

## Alternative Employment Arrangements: A Gender Perspective

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In this study we drew on national-level data to investigate the gendered nature of two alternative employment arrangements (independent contractors and temporary agency help), preferences for such arrangements, and the extent to which such arrangements accommodate work/family career quandaries of contemporary workers. Multivariate analyses revealed the perpetuation of gender schema and gendered structures, but this varied by type of alternative employment arrangement. Greater preference for temporary agency employment by married women than by married men derived from women not having to be the primary source of family income, rather than from an effort to “balance” work and child-rearing responsibilities. There were also gender differences in the tendency of married men and women to be independent contractors; women were less likely to be contractors. However, this alternative employment arrangement offers potential for both men and women to satisfy or challenge other gendered family structures and schema.

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**KEY WORDS:** gender schema; alternative employment arrangements; work and family; temporary work; independent contractors.

Alternative employment arrangements represent one of the fastest growing categories of employment in the U.S. labor force (Segal, 1996). Defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, alternative employment arrangements represent any employment arrangement that involves an intermediary (e.g., temporary help agencies) or whose time, place, or quantity of work is unpredictable such as independent contracting and on-call work (Polvika, 1996). About 10% of the U.S. labor force is currently in alternative employment arrangements, which include either full-time or part-time work schedules. In fact, access to part-time hours has often been given as one of the reasons women seek out alternative employment. Still, most people in these arrangements work full time; only 20% of temporary agency workers

and 26% of independent contractors are part time (Carre, 1998), and many workers—both young and old—consider alternative employment arrangements as a viable employment option compared to standard employment (Marler, Barringer, & Milkovich, 2002).

Social observers often invoke gender to explain why workers “choose” alternative employment arrangements, i.e., prefer them to standard employment. The assumption is that alternative employment, offers greater flexibility, thereby facilitating working parents’ (especially mothers’) management of both their unpaid family care work and paid employment. Scholars have examined whether workers “choose” and prefer part-time work to standard employment (e.g., Blank, 1990; Blossfield & Hakim, 1996; Meiksins & Whalley, 2002; Negrey, 1993; Tilly, 1996), but less is specifically known about the choices of alternative employment arrangements. There are few empirical studies of alternative employment arrangements that focus specifically on gender and how gender influences alternative employment arrangement choices. Rather, the spotlight has been

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on the contingent or temporary nature of alternative employment (Rogers, 2000). Management science researchers, in particular, have either ignored gender and family-related issues altogether (e.g., Kunda, Barley, & Evans, 2002) or have treated gender as a proxy for preference for child care-taking responsibilities (Ellingson, Gruys, & Sackett, 1998; Feldman, Doeringhaus, & Turnley, 1995; VanDyne & Ang, 1998). Although recent qualitative research does point to the importance of gender values and stereotypes in shaping attitudes toward temporary employment (e.g., Barker & Christensen, 1998; Kalleberg, Reskin, & Hudson, 2000; Rogers, 2000), the study samples are small or else the topic is primarily about reduced-time arrangements (e.g., Meiksins & Whalley, 2002; Negrey, 1993).

Our goal in this study was to assess the gendered nature of alternative employment arrangements. Research shows that gender-related processes influence attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes on multiple levels, from the individual to broad structural and institutional features of societies (Bem, 1999; Glick, 1991; Hudak, 1993; Moen & Shin-Kap, 2001). We first investigated how attitudes toward alternative employment arrangements are shaped by gender-related beliefs (such as the assumption that women should do the unpaid family care work) and gendered social contexts (such as occupational segregation, division of household labor, and inequality in earnings). Studying two very different types of alternative employment arrangements at different levels of analysis permitted us to capture the way people “do gender” (Bem, 1993) even in “alternative” (compared to standard) employment structures. We built on and extended recent qualitative research (e.g., Meiksins & Whalley, 2002; Rogers, 2000) by drawing on a nationally representative sample of full-time and part-time independent contractors and temporary agency workers.

### Gender Schema and Gender-Related Beliefs

Gender schemas represent the cognitive lenses through which individuals differentially view women and men (e.g., Bem, 1999). These cultural schemas (about the way things are and the way things should be) impose gender-based classifications on social reality, and encourage the sorting of people, attributes, behaviors, and other things on the basis of culturally prevailing, polarized definitions of masculinity and femininity (Bem, 1993). As such, gender schemas affect individual perceptions, interpretations, and expectations (Valian, 1998).

