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Family and Career Trajectories Among African American Female Attorneys

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Professional African American women are vastly understudied in sociology. We address that omission by examining how the intersection of race with the structure of elite, male-dominated occupations shapes family and work trajectories for a sample of 203 African American female attorneys. Like the general population of African American women, respondents with partners and with children do not seem to suffer a wage penalty. But like White women in male-dominated, prestigious professions, respondents tend to delay or avoid childbearing, particularly if they have uninterrupted careers. Their integration of work and family is supported by family resources found particularly in the Black community yet is also constrained by the demands of elite, male-dominated careers. We also find evidence of an impact of the historical period on respondents' work and family trajectories.

Keywords: *family; gender; life course; professionals; race; work*

This is a case study of the relationships between family and career in a sample of African American female attorneys. Black female lawyers are rare, comprising only 1.5% of all U.S. lawyers in 1990 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1990; cf. Segal, 1983). Thus, our respondents are unusual women who circumvented racial and gender barriers to build professional careers.

African American women in elite professions are vastly understudied. There is very little previous research on how these women integrate employment and family life. Yet this is a theoretically significant group,

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which sheds light on how the intersection of gender, race, and class shapes work and family trajectories. African American female attorneys are survivors. They have surpassed academic and professional obstacles and have overcome racial and gender barriers to achieve elite positions. We are not studying women's chances of such attainment, nor the processes by which women are winnowed out of attorney careers. Rather, the goals of this research are to understand respondents' strategies for intertwining family and work and to see how these strategies may differ for African American female lawyers coming of age during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, across a period of sharply increasing career opportunities wrought by the civil rights and women's movements.

The study is broadly informed by a life course perspective, which sensitizes us to the intersection of people's work and family lives (e.g., Moen, 1992; Moen & Wethington, 1992; O'Rand & Kreckler, 1990; Sampson & Laub, 1993) and to the impact of historical time on people's life trajectories (e.g., Blair-Loy, 1999; Elder, 1974; Mannheim, 1952; Whittier, 1995). We use a valuable data set based on a survey of over 200 African American female lawyers administered by Gwyned Simpson in 1982. The survey collected the family and work histories of Black women who launched attorney careers in the early 1950s through the early 1980s.

The data set is nonrandom. Almost 70% of the sample is under age 35, which limits the data set's usefulness for understanding middle age and later adulthood. Nevertheless, it provides detailed career histories for over 200 Black female attorneys and allows us to explore some of the complex relationships between family and work for this understudied but theoretically important group. And although the data were collected 20 years ago, they allow us to study these processes during a critical period when explicit racial and gender barriers in the workplace were beginning to fall.

INTERSECTIONS: FAMILY AND CAREER; RACE AND CLASS

Women generally spend far more time than men personally caring for family members, and thus their work lives are often curtailed by family obligations (e.g., Gerson, 1985; Hertz, 1986; Spain & Bianchi, 1996). Some previous research has identified different patterns of integrating family and work in different race and class groupings of women in the United States. We have found numerous studies of the general population of predominately White women, some research on the general population of Black women, and some studies of predominately White professional

women. However, there is very little research on African American professional women, who, due to intersections of race and class, may negotiate the demands of family and employment differently than other groups. Thus, this data set presents an invaluable opportunity for studying how an understudied population of elite, African American female professionals negotiate work and family and how these processes change over time.

GENERAL (NONELITE) POPULATIONS OF WHITE AND AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

Previous research suggests that, on average, African American women may experience different consequences of combining employment and family life than do White women. For instance, in the general, predominantly White population, childbearing has been found to lower women's wages (Waldfogel, 1997). These effects of childbearing on women's wages depend on the timing of family and work events: The child wage penalty is greater when childbearing occurs during a woman's early career than if it occurs precareer or well after her career is established (Taniguchi, 1999). Korenman and Neumark (1992) and Waldfogel (1997) found that wage penalties for childbearing are smaller or nonexistent for African American women compared to White women, although Budig and England (2001) found that this racial difference exists only for mothers with more than two children. A smaller wage penalty for Black women may be due to their socialization toward and experience of being coproviders or primary breadwinners (Higginbotham & Weber, 1992). African American women have historically had higher labor force participation rates than White women, whereas African American men's labor force participation has been at lower levels than White men's (John & Shelton, 1997; Spain & Bianchi, 1996). Moreover, Black women have higher divorce rates and higher rates of never-married motherhood than White women and are more likely to raise children alone (McLanahan & Casper, 1995). Consequently, African American women may be more likely than White women to see themselves as providers and to see work and family as complementary rather than in competition (cf. Moayedi, 2000).

According to research on predominantly White women, identities of worker and mother are constructed to be separate from each other, and women are expected to give priority to family over work (Coser & Coser, 1974; Wiley, 1991). White women, of course, do combine employment and family caregiving, but in the White, middle-class culture of motherhood, these roles conflict with rather than complement one another (P. H.

Collins, 1987; Hays, 1996.) In contrast, African Americans understand being a “good” mother to include being a strong breadwinner and a role model who emphasizes self-reliance and independence (P. H. Collins, 1987, 1991).

