The Effect of Time Spent Together on Marital Happiness and Marital Dissolution by Immigration Status

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I. Introduction

There is an old saying in South Korea that couples are estranged from each other as physical distance between them increases. In other words, many Koreans in the past believed that the physical interaction between couples is very important to keep their relationship. From this perspective, people living in current society are spending much time in the work place so there is not enough time to interact with their spouses or other family members. Although the amount of time working varies from person to person, most people work on weekdays regardless of their occupation. However, the variation is huge. Based on the 1985 Current Population Survey (CPS), 46 percent of females and 42 percent of males worked 35-40 hours a week, five days a week (Pressor 1989). In 1991, 31.5 percent of Americans over age 18 worked during the daytime, 35-40 hours, five days a week (Pressor 1995). These facts are showing that only 32-46% is working regularly in weekdays, and that the rest 54-68% people are working on irregular work schedule in a variety of occupations. Furthermore, there are few clues on how much time people are working on weekends. This variation is critical to understand the amount of time spent together because more and more females are working outside, together with their husbands (Teachman, Tedrow and Crowder 2000). As more women work outside, both

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spouses are "juggling their time" between work and family responsibilities (Pressor 1989). If they fail to juggle the ball, it might cause conflicts, reduce the marital happiness, and eventually it could be resulted in divorce or separation. Many researchers try to explain the current high divorce rate by the increase in female labor force participation (White 1990; Ruggles 1997). However, if we consider this unstable juggling situation with the physical interaction, the fundamental reason behind a high divorce rate might be rather a lack of time for interaction between spouses than the female labor force participation itself, acquired autonomy of women, or individualism, and so on. It might be possible to say that the marriage is unstable because the wife is working, but it could be more reasonable to say that marital instability is caused by less time together or less physical or emotional interaction due to the working schedules of both spouses**.**

When it comes to immigrants, however, the circumstances might be a little different. Considering the low socio-economic status of immigrants, they probably might work harder than other US-born people with American parents to stabilize their lives, to be settled as soon as possible, or to climb social ladder. Thus, the surviving and striving daily lives might take priority over sharing time together among married immigrants. If that is the case, though marital happiness of immigrants might be relatively low, they will keep trying to continue their marriage. In other words, even if spouses of immigrants spend few hours with each other, and even if their marriage life is unhappy, the chance of marital dissolution might be lower than with non-immigrant couples.

The result of Bean, Berg, and Van Hook (1996) supports this point of view. Based on the assimilation process by Gordon (1964), they used generation as a measure of cultural incorporation and education as a measure of structural incorporation. Contrary to the ar-

gument that it is cultural factors, like ‘familism’, that explain Mexican’s low marital disruption pattern (Massey 1981; Vega 1990), one of their main conclusions is that the migration experience and the family adaptation strategy of the migrants in low socio-economic status are the keys to understand the low likelihood of marital disruption. As they are more incorporated structurally (education), the likelihood of marital disruption goes up. So it is not only restricted to the behavior of Mexican immigrants, but it is also the behavior of immigrants.

Considering all things together, the main purpose of this study is breaking off the two major limitations from the previous studies about marital dissolution. First of all, they only focus on people who are born in the US with American parents (non-immigrants). There are few studies about the effect of work schedule on the marital dissolution of immigrants. Thus, we do not know whether the effect of time spent together caused by irregular work schedule may vary by immigration status. Secondly, most previous studies only used categorized work schedule, such as employed-unemployed or fixed-day-evening-night shift, and they just verified the effect of each individual work status, not the amount of time together. If work schedule has significant influence on the marriage life, it would be much better if we can directly calculate the amount of time spent at work place and at home. Fortunately, National Household and Family Survey data allows us to calculate duration of time at work place on a daily basis, and it even specifies the existence of second job of each respondent and his/her spouse.