Gender schema provide patterned guides to everyday life in the form of specific and diffuse norms about men’s and women’s work and family roles. These schemas are reenacted and reinforced by the social organization of work, family, and community—policy regimes that privilege those who follow the standard masculine lock-step career mystique (Moen & Roehling, 2005). But this pattern, developed in the 1950s, was predicated on the feminine mystique (Freidan, 1963) of full-time homemakers backing up men climbing career ladders (Bernard, 1981; Moen, 2003; Williams, 2000). Even though most women are now in the workforce and most working men no longer have wives who are full-time homemakers, gender schema that presume the primacy of men in the public sphere of paid work and women in the private sphere of family care work are deeply embedded in American culture. Indeed, most couples conform to this gender typing—married men continue to view themselves as the principal breadwinners (Townsend, 2002), and even employed women remain the principal unpaid family care providers (see Clarkberg & Moen, 2001). Furthermore, research suggests that Americans harshly judge people who deviate from established schema (such as a mother who does not care for her children) (Etaugh & Folger, 1998).

The standard, lock-step career path is therefore clearly gendered, designed for workers with no family responsibilities. But what about other, alternative paths? Alternative employment arrangements (specifically, temp work and contract work) are considerably different from standard organizational employment and even perceived by some as the “solution” for workers with family responsibilities (e.g., Albert & Bradley, 1997). Nevertheless, given the pervasiveness and insidiousness of gender schema within the family, at work, and in the culture at large, we expect that even people in alternative arrangements still perpetuate normative beliefs about paid employment, unpaid family care work, and gender. In other words, the “reasons” people give for being in temporary agency jobs or working as independent contractors will be patterned along the lines of prevailing gender schema.

Several small sample studies provide circumstantial support for our supposition. In their study of temporary agency clerical employees, who were primarily women, located in one midwestern city, Ellingson et. al. (1998) found that women were satisfied with their temporary employment arrangement because it offered flexible hours, variety,

and the potential to work shorter hours. Similarly, Jurik's (1998) study of 46 self-employed, predominantly female, home workers showed that the majority chose self-employment to escape from standard employment in order to find more autonomy and flexibility. Finally, Loscocco (1997) interviewed 30 self-employed individuals to understand to what extent individuals freed from the constraints of traditional employment reenacted or diverged from traditional gender roles. Her results showed that gender is a deeply embedded feature of work roles even apart from traditional structures. Men enacted work schedules that mirrored standard wage and salary employment. Married women worked around their family's demands. Thus, although self-employment offered the possibility for flexibility and autonomy, men and women exhibited gendered responses consistent with male breadwinner and female caretaker expectations.

To test whether these findings are indicative of most Americans in alternative employment arrangements, we drew on national data for two very different types of alternative employment: independent contractors and temporary help agency employees. Our first hypothesis was that men's and women's rationales for being in different types of alternative work arrangements would reflect a variant of the gendered breadwinner/homemaker schema. Specifically, we expected women in both temporary agency employment and independent contracting would be more likely to have family-centered reasons for being in such arrangements, whereas men in both temporary agency employment and independent contracting would more likely have work-centered reasons for being in them.

### **Social Structures, Gender Schema, and Preferences for Alternative Employment**

Gender schema theory primarily focuses on thinking about gender in terms of individual differences in cognitive processing but does not always conceptualize gender at the social structural level (Bem, 1999; Unger & Crawford, 1993). Feminist scholars tend to point out how gender operates at multiple levels and with complex interactions between levels (Korabik, 1999; Unger & Crawford, 1993). For example, the social organization of employment and family at the social structural level reinforces gender schema at the intrapersonal level by either increasing or minimizing role strain.

Traditionally masculine occupations and career structures, for example, facilitate fulfillment of the breadwinner role through their greater financial rewards and steeper hierarchical structures (Glick, 1991; Moen & Roehling, *in press*). Traditionally feminine occupational structures (such as clerical and secretarial careers) reflect the presumption that women will leave these jobs upon marriage or the birth of children (Goldin, 1991). Indeed, in the early twentieth century, "marriage bars" (Goldin, 1991) in the workplace eliminated the possibility of occupational careers for many women. Taken for granted assumptions fostered female-dominated employment structures that reinforced women's family caregiver role by offering undemanding routine jobs in relatively flat hierarchical structures with limited opportunities or expectation of upward mobility (Blau, Ferber, & Winkler, 1997).

Family structures also reinforce gender schema at the intrapersonal level by reinforcing beliefs about the "naturalness" of the presumably separate spheres of work and family responsibilities (Bailyn, 1993). For example, even women who work full time spend significantly more hours on housework than do men who work full-time (Blau et al., 1997). Thus, despite making financial contributions to the family's welfare, women perceive themselves as less successful if they cannot also take care of their families and homes (Moen, Waismel-Manor, & Sweet, 2003). Men, on the other hand, see their paid work as their major contribution to their families, even though long hours on the job mean less time with the family (Guttek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991).