Daughters can benefit from their mothers’ work orientation and emphasis on independence. One study of girls in the sciences finds that African American girls are advantaged in that they are likely to have an employed mother with high educational expectations of them. Compared to White female science students, African American students date less, express more interest in school, are less likely to be oriented toward family, and tend to have more liberal sex role attitudes (Hanson, 1996).

Simpson (1984) conducted interviews as a small pretest for what would later become the survey that produced the data set this article utilizes. The African American female attorneys she interviewed support the notion that African American mothers play a critical role in daughters’ work orientation. As one respondent states, “My mother was always very supportive of me . . . and was a major source of motivation in my life. . . . She said never to be limited by what other people said or what I thought couldn’t happen.” Another woman stressed the pressure put on her to value work over marriage: “I always expected to work. My mother always told me that I would work. . . . What was most important was to be able to support yourself and not to have to depend on anybody else.”

In addition to having a strong work orientation and a culture of motherhood that sees employment as compatible with good mothering, married African American women generally enjoy more domestic support from spouses than do married White women. On average, African American men do more housework and child care than White men (although African American women still generally do the majority of this domestic work) (Beckett & Smith, 1981; Broman, 1988; Hossain & Roopnarine, 1993; John & Shelton, 1997; Wilson, Tolson, Hinton, & Kiernan, 1990). Increased support at home may be one reason that marriage has been found to raise the earnings of African American women but not those of White women (Kilbourne, England, & Beron, 1994). Additionally, African American women are more likely to utilize extended family and friend networks for assistance with child care (P. H. Collins, 1991). A study on Black corporate managers, which includes a small sample of female managers, also emphasizes the supportiveness of family networks (Toliver, 1998). In sum, these studies suggest that family formation among African American women does not generally have the same negative effects on careers that it does among White women.

WOMEN IN PRESTIGIOUS, MALE-DOMINATED OCCUPATIONS

Almost all previous research on women in prestigious, male-dominated occupations studies predominately White populations (Toliver, 1998, cited above, is an exception). This literature has documented women's attempt to time their family formation around their careers and their tendency to postpone or eschew motherhood (Blair-Loy, 2001a; Davidson & Cooper, 1992; Epstein, Saute, Oglensky & Gever, 1995; Henning & Jardim, 1977; Wajcman, 1996). Below, we consider research on how women in management, in academic science departments, and in law confront the challenge of combining family with demanding professional careers.

Family responsibilities compete with the very long hours and enormous work devotion firms expect of senior managers (Blair-Loy, 2001a; Fried, 1998). High-ranking female managers are less likely to be married than women in the general population. And they tend to avoid or delay childbearing, in part because they fear motherhood will slow their career pace (Davidson & Cooper, 1992; Wajcman, 1996). Female managers acknowledge that taking career breaks can hurt advancement, especially if the interruptions occur before major promotions (Davidson & Cooper, 1992). In addition to time at the office, senior managers in some fields are required to spend their evenings and weekends cultivating potential clients, or rainmaking (Blair-Loy, 2001b).

Some elite, male-dominated occupations have a career structure that is even more incompatible with family responsibilities. For example, in academia and law, the first 7 to 10 years demand an intense work effort before the crucial promotion hurdle of tenure (in university departments) or partnership (in law firms) can be spanned. These careers have an "up or out" structure and are designed around the assumption that the worker has no significant family caregiving responsibilities. This prepromotion period often coincides with a woman's chief childbearing years, but starting a family then can entail substantial career risks for women (Hochschild, 1975; Kay, 1997; Keller, 1991).

Female academics in the sciences face a work culture that assumes career dedication should be all-consuming and uncompromised by family caregiving responsibilities. Yet research reveals that married women are just as productive researchers as single women and that women publish the same average number of papers whether or not they have children (Cole & Zuckerman, 1991). This lack of negative effects of marriage and motherhood on careers is probably due to the conscious strategies women use to manage career and family. For many female academics in the sci-

ences, combining family with academic science careers is a matter of timing, a strategy of attaining tenure before having children (Cole & Zuckerman, 1991).

Similar barriers and strategies have been noted for female attorneys. The limited years with which law firm associates have to try to achieve partnership often coincide with women's chief childbearing years (Epstein, 1993; Epstein et al., 1995; Hagan & Kay, 1995; Kay, 1997). But most law firms require enormous career dedication and long hours of their associates coming up for partner. For example, attorney associates are expected to bill high numbers of hours to clients (Harrington, 1993). Another time-consuming requirement for partnership in many firms is the lawyer's ability to make rain, or to bring in outside business (Epstein et al., 1995). Few attorneys work part-time, and those who do are stigmatized and unlikely to make partner (Epstein, Seron, Oglensky, & Saute, 1999).

