

Work Family Preferences, Behavior, and Marital Satisfaction in an Age of Egalitarianism

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Abstract

In this paper I argue that although trends point to increasing egalitarianism in marriage, dual-earner spouses are heterogeneous in their family role preferences. Dual-earners who prefer traditional family roles may experience a marital satisfaction penalty because their ideals are incongruent with their family reality. I use data from the 1997 and 2002 waves of National Study of the Changing Workforce to test this hypothesis. Because the survey contains a variety of family and workplace measures, I am able to test competing explanations for the marital satisfaction penalty experienced by traditionally-minded dual-earners. I find that after accounting for time spent with one's spouse, economic dependency, and the interaction between workplace characteristics and traditionalism, the penalty for holding traditional family preferences on marital satisfaction remains. I conclude that in an era where preferences increasingly determine one's lifestyle, the mismatch between traditional family preferences and a dual-earner reality may lower marital wellbeing.

Introduction

Over the past half century, American attitudes and preferences about family arrangements have undergone a tremendous shift. Nationally representative surveys show that support for the so-called “traditional” homemaker-breadwinner relationship has declined. Since the 1980s a strong majority of Americans have supported the idea that married couples share household labor; a similar majority approve of the employment of married women with children (Bolzendahl and Myers 2004; Brewster and Padavic 2000; Brooks and Bolzendahl 2004; Thornton and Young-DeMarco 2001). There is also overlap in what Americans say and what they actually do. Married women have entered the labor force in unprecedented numbers, wives contribute more to family income, and the dual-earner marriage arrangement has become the norm rather than the exception (Blau and Kahn 2007; Juhn and Potter 2006; Raley, Mattingly, and Bianchi 2006). More men have begun to adopt intensive fathering practices (Sayer, Bianchi, and Robinson 2004; Yeung et al. 2001), and it has been estimated that men have doubled their share of the housework (Robinson and Godbey 1999; Fisher et al. 2006). In short, there is increasing evidence that American marriages are becoming more egalitarian than in the past (Amato et al. 2007).

Despite the rise of the dual earner marriage and the apparent convergence of egalitarian attitudes and behaviors, there is still heterogeneity in gendered preferences among dual earners. Hakim (2000) persuasively argues that among women (and to a lesser extent men), there is wide variation in family-related role preferences. Not everyone has adopted the increasingly prevalent ideal of a “peer marriage” (Schwartz 1996) arrangement; some women *prefer* a traditional division of household labor and childrearing. After all, while national surveys show that most Americans appear to support egalitarian attitudes, a substantial proportion of Americans – both women and men – do not. For dual-earner women and men who have gone against the grain and still espouse traditional attitudes, holding these attitudes may be problematic. The mismatch between one’s preferences for a traditional homemaker-breadwinner relationship and the reality that both spouses are using paid work to contribute to the family’s economic wellbeing may have negative consequences on marital satisfaction.

Using the 1997 and 2002 waves from the National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW), I demonstrate a clear marital satisfaction penalty for dual earner married couples who

hold traditional gender preferences as measured by attitudes toward working mothers and the division of household labor. I find that even after accounting for several work and family mechanisms that may reduce or moderate the effect of traditional preferences on marital satisfaction, it appears that the simple mismatch between ideals and reality contributes to lower marital satisfaction. My results support Hakim's (2000) assertion that even in the case of dual earners, there is wide heterogeneity of gender and family preferences among women (and to a lesser extent, possibly men), and in a society where preferences are increasingly becoming more salient in determining various socio-economic and health outcomes, even marital satisfaction may be susceptible to mismatches between ideals and reality.

Marital Satisfaction and Family Preferences

Social scientists have long been concerned with marriage quality (Burgess and Locke 1954), but questioning how family preferences might shape marriage behavior and quality has only regained substantial attention over the past 20 years. How might gender and family preferences affect marital satisfaction today? Increased heterogeneity in gender and family preferences (Hakim 2000) implies that the traditional predictors of marital wellbeing – life stage, presence or children, and equity of housework – may affect marital satisfaction in different ways for people who hold different preferences. Traditional family-oriented spouses may not see a problem with an unbalanced division of labor, while work-oriented women might feel resentment toward husbands who do not contribute. Mismatches between preferences and behavior might create resentment or hostility toward one's spouse. This may be particularly true for dual earners if both spouses participate in paid work out of necessity or the wife chooses employment despite the traditional preferences of the husband. Below, I discuss recent research that sheds light on how preferences might directly affect marital wellbeing, as well as how preferences may interact with other variables to affect perceptions of wellbeing.