Bureaucratic organizations, built on the notion of separate spheres for men and women (Bailyn, 1993; Moen, 2003), exert less administrative control over independent contractors than over employees in standard employment arrangements (Barron & Pfeffer, 1988). Thus, independent contractors, both men and women, are freer to adjust their work to satisfy their individual needs. In contrast, temporary help agencies are themselves bureaucratic structures. Temporary agency employment arose primarily in response to accepted gender role differences in a bureaucratically dominated workplace (Gonos, 1994; Moore, 1963). Thus, temporary agency employment is consistent with gender typing and is characterized by limited upward mobility and expectations of limited tenure.

Given that temporary employment structures evolved from a more distinctly gendered process than independent contracting, we hypothesized that there

would be gender differences at the social structural level (occupational structures) and at the intrapersonal level (preferences for these alternative employment arrangements); however, the extent of gender difference was expected to differ across the two types of alternative employment. Specifically, we expected gender differences in both the occupation structure of temporary employment and in individual preferences within temporary agency employment. Men in temporary employment would be less satisfied with temporary agency employment than women would because the nature of these jobs are less consistent with men's breadwinning expectations that are embedded in a "regular" job.

In contrast, we did not expect to see gender differences in occupational structures and preferences for independent contracting employment over standard employment. Given the more gender-neutral formation process of independent contracting, we expected less occupational gender segregation in the work of independent contractors. Further, we expected no difference in preferences between men and women independent contractors because, consistent with Losocco's (1997) findings in her sample of self-employed men and women, we expected that within independent contracting both men and women would use their flexibility to satisfy gendered expectations.

In summary, we hypothesized that there would be gender differences at both the social structural level and at the intrapersonal level for temporary agency employment but not for independent contractors. But we have not yet clarified the nature of the gender difference we expected for temporary agency employees. Because the role of unpaid care provider rests on the premise of a (male) breadwinner, household earnings may be critical to the success of alternative employment arrangements for both men and women. Jurik's (1998) study of home-based self-employed workers suggested that, for women, the second income of the husband was very important in supporting the viability of the wife's self-employment. Married women's attitudes toward temporary agency employment arrangements may actually represent a family breadwinner effect more than a compensating care-provider (flexibility) effect. Our third hypothesis therefore stated that any gender difference in preference for temporary agency employment derives from having a financial breadwinner rather than from a desire to have flexibility to care for family.

## METHOD

### Participants

Participant data for this study came from the Current Population Survey (CPS) February 1995 and 1997 Contingent Work Supplement, a national household probability sample of individuals in alternative employment arrangements. The CPS is a monthly survey series collected by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and is the source for official government statistics on employment. Households are scientifically selected to represent the nation as a whole, and household participants are surveyed once a month for four consecutive months and again for the corresponding time period 1 year later (U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 1995, 1997). Participants in the 1995 and 1997 Contingent Work Supplement (CWS) were asked a set of additional questions regarding alternative employment arrangements that included temporary help agency employment, independent contracting, and on-call work. Independent contractors represent the largest proportion of workers involved in alternative arrangements (over two-thirds). Temporary agencies workers are the fastest growing segment of alternative employment arrangements and of the labor force in general (Segal, 1996).

From this national probability sample, we selected all individuals who reported that they were either independent contractors or temporary employment agency employees, were married with spouse present, and for whom there were no missing data.<sup>4</sup> We selected married individuals because the majority of married couples (over 60%) are also dual-earner households (Blau et al., 1997) and we believe this group will find work-family gender schema most salient. Our final sample consisted of 303 married temporary agency employees (179 women and 124 men) and 3,843 married independent contractors (1,294 women and 2,549 men). The lower proportion of temporary agency employees in the sample reflects their low incidence within the overall labor force. Government estimates show that temporary agency employees represent about 1–2% of the workforce at any one time whereas independent contractors comprise about 7–8% of the work force (Cohany, 1998).

<sup>4</sup>An analysis of those cases with missing data showed that there were no significant differences in preference for alternative employment, marital status, race, location, or reasons for being in alternative employment.

Consistent with previous studies, temporary agency employees present a different demographic and socioeconomic profile than independent contractors. Fifty-nine percent of married temporary agency employees are women with an average age of 40 years and about 13 years of education. Two-thirds of married independent contractors, on the other hand, are men. Independent contractors are, on average, over 46 years old, and have about 14 years of education. Independent contractors are significantly older, better educated, and have higher family incomes and greater access to health benefits than temporary agency employees.

### Procedure

We developed measures of key dependent and independent variables and used chi-square statistics, segregation indices, and probit regression to test our hypotheses. We analyzed temporary agency employees and independent contractors separately to compare the two different types of alternative employment arrangements and to highlight similarities and differences.