Unsurprisingly, studies show that female attorneys often delay motherhood until they achieve partnership, when they think it will be less damaging to their careers (Epstein et al., 1995; Kay, 1997). Women are far less likely than men to work as law firm partners, even after controlling for human capital and family status (Hagan & Kay, 1995; Hull & Nelson, 2000). Taking a parental leave further reduces women's chances of being promoted to partner (Hagan & Kay, 1995). Work-family tension has a significant negative effect on making partner for women but not for men (Hull & Nelson, 2000). Women "intent on partnership appear to consciously avoid or postpone motherhood" (Hull & Nelson, 2000, p. 252; see also Hagan & Kay, 1995, pp. 104-105). Due to repeated delays, many female attorneys end up forgoing motherhood altogether (Cooney & Uhlenberg, 1989).

These studies of women in prestigious, male-dominated occupations all use predominately White samples. Little is known about the intersection of family formation and careers for African American professional women. In the general population, women's experience of combining family and employment is mediated by race. Unlike White women, African American women's salaries are not depressed by marriage and motherhood. If race shapes the work-family strategies of professional women in similar ways, we would expect that African American professional women can also combine work and family without negative career consequences. Thus, we hypothesize that among our respondents, married women and mothers will not have lower salaries than women without those family ties. In fact, marriage may enhance respondents' careers and be associated with higher salaries.

On the other hand, if class or the structure of elite occupations is the primary force shaping women's experience combining work and family, we

would expect that African American women in prestigious occupations would use the same strategies employed by White women to limit the impact of family responsibilities on career commitment. This line of thought leads us to hypothesize that like White women in prestigious male-dominated occupations, African American professionals may delay childbearing or avoid it altogether.

A third alternative is that race and class may intersect in ways that produce as yet unanticipated ways in which African American women combine work and family. We will also examine how this process changes over time, as explicit, legal barriers to Black women's careers began to fall in the late 1960s and 1970s.

FAMILY FORMATION AND CAREERS FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN ACROSS HISTORICAL TIME

The life course literature has firmly established that people's life trajectories are affected by the historical period in which they live (e.g., Elder, 1974; Mannheim, 1925/1952; Whittier, 1995). More specifically, periods of new labor market opportunities may affect the unfolding of women's careers (Blair-Loy, 1999).

Thus, the intersections between career and family trajectories may differ for respondents in different age cohorts. Legal and explicit workplace barriers began to be dismantled for African American women who came of age during the civil rights and women's movement. Title 7 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 began to be enforced in the mid-1960s against race discrimination (S. Collins, 1983) and in the early 1970s against gender discrimination (Freeman, 1973; Kessler-Harris, 1994). Title 9 of the Education Amendment of 1972 prohibited sex discrimination in schools receiving federal funding; this legislation contributed to the sharp rise in female enrollment in law and business schools in the 1970s (Spain & Bianchi, 1996). In their small qualitative sample of Black women, Slevin and Wingrove (1998) found that respondents who began careers in the 1960s faced less widespread and systematic gender and race discrimination than those who launched careers in the 1940s and 1950s.

In the general population, women born after World War II (baby boomers) entered the labor force after the passage of legislation prohibiting explicit sex discrimination in schools and workplaces and during a time in which liberal feminism encouraged women's labor force attachment and aspirations toward well-paid and male-dominated occupations. Baby

boomers took advantage of these legal changes and gender-egalitarian ideologies. They pursued more education and worked outside the home more continuously than had older women (Spain & Bianchi, 1996).

In our sample of African American women who all became attorneys, we expect that respondents who graduated from college in the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s faced much more limited career opportunities in law than did younger women. We hypothesize that these older cohorts were likely to delay entry into law until more opportunities had opened up.¹ Conversely, we anticipate that the cohort finishing college in the mid-1960s, when explicit racial discrimination in the labor force became illegal, may have seen some racial barriers dismantled. And younger African American women who graduated from college in the late 1960s through the 1970s may have seen still more barriers come down, as explicit sex discrimination at work and in education was being challenged. Thus, we hypothesize that these younger cohorts were more likely than older cohorts to attend law school and launch legal careers right after college.

We further anticipate that emerging career opportunities will affect family formation (cf. Blair-Loy, 2001a). We expect that cohorts who came of age before the mid-1960s were more likely to focus on marriage and early motherhood and to enter law at later ages. And we hypothesize that cohorts who finished college after the mid-1960s would be more likely than their older colleagues to delay or eschew marriage and childbearing and to focus immediately on establishing attorney careers.

DATA

In 1982, Gwyned Simpson sent a survey to 400 African American female attorneys in large U.S. cities.² She constructed the survey population from names on mailing lists of African American bar associations in major cities. Two hundred thirty-eight women completed and returned the mailed questionnaires. Excluding one very old and one very young outlier, respondents graduated from law school between 1946 and 1982. Their ages ranged from 24 to 68 years old. Sixty-eight percent were under 35 years old, and 25% were between the ages of 35 and 44. The data for our analysis are based on the 203 respondents for whom we could construct complete and meaningful year-by-year career histories. To our knowledge, this is the first social scientific study written on these data, and this is the only data set with this kind of information on African American female professionals.