Work and the family life cannot be separated, especially in modern society. Working people spend at least half of the day at their workplace. It means that as a person spends more and more time on his/her work, the less time he/she spends with a spouse or child-

ren. If both spouses work outside, as many couples are doing in these days, time shared together will be reduced further. This can be connected to conflicts and unhappy marriage life, and the chance of marital dissolution will increase. Immigrants, however, might have a little different story considering their general circumstances. In this paper, first of all, the effect of the amount of time spent together due to work schedule on marital happiness and instability will be examined. Secondly, the difference between immigrants and non-immigrants in this relationship will be examined. Results from this study will set the groundwork for future analyses and data collection by emphasizing the importance of the actual time spent together between spouses on marriage life.

II. Literature Review

This study is based on a paper by Presser (2000). Her main question focuses on the impact of nonstandard schedules on marital instability. By using two waves of the National Survey of Families and Households data, she found that night-shift work and rotating-shift work significantly increase the instability of marriage in the case of couples with children. She mainly considers gender and duration of marriage together with work schedule. In summary, men whose marriage duration is below five years, who have children, and work at night, have an increased level of marital instability. For women whose marriage duration lasts over five years, who also have children, and work at night or work in a rotating shift, the story is the same as with men. In addition, for couples who rarely share time, the chance of marital dissolution goes up sharply regardless of marital duration. However, Presser does not consider the race or immigration status of respondents and their spouses.

Hertz and Charlton (1989) studied the effect of a nonstandard work schedule on family life by using the qualitative research method. Based on ninety interviews in which the husband was a security specialist at two U.S. Air Force bases, they found that day worker families stay together more than shift workers, and that a shift-work schedule affects the interaction in a family negatively in such a way that it disrupts routine events, like having dinner together. In addition, they found that shift workers spend more time with their pre-school children than day workers, but this is considered as the result of sacrificing their sleeping time. Although these results cannot be generalized easily, the result shows that families with workers with nonstandard schedules interact less than families with normal day workers.

A shift-work schedule deteriorates marital quality and increases the chance of divorce (White and Keith 1990). It means that a shift-work schedule can affect marital happiness, which is one of the components of marital quality in the research. According to Schoen, Astone, Rothert, Standish, and Kim (2002), women's employment is not directly connected to divorce. Through marital happiness, female employment affects the chance of divorce, and it can be explained by the economic opportunity hypothesis that economically independent women may choose to opt out of marriage if martial happiness is low. For example, if the marriage is not happy, and if the wife has a job, she is more likely to divorce than wives who are not employed but in an unhappy marriage. In addition, if couples face financial difficulties, and they spend little time together, then the chance of divorce increases (Poortman 2005). This is due to the mixed effect of financial problems and the total amount of time together, which is the key concept of this paper on marital instability. In that financial problems can cause serious conflicts between couples in a

variety of ways, it might be connected to one's marital happiness. Greenstein (1990) tried to identify the relationship between working married women and marital dissolution by National Longitudinal Surveys of Labor Market Experience of Young Women (1968-1982). The result shows that premarital work experience has significant negative effect on marital dissolution. Also, women in low income and working more than 35 hours per week are at high risk of marital dissolution. However, the average number of weeks at work during marriage has no meaningful effect on the marital dissolution.

Interestingly, marital happiness varies across race (Bulanda and Brown 2007). By using two waves of National Survey of Family and Household, they found that the marital happiness and the risk of marital dissolution of Mexican Americans is very similar to that of White Americans, while Black has significantly lower marital happiness and higher risk of marital dissolution compared to White and Mexican Americans. They argue that this difference in marital dissolution is due to the low marital happiness of Blacks. In addition, economic factors, such as income and unemployment, are not a significant predictor of the difference in marital happiness by race. It is argued that the stability of marriage and high level of marital happiness are due to the cultural factors of Mexican Americans, such as kin support, social relationship, and religion. In contrast with this study, however, Bean, Curtis, and Marcum (1977) insist that it is not the cultural factors that affect high marital satisfaction of Mexican Americans as many scholars insist. Instead, it is the marital conditions considering wife's employment, number of children, equal division of domestic work, or the social class of a household.