### Measures

#### *Reasons for Alternative Employment Arrangements*

The CWS survey asks individuals in alternative employment arrangements: "What is the MAIN reason you have a temporary job (are an independent contractor)?" The response choice consists of 16 attributes, and the response represents the main or most salient attribute or reason for being in alternative employment. We categorized the 16 possible responses into four groups, consistent with prior research. Specifically, we grouped the three responses that represent work/family-centered reasons (child-care, other family/personal obligations, and flexible schedule) following the classification used by Kalleberg et al. (1997). Another group consists of three responses that describe work-related dimensions (own boss, money is better, training). The remaining two groups represent responses that reflect involuntary reasons for choosing contingent work (only type of work could find, hope leads to a permanent job, laid-off and rehired as contingent worker, other economic), which Kalleberg et al. (1997) categorized as "economic reasons," and other voluntary personal reasons (health limita-

tions, social security limitations, in school, and other personal).

#### *Attitude Toward Alternative Employment*

To measure attitude toward their employment arrangement, we used a single-item attitude measure that consists of an evaluation of alternative employment (Olson & Zanna, 1993). The question asks respondents to make a judgment about their work arrangement. Individuals who work for temporary help agencies were asked: "Earlier you said you were paid by a temporary help agency. Would you prefer a job with a different type of employer?" Response choices are qualitative response categories: yes, no, or depends. Independent contractors were asked a similar question: "Would you prefer to work for someone else rather than being an independent contractor/self-employed?" Although asked as separate questions, each has the same objective, which is to capture the level of satisfaction with alternative employment versus other arrangements. Our sample includes only those who answered yes (coded as 1) or no (coded as 0) for ease of interpretation of the statistical analyses. Those who answered "depends" represented 4.2% of the sample. We analyzed whether excluding this group made a difference in our findings, and we found none.

#### *Other Independent Variables*

We measured *Occupation* with the CPS two-digit code categorization. We include two measures of *family responsibility* that are associated with the most family responsibility: number of infants less than 1 year of age and number of preschool children between 1 and 5 years of age (Rothausen, 1999). We also measured the type of work schedule the individual works because research suggests that married women prefer part-time schedules to balance their work and family roles better (Barker, 1993). *Part-time schedule* is an indicator variable with the value 1 if the respondent indicated that he or she works less than 35 hr per week. We used measures of family income and access to health insurance to capture the financial benefits of dual earner marriages. *Family income* is a self-report measure collected in the CPS survey. Family income is defined as the combined income of all family members during the last 12 months. It includes money from jobs; net income from business, farm, or rent; pensions; dividends; interest; social security payments; and any other money

income received by family members who are 15 years of age or older. The response scale represented 14 categorical ranges, the lowest range represents less than \$5,000, and the highest range represents \$75,000 or more. Each range was converted into a dollar amount, which represented the average of the two endpoints in each category range. For example, the lowest range represented 0 to \$5,000. The average of these two amounts is \$2,500. The highest range was the average of \$75,000 and \$250,000, a conservative estimate given that the high end is highly skewed. *Access to health insurance* is another important resource in the United States, where health insurance is primarily available only through employer benefits. Both Houseman (1997) and Abraham and Taylor (1996) indicated that a major reason employers used contingent work arrangements is to avoid providing costly employee benefits. Included in the model is a single-item measure that indicates whether the individual has access to health insurance. The dummy measure has a value of 1 if the individual answered yes to the question "Do you have health insurance from any source?"

#### Control Variables

The higher the wage and the better the job circumstances, the more likely the individuals prefer their work arrangement (Marler et al., 2002). However, we could not reliably include a measure of hourly wage as a control variable because individuals' self-reported weekly wage and hours, and weekly hours are not reliable for temporary agency em-

ployees and independent contractors. Consequently, we used age, age squared, education, and tenure to measure respondents' wage circumstances. *Age*, measured in terms of the number of years from birth, also serves as a control variable to account for the significant and positive relation it has to job satisfaction (Cherrington, Condie, & England, 1979; Glen, Taylor, & Weaver, 1977; Lorence, 1987; Mitchell, 1998). *Education* was measured on an ordinal scale that contains nine discrete values; with a low of eight representing less than a ninth grade education and a high of 21 representing a doctoral degree. *Tenure* represents the number of months an individual has been working in an alternative employment arrangement. Tenure is a measure of job experience, and it has been shown to be significantly and positively related to preference for alternative work arrangements (Marler, 2000).

