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# “The long arm of the household”: Gendered struggles in combining paid work with social and civil participation over the lifecycle

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## Abstract

Successfully combining paid work and various forms of social and civil participation is commonly assumed to be beneficial to both individuals and society. However, integrating these aspects can be difficult, partly because they can be connected through relationships that operate in opposing directions. Combining paid work and participation over the long term can be especially challenging, as the factors informing each continuously evolve. This balancing act may be particularly difficult for women who, relative to men, often manage greater caring responsibilities alongside work. To build understanding of these matters, we weave together the participation and work-related content of the UK's National Child Development Study and the associated Social Participation and Identity Study (2008). Using TSOL (total social organization of labor), we unpack a bidirectional relationship between these items and highlight the importance of household dynamics and gender. Paid work's flexibility, autonomy, predictability, and intensity also emerge as important elements in achieving a sustainable work-participation balance.

## KEYWORDS

civil participation, gender, NCDS, paid work, social participation

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Paid work (Jahoda, 1981) and some forms of social and civil participation (Brodie et al., 2009) are widely interpreted as individually and socially beneficial. Social and civil participation is understood here to refer to participation in social, political, and religious clubs, groups, associations and meetings, collective activities, and volunteering (Elliott, Miles, Parsons, & Savage, 2010). Volunteering, for instance, has been associated with higher levels of wellbeing (Morrow-Howell, Tang, Hinterlong, & Rozario, 2003) while employment has been associated with better mental health relative to unemployment (Butterworth et al., 2011). All things being equal, it might therefore be assumed that the greatest benefits will be accrued in situations where work and social/civil participation are successfully combined over the lifecourse. However, as these activities are connected through a complicated, often fraught, relationship, particularly so for women who are often balancing higher family-orientated caring commitments (ONS, 2013), this is no straightforward feat.

Several studies have uncovered a link between employment and social/civil participation (Brodie et al., 2009). For example, the NCVO (2016) and ONS (2017) identified higher rates of volunteering amongst individuals in part-time compared to full-time employment. However, this is a complex relationship: while proportionally more of the employed volunteer, the economically inactive devote more time to volunteering: 27 min/day in 2015, compared to 9 min/day by those in paid work (ONS, 2017). A likely explanation for this difference are the time demands of paid work, which are frequently identified as a barrier to participation, certainly at higher intensities (Brodie et al., 2009, 2011). Policymakers and politicians, while exhorting the value of paid work and social/civil participation, have been less vocal on the challenges faced in successfully combining these items, and of the significance of gender in these integration efforts.

In this article, we position gender roles and norms as frustrating women's ability to readily combine paid work and social/civil participation activities. Central to this argument is the "dominant concept of work," which has supported industrial capitalism and patriarchy (Ransome, 1996), entailing a gendered division of labor around a male breadwinner/female homemaker model, and which has strongly shaped British (Lewis, 1992) and various Western European and North American societies. Although this model has become less embedded in the post-war period, it continues to perform a powerful role in reproducing social norms around how, and by whom, paid and unpaid work should be performed, supported by family relations, labor market structure, and a gendered culture (Strangleman & Warren, 2008).

Women's engagement with paid work has traditionally been more fragmented than men's and managed alongside higher levels of unpaid work within the home. Women are much more likely to work part-time around family formation than men, they are also more likely to perform more domestic labor (even when there is symmetry between their paid work and a male partner's), and to assume more caring responsibilities (Grint, 1998; Morris, 1990). Gender differences are also evident in social and civil participation. In various Western European and North American societies, men take part in more sports and unpaid committee work, and women tend more towards education, social welfare, and fundraising activities (NCVO, 2019). Finch and Groves (1980) attribute some of these differences to women's cultural designation as carers, reinforced through inherited understandings of kinship obligation, or regarded as an extension of the domestic work responsibilities ascribed to them within the traditional breadwinner model. Skeggs (1997) suggests that social norms around "respectability" and the performance of femininity might also be important in explaining why men and women engage in qualitatively different kinds of social/civil participation activity. Focusing on working-class women, and thus highlighting the importance of social class in combination with gender (Crompton, 2002; Walby, 1986; Warren, 2007), she argued that women "buy into" these norms because their observation affords status to those ordinarily afforded little status (Skeggs, 1997). Gendered respectability, then, provides the potentially powerless with an important form of cultural capital at the same time as it regulates behavior, including social/civil participation, in the public sphere.

In this article, we use the phrase “the long arm of the household” to refer to the influence, in practical and normative terms, of “the household” on men’s and women’s social and civil participation, particularly how the gendered organization of, and expectations around, paid and unpaid work affects women’s participation in the public sphere—in work, education, leisure, and community/social activities. This is a play on the concept of the “long arm of the job” that we discuss later and that has been used to describe the impact of paid work on social and civil participation.

Set against this background, in this article we explore interactions across the lifecourse between work and social/civil participation in the lives of a British birth cohort, the 1958 Birth Cohort, captured in the National Child Development Study (NCDS). Moreover, we unpack the significance of gender in the balancing of these items. Forming part of the post-war “Baby boomer” generation, this birth cohort has lived through dramatic changes in employment, industries, and workforce composition, which make it a compelling focus of study. Steep declines in manufacturing employment have been coupled with increases in service industry employment, while women’s participation in the labor market has been transformed. In 1971, for example, 53% of women were in paid employment; by 2018 this had risen to over 71% (Powell, 2019). Legislation like the Equal Pay Act, 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act, 1975 has recast the UK’s regulatory framework, supporting women’s employment experiences, together with (somewhat) changing expectations around the role of women in the public and private sphere.

