

Previous studies of work/family linkages have emphasized the effects of one domain or the other on the individual, yet few have sought to analyze the interconnective nature of paid labor and family environments. Using data from the 1988 National Survey of Families and Households, this study examines the effects of husbands' and wives' employment and marriage characteristics on their respective perceptions of marital quality. Contrary to previous findings, occupational factors have only a minimal effect on both husbands' and wives' perceptions of marital quality. Husbands and wives are both affected by wives' opinions of fairness in the marriage. The results also suggest that husbands may maintain traditional role expectations for themselves and their wives, despite the dual-earner status of their marriage. The implications of these findings for gender roles in dual-earner marriages are discussed.

## **Employment, Family, and Perceptions of Marital Quality Among Husbands and Wives\***

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The proportion of wives in the paid labor force has nearly doubled over the past two decades, thus increasing the number of dual-earner couples in the United States. As of 1988, 56.8% of all married women were employed outside the home (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1989). As the percentage of wives working in the paid labor force increases, it necessarily generates change in the family and paid work roles occupied by both women and men. Yet, despite the increased labor force participation of women, both husbands and wives have been shown to be more content with their marriage and to report higher levels of life satisfaction when they and their spouses occupy traditional gender roles, both within the home and in the workplace (Bahr & Day, 1978; Lueptow, Guss, & Hyden, 1989; Perry-Jenkins & Crouter, 1990).

The importance of the employment/family interface has not gone unnoticed by researchers; indeed, most studies in this area have noted the

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significance of paid work and family factors in regard to how they affect the individual and the family (Mortimer, Lorence, & Kumka, 1986; Voydanoff, 1989). What is lacking, however, is the recognition that the relative effect of work (i.e., labor force participation) and family (or marital) characteristics on the individual depends on the combination of the work and marital characteristics of the individual and *those of their spouse*. Although several studies have examined the effects of employment versus family characteristics on individual's marital and life satisfaction, their likelihood of divorce, family conflict, and a wide gamut of psychological variables (e.g., depression, anxiety) (see Galambos & Silbereisen, 1989; Sutor, 1991; Voydanoff, 1988; Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1989), few studies have taken the direct approach of analyzing the effects of *both* husbands' and wives' work and marital role characteristics in combination with one another. This shortcoming in studies of paid labor and family roles has been noted by several researchers (Small & Riley, 1990; Voydanoff, 1988; Yogev & Brett, 1985).

This study will examine the effects of husbands' and wives' paid work and marital role characteristics on their individual assessments of marital quality. In doing so, two primary goals will be pursued. The first is based on previous research that has proposed that wives are more inclined to give precedence to marital roles (e.g., spouse, parent), whereas husbands are more likely to be concerned with their work (or provider) roles (Bielby & Bielby, 1989). It has also been suggested that wives' employment outside the home may increase spousal conflict among dual earners (Meeks, Arnkoff, Glass, & Notarius, 1986). If, indeed, husbands and wives place different emphases on their respective roles, their perceptions of marital quality will be affected in a significantly different manner by the aspects of employment and marital roles. This study will use husbands' and wives' separate assessments of marital quality to determine the relative effects of employment and marital role characteristics.

The second goal of this study focuses on the comparative nature of paid work and marital roles. If husbands and wives are both employed outside the home, the relative impact of work and marital attributes on their perceptions of marital quality will rely not only on their own characteristics (e.g., earnings, participation in household labor) but will also be affected by those same characteristics of their spouses (e.g., husbands may be affected by wives' income). For example, Bowen (1987) suggests that the effects of wives' employment on marital adjustment is mediated by the characteristics of husbands' work. Hence this study will analyze wives' and husbands' perceptions of marital quality by considering the combined effects of both spouses' marital and employment characteristics.

## UNDERSTANDING THE EMPLOYMENT AND FAMILY ROLES OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES

To understand the effects of paid work and family roles on the assessments of marital quality by husbands and wives, the manner and extent to which each sex identifies with paid work and family roles must first be examined. Several researchers have posited that definitive boundaries exist between the employment and family roles of men and women, such that a traditional, sex-typed, allocation of these roles still endures. In an analysis of paid work and family roles, Pleck (1977) proposes that the family roles of men are affected more by their employment roles than the employment roles of women are affected by their family roles. That is, men's family roles are secondary to their provider roles, whereas women are involved in and affected by their family roles to a greater extent. This would seem to indicate that men and women occupy distinctly separate sets of roles. Voydanoff (1988) offers a similar position, stating that "since traditional gender roles place higher priority on work responsibilities for men and family responsibilities for women, work role characteristics should be more strongly related to work/family conflict among men while family characteristics are relatively more important among women" (p. 750). According to Bernard (1971), male and female roles are dichotomized in the United States, regardless of the participation of females in the paid labor force or of the participation of males in domestic/family activities.