## RESULTS

Descriptive statistics, chi-squares, and *t* tests of variable means of temporary agency employees and independent contractors are shown in Table I. The descriptive statistics illustrate the key differences between those in temporary agency employment and those in independent contracting arrangements. Temporary agency arrangements employ mostly women (59% of the temporary agency sample), are a "settled for" not preferred, employment arrangement (about 60% do not prefer temporary agency employment), and a large proportion of temporary agency employees are without benefits from any

**Table I.** Descriptive Statistics, *t* tests, and Chi Square Analyses of Variables by Alternative Employment Arrangement and by Gender

	Temporary agency <sup>a</sup>				Independent contractors <sup>b</sup>			
	Mean <sup>c</sup>		SD		Mean <sup>c</sup>		SD	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Preference	<b>0.46</b>	<b>0.35</b>	0.49	0.48	0.91	0.92	0.27	0.29
Age (yrs)	<b>38.60</b>	<b>42.10</b>	11.3	13.70	<b>43.50</b>	<b>46.70</b>	11.9	11.30
Sex	<b>59%</b>	<b>41%</b>	0.49	0.49	<b>34%</b>	<b>66%</b>	0.47	0.47
Tenure (mos)	17.00	23.00	26.6	34.50	<b>94.00</b>	<b>143.00</b>	125	98.80
Education (yrs)	13.20	13.10	1.96	2.60	13.90	13.80	2.9	2.50
Number of infants	0.06	0.06	0.27	0.23	0.05	0.04	0.21	0.21
Number of preschool-age	0.27	0.31	0.62	0.63	<b>0.34</b>	<b>0.28</b>	0.59	0.63
Part-time schedule	<b>0.27</b>	<b>0.19</b>	0.45	0.39	<b>0.53</b>	<b>0.14</b>	0.35	0.50
Family income	<b>49,668</b>	<b>41,370</b>	34,860	32,354	64,398	61,821	40,500	40,673
Health benefit	0.67	0.61	0.47	0.49	<b>0.84</b>	<b>0.81</b>	0.39	0.37

<sup>a</sup>*n* = 303.

<sup>b</sup>*n* = 3, 843.

<sup>c</sup>Bold indicate means are not equal *p* < .05.

source (33% of women and 39% of men). This contrasts with independent contractors, a minority of whom are women (34% of the sample of independent contractors); 92% prefer their employment arrangement, and most have benefits (82%). In summary, temporary agency employment follows the traditionally feminine, ghettoized, occupational pattern, and independent contracting does not.

Within each type of employment arrangement there are also differences between men and women that suggest a typical gender pattern. Temporary agency women were significantly younger (38.6 years) than men (42 years) in temporary agency employment, were more likely to have a part-time schedule (27%) than men were (19%), and also had higher family incomes (\$49,668) than men did (\$41,370). Temporary agency women also preferred their employment arrangement (46%) more than men did (35%).

Similar to temporary agency women, women independent contractors were also significantly younger (43.5 years) than men (46.7 years), and they were considerably more likely to work part-time (53%) than were men (14%). Unlike temporary agency women, however, women independent contractors had about the same family income (\$64,398) as men had (\$61,821), and equally preferred their employment arrangement.

Our first hypothesis was that gender schema operated within alternative employment arrangements (even though such arrangements are in some sense “nontraditional”), such that married men and women have gendered rationales for being in alternative work. Specifically, we predicted that significantly more married women than married men would report family-centered reasons and significantly more married men than married women would report work-centered reasons. This hypothesis was supported, as the results of our analyses show in Table II. A chi-square test of independence indicates that reasons and gender are not independent within temporary agency employment,  $\chi^2 = 31, p < .001$ , nor within independent contracting,  $\chi^2 = 539, p < .001$ . Thus, the data show that there are significant differences by gender in reasons for being in alternative employment arrangements. As shown in Table II, 34% of temporary agency women and 45% of women independent contractors indicated family reasons for being in alternative employment, including childcare, flexible schedule, and other family-related reasons. By contrast, only 10% of married men in temporary arrangements and 16% of male independent contrac-

**Table II.** Chi Square Test of Reasons for Alternative Employment by Type of Employment and Gender

Reason	Temporary		Independent contractor	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Family-related <sup>d</sup>	10%	34%	16%	45%
Work-related <sup>b</sup>	9%	5%	57%	33%
Other economic <sup>c</sup>	65%	48%	8%	6%
Other <sup>d</sup>	16%	12%	20%	16%
$\chi$	31***		539***	
<i>df</i>	15		15	
<i>N</i>	303		3,843	

<sup>a</sup>Family-related reasons include childcare, other family/personal, and flexible schedule.

<sup>b</sup>Work-related reasons include to be own boss, money is better, and training.

<sup>c</sup>Other economic includes only type of work could find, hope leads to permanent job, laid-off and rehired as contingent worker, other economic.

<sup>d</sup>Other includes health limitations, social security limitations, in school and other personal.

\*\*\* $p < .001$ .

tors gave a family reason for being in alternative employment. As predicted, married women in alternative employment arrangements were more likely than married men to report being in alternative employment for family reasons. In further support of our first hypothesis, the results show that both temporary agency men (9%) and independent contract men (57%) identified work-related reasons in significantly higher proportions than women did in temporary agency employment (5%) and independent contracting (33%). Men were much more likely to cite “enjoys being own boss” (45%) than were women (25%). Similarly, men were more likely to report “money is better” (10%) as a rationale than were women (5%).