These wider social, political, and economic forces have helped carve out family, work, and social/civil participation trajectories for this generation that continue to influence generations today. Uneven demands and expectations around childcare, for instance, often meant that female Baby boomers engaged in part-time work and, out of necessity, pioneered balancing new expectations around female employment with entrenched expectations around “mothering.” These expectations persist today and continue to inform women’s work and family roles, as evidenced by the gulf between male and female participation in part-time work (Powell, 2019). Consequently, investigating work–participation dynamics amongst the 1958 Birth Cohort provides insights pertinent to circumstances today. Further, the study’s multiple data collection sweeps, and a linked qualitative study on social participation and identity completed in 2008, support investigations into the work–participation nexus within individuals’ lives over time, presenting a unique way to address a critically understudied issue (Brodie et al., 2009).

Focusing on how lives unfold over time enables researchers to interpret simultaneously: the cumulative effect of biographies on present circumstances; the importance of timing; individuals’ embeddedness in historical time; linked lives; and individual agency (Bengtson, Elder, & Putney, 2005). This kind of lifecourse perspective also allows consideration of the unpredictable and non-sequenced trajectories and transitions that populate people’s lives, and which may inform their participation and paid work pathways (Neale, 2015). Focusing on the lives of members of the 1958 Birth Cohort, the following questions framed our research, and this article:

1. How, and how successfully, are paid work and social/civil participation combined within the 1958 Birth Cohort, and is gender important in this?
2. How does “the long arm of the household” affect men’s and women’s participation trajectories?

Below we consider the evidence on work–participation dynamics, and the influence of family and household circumstances, which necessarily connects with gender, in these relations. We then introduce Glucksmann’s (2009) conceptual framework of a “total social organisation of labour” to shed light on the gendering of work–participation relationships. This is followed by a brief discussion of our methods and the data sets used. Our findings are presented around two interrelated, and gendered, themes that emerged from analysis of the data: work–participation bidirectionality, which connects to our first research question; and personal and family matters, which connects to our second. We close by reflecting on the implications of our findings for critical gender theory.

## 1.1 | The work–participation dynamic

Social and civil participation is not a discrete component of people's lives but is reliant upon a counterbalancing of time and commitments that can only be achieved through negotiation with other responsibilities. Pivotal in these is the economic driver of paid work. Over the lifecourse, fluctuations in paid work, which can be highly gendered, inform social and civil participation in complex ways, involving both opportunities and barriers which, as this article explores, provide these activities with their own trajectories.

The ways in which people become participants, and the activities they engage in, are related to their socio-economic circumstances. For example, disadvantage can limit people's capacity to take on unpaid work where economic drivers have precedence. Relatedly, the UK's "civic core" (Mohan & Bulloch, 2012)—a subset of the population responsible for a disproportionate amount of voluntary effort—consists predominantly of individuals from professional, managerial, and technical social classes. A person's socioeconomic situation is often tied to their labor market positioning: this can provide resources and opportunities that enable social and civil participation but, equally, it can have fewer positive effects.

On the one hand, paid work can unlock social and civil participation opportunities, such as trade union involvement, while, less directly, it can provide the skills, contacts, disposition, and resources to facilitate participation and develop capabilities (Brodie et al., 2009; Wilson & Musick, 1997). This positive relationship can also flow in the opposite direction, with participation providing benefits, such as opportunities for informal learning, helping people into paid work, or advancing careers (Sauer, 2015). Indeed, there is growing evidence that volunteering enhances employability for some individuals (Ellis Paine, McKay, & Moro, 2013).

Set against this relatively positive picture, "the long arm of the job" (Lynd & Lynd, 1929, in Wilson & Musick, 1997) has also been identified as an important barrier to social and civil participation. Indeed, paid work as a barrier to broader participation has been the main theme connecting these items in the literature. Marxist theory led the way in identifying work organization and labor divisions as important influences on participation (Wilson & Musick, 1997). Wilensky (1961), for example, formulated the "spillover thesis" which argues that labor market experiences steer social and civic participation experiences. Positive labor market experiences, in regards to such matters as the complexity, autonomy, and status of work, are seen to promote greater interaction with colleagues with similar values and interests, stronger work attachments, the integration of work into a person's life, the creation of strong ties to the community and society (Wilensky, 1961, p. 522), and the development of "civic skills" (Wilson & Musick, 1997), self-confidence and self-efficacy (Link, Lennon, & Dohrenwend, 1993). This collection of factors is seen to propel people into social and civic engagements. In contrast, repetitive or routine work that offers little freedom, little status, and no orderly career path is seen to promote weak work attachments, a stark division between work and leisure, and uncertain ties to the community, resulting in a retreat from work and an associated retreat from wider community life (Wilensky, 1961, pp. 522–523). Studying a sample of "upper-working and lower-middle class" white men, Wilensky (1961) found evidence to support his thesis.

Paid work's colonization of time, with full-time workers in the UK, for example, spending on average 37 h a week working (ONS, 2020a), is often identified as a key barrier to participation (Brodie et al., 2011). Caring duties and family responsibilities also consume time and, consequently, are also seen to affect people's "availability" for social/civil participation (Brodie et al., 2011). Putnam (2000) identified time pressures stemming from both paid work and household/family responsibilities as an important determinant of participation arguing that for full-time workers, the better educated and dual-career families the "time bind" formed a real impediment to social/civil participation. In some instances, however, the relationship between work time and participation seems counter-intuitive. For example, as previously noted, studies suggest that volunteering is higher amongst those who work full-time compared to those who are economically inactive (ONS, 2017). Ultimately, paid work and social/civil participation emerge in the literature as items connected through various, sometimes contradictory, pathways of influence, which are shaped by family/household responsibilities.