The data set has several advantages. It chronicles the family and work lives of a group of African American women who became attorneys across the period before, during, and after the civil rights and women's movements. Studies of African American female professionals are very rare but theoretically significant. They help us understand how race and a demanding professional career structure intersect to shape women's work and family lives. Another advantage is that the data set has detailed items from which we could construct year-by-year career histories for the 203 respondents we studied. We also have approximate dates for marriages and childbirths. Intact career histories of real people are extremely rare (cf. Blair-Loy, 1999). We use these histories to closely study the interaction of career and family formation among Black female lawyers during a critical historical period.

The data set also has some limitations. It uses a small nonprobability sample that was surveyed 18 years ago. Almost 70% of the sample is under age 35, limiting the data set's usefulness for understanding the interplay of work and family for middle-aged and older women. The data were collected at just one point in time and rely on retrospective life histories. We are appropriately cautious when interpreting quantitative results. Yet this is the only data set we know of with which to address these theoretically significant issues among a vastly understudied group.

METHOD

Our general approach is to use a sample of African American female attorneys as a case study in which to explore family and career trajectories. To examine these trajectories, we first extensively recoded the data into year-by-year career histories for each case. We then used optimal matching techniques to sort these individual career histories into general career patterns.³ Finally, we use ordinary least squares (OLS) and logistic regression to examine the relationships among variables. Given our small nonprobability data set, we interpret the results with caution. They should be investigated further in larger random data sets, should they ever become available.

CODING

We used questionnaire data to create a detailed educational and career history for each respondent. The questionnaire collected information on respondents' date of birth, dates of college and law school graduation, any

jobs they held before law school, periods out of the labor market, and their professional job history from law school graduation to the present. Respondents reported the order and types of positions they had held, the organizations in which they held each position, and the number of years they worked in each position. This recoding allowed us to represent each respondent's career history as a sequence of numbers that tracked her educational and work history each year from approximately age 18 to the interview date. The appendix lists these codes and gives an example of one respondent's career history.

OPTIMAL MATCHING ANALYSIS

We analyzed these career sequences with optimal matching techniques. Optimal matching uses a metric to develop a measure of distance between each pair of sequences. Each pair of sequences has a distance between them that is the minimal sum of the costs of the arithmetic operations required to turn one sequence into the other. The algorithm sums the costs to calculate the paired distances, or differences, between career sequences.

We then classified these distances by the clustering techniques in SPSS 9.0. This analysis yielded eight clusters, which indicate eight typical career patterns. Each cluster contains a group of careers that have a predominant feature that makes them more similar to one another than to the other careers in the sample. Difference of means tests revealed that the clusters indicate real clumping of the data, as the mean distances within each cluster are smaller than the mean distances across clusters ($p \leq .01$).

A few of these career patterns turn out to be closely associated with the family variables we study, and we use them as dichotomous variables in regression analyses. One pattern characterizes respondents who had long careers in other fields before entering law school ($n = 18$). Law is their second career. The second pattern characterizes women who, in the past, were homemakers for several years ($n = 11$). We call them the former long-term homemakers. Another important pattern is the direct career, which characterizes women who moved without interruption from college to law school to jobs as attorneys ($n = 114$).⁴

VARIABLES FOR REGRESSION ANALYSES

Table 1 lists our variables used in regression analyses. Above, we explained our career pattern indicators. Here we describe our other variables.

Age cohorts. Due the changing opportunity structures for African American women during the 1950s through 1970s, we expected that the intersection of career and family events might differ for women coming of age at different times. To examine this hypothesis, we divided our sample into six age cohorts.

Age Cohort 1 was born before World War II and turned age 22 (and had graduated from college) between 1949 and 1959 ($n = 13$). Cohort 2 was born after World War II began and turned 22 between 1961 and 1964 ($n = 13$). Both cohorts thus finished college and entered the labor market before legal challenges had begun to dismantle formal race and sex discrimination in the workplace. Cohort 3 was born in the waning years of World War II and turned 22 between 1965 and 1968 ($n = 33$), just after the passage of Title 7 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Cohort 4 members are early baby boomers who came of age between 1969 and 1972 ($n = 45$), during the peak of the activist stage of the women's movement. Cohort 5 members are mid-baby boomers, who turned 22 between 1973 and 1976 ($n = 64$), after Title 7 began to be applied to curtail gender discrimination in the workplace and after Title 9 legally prohibited gender discrimination in schools. Finally, Cohort 6, the late baby boomers, came of age between 1978 to 1981 ($n = 34$), after the gains of the civil rights and women's movements were further institutionalized. In some of the regression models, we use Age Cohorts 1 to 6 as dummy variables and exclude Cohorts 1 and 2 as the comparison category.

Other variables. Our models include the following dichotomous marital status measures: always single (never married and not currently cohabiting), early marriage (marriage contracted prior to or during law school) and late marriage (contracted after law school).⁵ Other family variables include not being a mother, early motherhood (first child born prior to or during law school), late motherhood (first child born after law school), number of children age 19 or younger at the survey date, and for those who do not have children, their plans to become a mother in the future. Work-related measures include salary (midpoints of a 10-category variable), sector (private, public, or self-employed), years experience as an attorney, and years experience squared. Other variables include age and age squared, year of law school graduation, and rank in law school graduating class (0 = lower 75%, 1 = upper 25%). See Table 1 for more detail on these measures.