Type of employment arrangement also influenced the nature of rationales for alternative employment arrangements. Temporaries, both men and women, were more likely to report being in alternative employment for economic reasons, such as the “only type of work they could find,” whereas independent contractors were more apt to cite work-related aspects, such as “enjoys being own boss,” as the primary reason for their employment arrangement. Gender differences operated across both types of employment arrangements, however. Women were more likely than men in both types of arrangements to cite family-related reasons.

Our second hypothesis concerned the presumption that alternative employment, like part-time work, offers greater flexibility, thereby facilitating working parents’, especially mothers’, efforts to

“balance” work and child-rearing responsibilities. We looked at preference for alternative employment as a function of the employment structure being consistent with gender schema regarding work and family expectations for men and women. We examined both preference for alternative employment and the occupational distribution across men and women in these employment arrangements. In our second hypothesis we asserted that there would be gender differences in the structure and preferences for alternative employment arrangements but that this would differ by alternative employment arrangements. Temporary agency employment, which evolved from a gendered process, was expected to result in gender differences in occupational distribution and preferences. In contrast, because independent contracting employment evolved from less gendered processes, we expected to see no gender differences within independent contracting at the social structural level.

First, we looked at gender difference from a social structural perspective. We expected that there would be gender-based occupational segregation for temporary agency employees but not for independent contractors. Our results, shown in Table III, revealed that the segregation index, which compared the distribution of men and women across occupations in all employment arrangements, was quite high. If there were no occupational segregation (that is, if gender and occupation were independent), then the index would approach zero. If there were complete segregation, it would approach 100 (Blau et al., 1997). The index for standard work arrangements, based on occupations at the

two-digit level of aggregation, was 45, whereas the index for independent contractors was 47, and the index for temporary agency employees was 50. Thus, all three employment arrangements suggest some gender segregation.

In support of our second hypothesis, however, our results show that temporary work arrangements exhibited substantial occupational segregation by gender, compared to that found in conventional work arrangements. The last row of Table III illustrates these structural differences in occupational segregation across employment arrangements. In this row, distributions of female temporaries and independent contractors are compared to that of men in standard employment. The cross-employment segregation for female temporaries compared to men in standard work arrangements was 64, which was significantly higher than the standard work arrangement segregation index of 45, and indicates that female temporaries are in occupations that were significantly more gendered than those of women in standard work arrangements. In further support of hypothesis two, we found no significant difference for the same comparison of occupational distribution between female independent contractors and men in standard employment.

These differing results suggest that occupational structures were especially segregated for female temporaries, whose occupational distributions are consistent with gender schema and gendered segregation. For example, the data show that women temporaries were more likely to be clustered in clerical occupations than were women either in traditional employment or independent contract arrangements.

**Table III.** Occupation Distribution and Segregation Index by Work Arrangement

Occupations	Standard		Temporary		Independent contractors	
	Men (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)
Executive, administrative, and managerial	15.0	14.0	7.0	8.0	23.0	15.0
Professional speciality	14.0	17.0	9.0	6.0	15.0	22.0
Technicians and related support	3.0	4.0	7.0	4.0	1.0	1.0
Sales occupation	11.0	12.0	1.0	3.0	16.0	21.0
Clerical	6.0	26.0	14.0	49.0	1.0	9.0
Service occupation	11.0	17.0	9.0	9.0	2.0	24.0
Precision production, craft, and repair	17.0	2.0	9.0	2.0	26.0	3.0
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	19.0	7.0	42.0	19.0	9.0	3.0
Farming, forestry, and fishing	4.0	1.0	2.0	—	7.0	2.0
Total employed	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Segregation indexes						
By employment arrangement		45		50		49
Compared to standard employment		45	58	64*	63*	51

\* $p < .05$  on paired  $t$  test with traditional occupational distribution.



**Table IV.** Probit Regression on Preference for Temporary Agency Employment

Variable	<i>dP/dx</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>dP/dx</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>dP/dx</i>	<i>SE</i>
Step 1						
Married women	0.177	0.06***	0.147	0.07***	0.101	0.07
Step 2						
Number of infants			-0.315	0.15 <sup>+</sup>	-0.378	0.24
Number of preschool children			0.036	0.15	0.057	0.07
Wife with infants			0.377	0.12	0.461	0.22
Wife with preschool			0.377	0.26	0.057	0.15
Step 3						
Part-time schedule					0.237	0.07***
Family income					0.000	0.000***
Health benefit					0.072	0.066
<i>N</i>	303			303	303	
Degrees of freedom	5			9	12	
$\chi^2$	32.48***			34.1***	53.68***	
$\Delta\chi^2$				1.61	19.59***	

Note. Control variables included but not shown are age, age squared, tenure, and education.