## 1.2 | Total social organization of labor

To address our research questions, we drew on concepts from work, gender, and population studies. In particular, we adopted a lifecourse approach and utilized Glucksmann's (2009) conceptual framework of a "total social organisation of labour" to drive our analysis in capturing some of the heterogeneity in the gendering of labor-participation relationships. In order to track the interlinked trajectories of paid work and social/civil participation (which very often itself takes the form of unpaid work), to unpick the influence of household and family circumstances on these, and to illustrate the significance of analyzing these items together, we applied a total social organization of labor (TSOL) framework in our data analysis.

Utilizing a TSOL approach, researchers are called upon to map and assess how work—both paid and unpaid, formal and informal, in public and private spheres—is configured across different "structures, institutions, activities and people" (Glucksmann, 2000, p. 19) as well as across time and space, an approach that is theoretically valuable in enabling connections and distinctions to be mapped and analyzed (Parry, Taylor, Pettinger, & Glucksmann, 2005). In essence, work is thus conceptualized along a continuum in which six forms of labor, distinguished by pay, formality, and public/private sphere location, are identified: paid employment, paid informal work, paid work within the family, formal voluntary work, informal unpaid work, and unpaid domestic work (Taylor, 2004). Glucksmann (2009) later extended this to consider wider socioeconomic formations of labor, such as consumption work. Using a TSOL framework researchers can elucidate how labor in different domains is interconnected in individual and household biographies, and the dynamism in this process. Especially pertinent to our research interests, it is useful in analyzing gendered distinctions and determining the influence of the "long arm of the household" on both work and participation pathways.

Recent application of a TSOL framework to different social situation has proved valuable in understanding complex labor distributions. Williams's (2011) analysis of the English Localities Survey of labor practices examined 44 common domestic tasks, such as routine housework, repair work, and caring activities, in affluent and deprived communities, and utilized TSOL to develop a fine-grained understanding of community self-help. He found the dichotomizing of formal and informal community self-help to be an impediment in theorizing the participation of more deprived communities, for whom the definition of "community self-help" needed to be expanded to include reimbursed and below-the-radar activity, such as helping out friends and receiving gifts as reimbursement. Williams noted that community self-help practices were an important aspect of household coping strategies in deprived communities, and he has elsewhere explored the importance of class differences in the uptake and meanings of informal work (Williams & Nadim, 2012).

In another study, Wilson et al. (2017) applied TSOL to their analysis of an Italian telecare pilot, which enabled them to chart the interconnections between formal and informal care systems, and paid employment and unpaid work. TSOL enabled them to better appreciate the blurring of boundaries between professional and interpersonal relationships in care provision, to analyze the third sector's unexpected role in supporting older people's sustained involvement in telecare services, and, crucially, to theorize the distribution, impacts, and relationship between labors in different areas of the telecare system. It is precisely these intersections, and the analytical nuance that TSOL provides in uncovering them, which presents new insight for work theorists, as it becomes increasingly evident that the work we need to analyze in order to make sense of a social situation is paid as well as unpaid, formal as well as informal, and occurring in the private sphere as well as in the public sphere.

In the context of our research, we used a TSOL framework to look more deeply at the different forms of labors embedded in work-participation dynamics, and how class and gender provide powerful mediators in these trajectories. Before presenting our results, we turn now to the approach that we adopted to investigate the connections between paid work and social and civil participation in the 1958 Birth Cohort.

## 2 | METHODS

To investigate work–participation dynamics, we integrated two associated secondary data sets: structured survey data from the NCDS, a national, longitudinal birth cohort study (Power & Elliott, 2005), and qualitative biographical interview data from the linked Social Participation and Identity Study (the 2008 SPIS; Elliott et al., 2010), a sub-study involving 220 members of the NCDS. In 2008 the NCDS cohort reached age 50, and we engaged with the adulthood NCDS data sweeps up to this date (sweeps 4–8).

Steered by Patton's (1990, p. 170) argument that “more can be learned from intensively studying extreme or unusual cases than can be learned from statistical depictions of what the average case is like,” we purposefully sampled 50 SPIS interview transcripts associated with cohort members who almost all ( $n = 49$ ) presented, in their NCDS data records, extreme, yet policy-relevant, social and civil participation narratives over the lifecourse. Thus, we sampled SPIS transcripts for study based on an initial analysis of the NCDS data set. Table 1 describes the criteria used to assemble the sample.

Our sample enabled us to explore consistencies and differences between the work patterns of groups who participated: a lot (identified here as “frequent participants”), over many years (“lifelong participants”), or not at all (“lifelong nonparticipants”). The sample was predominantly female (68%), a feature arguably linked to the inclusion of religious participation in the sampling criteria (Table 1). Studies exploring religiosity in Western societies have typically found higher levels of religiosity amongst women (Miller & Hoffmann, 1995). Additional demographic information on our sample is provided in Table 2.