TABLE 1
Means and Standard Deviations for Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coding</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Career patterns		
Law as second career	(0,1) (<i>n</i> = 18)	8.90
Former long-term homemaker	(0,1) (<i>n</i> = 11)	5.40
Direct careers	(0,1) Moved directly from college to law school to job in law (<i>n</i> = 114)	56.20
Age cohorts		
Age Cohort 1	Turned 22 1949-1959 (<i>n</i> = 13)	6.40
Age Cohort 2	Turned 22 1961-1964 (<i>n</i> = 13)	6.40
Age Cohort 3	Turned 22 1965-1968 (<i>n</i> = 33)	16.26
Age Cohort 4	Turned 22 1969-1972 (<i>n</i> = 45)	22.17
Age Cohort 5	Turned 22 1973-1976 (<i>n</i> = 64)	31.53
Age Cohort 6	Turned 22 1977-1981 (<i>n</i> = 34)	16.75
Family variables		
Always single	(0, 1) Always single and did not report cohabitating	.56
Early marriage	(0, 1) Marriage contracted before or during law school	.13
Late marriage	(0, 1) Marriage contracted after law school	.14
Early motherhood	(0, 1) Had first child before or during law school	.18
Late motherhood	(0, 1) Had first child after law school	.14
Child 19 or younger	(0, 1) Respondent has one or more children aged 19 years or younger, as of the interview date	.25
Not a mother	(0, 1) Not currently a mother	.67
Plans to become a mother (answered only if childless)	(0, 1) Plans to have child(ren) in the future	.73

(continued)

TABLE 1 (continued)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coding</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Career and school variables		
Salary (1982 dollars)	Midpoints of 10 categories: (1) less than \$10,999; (2) \$11,000-\$15,999; (3) \$16,000-\$20,999; (4) \$21,000-\$25,999; (5) \$26,000-\$30,999; (6) \$31,000-\$40,999; (7) \$41,000-\$50,999; (8) \$51,000-60,999; (9) \$61,000-\$70,999; (10) \$71,000-\$80,999	33,176.77 (13,950.39)
Experience	Years of experience in law	6.28 (5.26)
Experience squared	Years of experience in law squared	66.92 (198.60)
Sector	(1 = private, 2 = self-employed, 3 = public)	1.6
Law school rank	(0 = lower 75%, 1 = upper 25%)	.43
Year law school graduation		1975.72 (5.26)
Age in years		33.00 (6.85)
Age squared		1135.73 (591.27)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

The majority of respondents come from middle-class backgrounds. Fifty-six percent of respondents' fathers and 54% of their mothers had had at least some college. Approximately two thirds of respondents' fathers and mothers worked in managerial, professional, or semiprofessional occupations. Thus, respondents' parents had unusually high levels of educational and occupational attainment for the pre-civil rights era. (This finding was also reported in Segal's [1983] study of Black, predominately male lawyers.)

Previous research maintains that the high labor force participation of African American women supports daughters' career orientation. In our sample, about two thirds of respondents' mothers had managerial, professional or semiprofessional occupations. Just over half of the respondents reported that their mothers were continuously employed, whereas the remainder reported that their mothers had been employed intermittently or before childbirth. Respondents were less likely to be married or to have children than are women in the general population. Fifty-six percent were always single. Two thirds had no children, and only 25% had a child aged 19 or younger as of the survey date. Almost 70% of the sample is under age 35; some of these women may have children in the future. We now turn to models that examine relationships among respondents' family responsibilities and careers.

INTERSECTION OF FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES AND CAREERS

Current salary. We used OLS models to examine the effects of family responsibilities on current salaries. Consistent with the general population of employed African American women, motherhood is not associated with lower salaries for the Black attorneys in our sample. Moreover, early marriage and late marriage are both associated with higher salaries (see Table 2).⁶ (Also, respondents with more legal experience, those who graduated in the top 25% of their law school class, and those working in the private sector earned higher salaries.)

These findings lend support to our first hypothesis: Childbearing does not hurt and marriage helps respondents' careers, as measured by earning a higher salary. This may be in part because African American women are accustomed to seeing work and parenthood as complementary rather than

TABLE 2
Ordinary Least Squares Model Predicting Salary

<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>Standardized Beta Coefficient</i>
Early marriage	.15**
Late marriage	.15**
Number of children 19 or younger	-.03
Experience	.58**
Experience squared	-.255
Law school rank	.16**
Age	.36
Age squared	-.32
Sector	.15**
<i>N</i>	163
<i>R</i> ²	.262

***p* < .05.

as competing roles and because marriage among African Americans tends to be more egalitarian than marriage among Whites.

Sequencing. We now explore whether respondents' timing of family events were linked to typical career patterns that would accommodate (or fail to accommodate) family responsibilities. As explained in the Method section, we used optimal matching techniques to help us locate typical career patterns. Earlier studies of predominately White women in prestigious, male-dominated occupations suggest that early marriage and early motherhood will be associated with a late professional career launch. In our sample, respondents with substantially delayed legal careers fall into one of two patterns: those with long-term previous careers and those who were long-term homemakers prior to entering law. In contrast, having no family responsibilities should be associated with having a direct career that progresses immediately from college to law school to the legal labor market.