<sup>+</sup>*p* < .10. \*\*\**p* < .001.

In addition to social structural differences, we examined intrapersonal differences by studying preferences for employment arrangement. Tables IV and V summarize the results of our probit regression analysis of preference for alternative employment. Table IV shows the results for temporary agency employees, and Table V shows the results for independent contractors. Our results (shown in the first columns of Tables IV and V) provide support for our second hypothesis. Specifically, married women temporaries were significantly more likely than men were to prefer alternatives to standard employment arrangements. There was a 17.7% point difference in probability of preference between mar-

ried women and men in temporary agency employment (significant at *p* < .001). Consistent with the results shown in Table I, the same analyses for independent contractors (Table V, column 1) indicated no significant difference in preference for standard employment over independent contracting between married men and women. These results held even after we controlled for differences in individual wage earning capacity, tenure, and education.

In our third hypothesis, we posited that gender differences at the intrapersonal level for temporary agency employees would relate more to the presumption of the existence of a family breadwinner than to a family caretaker. Thus, we further

**Table V.** Probit Regression on Preference for Independent Contracting

Variable	<i>dP/dx</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>dP/dx</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>dP/dx</i>	<i>SE</i>
Step 1						
Married women	0.002	0.009	0.005	0.010	0.003	0.011
Step 2						
Number of infants			0.061	0.031**	0.059	0.030*
Number of preschool children			0.003	0.009	0.005	0.008
Wife with infants			-0.069	0.071	-0.069	0.071
Wife with preschool			-0.001	0.020	-0.005	0.020
Step 3						
Part-time schedule					-0.011	0.011
Family income					0.000	0.000***
Health benefit					0.036	0.013***
<i>N</i>	3843			3843	3843	
Degrees of freedom	5			9	12	
$\chi^2$	65.23***			69.93***	124.48***	
$\Delta\chi^2$				4.7	54.55***	

Note. Control variables included but not shown are age, age squared, tenure, and education.

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001.

analyzed individual preferences to determine to what extent family care provider, a feminine characteristic, or financial provider, a masculine characteristic, influenced preference for alternative employment. If preference were a function of reinforcing gender schema and structures such that caretaking within families predominated, then adding measures of family responsibility would provide a better explanation of the gender difference in preference between women and men in temporary agency employment. The second column of Table IV shows whether a significant gender difference between married men's and women's preference for temporary agency employment remained after we added family responsibility measures to the model. The third column of Table IV shows whether the gender difference remained after we added financial provider variables to the model.

Measures of family responsibility, when entered into the model for temporary agency employees, did reduce the percentage difference in preference between married men and women from 17.7 to 14.7%, but this change was not significant. Furthermore, the family measures as a group did not explain any additional variance in preference for temporary agency employees,  $\Delta\chi^2 = 1.72$ ,  $p > .10$ . Thus, gender does not appear to be simply a proxy for the child-care responsibilities presumed to motivate a desire for greater flexibility in hours of work consistent with the gender schema for women. In fact, having infants in the family appeared to decrease substantially the probability of preference for temporary agency employment, although the coefficient for this negative relationship was not significant at conventional levels,  $dP/dx = -.315$ ,  $p < .10$ . The outcomes for independent contractors shown in Table V were markedly different. Married women independent contractors were not significantly more likely than married men to prefer their work arrangement. In contrast to temporary workers, however, the presence of infants significantly increased independent contractors' preference for their alternative arrangement. Independent contractors, both married men and women, were 6% more likely to prefer their employment arrangement for each infant they had in their families.

The results in the third columns of Tables IV and V show the results of what happened when variables that represent financial effects, e.g., family breadwinner, were added to the models. When part-time status, family income, and access to health benefits, e.g., family breadwinner effects, were added, the differ-

ence between temporary agency men's and women's preference was no longer significantly different. Furthermore, part-time schedule,  $dP/dx = .237$ ,  $p < .001$ , and measure of family income,  $dP/dx = .0001$ ,  $p < .001$ , were positively and significantly related to preference for temporary agency employment. Taken together these results suggest that preference for temporary agency employment is better explained by *both* men and women having another source of "breadwinning" rather than by women choosing for family-related flexibility.

Again, the results of adding secondary earner and financial variables to the model for independent contractors (shown in Table V, column three) reveal quite different results. Unlike temporary employees, a part-time schedule did not have a significantly positive effect on preference for independent contractors. The coefficient of this measure was negative but not significantly different from zero. These employment arrangements were not preferred because they were sought as a source of part-time or secondary income. Preference for independent contracting was strongly influenced by the availability of health benefits, in contrast to temporary agency employment where access was not significantly related to preference net of other factors. Taken together, the results for independent contractors suggest that independent contracting was preferred because it contributed to *both* family care and financial providing.