Although the amount of time together is the primary focus of this analysis, other risk factors for marital instability, such as age, education, household income, marital duration,

premarital cohabitation history, number of children, etc. are strongly needed to be considered for studies about marital dissolution (White 1990). By using the first wave of National Survey of Families and Households (1987-1988), Bumpass, Martin, and Sweet (1991) explored broad risk factors of marital instability. The result shows that young age at marriage, low education, a cohabitation history, and the previous marriage history of the spouse are associated with marital instability of women. The marital disruption of parents, the heterogeneity of religion or education between spouses, and unemployment of men are also significant risk factors of marital instability.

In addition, age, education, household income, marital duration, number of children, etc. are known to affect marital dissolution (Greenstein 1990; White 1990; Bumpass et al. 1991; Lillard et al. 1995). It is hard to distinguish the effect of age and marital duration, but generally, the older the age and the longer the marital duration, the lower the chance of marital dissolution. The higher the education level and the higher the number of children, the lower the likelihood of marital dissolution is.

IV. Hypotheses, Data and Method

My basic hypothesis is that less time together caused by the work schedules of spouses decreases the marital happiness and subsequently increases the likelihood of marital dissolution among non-immigrants. However, in the case of immigrants, the longer the time spent together, the lower the marital happiness, but it does not affect the likelihood of marital dissolution. The concept of time spent together can be divided into two variables in this paper. One is hours spouses can spend together based on the work schedule, and the other is if any one of them is working on weekends or having a second job or not.

Marital happiness consists of husband's and wife's happiness. These two need to be separated because spouses react differently to the conditions of their marriage. Thus, same models will be tested for each spouse's marital happiness.

The focus of this study is the interaction between spouses so that marriage history, age, education, number of children, duration of marriage, and household income are used as controlling variables.

The data used in this paper includes two waves of the National Survey of Family and Households (NSFH). In this data, African Americans, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, and single-parent families, families with stepchildren, cohabiting couples, and recently married persons are oversampled on purpose. In the first wave, in 1987-1988, a total of 13,007 respondents of men and women over the age of 19 were interviewed. In addition, the information about spouses, partners, siblings, or relatives of the respondents was included together. In the follow-up data, wave 2, a total of 10,005 main respondents were re-interviewed in 1992-1994. In wave 2, spouse-partners at the time of data collection (5,624) and ex spouse-partners (789) were also interviewed.

For my research, married couples at wave 1 are selected and then matched the data to the wave 2 data by ID. As a result, a total of 6,877 main respondents who were married in wave 1 are used to analyze the marital dissolution by using logistic regression analysis. Same data is used to analyze the marital happiness by using OLS regression analysis.

Measures of variables

Marital Status: The marital status is whether married respondents in wave 1 still remain married or not in wave 2. People who had separated or divorced before wave 2 are considered as one group whose marriages were dissolved.

Marital Happiness: The question is, "Taking things all together, how would you describe your marriage?" Likert index from 1 (very unhappy) to 7 (very happy) is used to measure the happiness of a husband and a wife. However, since the distribution is left skewed, the logged marital happiness is used for OLS regression and logistic regression analysis.

Immigration status: Because there is no clear question that can detect immigrants in NSFH, I used two questions to check the immigration status of main respondents. The first question is "In what city and state did you live right after you were born?" And the second question is "How old were you when you first came to live in the United States?" People who were born in the U.S., or who have always lived here, and at the same time who didn't come to the U.S at any age, are considered U.S. native (non-immigrants). People who were born in Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, or foreign countries, and at the same time, who came to the US at any age, are coded immigrants. The limitation is that the immigration status of respondent is only identified, not both respondent and spouse. So immigrants can be a husband, a wife, or both. There is no question for the immigration status of the spouse. As a result, if one of the spouses is an immigrant, the household is considered immigrant household.

The Amount of Time Spent Together: This variable is the average time (seconds) spending at the work place per day during weekdays. For instance, if a husband is working from 7:00 to 18:00 and a wife is working from 12:00 to 20:00, they might not encounter each other from 7:00 to 20:00. So they might be able to spend time together from 20:00 to 7:00, for 11 hours. In this way, the spending time together from Monday to Friday is calculated and averaged (hour).

Working on Weekends or Having the Second Job: Regardless of the amount of time worked on weekends, if at least one of spouse works on weekends, the case is considered as working on weekends. In the same way, if at least one spouse has a second job, the case is considered as having a second job. Then these two variables are combined due to the small number of cases.