Logistic regression models suggest that respondents do resemble elite professional White women in their sequencing of family formation and career launch. Being an early mother is more likely for women who entered law after a lengthy previous career, although this effect is no longer statistically significant when we control for age (see Table 3, Panel 1). And being an early mother is associated with the former long-term home-

TABLE 3
Binary Logistic Regression Models Predicting Career Patterns:
Law as Second Career, Former Homemaker, and Direct Career

	Panel 1		Panel 2		Panel 3	
	Career Patterns					
	<i>Law as</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Former</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Direct</i>	<i>Beta</i>
	<i>Second</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Long-Term</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Career</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>
	<i>Career</i>	<i>(SE)</i>	<i>Homemaker</i>	<i>(SE)</i>	<i>Career</i>	<i>(SE)</i>
Family status variables only						
Intercept	.65	(.75)	-.91	(1.17)	.96	(.22)****
Early marriage	.62	(.70)	.01	(1.21)		
Early motherhood	1.66	(.54)***	4.17	(1.07)****		
Always single					.24	(.34)
Childless					1.85	(.36)****
Family status variables with controls						
Intercept	5.01	(1.77)***	-3.97	(1.89)**	9.85	(1.58)****
Early marriage	.77	(.72)	.18	(1.23)		
Early motherhood	.94	(.62)	3.82	(1.10)****		
Single					.37	(.40)
Childless					.83	(.45)*
Age	.11	(.04)***	.08	(.04)**	-.28	(.05)****
Full model						
Nagelkerke						
Pseudo R^2	.220		.453		.48	
N	197		197		197	

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. **** $p < .001$.

makers' career pattern, even net of the effects of age (see Table 3, Panel 2). These findings can be interpreted in two ways, both of which may well be true. First, second-career attorneys and former long-term homemakers took advantage of the time they had while outside the legal labor market to have children. Second, early childbearing is not easily combined with an early launch of an attorney career.

In fact, respondents with direct careers were extremely unlikely to have had children by the interview date. Although over half (117) of all respondents had direct careers, only a quarter (17) of the mothers were in direct careers. (A chi-square test shows this association to be statistically signifi-

cant, $p \leq .001$.) It seems particularly difficult to combine motherhood with a legal career that has no breaks.

Logistic regression models support this notion, showing that having a direct career is associated with being childless and with being younger (Table 3, Panel 3).⁷ However, younger age does not fully account for the likelihood that respondents in direct careers tend to be childless. The association between childlessness and having a direct career remains weakly statistically significant even after we controlled for age. We tried restricting our analysis to the 164 respondents aged 28 and over and again found that women in direct careers were also likely to be childless (results not reported). Thus, even among respondents in their late 20s and beyond, women without family responsibilities were more likely to have had direct careers. Age is negatively associated with having a direct career, suggesting that younger respondents had more opportunities than older ones to specialize immediately in a legal career.

Although we found earlier that childbearing does not directly lower salary of the African American female attorneys in the sample (Table 2), respondents nonetheless shape family decisions and career trajectories around one another. Lending support to our second hypothesis, we find that respondents tend to sequence their career and family formation to minimize the potential conflict between them. Respondents tend either to have children before entering legal careers or to avoid or delay childbearing (Table 3). Whatever their age at the survey date, respondents who moved directly into legal careers while they were young are especially unlikely to be mothers.

FAMILY FORMATION AND CAREERS FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN ACROSS HISTORICAL TIME

We now look more closely at how the timing and sequencing of family formation and career launch differs for different cohorts of respondents. The positive association between age and having initially had a lengthy nonlegal career or a long homemaking tenure and the negative association between age and having a direct career (Table 3) are consistent with the argument that new opportunities in law began opening up for younger cohorts of African American women.

We expected that respondents graduating from college during or after the mid-1960s would be more likely than older cohorts to have focused immediately on legal careers and to have delayed or eschewed marriage or cohabitation and motherhood. Logistic regression models lend support to

these hypotheses. Members of Age Cohorts 4, 5, and 6 (who turned age 22 between 1969 and 1981) were more likely than Age Cohorts 1 and 2 (who turned 22 between 1949 and 1964) to have had direct careers that progressed immediately from college to law school to the legal profession (see Table 4). Thus, respondents finishing college in 1969 or later were more likely than older cohorts to specialize immediately in legal careers.⁸

These data do not allow us empirically to distinguish between age and period effects. A reasonable interpretation is that the period effect of the civil rights and women's movements may have similarly affected respondents of different ages by encouraging law careers, wherever they were in their work histories at that time. Cohorts turning age 22 in 1969 and later seemed to have more career opportunities right out of college, once some of the most blatant race- and gender-based workplace barriers had been made illegal.

These emerging opportunities for African American women also affected their family formation. Members of Age Cohorts 3, 4, 5, and 6 were more likely to be childless than were women in older cohorts, even after controlling for having a direct career (see Table 5, Panel 1). Similarly, members of Age Cohorts 3, 4, and 5 were less likely to be early mothers than were members of older cohorts, even after controlling for having a direct career (Table 5, Panel 2).