The Effects of Egalitarian Preferences and Behaviors on Marital Wellbeing

When it comes to understanding how family role preferences might affect marital wellbeing, the verdict is still out. Although there is a substantial body of literature examining the topic, only a few studies rely on large representative data sets, and the vast majority use cross-

sectional data. Furthermore, it is unclear whether the effects of family role preferences on marital satisfaction depends on one's gender; studies that include men provide conflicting results. However, recently, there appears to be evidence that the satisfaction of both women and men may benefit from egalitarian beliefs and behaviors.

Most studies using data from the 70s to early 90s find that, for women, the effect of gender preferences on marital satisfaction is in the opposite direction of what I propose. These studies show that gender attitudes have become increasingly egalitarian, but the marital satisfaction penalty is greatest for women who hold *egalitarian* beliefs. During this period (1970s-early 1990s) it was widely accepted that women still took part in the bulk of household labor, and for working married women, domestic labor in addition to paid work was considered an unattractive "second shift" (Hochschild 1989). Thus, women with egalitarian beliefs might have been more susceptible to lower marital satisfaction because their beliefs were incongruent with the gendered reality. This argument was supported in a number of studies using both small convenience samples and large representative surveys (Amato and Booth 1995; Greenstein 1995; Lye and Biblarz 1993; Rogers and Amato 2000). Other authors argued that because it was assumed that women shouldered the burden of most of the housework, egalitarian women would be more likely to keep an eye out for more desirable arrangements (England and Farkas 1986; DeMaris and Longmore 1996). Others argued that gender attitudes acted as a "lens" through which women viewed the household division of labor. Thus, an unequal housework arrangement would lower partner satisfaction for egalitarian women, but not for women with traditional gender preferences (Greenstein 1996; Wilkie, Ferree, and Ratcliff 1998). While women's egalitarian penalty on partner satisfaction was consistently supported, it is important to note that nearly all of the data was collected during or before the early 90s, and may not be generalizable to modern dual earner couples.

Previous research has also examined the role of gender preferences on men's reports of relationship wellbeing. The findings appear less consistent and conclusive, but it seems clear that there are gender differences in the effects of family preferences and relationship satisfaction. Lye and Biblarz (1993) found that men who supported an egalitarian division of household labor were more likely to report higher marital wellbeing, especially if their wife held traditional views on the division of housework. Similarly, using panel data, Rogers and Amato (2000) found that men who switched to holding more egalitarian preferences during the course of their marriages

were more likely to be satisfied with their relationships. Perry-Jenkins and Crouter (1990) found that regardless of whether men held traditional or egalitarian preferences, they reported higher levels of marital satisfaction if their attitudes were congruent with their housework behavior. On the other hand, McHale and Crouter (1992) found that men were less likely to be satisfied with their relationships if they maintained traditional preferences and divided housework in an egalitarian manner. Finally, Stevens, Kiger, and Riley (2001) found that family preferences had no effect on marital wellbeing.

Recently, increasing evidence shows that egalitarian preferences and behaviors have a positive effect on marital wellbeing. Amato et al. (2003) found that the trend toward egalitarian gender attitudes between 1980 and 2000 led to an aggregate increase in marital quality over time and reduced the gender gap in marital quality. Unfortunately, recent studies tend to focus on egalitarian behavior rather than preferences. For example, many studies have shown that progressive gender ideology is partly responsible for spouses' adoption of egalitarian housework behaviors (Coltrane 2000), and these behaviors in turn have been shown to lead increase women's marital satisfaction (Coltrane 2000; Stevens, Kiger, and Mannon 2005). Similarly, embracing egalitarian household behaviors lowers the risk of divorce (Cooke 2007) and may be associated with higher frequencies of sex between spouses (Coleman 2007, 2008). In short, while most evidence showing that egalitarian marriages result in higher marital satisfaction focuses on egalitarian behaviors, it is likely that egalitarian preferences are somewhat responsible for these behaviors.

Is There a Marital Satisfaction Penalty for Dual Earners With Traditional Gender Preferences?

While recent evidence offers a compelling argument about the importance of egalitarian preferences and behaviors for marriage wellbeing, research seems to ignore the possible negative consequences for dual earners who hold traditional gender preferences. Because both spouses contribute to the family's wellbeing through paid work, the dual earner relationship stands in opposition to the highly gendered breadwinner-homemaker model of marriage. Thus, there is an inherent disconnect between the ideals of traditionalist dual earners and the reality of their family life. This disconnect between ideals and reality may have negative ramifications on marital

wellbeing. In the following sections I elaborate on the possible negative connection between the mismatch of ideals and reality, and further suggest ways in which the mismatch might result in lower reports of marital quality