Previous marital history: If at least one spouse was married before the current marriage, the case is considered as "married-before." If the current marriage was the first for both of them, the case is regarded as "first married."

Duration of marriage (month): The duration of current marriage is calculated by subtracting the interview date at wave 1 from the last marriage date.

Household Income (thousand): The primary source of this variable is the household's total income, including incomes of both spouses from interest, dividends, and other investments. This variable is divided by 1,000.

Number of children: The number of children who were living with respondents is counted by considering biological child, step-child, adopted child, foster child, and child of lover/partner.

Education level (year): Education variables are changed to continuous variable. From 1st grade in the elementary school to high school graduate (12th grade), the education year is the same with the year of the grade. After high school graduation, each answer is changed to years; "attended a two- or four-year college or university for one year" to 13-year, "as-

sociate degree or enrolled for two years" to 14-year, "enrolled for three years" to 15-year, "bachelor's degree" to 16-year, "enrolled in postgraduate education" to 17-year, "master's degree" to 18-year, "enrolled in post-Master's education" to 20-year, and "doctorate or professional degree" to 23-year.

Age (year): The age of husbands and wives at wave 1.

V. Results

For PAA presentation, this section will be developed further. For abstract, I briefly summarize the preliminary results and emphasize a few important points.

The descriptive statistics of all variables are shown in <Table 1>. Most of all, the marital happiness of wife among immigrants is slightly lower than that of non-immigrants. In contrast, the happiness of husband among immigrants is higher than that of non-immigrants. It is quite interesting if we think about the low likelihood of divorce among immigrants compared to non-immigrants. Both groups are spending about 13.5 hours with their spouses, and 66% of both groups are working on weekends or having second job. The differences are very small though the deviation for time together variable is higher among immigrants. The proportion of previous marriage experience is higher among non-immigrants, and the marriage duration of immigrants is longer than the one of non-immigrants. These numbers reflect the low probability of marital dissolution among immigrants. In addition, income of immigrants is a little bit higher than the one of non-immigrants, but the deviation for immigrants is fairly high so it is difficult to say that immigrants are in better economic conditions than non-immigrants in this data.

The result of OLS regression analysis on marital happiness of husband is shown in <Table 2>. In the first model, basic demographic variables are used, and then marriage variables, time together variables, interaction terms are used in order for the next three models.

Although there is no difference of significance across the models, there are a few important findings for the next analysis. Most of all, the marital happiness of husband does not vary by immigration status even after controlling for all other variables. However, time together and weekend or second work are significant at $p < 0.10$ level. In detail, the more spouses spend time together, the higher the marital happiness of husband. The husband's marital happiness is lower if one of spouses has a weekend work or a second job. However, the interaction between time together variables and immigration status is not significant. The result of number of children and marriage duration is consistent with previous studies. The higher the number of children, the lower the marital happiness of husband is. The marriage duration has curve linear relationship with marital happiness of husband. As marriage continues, the happiness goes down, but after years, it starts going up.

The result of OLS regression analysis on marital happiness of wife is shown in <Table 3>. In contrast with the result of husband, the marital happiness of wife is significantly different by immigration status though p-value is small. More interestingly, the interaction between time together and immigration status is significant at $p < 0.10$ level. The effect of time together for non-immigrants is -0.0007, and the one for immigrants is +0.0179. The coefficients are quite small due to the logged dependent variable, but it is important to note that the way of effects is the opposite. In other words, for immigrant

wives, the longer spouses spend together, the merrier the marriage, but for non-immigrant wives, the un-merrier the marriage. This result is unexpected at all, so further research is needed. But still, it is obvious that there is an interesting difference between marital happiness of husband and wife in the effect of time together by immigration status.

Up to now, marital happiness of husband and wife is analyzed separately. From now on, to figure out the effect of marital happiness and time spent together on the marital dissolution, including divorce and separation, logistic regression analysis on the likelihood of marital dissolution is used. If the couple was divorced or separated between wave 1 and wave 2, the dependent variable is equal to 1. All independent variables are from wave 1. The result is summarized in <Table 4>.