On the other hand, Ross, Mirowsky, & Huber (1983) have suggested that marriages are increasingly moving away from a *complementary* pattern, in which the husband and wife perform different but interdependent functions, toward a more *parallel* pattern, in which work and family duties are shared by the husband and wife. Such a shift toward a parallel form of marriage would imply not only that husbands and wives would share more equally in the division of work and family labor, but also that they would each come to identify with those roles to an equal degree. As Bielby and Bielby (1989) state, "As individuals allocate time and energy to work and family roles, they come to identify with those roles" (p. 776). Pleck (1987), in a revision of his earlier position, proposes that men in dual-earner marriages are actually moving closer to a family role similar to that of women. This shift in men's family roles is evident in their increasing participation in household labor and child care, as well as in their increased reports of psychological distress (Pleck, 1987).

The extent to which persons identify with a specific role (either family or employment) has been shown to affect both the individual and their marital relations. Lueptow et al. (1989) found that wives who espoused a

nontraditional sex role ideology were less happy with their marriage and were more likely to divorce. Similarly, Kessler and McRae (1982) posit that husbands of employed wives are less satisfied with their marriages and also are subject to lower levels of physical and mental well-being. The interconnective nature of work and family roles of females and males has also been demonstrated in research showing how the employment of one spouse can affect the physical and mental health of the other (Galambos & Silbereisen, 1989; Keith & Schafer, 1980; Ross et al., 1983).

Given that some research has supported the position that the roles of husbands and wives are becoming equally shared (e.g., Ross et al., 1983), whereas other studies have suggested that a more traditional segregation of roles still exists (e.g., Bielby & Bielby, 1989), this study will concentrate on the examination of the effects of role characteristics on individual's (both husbands and wives) assessment of the quality of their marriage. If indeed marriages are becoming more parallel in form, then the respective assessments of men and women of their marriages should be equally affected by work and family factors. If, on the other hand, work and family roles are still dichotomized in the United States, husbands' assessments of marital quality will be affected more by their work characteristics, and wives' perceptions of marital quality will be affected more by dimensions of their family roles.

Further, because this study will focus on dual-earner couples, it is also proposed that if paid work and family roles are still dichotomized by sex, husbands will be affected by the work characteristics of their wives (primarily because their wives will not be seen as occupying a traditional female role), whereas wives will be unaffected by the work characteristics of their husbands. Wives may also be affected by husbands' assistance or commitment to a more egalitarian family role. Employment and family roles contain a wide array of characteristics that have been shown to affect both individual well-being and marital quality. The respective dimensions of work and family examined by previous researchers will now be addressed.

## **THE EFFECTS OF EMPLOYMENT AND MARITAL CHARACTERISTICS**

### **EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS**

One of the most common employment factors that has been examined in regard to its effects on individuals and couples is that of *hours spent*

*in the workplace.* Galambos and Silbereisen (1989) found that wives' work hours are related to lower levels of marital interaction and higher levels of family conflict. Voydanoff (1988) found that an increase in hours spent in employment is related to higher levels of work/family conflict. Kingston and Nock (1987) report that the amounts of time spent together by couples (i.e., "family time") is significantly reduced by the number of hours spent in the paid labor force. Kingston and Nock conclude that "among dual-earner couples, more pressing work schedules mean losses in togetherness in every part of domestic life; time together for eating meals, watching TV, and enjoying active recreation, however, especially lose out in the competition" (p. 399).

Several researchers, such as Kingston and Nock (1987) have noted that not only do hours in the work force have an impact on marital quality but that the scheduling of those work hours is also important. White and Keith (1990) report that *shift work* has a negative effect on marital quality across a variety of dimensions. White and Keith also conclude that shift work increases the likelihood of divorce. Simon (1990) also concludes that shift work produces a variety of strains in married couples' relationships. This strain is not only on the individual, but also creates dilemmas for the spouse. Simon states, "The shift worker's partner may experience resentment and frustration as a result of having to juggle multiple family responsibilities and his or her own job to accommodate the shift worker's rotating, afternoon, or night shift schedule" (p. 345).

The *income* of workers has an effect on marital quality. Booth, Johnson, White, and Edwards (1984) conclude that marital stability is negatively affected by wives' income. That is, an increase in wives' income tends to increase the probability of divorce or separation. Zedeck, Maslach, Mosier, and Skitka (1988) similarly posit that earnings has a direct impact on family relations; an increase in earnings elevates the standard of living for the couple. Voydanoff (1988) also proposes that marital satisfaction is higher for those couples in which the wife has a well-paying job. However, the marital quality as perceived by husbands may be affected by wives' income in the opposite direction. That is, traditional husbands may perceive the income of wives as a threat to their position of authority in the family, and may thus rate the quality of their marriage lower. In support of this, Jorgensen (1979) found that wives' satisfaction with the marriage is associated with their satisfaction with their husbands' income.