Within the social sciences, it has long been argued that a mismatch between ideals and behaviors, sometimes termed “cognitive dissonance” or “role incongruity”, is an undesirable state that can negatively affect personal health and interpersonal relationships (Newcomb 1953; Osgood and Tannebaum 1955). It has been shown that when husbands and wives maintain an incongruity between their attitudes and roles, they are less likely to be satisfied with their relationships (Arnott 1972; Araji 1977; McHale and Crouter 1992; Amato and Booth 1995; Greenstein 1995; Lye and Biblarz 1993; Rogers and Amato 2000; Vannoy and Philliber 1992). Using preference theory, and arguing about the tight connection between attitudes and preferences, Hakim (2000) has shown that the mismatch between women’s gender and family preferences and the reality of their work-family situation may be useful in understanding the well-documented gender gap in depression and marital satisfaction. Combining classic theories of role incongruence with preference theory one would expect contemporary dual earners with traditional attitudes to experience marital instability. However, for dual earners, the effect of the mismatch between gender preferences and reality on marital satisfaction may not be so simple. Rather, there may be family and work related mechanisms that are responsible for the possible association. In the next section I address possible mechanisms that may explain or moderate the effect of incongruence on marital satisfaction.

Mechanisms Affecting the Dual Earner Preference/Behavior Mismatch on Marital Satisfaction

Time Spent With Spouse. Over half a century ago, Locke (1951) proposed that partners who spend more leisure time together are more likely to have satisfying relationships. The majority of studies that followed have found similar results; the more leisure hours (or in some cases any type of time) one spent with their partner, the healthier their relationship (Orthner 1975; Kingston and Nock 1987; Hill 1988; Claxton and Perry-Jenkins 2008). Similarly, dual earning couples where one partner worked a non-standard schedule were more likely to suffer from lower marital quality possibly because the couples had less time to interact (Presser 2000, 2003; White and Keith 1990).

Hakim (2000) estimated that between 10 and 30 percent of women and 5 and 15 percent of men are family-oriented, meaning these individuals prefer to invest their time in the family sphere and would prefer to invest little to no time in paid work or careers. It may be the case that traditional-minded individuals may desire to spend more leisure time with their spouse than egalitarian-minded individuals. It may also be that the dual earner relationship creates a situation where family-oriented individuals cannot spend as much time interacting with their loved ones – especially their spouse. If this is true, it is not necessarily the mismatch between gender preferences and family reality that might cause relationship distress, but the fact that dual earners with traditional preferences are more likely to be family oriented, and therefore, report lower marital satisfaction because they are unable to spend as much quality time with their spouse.

Gender Maintenance and Work-Family Roles. Gender is a salient part of identity, and women and men express their gendered selves through gender-consistent presentations in a variety of contexts. By “doing gender”, women and men reproduce gender inequalities in paid work and the division of household labor (Berk 1985; Brines 1994; Ferree 1990; West and Zimmerman 1987; Zvonkovic et al. 1996). A few studies have documented a decline in partner satisfaction in relationships where a spouse regularly takes part in gender-inconsistent activities. For example, some studies find that holding gender-neutral family attitudes increased the risk of divorce or marital disruption (Amato et al. 2007; Heaton and Blake 1999). There is some evidence that having an employed wife with a full-time work schedule increased reports of marital instability (Booth et al. 1994). Other ethnographic research shows that although non-gendered, egalitarian couples develop “deep friendships” (Risman and Johnson-Sumerford 1998; Schwartz 1994), they sacrificed romantic and sexual passion in exchange for marriage equality (Schwartz 1994). Although these studies demonstrate the possible negative side effects of maintaining gender-inconsistent relationship roles, it would be imprudent to rule out the prevailing evidence that egalitarian relationships promote higher levels of marital satisfaction. However, one study did examine the effects of gender-inconsistent spousal behavior on marital satisfaction, measured as the wife’s to husband’s earnings ratio (Furdyna, Tucker, and James 2008). The authors found that white wives who held traditional gender preferences and earned the same or more than their husbands were less likely to report feeling very happy with their marriage. However, when traditional-oriented white wives felt they needed to work in order to

support their family, they were more likely to report marital happiness compared to traditional-oriented wives who did not need paid work to support their family.

The gender maintenance perspective offers a competing explanation for the possible discontent dual earners may feel toward their relationships. Women and men with traditional beliefs may resent that they cannot establish family work arrangements in ways consistent with their preferences. Like the results from Furdyna, Tucker and James (2008) demonstrate, traditionally-minded dual earning women may begrudge taking what they perceive to be a male-oriented role, and this dissatisfaction may affect their marital quality. Furthermore, traditional dual earner wives may hold resentments toward their husbands who are unable to support their families on their individual earnings. Similarly, traditional dual earning men may bear guilt that they cannot support their family on their own, or they may feel antipathy toward the gender-inconsistent working role of their wife. For these couples, intra- or interpersonal dissatisfaction stemming from gender role inconsistencies might explain the association between traditional gender preferences and lower marital satisfaction. Thus, I would expect to find wife's contribution to income, wife's relative hours spent on paid work, and whether a husband or wife's income is enough to support the family to explain the negative effect of traditional preferences on relationship satisfaction.