The same steps with the regression analysis are used in this analysis. In model 4, one unit increase in the logged marital happiness of husband is associated with a 61% decrease in the predicted odds of marital dissolution. One unit increase in the logged marital happiness of wife is associated with a 73% decrease in the predicted odds of marital dissolution. Thus, when other variables are controlled, the marital happiness of wife is more influential on the marital dissolution. Age gap is also significant. One year increase in age gap is associated with 3% increase in the predicted odds of marital dissolution. Considering that age gap might be connected with different values or preferences between spouses, this result seems reasonable. In addition, one month increase in marriage duration is associated with 1% decrease in the predicted odds of marital dissolution. However, through model 1 to model 4, time together variables and immigration status, which are the main variables of this study, are not significant at all. The interaction between time together

variables and immigration status is not significant as well. Does this mean that they only affect the happiness of wife, but not the marital dissolution?

To test this, three-way interaction among immigration status, time together, and marital happiness of wife is needed, but the number of cases of immigrants is too small to do this test. So the interaction between time together variables and happiness of husband or wife is added in model 5. The interaction between time together and marital happiness of husband is significant. If we fix the marital happiness of husband and change the value of hours spending together from 1 to 10 to figure out the effect of marital happiness of husband on marital dissolution, we get the coefficient of marital happiness of husband, -0.21 and -2.1, respectively. Odds ratio for each coefficient is 0.81 and 0.12 respectively. Thus, as the time spent together increases, the effect of marital happiness of husband on marital dissolution increases. Substantially, it seems like the longer spouses spend together, the merrier the husband and this decreases the likelihood of marital dissolution. However, this is not the case for a wife. In other words, the time spent together increases the marital happiness of wife based the result in model 3 of <Table 3>, but this is not associated to the marital dissolution.

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<Table 1> Descriptive Statistics of Variables

	Immigrants			Non-Immigrants			Total		
	N	Mean	S.D.	N	Mean	S.D.	N	Mean	S.D.
Marital Happiness of Husband	105	6.16	1.12	2,288	6.07	1.16	2,393	6.07	1.16
Marital Happiness of Wife	105	5.83	1.55	2,288	6.02	1.26	2,393	6.01	1.27
Time Together (Hour)	105	13.63	3.06	2,288	13.56	2.75	2,393	13.56	2.77
Weekend work / Second Job (Y/N)	105	0.66	0.48	2,288	0.66	0.47	2,393	0.66	0.47
Marriage History (Y/N)	105	0.29	0.45	2,288	0.32	0.47	2,393	0.31	0.46
Age of Husband	105	39.90	12.01	2,288	37.28	10.47	2,393	37.40	10.55
Age of Wife	105	36.93	10.52	2,288	34.86	9.87	2,393	34.96	9.90
Education of Husband	105	12.65	4.51	2,288	13.79	3.00	2,393	13.74	3.09
Education of Wife	105	12.02	4.29	2,288	13.53	2.50	2,393	13.46	2.62
Age Gap	105	2.96	6.23	2,288	2.42	4.34	2,393	2.44	4.44
Education Gap	105	0.63	3.36	2,288	0.26	2.66	2,393	0.28	2.70
Number of Children	105	1.59	1.43	2,288	1.35	1.20	2,393	1.36	1.21
Marriage Duration (month)	105	146.24	123.44	2,288	136.36	121.13	2,393	136.79	121.22
Household Income (thousand)	105	49.56	72.01	2,288	47.49	43.60	2,393	47.58	45.21