Finally, *job commitment* and job stress have also been shown to be associated with marital quality. Benin and Nienstedt (1985) found that the overall happiness of couples depends on a combination of job satisfaction and marital happiness. Voydanoff (1988) also posits that workers in unde-

sirable jobs will be likely to report lower levels of marital satisfaction. The relationship between job satisfaction and marital quality has been demonstrated consistently in previous research (Zedeck et al., 1988), such that higher stress and job demands are detrimental to marital satisfaction.

### MARITAL CHARACTERISTICS

Given that marital quality is determined within the family context, it is understandable that an equally broad range of family factors have been shown to be associated with marital quality. Further, because the traditional family role of women has involved participation in household labor, the bulk of research in this area has focused on wives' satisfaction with the *division of family labor*. Blair and Lichter (1991) show that even in the late 1980s, females in the United States still performed approximately twice as much household labor as males, and that the allocation of the various chores was still highly sex segregated.

Suitor (1991) found that satisfaction with the division of household labor was a greater determinant of marital happiness than were age, educational attainment, or wives' employment status. Benin and Agostinelli (1988) found that wives' satisfaction is determined more by husbands' sharing of chores traditionally performed by women (e.g., cooking, washing clothes) than by the sheer number of hours husbands contribute. Because household labor has been shown to be highly segregated, an increase in husbands' time spent mowing grass is likely to have less impact on wives' satisfaction with the division of household labor than an increase in husbands' time spent washing dishes. Similarly, Broman (1988) concludes that women are twice as likely as men to feel overburdened by household labor. Broman further posits that employed people to whom the majority of household labor is allocated report lower levels of satisfaction with their family life.

The issue of *perceptions of fairness* is readily apparent in the above studies. Yogeve and Brett (1985) propose that the subjective perceptions of marriage are more important than the demographic characteristics of couples' unions in regard to understanding marital satisfaction. Yogeve and Brett state, "Dual-earner men, who are most satisfied with their marriages when they are doing their share—not more or less—and when their wives are doing more than their share of family work, have not quite given up the idealized model of the traditional wife" (p. 614). Yogeve and Brett further state that "the dual-earner women seem to have rejected the tra-

ditional role" (p. 614). These findings seem to indicate that not only is the division of labor itself important, but that the perceptions of fairness and subjective assessment of family roles themselves are equally important.

Indeed, Jorgensen (1979) found that wives' perception of husbands as a good provider is a significant determinant of marital quality. Thus wives are concerned not only with their own roles but with those of their husbands as well. Interestingly, Lueptow et al. (1989) report that men's sex role ideology is not significantly related to marital happiness and marital stability. However, women's *sex role ideologies* are shown to be significant and that "women with traditional gender values are slightly happier than women with nontraditional values" (p. 395). This relationship between wives' sex role beliefs and marital quality has been demonstrated in previous studies (e.g., Bahr & Day, 1979). Perry-Jenkins and Crouter (1990) further suggest that husbands who espouse traditional sex role attitudes, but whose wives are employed, will report lower levels of satisfaction with their marriage.

Finally, because many aspects of family life, both behavioral (e.g., fertility rates) and affective (e.g., marital satisfaction) vary across the family life cycle (Crohan & Veroff, 1989; Rollins, 1989), the *duration of marriage* should have a substantial effect on marital quality.

### **MARITAL QUALITY AS AFFECTED BY FAMILY AND WORK CHARACTERISTICS**

Previous studies in the area of marital quality have investigated the impact of work and family characteristics, yet few have specifically explored the interconnective nature of these two distinct environments. This study will seek to extend previous research by examining not only the relative effects of work and family on marital quality, but will also focus on sex-based differences in perceptions of marital quality. Building on previous studies, it is hypothesized that (a) men's perceptions of marital quality will be affected more by their work characteristics than by their marriage characteristics, (b) women's perceptions of marital quality will be affected more by their marriage characteristics than by their work characteristics, and (c) women's perceptions of marital quality will also be affected by the work characteristics of their husbands (role performance), whereas men's perceptions of marital quality will be affected by the marriage characteristics of their wives (role performance).

## DATA AND VARIABLES

This study is based on data from the 1988 National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH; Sweet, Bumpass, & Call, 1988). The NSFH provides a cross-sectional national sample of 13,017 respondents aged 19 and older. The analysis used in this study is based on household-level data from 693 couples (i.e., 693 wives and their [693] husbands) for whom data were complete across the variables used herein. The sample includes only dual-earner couples (i.e., both spouses are employed outside the home—either full- or part-time). Husbands were an average of 39 years old and had 14 years of formal education; wives were an average of 37 years of age and had 13.5 years of formal education. In addition, because the NSFH oversamples for several specific groups in the larger population (e.g., Blacks, Hispanics, cohabitators), sample weights are used in the analyses to compensate for any discrepancies that may arise due to the effects of oversampling.

