yrs)

Source: Lacey et al. IJE 2015

‘Fully adjusted’ models include gender, childhood social class, childhood health & behavioural difficulties, educational attainment, occupational class of head of household, smoking, physical activity, problem drinking, BMI.
'Fully adjusted' models include gender, childhood social class, childhood health and behavioural difficulties, educational attainment, occupational class of head of household, smoking, physical activity, problem drinking, BMI.

Source: Lacey et al. IJE 2015
Work-family life courses characterised by weak ties to paid work and partnership combined with earlier parenthood $\rightarrow$ raised inflammation & metabolic risk?

Groups characterised by early transitions to parenthood = greater inflammatory & metabolic risk.

Those who take long periods of time out of paid work to care for children & home (‘homemakers’) = significantly $\uparrow$ Fibrinogen & $\downarrow$ HDL.
ERC funding from a (female) grantee’s perspective

• Allowance for childbearing/career breaks in career stage definitions.

• The application and evaluation procedure – my experience
Thank you