An inductive thematic analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006) was performed on the selected interview transcripts in NVivo by two of the authors. Coding started in an open process, using more “literal” codes, becoming more focused and interpretive over time, as the analysis was refined. Driven by our concern for an individual's TSOL, our coding was informed by this framework's core matters of interest. Consequently, codes and themes identified in the data included: domestic and caring work, family/household roles/responsibilities, paid work, transitions (between paid/unpaid work, in family arrangements, etc.), work–life organization/balance, household negotiation/decision making. We also identified codes and themes primarily concerned with the practice of volunteering and participating, these included: attitudes towards social/civil participation and volunteering, aids and barriers to social/civil participation and volunteering, forms/expressions of social/civil participation and volunteering. NCDS data were analyzed in Stata and Excel. Personalized timelines detailing cohort members' participation commitments at each NCDS data collection sweep were created to offer analytical comparability. All interviewees are assigned anonymized names to distinguish their experiences.

An important finding of our analysis, with methodological significance, was divergence in the way participation was conceptualized in the NCDS and SPIS. A result of this was a discrepancy in the scale of nonparticipation observed across our sample, which we have explored in detail elsewhere (Brookfield, Parry, & Bolton, 2018a). In short, where the NCDS identified 21 individuals within our sample as lifelong nonparticipants, the SPIS identified only seven. As appropriate, when discussing findings we identify cohort members' participation status both in terms of their NCDS and their SPIS data.

## 3 | FINDINGS

Analyzing interactions between work and participation over multiple decades amongst 50 individuals necessarily revealed vastly different experiences. However, amongst this diversity, points of convergence emerged, crosscut and mediated by gender. Two issues appeared key in explaining and framing the sample's work–participation experiences: the bidirectional relationship between work and participation, and personal and family matters. Regarding the former, our research revealed that participation could open up opportunities for paid

TABLE 1 Sampling criteria

Type of participation	Sampling criteria	N
Lifelong nonparticipation	Reported in every adult NCDS data collection sweep: not being a member of, and not joining in with, social, leisure, sports, community, interest, political, and religious clubs/groups/associations; not attending with any regularity religious meetings; and reported in the sweeps in which it was addressed, and which were responded to, not taking part in volunteering.	21
Lifelong participation	Reported in every adult NCDS data collection sweep responded to: being a member of and joining in with social, leisure, sports, community, interest, political, or religious clubs/groups/associations, or attending religious meetings at least monthly.	20
Frequent participation	Reported in sweep 8 at age 50 membership of, and joining in once a week or more with, at least three social, leisure, sports, community, interest, political, or religious clubs/groups/associations, or volunteering at least once a week.	8
Unemployed cohort member (only one in SPIS)	Included on the grounds that unemployment has been linked to reduced social participation (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2011).	1

Abbreviation: NCDS, National Child Development Study.

work, while paid work could open up opportunities for participation; however, reflecting previous findings, paid work could also reduce opportunities for participation. In terms of the latter, our analyses suggested that items such as household organization, family needs, health, attitudes, and personality characteristics influenced the relationship between work and social/civil participation over the lifecourse, sometimes determining if either activity even occurred. Anchored by our research questions, discussion of these issues structures this section.

### 3.1 | The bidirectional relationship between work and participation

Work opened up participation opportunities for some cohort members. In some cases it was the skills acquired in an individual's paid work that unlocked voluntary roles. The professional skills honed in Lorna's (lifelong participant) police force work were reapplied to her voluntary work—she took statements in Catholic marriage tribunals. This has echoes of the comparisons that Taylor (2004) made of the conceptually similar labors operating across different TSOL work domains, and indicates the fluidity that individuals can adopt in mobilizing familiar work activities across different contexts of their lives. Like Lorna, and suggestive, perhaps, of the influence of gendered social norms of “respectability” (Skeggs, 1997), many women in our sample participated in religious groups with several participating regularly and some occupying leadership roles. Perhaps also suggestive of the influence of these norms, the women in our sample presented a narrower range of group attachments than the men. Men's more diverse attachments might imply fewer restrictions on what is deemed an acceptable or respectable interest: a gendering of social roles in unpaid capacities that mirrors men's wider public sphere participation.

Work exposed some cohort members to previously unknown participation opportunities. Daniel (frequent participant) volunteered as a marshal on sponsored walks, after hearing about the role through work colleagues. Having recently moved to a new area, this work-related route into social participation supplanted the local networks he might otherwise have relied upon, and signaled the sometimes blurred boundaries between work and non-work relationships.



TABLE 2 Qualitative sample

	8 Frequent participants (%)	20 Lifelong participants (%)	21 NCDS-identified lifelong nonparticipants (%)	7 "True" lifelong nonparticipants (%)	1 Unemployed cohort member (%)
<b>Sex</b>					
Male	50	25	33	14	-
Female	50	75	67	86	100
<b>Health (self-reported) at age 50</b>					
Excellent	63	20	14	29	-
Very good	13	25	33	29	-
Good	-	50	33	13	-
Fair	13	-	14	29	100
Poor	13	5	5	-	-
<b>WEMWBS at age 50</b>					
WEMWBS score $\leq 44$	13	11	17	67	100
<b>Children by age 50 (number)</b>					
0	13	20	24	29	-
1	25	25	24	29	-
2	63	15	29	43	100
3 or more	-	40	24	-	-
<b>One or both parents alive when cohort member was 50</b>					
Parents alive	50	65	71	57	100
<b>Care for parents/in-laws on a weekly basis at age 50</b>					
Care for parents/in-laws	25	50	24	29	-
<b>Marital status at age 50</b>					
Married	63	72	76	86	100
Widowed	38	17	10	-	-
Divorced	-	-	5	-	-
Single	-	11	10	14	-

TABLE 2 (Continued)