Workplace Characteristics. Up until now, I have ignored one factor in the lives of dual earner couples that undoubtedly affects perceptions of marital wellbeing – the workplace. While work characteristics are a relatively understudied predictor of marital satisfaction, a handful of studies have offered valuable insights into the ways in which aspects of the job spill over into marriage. Through detailed observations and interviews of employees at a Fortune 500 company, Hochschild (1997) demonstrated that workplace culture and the organization of work directly affected her subjects' family lives. Other research using representative samples continues to offer evidence that work may affect marital satisfaction in complicated ways. There is limited evidence that having a satisfying job may positively affect marital satisfaction (Rogers and May 2003). For women, being employed in a high stress job leads to increased perceptions of overall stress, which in turn negatively spill over into perceptions of their relationship wellbeing (Hughes, Galinsky, and Morris 1992). Other studies show that the quality of one's workplace may affect perceptions of marital satisfaction. For women and men with jobs characterized by challenging work, decision-making latitude, and supportive supervisors, relationships with the

spouse were more supportive behaviors with less disruptive husband-wife interactions (Hughes and Galinsky 1994). Similarly, workers that were supported by both a family-friendly organizational culture and supportive coworkers were more likely to report higher levels of family satisfaction, while having an understanding supervisor increased marital satisfaction (Hill 2005). Although, it appears clear that the work context affects marital quality, there are no studies that examine how the work-marriage connection interacts with workers' gender and family role preferences.

It is unclear how the work context might affect perceptions on wellbeing for dual earners with traditional preferences. On one hand, if dual earners with traditional role preferences work out of financial necessity, it may be that they are overrepresented in jobs with weak career prospects and unpleasant working conditions. If this is the case, one would expect that controlling for workplace characteristics might explain the association between preferences and marital wellbeing. However, another argument can be made: the association between preferences and marital satisfaction may *depend* on the type of job one has. If a dual earner with traditional family preferences is forced to abandon their ideals and enter the world of paid work, having a rewarding job with supportive coworkers and management might reduce the initial negative effect of unmet preferences on relationship quality. Likewise, traditionally-minded dual earners that work in hostile and monotonous jobs may find an exacerbated negative effect between traditional preferences and marital quality.

Gender and Parenthood. There are good reasons to test whether the negative effect of the mismatch between preferences and reality differs by gender. Hakim (2000) suggested that women have more heterogeneous family preferences than men because men's destinies have traditionally been connected to the world of paid work, while women, whose lives traditionally revolved around the family-sphere, may choose the extent they wish to embrace one sphere over the other. Thus, the effect of traditional preferences may be more salient for women because of this strong element of "choice." Likewise, traditional preferences may be more salient for dual earner parents of young children. All parents are concerned about their child's wellbeing, but dual earner parents with traditional family orientations may feel deep concern for their child's wellbeing if their arrangement deviates from traditional standards. They may also fear that their division of labor may negatively affect their child's socialization process. Thus, it is also

important to consider whether the effect of the discrepancy between ideal and reality on marital satisfaction may depend on parental status.

Data and Measures

To test whether there is a traditional role preference penalty on perceptions of marital satisfaction for dual earners, I pool the 1997 and 2002 cross-sectional waves of the National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW) - a large nationally representative probability sample of non-institutionalized working adults (for technical details on the study see Bond, Galinski, and Swanberg 1998; Bond et al. 2002). To the best of my knowledge, this data set is the most current large-scale data set that includes comprehensive measures of work and family life. I only include measures that are directly comparable between waves.¹

My sample includes both married dual earner respondents as well as married respondents with a stay-at-home wife or husband. However, the bulk of the analysis focuses on the dual earner sample; the non-dual earners are included as a comparison group for a separate analysis. I do not include cohabiting respondents primarily because my dependent variable, partner satisfaction, only includes married and re-married respondents.² After using listwise deletion to account for missing data, my final sample included 1,899 dual earners and 867 respondents with a dependent spouse.

My dependent variable is a global measure of partner satisfaction. Respondents were asked, “All and all how satisfied would you say you are with your marriage?”, and were required to choose from the following categories, “Extremely Satisfied”, “Very Satisfied”, “Somewhat Satisfied”, and “Not Too Satisfied”. Because very few respondents claimed to be “not too satisfied” with their marriages, I collapse the bottom two categories into a single category that captures being somewhat satisfied or dissatisfied with the marriage.