Whether they moved directly into legal careers or took more circuitous routes, respondents who turned 22 after 1964 were more likely to delay or eschew childbearing than those who turned 22 between 1949 and 1964. These findings are consistent with our argument that among respondents who came of age after 1964, Title 7 and related legislation began to dismantle first racial and then gender barriers in employment and encouraged Black women to focus on education and work rather than on family formation while they were young. Thus, historical period can have a major impact on career and family formation, especially during periods of sharply increasing opportunities. Recall that our sample only includes women who successfully became attorneys. Possibly, women who avoided becoming young mothers during the dramatic changes of the 1960s and 1970s had more opportunity to take advantage of these new opportunities and to become professionals (and thus would be more likely to be in our sample). Yet despite respondents' advantages, most have so far been unable or unwilling to combine a legal career with motherhood.

Although cohorts coming of age after 1964 were more likely than older cohorts to be childless at the survey date, we do not know whether they will later become mothers. But the data do indicate that 85% of childless

TABLE 4
Binary Logistic Regression Models

<i>Effects of Family Status and Age Cohort on Having a Direct Career^a</i>	
<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>Beta Coefficient (SE)</i>
Intercept	7.38 (2.10)***
Always single	-.27 (.42)
Not a mother	.96 (.45)**
Age cohorts	
3 (age 22 1965-1968)	-.40 (.78)
4 (age 22 1969-1972)	2.00 (.64)***
5 (age 22 1973-1976)	2.46 (.64)****
6 (age 22 1977-1981)	4.68 (1.18)****
Full model Nagelkerke Pseudo R^2	.516
<i>N</i>	203

a. The comparison variables excluded from the model are Age Cohorts 1 and 2. Two rather than one comparison variables are excluded because of the small *ns* of Age Cohort 1 and Age Cohort 2.

** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. **** $p < .001$.

women who moved directly from college to law school to attorney jobs do plan on having children in the future. The younger the age cohort, the more likely respondents are to plan to have children. Of the childless women in Cohort 3 (aged 36-39 at the survey date), 31% plan to have children. This percentage rises to 76% in Cohort 4, to 81% in Cohort 5 and to 93% in the youngest cohort, 6 (aged 23-27 at the survey date).

This strategy of waiting until a later career stage to start a family resembles patterns found in previous research on predominately White, elite professional women. In our sample, childless women with direct careers have a mean age of 29 and could still have children in the future. However, many may end up not doing so, as the mean age of those who are already mothers is 31, and these mothers were far younger, on average, when their children were born. It is possible that work demands and commitments will ultimately not leave room for motherhood. Such a realization might help explain why the percentage of women who plan on having children is so much lower for third-cohort members in their late 30s than it is for younger cohorts. Yet, among childless respondents, the majority of women in direct careers and the majority of women in the three youngest cohorts express the desire to have children. They find motherhood incompatible with their careers now but hope to balance both at a later time.

TABLE 5
Binary Logistic Regression Models

<i>Effects of Age Cohorts on Being Not a Mother and an Early Mother^a</i>				
	<i>Panel 1</i>		<i>Panel 2</i>	
	<i>Not a Mother</i>		<i>Early Mother</i>	
	<i>Beta Coefficient</i>	<i>(SE)</i>	<i>Beta Coefficient</i>	<i>(SE)</i>
Intercept	7.74	(1.72)****	-7.54	(1.65)****
3 (age 22 1965-68)	1.48	(.59)***	-1.11	(.56)**
4 (age 22 1969-72)	1.32	(.59)**	-1.39	(.63)**
5 (age 22 1973-76)	2.04	(.60)****	-1.93	(.69)***
6 (age 22 1977-81)	3.86	(.92)****	-1.23	(.97)
Direct career	1.27	(.41)**	-2.32	(.66)***
Full model Nagelkerke Pseudo R^2	.34		.36	
<i>N</i>	203		203	

a. The comparison variables excluded from the model are Age Cohorts 1 and 2. Two rather than one comparison variables are excluded because of the small *ns* of Age Cohort 1 and Age Cohort 2.

** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. **** $p < .001$.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The integration of career and family by the African American female attorneys in our sample is mediated by race and by the occupational structure of an elite, male-dominated profession. Like the general population of Black women (and in contrast to the general population of White women), male partners and children do not depress respondents' salaries. In fact, married respondents generally enjoy higher salaries than do single ones. We believe there are several reasons that family formation does not negatively affect respondents' salaries. First, our sample only includes attorneys. Women whose career goals were completely derailed by marital or parenting obligations would not be in the sample. More important, African American women generally benefit from a strong work orientation, a culture of motherhood that embraces breadwinning, and, if married, unions that tend to be more egalitarian than in the White population. These norms specific to the Black community would tend to support motherhood among committed professionals.