*Marital quality.* The assessment of marital quality, as previously described, was taken from both husbands and wives. This study used a multiple-measure approach to the assessment of marital quality. That is, rather than focus on a single measure of marital quality, it is proposed here that marital quality encompasses numerous dimensions of the marital relationship and should be measured as such (see Crohan & Veroff, 1989; Fowers, 1991; White & Keith, 1990). For both husbands and wives, the first measure of marital quality was the *frequency of disagreements*. Responses were taken from the question, "How often, if at all, in the last year have you had open disagreements about each of the following: (a) household tasks, (b) money, (c) spending time together, (d) sex, (e) in-laws, (f) the children?" Responses ranged from *never* (1), *less than once a month* (2), *several times a month* (3), *about once a week* (4), *several times a week* (5), to *almost everyday* (6). These areas of disagreement were combined into a single measure, resulting in a scale ranging from 6 to 36. Cronbach's alpha for husbands was .783, and .759 for wives.

A series of dummy variables were constructed to measure other dimensions of marital quality. *Divorce possible* is based on responses to the following question: "It is always difficult to predict what will happen in a marriage, but realistically, what do you think the chances are that you and your husband/wife will eventually separate or divorce?" This variable was originally coded on a 5-point scale, ranging from *very low* to *very high*. However, given the social desirability of responses to such ques-

tions, 71% of husbands and 68% of wives replied *very low*. With such a skewed distribution of responses, the item was recoded as very low (0) and greater than zero (1).

A more global measure of marital quality, *less than happy marriage*, was taken from responses to the following question: "Taking things all together, how would you describe your marriage?" This measure was originally coded on a 7-point scale, ranging from *very unhappy* to *very happy*. Among wives, 75.6% rated their marriage on the sixth and seventh point of the scale (*very happy*), and 77.6% of husbands rated the marriage likewise. To better understand variation in this measure, responses were separated into very happy (0) and less than very happy (1). *Less than daily contact*, a measure focusing on physical contact, was taken from responses to the following question: "During the past month, about how often did you and your husband/wife spend time alone with each other, talking, or sharing an activity?" Responses originally ranged from *never* to *almost every day*, on a 6-point scale. Because 57.9% of husbands and 62.1% of wives answered that they interacted with their spouse at least two or three times a week or more, responses were separated into two or three times a week and almost every day (0), and about once a week to never (1). Finally, *troubled marriage* was taken from responses to "During the past year, have you ever thought that your marriage might be in trouble?" Responses were coded yes (1) and no (0).

*Employment characteristics.* Characteristics of respondents' current job included a wide variety of measures. *Occupational Socioeconomic Status (SES)* is taken from the SES status scores of the reported occupations (see Stevens & Cho, 1985 for discussion). These scores are based on the total-based scores attached to occupations and have a potential range of 13.98 to 90.45 for both males and females. *Earnings* is simply the annual income from the respondents' job. *Hours per week* is the reported number of hours the respondents spent in their job per week, on average. In addition to hours worked, respondents were also queried as to the *shift work status* of their job (coded 0 = no, 1 = yes). Finally, a measure of *job commitment* was taken from responses to the following question: "The job I do is one of the most satisfying parts of my life." Responses ranged from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* on a 5-point scale.

*Marriage characteristics.* Characteristics of respondents' marriage also included a wide variety of measures. An indexed measure of *gender role ideology* was taken from responses to the following statements: (a)

"It is much better for everyone if the man earns the main living and the woman takes care of the home and the family. (b) Preschool children are likely to suffer if their mother is employed. (c) Parents should encourage just as much independence in their daughters as in their sons. (d) In a successful marriage, each partner must have the freedom to do what they want individually." Respondents answered each question on the basis of a 5-point scale, ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. Each item was coded accordingly, resulting in a scale ranging from 4 to 20, with a low score indicating egalitarian gender role orientations (Cronbach's alpha was .512 for husbands and .583 for wives).

A measure of ideology focused more directly on the division of labor, *family role ideology*, was taken from responses to the following statement: "If a man and wife both work full-time, they should share household tasks equally." Responses again ranged from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*, across a 5-point scale. A low score indicates egalitarian family role orientations.

Respondents were also queried as to their perceptions of unfairness within several areas of married life. Spouses' perceptions of unfairness were taken from the following questions: "How do you feel about the fairness in your relationship in each of the following areas?" (*household chores, working for pay, and spending money*). Responses were coded *very unfair to me* and *unfair to me* (1), and *fair to both, unfair to spouse, and very unfair to spouse* (0).

*Duration of marriage* is the number of years the couple has been married. Finally, given that much of the previous research in marital quality has focused on the division of household labor, *Wives' total weekly household labor* is the number of hours spent by wives in household labor (containing the following tasks: (a) preparing meals, (b) washing dishes, (c) cleaning house, (d) outdoor tasks, (e) shopping, (f) washing and ironing clothes, (g) paying bills, and (h) auto maintenance). *Husbands' weekly household labor in female-dominated chores* is the number of hours spent by husbands weekly in the following four tasks: (a) preparing meals, (b) washing dishes, (c) washing and ironing clothes, and (d) cleaning house.