Gender-role and family preferences were measured by respondents strongly agreeing, agreeing, disagreeing, or strongly disagreeing to the following statements, “How much do you agree or disagree that it is much better for everyone involved if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children?” and “How much do you agree or disagree that a

¹ Although not shown in the subsequent analysis, I included a year dummy variable and interacted the year variable with each key independent variable to test for unobserved heterogeneity by survey wave as well as the possibility that the unobserved heterogeneity may interact with my independent variables.

² The NSCW codebook claims that the partner satisfaction question was asked to all respondents in a committed relationship regardless of marital status. However, upon further inspection, this was not the case.

mother who works outside the home can have just as good a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work?”. In order to examine the effect of preference consistency (i.e. having traditional preferences on both measures) versus the effect of being traditional on only one item, I construct a set of dummy variables representing different combinations of values for the two measures. Respondents who reported being traditional toward the division of labor statement (i.e. strongly agreeing or agreeing) and the working mother statement (i.e. strongly disagreeing or disagreeing) were included in the category “traditional consistent”. Those respondents who reported being traditional toward the division of labor, but not toward the working mother statement were placed into a “traditional division of labor” category. Likewise, respondents whose attitudes toward working mothers were traditional, but who held less conservative attitudes toward the familial division of labor were placed into a “mom working traditional” category. The referent category contains the most respondents – those who reported egalitarian attitudes toward both statements. Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for the traditional preference measures alongside other variables included in the analysis. The descriptive statistics support the observation that wide heterogeneity of family preferences is present amongst dual earning women and men.

Table 1 About Here

To test whether a traditionalism penalty on marital satisfaction among dual earners might be due to traditional partners wanting to spend more time with their spouse, I include a measure for desired time with spouse. Respondents were asked, “Do you feel that the time you have with your (PARTNER) is too much, just enough, or not enough?” Because a small minority of respondents claimed to desire less time with their spouse, I collapse the “just enough” category with the “less time” category. This procedure resulted in a dichotomous variable representing the desire to spend more time with one’s spouse, where those who are content with their time with their spouse or want to spend less time with their spouse serve as the referent category.

In order to assess whether traditional attitudes negatively affect marital quality because dual earner respondents cannot enact traditional gender roles, I rely on a variety of measures that

tap into the gendered division of paid work.³ First, I employ a dichotomous measure that asked respondents if their earnings were enough to provide for their family. Second, following (Brines 1994), I construct a measure representing a respondent's earnings contribution using the following formula:

$$\text{Earnings Contribution} = (\text{R. Earnings} - \text{Sp. Earnings}) / (\text{R. Earnings} + \text{Sp. Earnings})$$

Values range from -1 to 1, where -1 refers to a respondent who is completely dependent on their spouse and 1 refers to a respondent who solely provides for the family. A value of 0 indicates that both spouses contribute equal earnings. Third, I use the absolute difference in hours worked for both spouses. To represent the connection between gender and paid work, I interact each of the three measures with gender. Thus, I am able to test if the effect of earnings contribution and hours worked on marital satisfaction differs by gender depending on whether or not these contributions are consistent with role expectations. Significant interactions in the proposed direction that pick up the effect of traditional preferences would suggest that marital satisfaction is lower among traditional-oriented dual earning women and men to the extent that they are violating traditional breadwinner norms.

To test whether work characteristics explain or moderate a relationship between traditional preferences and lower marital satisfaction, I include measures of job autonomy, supervisor support, and supportive work culture; larger values indicate larger amounts of each characteristic.⁴ I detail the index construction in Appendix A. I interact each of the indices with the traditional preference variables to test if dual earners with "good jobs" are able to reduce the negative effect of traditional preferences on marital satisfaction.

I include a number of basic respondent characteristics as controls. These variables include, gender, race (black, white, or other), presence of a child under 13 (referent = those with older or no children), education (referent = high school or less), occupational category (referent = manual laborer), and age intervals to capture one's position in the life-course (referent = older than 50). I also include a control for the natural log of family income.⁵ Unfortunately, the NSCW

³ Unfortunately, while the NSCW does contain a general categorical measure for perceptions of spouse's contribution of housework, the measure is not comparable across both waves.

⁴ I purposely do not include a job satisfaction measure because the direction of causality is unclear. In addition, it has been demonstrated that positive spillover occurs most strongly in the direction from marriage to job (Rogers and May 2003).