<Table 2> OLS Regression Result on the Logged Marital Happiness of Husband

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	S.E.		B	S.E.		B	S.E.		B	S.E.	
Immigration Status	0.0225	0.0272		0.0268	0.0271		0.0264	0.0271		0.0415	0.1373	
Age Gap	-0.0016	0.0013		-0.0015	0.0013		-0.0014	0.0013		-0.0014	0.0013	
Education Gap	-0.0017	0.0021		-0.0012	0.0021		-0.0014	0.0021		-0.0014	0.0021	
Marriage History				-0.0020	0.0127		-0.0022	0.0127		-0.0020	0.0127	
Number of Children				-0.0132	0.0051	*	-0.0122	0.0052	*	-0.0123	0.0052	*
Marriage Duration				-0.0004	0.0002	*	-0.0004	0.0002	**	-0.0004	0.0002	**
Marriage Duration ^{2}				0.0000	0.0000	*	0.0000	0.0000	*	0.0000	0.0000	*
Household Income				0.0001	0.0001		0.0001	0.0001		0.0001	0.0001	
Time Together							0.0034	0.0020	†	0.0036	0.0021	†
Weekend Work / Second Job							-0.0205	0.0118	†	-0.0223	0.0120	†
Time Together * Immigration Status										-0.0031	0.0091	
Weekend/Second * Immigration Status										0.0415	0.0577	
Intercept	1.7793	0.0065	**	1.8236	0.0140	**	1.7909	0.0325	**	1.7896	0.0333	**
R^2	0.001			0.011			0.013			0.014		
N	2,393			2,393			2,393			2,393		

Note: † $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, two tailed.

<Table 3> OLS Regression Result on the Logged Marital Happiness of Wife

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	S.E.		B	S.E.		B	S.E.		B	S.E.	
Immigration Status	-0.0583	0.0305	†	-0.0536	0.0304	†	-0.0537	0.0304	†	-0.3702	0.1537	*
Age Gap	-0.0010	0.0014		-0.0009	0.0014		-0.0009	0.0014		-0.0008	0.0014	
Education Gap	0.0007	0.0023		0.0015	0.0023		0.0015	0.0023		0.0017	0.0023	
Marriage History				-0.0075	0.0142		-0.0077	0.0142		-0.0089	0.0142	
Number of Children				-0.0125	0.0058	*	-0.0116	0.0058	*	-0.0119	0.0058	*
Marriage Duration				-0.0006	0.0002	**	-0.0006	0.0002	**	-0.0006	0.0002	**
Marriage Duration ^{2}				0.0000	0.0000	*	0.0000	0.0000	**	0.0000	0.0000	**
Household Income				0.0000	0.0001		0.0000	0.0001		0.0000	0.0001	
Time Together							0.0003	0.0023		-0.0007	0.0023	
Weekend Work / Second Job							-0.0238	0.0132	†	-0.0277	0.0135	*
Time Together * Immigration Status										0.0186	0.0102	†
Weekend/Second * Immigration Status										0.0964	0.0646	
Intercept	1.7639	0.0073	**	1.8248	0.0157	**	1.8370	0.0365	**	1.8526	0.0372	**
R^2	0.002			0.013			0.015			0.017		
N	2,393			2,393			2,393			2,393		

Note: † $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, two tailed.

<Table 4> Logistic Regression Analysis on Marital Dissolution (odds ratio in parenthesis)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Marital Happiness of Husband (log)	0.46 **	0.39 **	0.39 **	0.39 **	6.47
Marital Happiness of Wife (log)	0.34 **	0.27 **	0.27 **	0.27 **	0.25
Immigration Status	0.67	0.68	0.68	1.49	0.68
Age Gap	1.03 *	1.03 *	1.03 †	1.03 †	1.03 *
Education gap	0.96 †	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97
Marriage History		1.14	1.15	1.15	1.15
Number of Children		1.10 †	1.09	1.09	1.10 †
Marriage Duration		0.99 **	0.99 **	0.99 **	0.99 **
Household Income		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Time Together			1.00	1.00	1.34 †
Weekend Work / Second Job			1.27 †	1.26 †	3.42
Inter1: Time Together * Immigration Status				0.94	
Inter2: Weekend/Second * Immigration Status				1.02	
Inter3: Time Together * Happiness of Husband					0.81 *
Inter4: Weekend/Second * Happiness of Husband					1.02
Inter5: Time Together * Happiness of Wife					1.04
Inter6: Weekend/Second * Happiness of Wife					0.55
-2LL	1901.72	1760.07	1756.95	1756.63	1748.17
N	2,393	2,393	2,393	2,393	2,393

Note: † $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, two tailed.