## RESULTS

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for marital quality, employment, and marital characteristic variables, for both husbands and wives. As shown, husbands and wives report similar levels of marital quality across all five of the measures used. In terms of the likelihood of

**TABLE 1**  
**Means and Standard Deviations for Marital Quality, Employment,**  
**and Marital Characteristics Variables, for Husbands and Wives**

	<i>Husbands</i>		<i>Wives</i>	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Marital quality				
Disagreements	11.919*	4.512	11.402	4.089
Divorce possible	.290	.454	.316	.465
Less than happy with marriage	.224	.417	.245	.430
Less than daily contact	.421	.494	.380	.486
Troubled marriage	.255*	.436	.327	.469
Employment				
Occupational SES	44.543	20.472	43.689	17.911
Earnings (thousands)	35.000*	29.992	14.632	14.867
Hours per week	44.780*	11.918	32.085	13.905
Shift work status	.182	.386	.193	.395
Job commitment	3.369*	1.068	3.221	1.046
Marital characteristics				
Gender role ideology	10.636*	2.589	9.678	2.697
Family role ideology	1.964*	.766	1.679	.712
Unfairness in				
Household chores	.044*	.206	.353	.478
Working for pay	.060*	.238	.086	.281
Spending money	.098	.298	.084	.278
Duration of marriage	14.906	9.256	a	
Wives' total weekly household labor			32.569	17.601
Husbands' weekly household labor in female dominated chores	7.276	6.875		

*N* = 693

a. Mean is the same as the spouse.

\**p* < .05 (difference in means).

divorce, whether the spouse is less than happy with the marriage, and whether the couple has less than daily contact, there are no significant differences between the perceived marital quality of husbands and wives. Wives do report a slightly, yet significant, higher level of open disagreements in their marriage. Further, wives also perceived their marriages to be significantly more troubled than did their husbands. Approximately 33% of wives perceived their marriage to be troubled, whereas only 26% of husbands viewed their marriage to be in trouble.

Husbands and wives had several significant differences in their respective employment characteristics. Although men's and women's occupa-

tional SES ratings were not significantly different, husbands earnings were approximately twice that of their wives, on average (\$35,000 for males vs. \$14,632 for females). Husbands were also more likely to spend long hours in the paid labor force. Males averaged approximately 45 hours per week in paid employment, and females averaged about 32 hours. Finally, males were significantly more satisfied with their jobs than were females.

In regard to marital characteristics, husbands, on average, reported more traditional gender role and family role ideologies than did their wives. Further, couples differed significantly in their perceptions of unfairness within their marriage. Approximately 35% of wives perceived the division of labor in their household to be unfair, whereas only about 4% of husbands felt it to be unfair. Slightly more wives than husbands also perceived the allocation of work roles (working for pay) to be unfair (8.6% for females vs. 6.0% for males). The allocation of household labor itself was sharply divided, with wives averaging about 33 hours per week of total labor, whereas husbands averaged only about 7 hours per week in tasks traditionally envisioned as "women's work."

To what extent, however, do the multiple measures of marital quality overlap? Table 2 presents the results of bivariate correlations among the five measures of marital quality for both husbands' and wives' responses. As shown, the measures certainly reveal significant correlations with one another, both across measures and between spouses. Two important trends can be noted in these results. First, for each sex, the bivariate correlations are significant between measures of marital quality, yet are still low enough to demonstrate the need for a multiple measure assessment of marital quality. For instance, the interitem correlations for wives' own perceptions of marital quality ranged from .228 to .520, whereas among husbands, their multiple dimensions of marital quality revealed a set of interitem correlations ranging from .103 to .357. Thus, although both spouses have significantly correlated perceptions of marital quality, a substantial amount of variation remains across the measures of marital quality for each sex. Second, although correlations between husbands' and wives' responses are high, the correlations do not demonstrate a congruent assessment of the same dimensions of marital quality. Rather, husbands and wives have their own distinct and separate perceptions of marital quality.

Of central interest to this study, however, is the effect of work and marriage characteristics on the separate perceptions of marital quality of husbands and wives. Table 3 presents the results of multivariate logistic regressions of work and marriage variables on the four dichotomized

**TABLE 2**  
**Interitem Bivariate Correlations Among Husbands' and Wives' Perceptions of Marital Quality**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Divorce possible									
1. Husbands									
2. Wives	.342**								
Less than happy marriage									
3. Husbands	.346**	.216**							
4. Wives	.274**	.408**	.275**						
Less than daily contact									
5. Husbands	.202**	.207**	.202**	.188**					
6. Wives	.199**	.228**	.129**	.300**	.378**				
Troubled marriage									
7. Husbands	.357**	.280**	.330**	.268**	.103**	.085*			
8. Wives	.241**	.379**	.217**	.520**	.165**	.249**	.498**		
Frequency of open disagreements									
9. Husbands	.270**	.180**	.235**	.146**	.183**	.159**	.304**	.227**	
10. Wives	.245**	.287**	.193**	.315**	.240**	.243**	.272**	.401**	.495**

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

measures of marital quality, with separate models of each for men and women.