	8 Frequent participants (%)	20 Lifelong participants (%)	21 NCDS-identified lifelong nonparticipants (%)	7 "True" lifelong nonparticipants (%)	1 Unemployed cohort member (%)
Highest qualification (by NVQ level 1–4) at age 50					
None	–	5	14	29	–
NVQ-1	–	10	19	–	–
NVQ-2	13	10	38	43	–
NVQ-3	13	20	5	–	–
NVQ-4	75	55	24	29	100
Economic activity at age 50					
Part-time employed	13	25	19	14	–
Full-time employed	50	60	62	57	–
Part-time self-employed	–	5	5	–	–
Full-time self-employed	38	–	10	14	–
Homemaker	–	10	–	–	–
Sick	–	–	5	14	–
Unemployed	–	–	–	–	100
Social class at 50					
I Professional occupations	13	11	5	–	–
II Managerial and technical occupations	50	39	45	67	–
III NM skilled non-manual occupations	–	17	35	33	–
III M skilled manual occupations	13	17	5	–	–
IV Partly skilled occupations	25	17	10	–	–
V Unskilled occupations	–	–	–	–	–

Source: Authors' analysis of NCDS data. University of London. Institute of Education. Centre for Longitudinal Studies. (2012). *National Child Development Study: Sweep 8, 2008–2009*. [data collection]. 3rd Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 6137. <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-6137-2>

Abbreviations: NCDS, National Child Development Study; WEMWBS, Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale.

Sometimes the workplace introduced individuals to opportunities for on-site participation, such as trade unions. Analysis of NCDS data alongside qualitative SPIS data identified a gendered dimension to trade union participation, similar to that observed in other data sets (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy & the Office for National Statistics, 2018). Men were more likely to participate as younger adults, at ages 23 and 33, and less so after that, with their participation rates corresponding to women's in later years. These divergences may speak to the consequences of women's heavier unpaid commitments around family formation, which reflect traditional gender roles, on their broader patterns of work and social/civil participation.

The organization of work was crucial in creating time for participation, with flexibility or control of working hours key. John, a frequent participant, and his wife were heavily involved in coaching their children's competitive swimming. Morning and evening coaching commitments were possible only because of their self-employment, which enabled them to manage their working schedule around their participation: "*I don't think we could do as much as we do with the children if we hadn't got the flexibility of the business.*" Unusually amongst our sample, for this couple, gender operated symmetrically around the household's organization of paid and unpaid work, at least read from John's perspective. Notably, as a group, "frequent participants" were more likely to belong to professional, managerial, and technical social classes (62.5%), and thus were performing qualitatively different types of work to "lifelong participants" (50%) or "lifelong nonparticipants" (50%): work that might be expected to provide greater autonomy, with Jakopovich (2014) pointing to the polarization of workplace autonomy around class markers, such as skills. While it is not only the more privileged who can participate in desired ways, frequent participants' intensive participation patterns would be more difficult to pursue alongside less autonomous and more traditionally organized full-time employee positions exhibiting "the long(er) arm of the job" (Wilson & Musick, 1997).

Work's relative predictability was influential in how effectively people balanced work and social/civil participation, more so than their working commitments or sectoral issues. Both Linda and Alice (respectively, frequent and lifelong participants) were part-time NHS nurses and, notwithstanding individual motivational differences, were similar enough to apply the type of biographical matching used by Crompton (2001) to understand how gender relations are structured. They had very different contracts, and consequently distinctive TSOLs. Linda's work was flexible and autonomous, it's "*given me my own diary,*" and could be managed around her unpaid work as a school governor and in a church. By contrast, Alice's hours were variable, which made it difficult to "*plan things around that.*" She targeted her participation around helping out neighbors and at a Sunday school, flexible activities that fitted around her working hours. In this context, it was less the content of paid work that affected women's participation agency, than how this was combined with its organization, and the control that individuals had over this. Notably, when her children were younger, Linda had worked shifts, and had found her work-life balance much more constrained, "*you couldn't totally commit to something,*" but moving onto a more flexible contract had enabled her to incorporate desired forms of social and civil participation more readily into her TSOL.

Participation opened up work opportunities for some cohort members. In some cases this was due to participation enhancing an individual's skillset and widening their interests. For example, Mary (frequent participant) counselled voluntarily for a charity working with male survivors of sexual abuse, an experience that fostered her ambition to become a professional counsellor. James (frequent participant) had coached local children in a voluntary capacity before the role led to opportunities to pursue paid athletics coaching, a welcome career change after recessionary pressures saw demand for his carpentry work plummet. Isobel (frequent participant) moved from volunteering at her daughter's school to, following successful completion of a teaching training course, full-time teaching.

Reflecting past findings, we found clear evidence of the potential for paid work to "close off" participation opportunities, with the "long arm of the job" being evident here. This issue was most often raised by the low-intensity or nonparticipants in our sample. Intensive working patterns, including long or unsociable working hours, commuting, and an expectation of work travel, had reverberations for cohort members' work-participation

dynamics and those of their families, reducing time and energy to participate. Such working arrangements were highly gendered, more often described by men, and discussed by women in terms of their impact upon family life. Partly this is a function of differential working patterns, with women in the UK having the shortest working hours of the 15 European Union countries that Warren (2010) analyzed, a product of the UK's buy-in to the breadwinner model, such that women in the cohort studied were frequently cast in the role of male career support in terms of the weighting of paid:unpaid work in their TSOL. Fiona (NCDS-identified frequent participant, SPIS-identified past participant) reflected on her husband's work, "because he's self-employed he works all the hours God sends as well. So it's not unusual for him not to be in until nine o'clock at night, working weekends, you know, bank holidays ... there's no balance, leisure time as a family." These findings are significant given the intensification of work pressures in the UK, with particular occupations experiencing these most acutely (Green, 2001).