⁵ Including the log of family income and the earnings ratio measure in the same model does not introduce colinearity because the earnings ratio transformation creates an entirely different measure.

contains few useful basic relationship measures such as spouse's age or length of marriage, so my attempts to control for one's position in the life-course are substantially limited.

Analytic Strategy

Because my dependent variable, marital satisfaction, is a semi-ordinal variable consisting of three categories, OLS and Logistic Regression procedures are inappropriate. Due to its semi-ordinal nature, I considered using Ordinal Logistic Regression. However, preliminary tests showed that the coefficients did not affect each level of the dependent variable equally (i.e. the assumption of parallel regression was rejected). Thus, I chose the Multinomial Logistic Regression (MLR) model. Unfortunately, the MLR model often presents unwieldy amounts of information (to quote a well-respected colleague: "Let 1000 coefficients bloom!"), and is relatively more difficult to interpret. Nonetheless, the MLR model requires the fewest assumptions, and I am able to report more consistent results.

I report my findings using five different models in order to test for the negative effects of traditional preferences on marital satisfaction, as well as the competing explanations. Model 1 only includes the bivariate results between preferences and marital satisfaction. Model 2 includes all respondent characteristics. Model 3 introduces the variable measuring desire to spend more time with spouse. Model 4 contains the breadwinner- and dependency-by-gender interactions. Model 5 includes the job-characteristic interactions with traditional family preferences. I test whether Models 3-5 are an improvement on Model 2 (the baseline model plus respondent control variables), by conducting log-likelihood ratio tests for nested models. Finally, I also test whether the traditional preference variable interacts with gender or parental status. These results are not reported for reasons I elaborate on below.

The MLR results are interpreted in the following way. Each model is broken down into two columns. One column contains coefficients that represents the probability of only being somewhat satisfied (or not too satisfied) with one's relationship relative to being extremely satisfied with one's relationship (the referent category for both columns). The other column contains coefficients representing the probability of being very satisfied with one's relationship relative to being extremely satisfied with one's relationship. A significant coefficient in the first column would be interpreted as follows: Being consistently traditional in role preferences as

opposed to consistently egalitarian raises the odds of being somewhat satisfied with one's marriage compared to extremely satisfied with one's marriage. Thus, odds ratios greater than 1 imply an increased risk of being *dissatisfied* with one's spouse.

Results

Table 2 shows the results of the MLR analysis. It is very clear that, for dual earners, maintaining traditional family preferences has a negative effect on marital satisfaction. Model 1 includes only the preference variables and compares the effect of maintaining traditional preferences to holding egalitarian ideals. Having consistently traditional preferences (i.e. supporting a gendered division of labor and believing a working mother is harmful for children), nearly doubles the odds of reporting being disappointed or only somewhat satisfied with one's partner, compared to being extremely satisfied. Likewise, holding consistently traditional preferences raises the odds of being very satisfied instead of extremely satisfied by 50%. Interestingly, there appears to be a small marital satisfaction penalty for dual earners who are only conservative regarding the division of labor. However, this effect does not show up in each of the models.

Table 2 About Here

Before elaborating on the subsequent models, I must address an important question. Is it possible that all couples, regardless of dual earner status, may perceive lower marital satisfaction if they hold traditional family preferences? After all, these couples may exhibit a mismatch between their ideals and the reality of popular culture. Constantly "going against the grain" when one is surrounded by peers and media images that promote a more egalitarian division of labor, may cause spouses to think more critically about their relationships. To test if this is the case I run the models for a sample of 867 employed married men and women with non-employed spouses. Although not shown here, the relationship between traditional preferences and marital satisfaction was nonexistent. This finding offers further evidence that dual earners with traditional preferences must deal with directly incongruent preferences and behaviors that may lower their sense of marital wellbeing.

Although not included in Table 2, interacting gender with preferences does not affect marital satisfaction. Apparently, women and men view their marriages similarly when their ideals conflict with their paid-work arrangement. Likewise, I test for an interaction between preferences and parental status. Once again, non-significant results suggest that both parents and couples without children experience similar declines in marital quality when traditional family preferences are not met.

Model 2 introduces the basic respondent characteristics in addition to the preference variables. Females appear to have a slightly greater risk of being somewhat satisfied or dissatisfied. This is consistent with literature that reports a gender gap in marital satisfaction (Flowers 1991; Kalmihn and Poortman 2006; Rhyne 1981; Schumm et al. 1985). Similar to results reported elsewhere, blacks appear to be twice as likely as whites to be dissatisfied or somewhat satisfied with their spouse (Dillaway and Broman 2001). Consistent with nearly every study of marital satisfaction, having a young child does not bring additional happiness to the relationship; parents with a young child are twice as likely to fall into either of the less satisfied categories. There is little evidence that respondent's age contributes to perceptions of marital satisfaction; however, younger respondents (under age 30) appear to be less likely to fall into the lower two marital satisfaction categories. Education and family income effects fail to emerge, but there appears to be an occupation effect. Professional, managerial, service, and technical workers are all less likely than manual laborers to report lower levels of marital satisfaction.