## DISCUSSION

In this study we examined the degree to which gender influences alternative employment arrangements. Contemporary work/family research literature on standard employment suggests that gendered divisions of labor at home and in the workplace perpetuate gender differences at multiple levels, such that employed women take on a "second shift" of unpaid family care work and men remain the principal family financial providers. Different gender theories predict that gender expectations mirror and are mirrored in beliefs, attitudes, and workplace structures. Our data show that, as in standard work arrangements, gender schema and social structures prevail in alternative employment arrangements. Gender plays out in these two types of alternative employment arrangements quite differently, however.

Our analyses show similarities and differences between temporary agency employees and independent contractors. There are conventional gender

differences between married women and men in the reasons they give for being in alternative employment arrangements; women were more likely to report family-centered reasons, and men were more likely to report work-centered reasons. But these gender schemas are not the only factor that influenced attitudes to alternative employment arrangements.

In temporary employment, the employment structure and consequent career opportunities also reflected traditional gendered expectations that women were *not* expected to be family breadwinners. Temporary jobs largely occurred in clerical occupations that were characterized by limited upward mobility and built on the social expectation that women give priority to their family responsibilities (Goldin, 1991). Consistent with the clustering of women in temporary agency employment, many suggest that the explanation for gender differences between men and women in this alternative employment arrangement derives from the greater flexibility this employment structure offers for women to meet their desire to be the family care-provider. Our additional analyses of this national probability sample of temporary agency employees do not support this common presumption. The gender difference in preference does not relate to traditional family caretaker roles (e.g., to accommodate young children at home). Rather the gender difference is better explained by male breadwinners' expectations. The gender difference in preference diminishes when *neither man nor woman* have to be the primary financial provider.

Thus temporaries' preferences are consistent with a neotraditional version of the breadwinner/homemaker template (Moen, 2003); such neotraditional expectations are also built into the occupational structures and opportunities available to those in temporary employment, thereby reifying social expectations about women's secondary earner status.

By contrast, women in independent contracting more closely conform to the image of the family care-provider in that their preference for alternative employment is related to traditional family caretaking roles. Although their employment arrangements are structurally less gendered than those in temporary agency employment, our evidence suggests that independent contractors' attitudes are significantly more affected by family structure than those of temporary agency employees. Thus, in contrast to temporary agency employees, the presence of young children in the family significantly increases preference for alternative employment. Also in contrast to temporary

employees, independent contractors are less likely to prefer alternative employment if they work reduced hours. These results suggest that independent contractors preferred their arrangements *separate from* and *not because* of their reduced-time schedules.

Both independent contractors and temporaries seek flexibility, but for different (but still gender-related) reasons. Temporary agency employees are motivated by financial considerations. Nevertheless, they are clustered in employment structures built on gender expectations that these individuals will be family *care* providers and *not financial* providers. Independent contractors, on the other hand, although motivated by family care provider expectations, are in employment structures whose formations do not exhibit this implicit gendered assumption (or perhaps assume masculine breadwinner expectations) and yet self-impose gender schema onto this employment arrangement. Consequently, while women independent contractors are not externally restricted to secondary earner and family care-provider status within their employment structure, they choose secondary and care-providing status by working fewer hours.

Taken together, our findings point to the importance of understanding gender in studying alternative employment arrangements, along with the strategic responses of women and men to the work/family career quandary. Gender influences likelihood of being in particular employment arrangements and occupational distribution. The fact that temporaries are more likely to be women (59%) and independent contractors are more likely to be men (66%) underscores the gendered structures within which even those in alternative arrangements are embedded. Still, independent contract arrangements may be less likely than temporary work arrangements to reconstruct neotraditional gender structures. Independent contracting may offer the flexibility and autonomy to create work schedules that are more supportive of those in dual-earner couples, relative to standard work arrangements that still presume a (male) unencumbered worker career template (Moen, 2003; Moen & Roehling, 2005; Williams, 2000).

The rapid growth in alternative employment arrangements is a response both to a changing global internet-based economy and a changing workforce unable or unwilling to fulfill the demands of the unencumbered worker who follows the standard lock-step career path. We have shown the extent to which gender pervades alternative employment arrangements, which serve to perpetuate gender

schema and reinforce outdated work and family structures. Temporary agency employment illustrates the problems that arise when social structures reify outdated assumptions about men's and women's roles in family structures. Thus, few in temporary agency employment are satisfied with this alternative work arrangement. On the other hand, independent contracting offers potential for men and women to resolve the paid work/care work career quandary thereby providing more satisfying employment than temporary agency employment. Even within independent contracting, however, it appears that changes in men's and women's attitudes and choices toward work and family are still evolving.

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