Fueling rising work pressures are developments in information technology leading to the encroachment of work across all aspects of people's lives (Gregg, 2011) with the expectation of continual work accessibility; an issue that illustrates the permeable boundaries between public and private sphere relationships in individual TSOLs. As we write this, the guidance issued by the UK Government under the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic to work from home wherever possible, with an implied repurposing of homes into hybrid public-private spaces where paid, unpaid, caring, and educative work take place simultaneously in a previously uncharted, albeit also classed, TSOL, looks set to further complicate these negotiations. There has already been widespread speculation, and some emerging evidence to show (ONS, 2020b), that gender is playing a key role in how these tasks are being addressed within the home.

Shift working could be a complicating factor for families. Charlotte (NCDS-identified nonparticipant, SPIS-identified past participant) worked in financial services and after a 4-day shift found that she needed a day to recuperate. Her husband also worked shifts, and this led to her commenting, "we just don't have time," giving some indication of the difficulty that coordinating non-traditional working patterns presents for households. A lack of regularity in Charlotte's weekly working patterns made it difficult to commit to activities such as formalized volunteering, and consequently shift workers often participated in more flexible and informal ways. Relevant here is Williams's (2011) work, introduced earlier, which highlighted the importance of capturing forms of community participation such as mutual favors and self-provisioning, which are equally important in mapping the TSOLs of deprived communities. A consequence of having used NCDS data was that the forms of labor we identified were an artefact of the questions and responses contained in the NCDS. For social/civil participation there was an emphasis on more formalized, group-based (and middle-class) activities rather than those of a more informal, ad hoc nature, such as doing a "good turn" for a neighbor (Brookfield, Parry, & Bolton, 2018b).

The burden of reconciling family time pressures often fell disproportionately upon women, reflecting the continued gendering of particular kinds of household labor, with self-orientated participation sacrificed as child-focused participation increased. Fiona (NCDS-identified frequent participant, SPIS-identified past participant), an accountant, described the pressures when her family were young, and she had been working long hours, as "horrendous." Notably, Fiona's husband had also been working long hours, leaving no one to take on the role of "career support person" that more commonly characterized a couple's household arrangements where one (in greater part, the male partner) worked hours that took them away from home. For many of our sample, when a household's working patterns became strained, it was women's paid work that came under pressure to adjust.

Work time demands were regularly identified by both our SPIS- and NCDS-identified lifelong nonparticipants as a key participation barrier (Brookfield et al., 2018a). Interestingly, both these groups were primarily comprised of women and, pertinent here, Southerton and Tomlinson (2005) found that women were more likely than men to report feeling "pressed for time." Examining their working patterns, the men and women in our sample were working markedly differently, with *all* the men working full-time compared to only 53% of women. Furthermore, women's economic inactivity was higher than men's around the time of family formation, a pattern that directly mirrors the gendered social norms set out in the introduction. To some extent, then, temporal differences in paid

work patterns have provided the women in our sample with potentially more participation opportunities over the lifecycle, while they were also more exposed to volunteering and participation opportunities through their children at a time when paid work commitments were often lower (although childrearing was not a universal experience of the sample). Yet for our female low-level and nonparticipants these factors were evidently *not* related to, or had not transpired to produce, social and civil participation.

While the “time bind” was presented by the lifelong nonparticipants as an insurmountable barrier to participation, those who participated the most, the frequent participants, were more likely to report full-time employment and childcare responsibilities, indicating that, objectively speaking, they experienced the greatest time pressures. The female frequent participants, for example, were more likely to be working full-time than either the female lifelong participants or the female lifelong nonparticipants, moreover, they all also had children. Like their male counterparts, these female frequent participants were managing to accommodate a high level of participation alongside full-time paid work and caring commitments. Compared to the female lifelong nonparticipants and low-level participants, they were also more likely to return to work full-time following career breaks. Facilitating this, they were more able to afford the childcare that gave them control over their schedules, a significant class difference in their circumstances. A notable factor in their TSOLs, which perhaps explains the greater control they had affected over their work–participation balance, was that they had all, at some point, made a dramatic change to their paid working patterns, such as negotiating more flexible working hours towards a balance that provided for greater autonomy in pursuing social and civil participation. The male frequent participants had also often restructured their working lives, but notably they were more likely to have transitioned to self-employment. For the female frequent participants, they continued as employees, albeit with renegotiated working patterns.

### 3.2 | Personal and family matters

The private sphere, incorporating dimensions of household organization, family structure and behaviors, identity, attitudes and personality characteristics, impacted upon the shifting relationships between work and social and civil participation over the lifecycle across our sample. Moreover, the data suggested that these factors had differing effects on men and women.

Attitudinal factors and personality characteristics informed how, and indeed if, efforts to incorporate work and participation into an individual's life occurred. The way individuals understood “participation”: what it meant to them, its incorporation (or not) into priorities, and the value it carried in their lives, appeared key. Unsurprisingly, those who attached “weight” to participation could make great efforts to organize their time to incorporate opportunities to engage. For some, a sense of duty underpinned their participation; for others, participation provided a sense of purpose or productivity, status, enjoyment, and/or social contact. For these individuals, the meshing together of work and participation could be a labor in its own right, but one worth tackling. For those without this disposition, and who did not take part, participation barely appeared on their radar. Cohort members' parents appeared important in how attitudes developed. Some cohort members had inherited a view of social/civil participation as valuable: “*my parents I suppose [set] the ground rules, the traditions, the expectations, you know, and you try to leave the place a little bit better*” (Anwen, lifelong participant). The more-engaged cohort members (participation-wise) were more likely to report engaged parents, and the less-engaged to report disengaged parents (Brookfield et al., 2018a).