Even after controlling for a wide variety of individual-level characteristics, the negative effect observed for dual earners who hold consistently traditional preferences persists. It is interesting to note that once other respondent characteristics are included in the model, holding traditional preferences toward working women (but not the division of labor) increases the odds of lowering marital satisfaction by 56%. This may be because dual earners hold stronger preferences toward childrearing than they do the division of household labor. It may be easier for dual earners to maintain a somewhat traditional division of housework, while raising a child in ways that comply with traditional preferences may be impossible when both parents work. It may also be that child wellbeing is valued more highly than preferred housework styles. Overall, Model 2 provides strong support that dual earners who hold traditional family preferences are less likely to be satisfied with their marriages compared to their egalitarian counterparts.

However, while Model 2 suggests that this effect derives from a mismatch between ideals and reality, it does not rule out related explanations.

Does the marital-satisfaction penalty for traditional-minded dual earners actually reflect the fact that traditional couples place a stronger emphasis on time spent with their spouse? Model 3 tests this proposition by including a variable for whether or not a respondent wants to spend more time with their spouse. The odds are less than 1.0 for both of the lower marital quality categories, suggesting that husbands and wives who want to spend more time with their spouse have higher marital satisfaction; however, the observed effect is non-significant. More important, including this variable does not appear to diminish the effect of traditional preferences on marital satisfaction. Thus, it is not the case that traditional-minded dual earners experience less marital satisfaction because they cannot spend as much time as they would like with their spouse.

Perhaps dual earners with traditional preferences experience lower marital quality because, in ways above and beyond their dual-earner status, they are unable to perform their desired gender roles. Model 4 introduces variables that more precisely gauge compliance with the male provider role. These include measures of relative contribution to family income, differences in hours of paid work, and perceptions of whether or not enough is earned to support the family. According to the ideas motivating Model 4, accounting for dual earning husbands who might make less money than their wives, and working wives who contribute more than their husbands will explain the association between traditional preferences and lower marital satisfaction. None of the gender interactions are significant, although accounting for the work hour and income variables appears to explain the initial association between the managerial occupation and higher reports of marital satisfaction. Perhaps, the initial managerial effect was capturing the effect of “good” managerial jobs that are likely correlated with higher earnings and better hours. Even after controlling for how dual earners approach the provider role, the penalty of traditional family preferences on marital satisfaction persists. Furthermore, controlling for the provider role causes the negative effect of having only traditional division of labor preferences to become significant again (at least for the likelihood of being very satisfied compared to extremely satisfied). Perhaps the coefficients in Models 2 and 3 did not attain significance because most couples with traditional division-of-labor preferences were able to offset the negative effect by maintaining traditional provider roles. This result requires further investigation. However, the overall findings from Model 4 suggest that the consequences of

unmet family preferences on marital satisfaction exist independently of who earns how much, who spends the most time on the job, or whether household income is perceived to be adequate.

Model 5 examines how the workplaces of dual earners may affect the relationship between traditional preferences and marital satisfaction. The results show that having a supportive workplace, as measured by the autonomy, supervisor support, and supportive work culture indices, does little to moderate the preference-satisfaction relationship. There is one exception, however. Having a supportive supervisor appears to lower the initial negative effect of having consistently traditional preferences on the likelihood of being very satisfied compared to extremely satisfied. For example, a score of 2 on the supervisor support scale would result in an 84% decrease in initial negative odds of having traditional-preferences on marital satisfaction. Scoring a 4 (the highest value possible) on the supervisor index would result in a 97% in the initial traditional preference penalty.⁶ This finding suggests that although no workplace characteristic mediates the negative impact of traditional preferences on being in the lowest marital satisfaction category, supervisor support may reduce the negative effect of the preference-dual earner mismatch by lowering the chances of being “only” very satisfied vs. extremely satisfied with one’s relationship.⁷

Discussion

In this paper I have argued that despite trends toward egalitarian gender role attitudes and less specialized marriages, married men and especially women are heterogeneous in their preferences for work and family. Some husbands and wives *prefer* a more traditional marriage as opposed to the increasingly egalitarian arrangement noted in the literature. I argued that holding traditional preferences, but being unable to live by those preferences because both partners are

⁶ Percentages were calculated in three steps. First, I multiplied the interaction logit by the hypothesized values of the supervisor support scale. I then transformed the predicted coefficient into an odds ratio. Finally, I transformed the odds ratio in a percentage decrease.