*Divorce possible.* The model of husbands' perceptions as to the likelihood of divorce in their marriage reveals that men are affected by a combination of both work and marriage factors, yet they are affected more by the characteristics of their wives than by those of themselves. For instance, husbands' perceptions of the likelihood of divorce is strongly affected by the wives' belief that money is unfairly controlled in the home. The more the wife believes money is unfairly controlled, the greater the likelihood of divorce as perceived by the husband ( $b = 1.277$ ). In addition, the household labor of husbands has no significant effect on their perception of the likelihood of divorce, whereas their wives' household labor contributions are inversely related to the consideration of divorce ( $b = -.013$ ). Interestingly, the only significant effect from work variables is that of the wives' occupational SES ( $b = -.016$ ), indicating that husbands are possibly less likely to consider divorce when the wives have comparatively prestigious jobs.

The model of wives' perceptions of the likelihood of divorce contains several notable differences as compared to the model for husbands. Wives are less likely to consider divorce a possibility if their husbands have a relatively high income ( $b = -.013$ ). Meanwhile, wives are more likely to consider divorce if they themselves have to work long hours outside the home ( $b = .014$ ). The strongest effect on wives' consideration of divorce is again whether they consider the control of money in the marriage to be inequitable ( $b = 1.482$ ).

*Less than happy marriage.* The model of husbands' perceptions of the happiness of their marriage contains no significant effects from the employment factors of either the husbands or wives. As with the consideration of divorce, husbands' perceptions of the happiness of their marriage is largely determined by their wives' beliefs concerning the control of money in the marriage ( $b = .982$ ). Husbands' family role ideology is also significantly associated with their perceptions of happiness in their marriage ( $b = .245$ ).

The model of wives' perceptions of the whether their marriage is a happy one also lacks any significant effects from employment factors. However, wives appear to again be strongly affected by their opinion of the extent of unfairness in the various dimensions of the marriage. It is noteworthy that wives are not significantly affected by the marriage

characteristics of their husbands, but husbands are affected by their wives' characteristics. This may indicate that these dual-earner wives are concerned with the acceptance or appreciation of their role by their husbands, whereas husbands do not have the same concerns about their own roles.

*Less than daily contact.* Husbands' perceptions of the amount of contact in the marriage are affected by the number of hours they spend in the paid labor force ( $b = .014$ ), yet this is the only significant work-related variable; and compared to the marriage characteristics, it may denote that husbands' perceptions of marital quality are affected more by marriage-related factors. Although these effects are shown within cross-sectional analyses, it appears that as the duration of the marriage lengthens, the amount of perceived contact (by husbands) increases ( $b = -.020$ ). Among wives, however, there are a number of significant employment-related factors. For instance, wives' perceptions of daily contact are affected by husbands' hours spent in the paid labor force ( $b = .019$ ) and the shift work status of husbands ( $b = .517$ ). The employment of wives, however, is significant only in regard to their extent of job commitment ( $b = -.181$ ), indicating that as wives' job commitment decreases, the amount of time they spend with their spouse increases. Thus wives who are dissatisfied with their employment outside the home may be making a conscious effort to spend more time in the marital or family environment. Indeed, it appears that wives are equally affected by work and marriage factors, at least in regard to their perceptions of time spent together by the couple.

In additional analyses (not shown), the effects of children were considered. The effects of children in the household were largely limited to the probability of spouses having less than daily contact with one another. That is, both husbands and wives reported having less contact with their spouses when children were present. Furthermore, as the number of children increased, the amount of daily contact reported by each spouse decreased. This seems to support the contention that children detract from the companionate dimensions of marital quality, yet this must be taken in light of the findings that children have virtually no effect on the other aspects of marital quality.

*Troubled marriage.* The model of husbands' perceptions of whether the marriage is troubled is affected significantly by their own opinion of the control of money in the marriage ( $b = 1.052$ ), as well as by their wives' opinions of control of money ( $b = 1.545$ ). Indeed, no work-related factors are significant within either the husbands' or the wives' models of percep-

TABLE 3

**Multivariate Logistic Regression Coefficients for Relationship  
Between Marital Quality and Employment and Marital Characteristics, by Sex**

	<i>Divorce possible</i>		<i>Less Than Happy Marriage</i>		<i>Less Than Daily Contact</i>		<i>Troubled Marriage</i>	
	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives
<b>Employment</b>								
Husbands								
Occupational SES	.000	-.003	.001	-.008	-.005	-.005	.005	-.003
Earnings	-.007	-.013**	-.005	-.003	.002	-.001	-.001	-.004
Hours worked	.002	.004	.004	-.007	.014*	.019**	.005	-.003
Shift work status	.222	-.041	.275	.137	-.021	.517**	.239	.009
Job commitment	-.006	-.063	-.075	-.042	-.030	-.038	-.077	-.024
Wives								
Occupational SES	-.016**	-.010	.001	-.001	-.005	.004	.000	.002
Earnings	.005	.011	.004	.004	.000	-.006	.001	-.003
Hours worked	.010	.014*	.002	.005	-.002	-.003	.010	.007
Shift work status	.062	-.096	.231	.158	.358	-.093	.156	.257
Job commitment	.018	-.109	.056	.097	-.034	-.181*	-.139	.031
<b>Marital characteristics</b>								
Husbands								
Gender role ideology	-.068	-.092*	-.057	.000	.009	-.022	.057	.024
Family role ideology	.470**	.109	.245*	.144	.015	-.075	.221	.047
Unfairness in								
Household chores	.582	-.106	.369	-.561	.172	-.203	-.258	-.843
Working for pay	.225	.365	.018	.343	.520	.251	.143	.016
Spending money	.791**	-.155	.412	.375	.357	.661*	1.052**	.847**