Identity informed work–participation dynamics for some cohort members. A number of the sample were strongly work-identified, leaving little time for outside participation; men predominated this subgroup, and this was particularly the case for the self-employed, who talked about stretched work boundaries. Other cohort members strongly identified as employees, to the exclusion of outside activities, but were happy with this balance and derived deep fulfilment from their paid work. Again, men dominated this subgroup. *Choice* about how time was used was key

to how work commitments were interpreted, and correspondingly, class was significant. Robert (NCDS-identified nonparticipant, SPIS-identified past participant), a senior manager, travelled with his work and rarely took part in outside activities. He faced pressure from his family to scale down these work commitments, which he rallied against, and thrived in his occupational immersion. Although it precluded significant social participation, he interpreted the intensity of his work positively. Conversely, for women it was more common that the “long arm of the household” was such that they were less able or motivated to immerse themselves in the paid work side of their TSOL, to the exclusion of other aspects. It was only when the “reach” of this “arm” lessened for some reason, for example, following children growing up and requiring less supervision, that opportunities for deeper immersion in this side of their TSOL occurred.

Men's and women's different paid working patterns appeared to shore up gendered household dynamics around unpaid domestic work with many in our sample exhibiting a modified breadwinner model of household organization (Cass & Brennan, 2003), as previously highlighted. This model was often accentuated around family formation, having impacts upon women's participation during the “rush hour of life” (Bowman, Bodsworth, & Zinn, 2013). Women adopted multiple roles during this time, exacerbated by the UK's weak childcare structures, and engaged in more flexible or insecure employment (Coyle, 2006). Lending support to Wilensky's (1961, p. 535) thesis that “chaotic” careers are negatively correlated with participation, women's more erratic stop–start relationship with work across the lifecourse seemed to frustrate the maintenance of stable forms of social and civil participation, albeit religious participation was an exception. It is perhaps surprising that gendered divisions of labor had not de-intensified more for our sample by the time of the SPIS in 2008, a significant time since their childbearing years, and in the context of more progressive social attitudes and values. That these attitudes and values did not appear to be disrupting the cohort's more traditional approaches to family and work organization to a greater degree may provide evidence of the enduring influence of the formative years on lifelong behaviors (Brodie et al., 2009).

For many women in our sample, family formation permanently changed their working patterns, and they assumed the dominant share of domestic responsibility long after childrearing. For some cohort members, children becoming less dependent coincided with aging parents requiring more care, responsibilities that informed and restricted their decisions about broader participation. Dilys's (lifelong nonparticipant) lack of social participation reflected intensive family demands on her time, first from children, and later from her mother and mother-in-law. She juggled these caring activities with part-time work and in the context of her husband's work which frequently took him away from home. While she initially minimized the effort that her TSOL required, an exercise which in itself might be a signifier of respectability (Skeggs, 1997) as she wished to be seen to be coping with gendered expectations, she later reflected that it entailed “*military precision*” to organize her household's activities. Despite several creative responses to managing family responsibilities, gendered dynamics played a strong role in the cohort's TSOLs in terms of the interplay between paid work and unpaid domestic work. Even those with the most self-proclaimed egalitarian partnerships adopted female-dominated childcare around family formation, reinforced no doubt by the gendered context of maternity/paternity rights at that time.

Although affecting women most acutely, the arrival of children also impacted upon men's work–participation dynamics. For the six male and eight female NCDS-identified nonparticipants who emerged as participants in the SPIS interviews it was usually their participation in groups and activities linked to their children that led to this reclassification. Their participation in these groups and activities tended to be maintained only while their children were involved in a group or activity: in other words, when these particular aspects of unpaid work in their TSOL aligned in a way that was convenient. The involvement of child-orientated participation for women around family formation, was often their first experience of social participation. Its predominance provides a signifier of their assumption of gendered social norms in pursuing culturally validated public sphere activities. In this context, not only was their participation functional, but it tied in with the classed

expectations about respectability that Skeggs (1997) found to be important in explaining (working-class) women's behaviors.

Underlining the significance of children as a participation trigger, the NCDS- and SPIS-identified lifelong nonparticipants had the highest levels of childlessness. These individuals arguably had fewer opportunities for entry into "family orientated" social/civil participation activities like Parent-Teacher Associations. However, even for those without children, 20% of the sample and a growing proportion of the UK population (ONS, 2015), participation could connect to children. Individuals were coaches of youth sports teams, convenors of children's charities, and school-based volunteers. Interestingly, however, for some childless participants the *absence* of children had provided a "trigger" for greater participation, as described by Joseph, a lifelong participant heavily involved in local clubs: "*I can do reasonably what I would like to do 'cause we've not had any children.*" A route into participation around children's activities was more often taken by women in our sample, suggestive, perhaps, of the influence of gendered social norms regarding the kinds of participation that are "acceptable" for women (and equally what kinds are acceptable for men).

## 4 | CONCLUSIONS

By integrating structured longitudinal survey data from the NCDS with biographical interview data from the associated SPIS (2008), and adopting a focus on gender, we have explored work-participation interactions amongst a subset of the 1958 Birth Cohort. No other study has, to our knowledge, combined these data sets in this way to investigate these relationships. Using a TSOL framework, our attention has been directed at the distribution of different labors in work-participation dynamics over time, and has enabled us to move beyond traditional labor dualisms to build a much more complex picture of how these relationships evolve and are negotiated in ways that are rooted in inequalities. Based on our observations, we argue that a combination of structural constraints and the embodiment of social norms explain why men and women have combined paid work with social and civil participation in distinctively gendered ways.