Another reason motherhood does not seem to depress respondents' salary is that many respondents sequence their career and family formation to

minimize the conflict between them. In this way, our respondents mirrored the patterns found in previous research on predominately White, elite professional women. Sample members who began their adult lives as homemakers or in long-term jobs outside the legal profession were likely to take advantage of that time to have children. In contrast, respondents who moved directly from college to law school to legal careers have generally avoided childbearing, at least as of the survey date. Thus, the long hours and arduous demands of the legal profession constrain the family formation of White and African American women alike.

The relationships between career and family among the lawyers in our sample have changed over time. Older respondents, who came of age before the momentous workplace opportunities forged by the civil rights and women's movements, were more likely to have had children early and to launch legal careers later, after some of the most explicit barriers to African American women's professional careers had been dismantled. In contrast, respondents who finished college after 1964 were likely as young women to immediately establish attorney careers and to postpone or eschew motherhood. Thus, the historical periods can influence work and family trajectories, especially during a rapid opening of opportunities.

African American female lawyers are still rare. Respondents in the younger cohorts are still likely to face race- and gender-based discrimination (Segal, 1983; cf. Toliver 1998). But relative to other African Americans, and even relative to many other Americans, the women in this sample enjoy some privilege. Most grew up with educated, middle-class parents, despite the fact that their parents came of age well before the civil rights movement. Respondents became highly educated and established prestigious professional careers. And they were probably more likely than many White professional women to have been raised with a culture of motherhood that accepts rather than denounces breadwinning. Despite these resources, the majority of respondents still find it difficult to combine family formation with the demands of being attorneys. Most members of the youngest cohorts hope to have children someday but are delaying motherhood for the sake of their careers.

Because this research is based on a small nonprobability sample surveyed at one point in time, these processes should be further investigated in larger, random, truly longitudinal samples. Yet these ideal samples do not yet exist. Our results are internally consistent and reasonable in terms of previous research. The findings are important for what they reveal about how an understudied but theoretically important group combines family and career over a historical period of sharply changing opportunities. For the African American female attorneys in our sample, the integra-

tion of work and family is simultaneously supported by family resources found particularly in the Black community yet constrained by the demands and structures of elite, male-dominated careers.

APPENDIX

Codes for Work and Educational History

Years Before First Attorney Job (one-digit code)

1	College
2	Law school
3	Homemaker
4	Other career
5	Unknown

Organizations (first digit of two-digit code)

1	Firm
2	Corporation and bank
3	Agency
4	Self-employed
5	Legal aid nonprofit
6	Other

Legal Positions (second digit of two-digit code)

1	Associate
2	Partner
3	Senior other attorney
4	Junior other attorney
5	Judge
6	Clerk
7	Teaching and administration
8	Other

As an example, consider the following sequence: 1 1 1 1 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 2 2 2 54 54 53 53 53 61 24 24 24 24 24 24 24 24 24 24 33 33 33 53 53 53. This woman, case 153, attended college for 4 years (code 1), was a homemaker for 8 years (code 3) and then entered law school (code 2). After law school, she worked in a legal aid nonprofit organization, first as a junior attorney (code 54) and then as a senior attorney (code 53). She then served for a year as an associate in an "other" (residual) organization (code 61). Next, she moved to a corporation or bank, where she

worked as a junior attorney for 9 years (code 24). She spent the next 3 years at an agency working as a senior attorney (code 23). During the last 4 years up to the survey date, she worked as a senior attorney in a legal aid nonprofit organization (code 53).

NOTES

1. We cannot empirically distinguish age from period effects in these data. It is reasonable to expect that the period effect of the civil rights and women's movements affected sample members of all ages. We surmise that older respondents were encouraged to shift from their previous occupations to legal careers, whereas younger women were encouraged to go immediately into law schools after college.

2. Respondents were from the following cities: New York City (30%), San Francisco (21%), Washington, D.C. (26%), Chicago (10%), Atlanta (10%), and Houston (2%). Gwyned Simpson's Black Women Attorneys data set is currently archived at the Murray Research Center, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (producer and distributor).

3. The standard algorithm is the Needleman-Wunsch algorithm, which calculates alignments based on costs associated with substitution and insertion (Levenshtein, 1965). We used Andrew Abbott's OPTIMIZE program to calculate the alignments and subsequent distances between each career pair. For more detail on these methods, see Abbott and Hrycak (1990), Blair-Loy (1999), and Han and Moen (1999).

4. Law as a second career and former long-term homemaker represent two of the eight optimal-matching generated career clusters. The direct career pattern is found primarily in two more of the optimal-matching generated clusters. The other clusters are not systematically related to the family variables studied here, so we do not include them in our analyses.

5. In addition to these marital status variables of theoretical interest, 9% of sample members were coded as unmarried and cohabiting and 8% were married but had incomplete data on marriage timing.

6. We replaced the early marriage and late marriage variables with an indicator for being single and found that being single is associated with a lower salary (results not shown).

7. An interaction term of age with childlessness is not statistically significant in predicting having a direct career.

8. The high incidence of direct careers in Cohort 6 is partly due to the right truncation of the career histories. These young women necessarily had direct careers to become attorneys by 1982 and to make it into the sample. But the tendency of Cohorts 4 and 5 to have direct careers cannot be explained away by right truncation.

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