tions of whether their marriage is troubled. It is notable, however, that husbands consider the marriage to be less troubled as the duration of the union goes on ( $b = -.039$ ). In comparison, wives' perceptions of this aspect of marital quality are substantially affected by their own opinion concerning the extent of unfairness in household chores ( $b = .560$ ) and the control of money ( $b = 2.265$ ). Oddly, however, the actual participation of husbands and wives in household labor yields no significant effects.

*Frequency of open disagreements.* Table 4 presents the results of multivariate ordinary least squares regression of employment and marriage variables on the frequency of open disagreements, as perceived by the husbands and wives separately. Husbands are slightly affected by the number of hours their wives spend in the paid labor force ( $b = .026$ ), yet the vast majority of their perception of disagreements in the marriage come from the marriage-related variables. Husbands appear to be affected by both their own and their wives' opinions concerning the unfairness of household chores, working for pay, and spending of money in the marriage. Further, husbands who espouse more traditional family role ideologies actually appear to report fewer disagreements in their marriage ( $b = -.548$ ). This is interesting given that a natural assumption concerning dual-earner couples is that both the husbands and wives are somewhat more egalitarian in their gender role and family role orientations.

Wives' perceptions of open disagreements in the marriage are affected slightly by their own occupational SES ( $b = -.002$ ). As with husbands, however, wives are most strongly affected by their perceptions of unfairness in the three dimensions of household chores, working for pay, and spending money. Also, wives who espouse more traditional family role ideologies are also likely to report fewer open disagreements in the marriage ( $b = -.426$ ). Wives, however, are not significantly affected by the marriage characteristics of their husbands. Indeed, across all of the marital quality measures, wives did not appear to be greatly affected by their husbands' marriage characteristics, whereas the same models of husbands' perceptions of marital quality were affected by their wives' characteristics.

The regression models in Table 3 and Table 4 include only the main effects for each of the independent variables. Given that previous studies have demonstrated the importance of ideology to individuals' interpretations of work and family roles (Stokes & Peyton, 1986), as well the mediating effect of ideology (Meeks et al., 1986), additional analyses were performed (results not shown) to investigate the possible interaction effects of husbands' and wives' family and sex role ideologies with work

**TABLE 4**  
**Multivariate Ordinary Least Squares Regression**  
**Coefficients for Relationship Between Marital Quality**  
**and Employment and Marital Characteristics, by Sex**

	<i>Frequency of Open Disagreements</i>			
	<i>Husbands</i>		<i>Wives</i>	
	<i>b</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>B</i>
<b>Employment</b>				
Husbands:				
Occupational SES	-.003	-.012	-.002	-.012
Earnings	-.001	-.003	-.009	-.063
Hours worked	.004	.011	.011	.033
Shift work status	.364	.031	-.122	-.012
Job commitment	.066	.016	.036	.009
Wives				
Occupational SES	.004	.016	-.002**	-.012
Earnings	-.014	-.046	.006	.022
Hours worked	.026*	.081	-.013	-.045
Shift work status	.557	.049	-.108	-.010
Job commitment	-.033	-.008	.063	.016
<b>Marital characteristics</b>				
Husbands				
Gender role ideology	.101	.058	-.038	-.024
Family role ideology	.160	.027	.033	.006
Unfairness in				
Household chores	2.626**	.120	.242	.012
Working for pay	2.020**	.107	.237	.014
Spending money	1.820**	.120	.436	.032
Wives				
Gender role ideology	.049	.029	-.010	-.006
Family role ideology	-.548*	-.087	-.426*	-.074
Unfairness in				
Household chores	1.308**	.139	1.709**	.200
Working for pay	1.135	.071	1.372**	.094
Spending money	1.614**	.099	1.652**	.112
Duration of marriage	-.103**	-.211	-.089**	-.203
Wives' total weekly household labor	.012	.045	-.002	-.011
Husbands' weekly household labor in female-dominated chores	.073**	.111	.041	.069
$R^2$	.198		.167	
$F$	7.157**		5.849**	
$N = 693$				

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

and marital characteristics. Interestingly, few significant interactions were found. However, husbands' family role ideologies did interact with wives' earnings in the models of wives' perceptions of "less than happy marriage," "less than daily contact," and the frequency of open disagreements. Not surprisingly, wives whose husbands espoused more traditional family role ideologies were more likely to report lower marital quality as their own level of earnings increased. This may indicate that traditionally oriented husbands become increasingly more difficult for wives to deal with as they (wives) achieve greater economic success.

### CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Previous studies have proposed that women are more concerned with their family and marital roles than with their work or occupational roles, whereas men have the opposite emphases. That is, men are viewed as placing greater importance on their work roles (e.g., provider roles) than on their family or marital roles (Bielby & Bielby, 1989). Further, previous researchers have posited that women are more likely to be affected by family-related factors than by work-related factors (e.g., Lueptow et al., 1989). This study contained two primary goals that were intended to address this dichotomization of paid labor and marital roles for husbands and wives.

The first goal of this study was to ascertain whether the perceived marital quality of husbands and wives was affected differently by employment and marital characteristics. Although the employment characteristics of females and males were indeed significantly different, the effects of work and occupation on both husbands' and wives' perceptions of marital quality were minimal. Employment characteristics significantly affected the consideration of divorce, amount of daily contact, and the frequency of disagreements in marriage, yet their effects were slight as compared to the effects demonstrated by marital characteristics.

Both husbands' and wives' perceptions of marital quality were affected primarily by marital characteristics. Among the strongest effects for both spouses were the perceptions of unfairness with the marriage itself. Wives, in particular, were likely to be affected by the extent of unfairness with the spending of money. Additionally, family role ideology affected both sexes across the various measures of marital quality. Overall, it would appear that work-related factors (or at least the specific measures used in this study) have only a meager effect on the marital quality as perceived by either husbands or wives.

The second goal of this study was to examine the extent to which husbands' and wives' perceptions of marital quality were determined by either their own or their spouses' work and marital characteristics. In general, husbands were more likely than wives to be affected by the characteristics of their spouse. This was particularly true in regard to the frequency of open disagreements. Husbands' perceptions of open disagreements were substantially affected by their wives' beliefs concerning fairness in the division of household labor and the spending of money in the marriage. Wives, on the other hand, were most affected by their own beliefs concerning the spending of money.

It appears that for husbands' and wives' perceptions of marital quality alike, wives' assessments of unfairness in the marriage have stronger effects than do husbands' reports of unfairness. Wives may be more likely to express their distress or displeasure over issues of equity in the marriage (e.g., the division of housework, the balance of control over family income) than are husbands. This difference in the effects of assessments of (un)fairness is in keeping with previous research that suggests that wives are likely to raise issues of marital dissatisfaction with their spouse, whereas husbands are more likely to try to avoid any stressful confrontations (Cowan et al., 1985). Notarius, Benson, Sloane, Vanzetti, and Hornyak (1989) suggest that husbands are likely to detach themselves from discussions of problems, leaving wives in a situation in which they have no partner available to discuss marital concerns. In comparison to husbands, then, wives may accumulate feelings of dissatisfaction with their husband and/or marriage over time, until it reaches a "breaking point" (e.g., dissolution of the marriage).

Pleck's (1987) suggestion that contemporary men are becoming more involved in family roles is somewhat supported by the present research. That egalitarian-oriented men report higher marital quality perhaps illustrates the gradual merging of male and female roles in the United States. Yet this is contrasted by the finding that wives with traditionally oriented husbands report lower marital quality as their own earnings increase. Furthermore, husbands report more open disagreements when they perform higher levels of household labor. Overall, it would appear that husbands, even in dual-earner households, remain somewhat entrenched in the traditional roles and behavioral expectations that were perhaps more indicative of their own fathers.

Lest these results present an entirely pessimistic view of husbands in the United States, it is important to note that husbands in this study are affected by their wives' beliefs concerning fairness in their marriage. Couples in this study are from dual-earner households and, presumably,

have better (i.e., more frequent, more intimate) communication with one another due to the scheduling demands of their dual-earner life-style. Although this may not imply greater "sensitivity" on the part of husbands, husbands do at least appear to have a basic understanding of their wives' attitudes and/or concerns about fairness. Whether this understanding can be equated with behavioral change (e.g., performing more household labor), of course, is quite debatable.

Finally, given that numerous studies have shown the existence of a strong work/family interface in dual-earner couples (Small & Riley, 1990) and that this interface affects many areas of their married lives (e.g., marital quality) and their own personal well-being (e.g., depression), it is difficult to accept the seeming lack of effects from the work environment demonstrated in this study. One plausible explanation for this is the limited range of employment characteristics used herein. Although the employment characteristics used here represent what would be considered the majority of important dimensions within paid labor, it is possible that the more intrinsic aspects of employment (e.g., job complexity) may be more directly associated with the work/family interface. Given that this research has focused on the perceptions of marital quality, future research should seek to explore the dynamic aspects of marriage (e.g., patterns of marital interaction) among dual-earner couples to better understand how spouses' perceptions of marital quality evolve over time.

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