Echoing the literature, our analysis revealed a bidirectional relationship between paid work and participation, taking different forms in different contexts, and mediated by socioeconomic factors, but with gender as a key issue steering how underpinning household labors were organized. Work could both open up and close off opportunities for participation, while social and civil participation could unlock opportunities for work, indicating the value of using TSOL to understand the interconnections between these domains, rather than studying them as distinctive labors. The private sphere, encompassing factors such as household organization and family formation, influenced shifting relationships between work and social/civil participation over the lifecourse, with a particularly acute effect upon how women's social and civil participation was manifested.

We have added to academic discussion in this area by identifying once again how gender is, and continues over time as, a powerful intermediary factor in the balancing of different public sphere activities, providing significant exploratory capacity for how individual TSOLs unfold over the lifecourse. This extends—as she intended—Glucksmann's original conception of TSOL which focused on gendered connections between paid and unpaid work, in applying gender theory to a broader range of socioeconomic modes. Our analysis has applied TSOL to volunteering, public leisure, and community work, which are integrated through this framework with our analyses of public/private sector labors. This kind of extension is vital to continue the TSOL's dialogue with shifting social forces, including women's increased engagement with paid work and a dynamic third sector. How women and men of the Baby boomer generation have performed gender has been key to understanding their relationships to different kinds of labors and activities both within their homes and in the public sphere. Gender theory has long noted the non-linearity of women's careers (Evetts, 1994). Consequently, time takes on different meanings in men's and women's lives, and embedding a TSOL framework in our methodological approach in mapping labor shifts over

time has enabled us to put this at the forefront of our analysis. Critical differences were evident in individuals' TSOLs, demarcated by class as well as gender, with social and civil participation trajectories interwoven with the inequalities that characterize paid working experiences and domestic experiences. Indeed, women's lives cannot be meaningfully examined without a closer interrogation of the fusion of class with gender. In looking at this cohort we have been able to examine the relative persistence of gendered divisions of labor as the worlds of work and participation around them have shifted.

Less positively, in examining this cohort, given the point in time in which it was first assembled (1958), there have been few opportunities to explore the intersection of ethnicity with gender, and the consequent implications for work–social/civil participation dynamics. Additionally, by focusing on a single birth cohort we have not been able to evaluate how gender equality policy, ongoing changes in societal norms and expectations, and recent social, political, and economic changes, like advancements in digital technology, have impacted more recent generations in their efforts to combine work and social/civil participation. While other, more recent, birth cohort studies are available, like the 1970 British Cohort Study, to our knowledge these studies have not completed comparable investigations to the SPIS (2008), which provided such rich qualitative insights into the work–participation–household nexus within individuals' lives over time. Therefore, the opportunity to replicate our research with later birth cohorts seems limited.

Gendered roles and household dynamics, in combination with paid work's relative flexibility, autonomy, predictability, and intensity, were key elements in individuals' negotiation of a sustainable balance between work and participation. Forging an equilibrium involved cohort members deploying conscious effort, which for women was often a "hard labor" in its own right, in a way that was largely off men's radar. Women had to negotiate participation in relation to their partner's as well as their own paid work in a way that was rarely reciprocated, and this was further convoluted by less autonomous and more inflexible, and generally lower-paid jobs. It was notable that women were over-represented among non- or low-level participants, perhaps in part because prevailing social norms and expectations around acceptable social and civil participation, combined with the "long arm of the household" and fewer labor market opportunities for women of this generation, have combined to make it more problematic for them to carve out a space to participate in certain forms of public sphere activity. A policy consequence of this is that we might expect to see low levels of diversity within public sphere participation, as well as women being less able to accrue the benefits of participation, such as skills accumulation, with potentially negative consequences for families and societies.

Work decisions are acutely relational for women, paid and unpaid work interacting cyclically, an aspect that has become apparent in utilizing a TSOL framework. Furthermore, power relations operate in combination with structural features, such as childcare, and the discourses of respectability that Skeggs (1997) identified as being so important in understanding how working-class women performed femininity, also impact upon how parenting functions. They limit women's working choices by making it difficult to step outside of the TSOL of one's habitus (Bourdieu, 1984): an implication that is of great importance considering the socioeconomic differentiation that we observed in women's participation patterns. The childrearing years, and the unpaid labor they have required from women, have had lasting impacts upon this cohort's working patterns. A combination of social pressures and structural disadvantage make it difficult for working-class women, in particular, to challenge gendered divisions of labor.

The ways that cohort members worked was more significant than their jobs, both in terms of their social/civil participation and their broader wellbeing. This was the product of their class relations and workplace culture. Our lifecourse analysis illustrates how negotiations are made and remade over time, forming complex and gendered work–participation trajectories. This has drawn attention to gaps or inconsistencies where policy interventions could contribute to supporting people in negotiating a more productive work–participation balance. Overall, our findings suggest that an ambitious, whole systems approach, which attends to the interlinked domains of work, family/household, and social/civil participation, might be the only way to attenuate the labor involved in combining work and participation. For example, policy efforts could be directed towards empowering employees to organize their working hours and to work flexibly. However, women's thrall to "the long arm of the household" cannot be countered without addressing parity issues within household relationships and improving access to affordable



social care and childcare. A TSOL approach then offers the prospect of nuanced policy gains for women, as well as offering critical insight in theorizing gender relations across multiple work domains.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest.

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