

**Careers, Family and Satisfaction:  
Change over Time in Correlates of Women's Subjective Well-being**

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The paper examines change over time in the relationships between women's self-reported levels of well-being and their roles in the labor force and the family. In particular, it asks whether the relationship of well-being to employment and family status changed the late 1960s and 1970s, when women's role in the labor force underwent a rapid transformation. Recent work on subjective well-being argues that absolute levels of income play an important role in influencing well-being and that the life satisfaction of individuals typically rises with their countries' economic growth (Sacks, Stevenson, and Wolfers, 2010). Looking longitudinally within the United States, this paper examines the impact of women's rapid shift into careers in the late 1960s and early 1970s on their self-reported life satisfaction. The National Longitudinal Studies (NLS) and National Longitudinal Studies of Youth (NLSY) allow for the detailed comparison of two cohorts of women: an older cohort that reached adulthood between 1964 and 1972, just as rapid shifts in women's role in the labor force were beginning, and a younger cohort that reached adulthood between 1978 and 1985, when the period of most rapid change in women's role was coming to an end. The paper examines the subjective well-being of these two cohorts of women: both in comparison to one another and relative to men in their cohort. Ordinal logit models are used to examine the relationship between the level of satisfaction these two cohorts of women report in their early 30s and their labor force and family status. Preliminary findings suggest that from one cohort to the next, marriage and children became less correlated with self-reported life satisfaction, while earnings and employment became more tightly correlated with satisfaction. In contrast to the claims of Sacks, Stevenson, and Wolfers, they also suggest a general decrease in women's subjective levels of wellbeing from one cohort to the next, despite increased earnings.