⁷ The reader should interpret these findings with caution. First, the standard errors are unstable, particularly for the traditional-consistent effect when all workplace support variables are set to zero. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that there are almost no respondents who hold traditional-consistent preferences and score zero for each of the workplace indices. My second issue concerns substance rather than statistics. It is substantively less interesting to examine the likelihood of being “very satisfied” with one’s relationship compared to being “extremely satisfied” with one’s relationship. Results in each of the left columns are likely to be of more interest because they compare the odds of being in a dissatisfying or somewhat satisfying relationship compared to being in the top marital satisfaction category. Thus, my conclusion, although somewhat arbitrary, is that workplace characteristics do not seem to moderate the effect of traditional preferences on marital satisfaction; however, supervisor support may help reduce the blow of having mismatched preferences, but only for those who perceive small problems in their relationship, compared to those who report the happiest of marriages.

employed, harms marital wellbeing. Dual earner spouses who hold traditional preferences associated with a breadwinner/homemaker model of marriage may experience relationship disappointment when their lifestyles do not match their ideals. In this study I focused on dual earner couples because, for traditionally-minded spouses, the dual earner relationship is inherently contradictory. Successfully managing a traditional division of household labor and childrearing is less realistic when both husband and wives engage in paid work. Thus, I expected dual earner couples with traditional family preferences to experience a marital satisfaction penalty.

My results largely supported my predictions. Even after controlling for a host of respondent characteristics, maintaining traditional values when both spouses work increased the likelihood of reporting lower levels of marital quality. These effects did not appear to differ by gender or the parenthood of young children. I also tested a variety of possible mechanisms that could explain or interact with the negative association between traditional preferences and relationship wellbeing. My results clearly demonstrate that the negative effect of traditional preferences is not a result of traditional dual earning spouses wishing they could spend more time together. Likewise, lower marital satisfaction among “traditional” dual earners does not appear to arise from their inability to comply with expectations that the husband (by various measures) occupied the “main provider” role. Finally, for the most part, it appears that having a “good” job, characterized by high levels of autonomy, supervisor support, and a family supportive work culture, does not offset the negative effects of traditional family preferences on marital satisfaction. However, there was some evidence that having a supportive supervisor might lower the initial negative effect of traditional preferences on marital satisfaction. Overall, my findings support the prediction that the dual earner relationship symbolizes a mismatch between ideals and reality for spouses who hold traditional preferences for family life, and this mismatch is likely responsible for these spouses feeling less satisfied with their marriages.

I also tested whether the negative effects of traditional preferences on marital satisfaction applied to couples with a dependent spouse. If these couples experienced a similar marital satisfaction penalty, then it would be difficult to assert that the observed effects were due to some kind of dissatisfaction between the mismatch of preferences and reality. My results show that traditional preferences do not harm perceptions of marital wellbeing for non-dual earner couples. This constitutes further evidence that dual earner couples may look upon their

relationship unfavorably if their family preferences do not match the reality of their marriage arrangement.

This study contributes to the study of marriage and family in two ways. First, while many studies have demonstrated how gender and family attitudes affect perceptions of wellbeing, few have examined gender and family preferences using data that permit analysis in today's more gender egalitarian context. Second, by examining dual earners and the mismatch between their preferred family arrangement and their current arrangement, I was able to show that work and family preferences, as gauged by attitudes, influence satisfaction with one's marriage. Hakim (2000) asserted that, in affluent, liberal societies, preferences carry enormous weight in determining life-chances. In today's society, where women have more control of their employment, reproduction, and family destinies, preferences will shape life outcomes as never witnessed before. It is important to not only question how these preferences will affect outcomes, but how the mismatch between preferences and reality may place individuals at a disadvantage in all spheres of life including both paid work and family wellbeing.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of Variables, 1997 and 2002 NSCW.

Variable Name	Women (N=1,101)		Men (N=790)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Dependent Variable				
Marital Satisfaction				
Somewhat Satisfied/Dissatisfied = 1	0.15		0.14	
Very Satisfied = 2	0.34		0.33	
Independent Variables				
Traditional Preferences				
Trad. Consistent = 1	0.13		0.19	
Trad. Div. of Labor = 1	0.29		0.17	
Trad. Mom Working = 1	0.10		0.17	
Want More Time W/ Spouse = 1	0.66		0.68	
Income Contribution Ratio	-0.17	0.34	0.26	0.33
Earn Enough \$ For Family = 1	0.21		0.42	
Difference In Work Hours	-12.33	14.56	1.04	14.08
Autonomy Index	2.99	0.75	3.08	0.71
Supervisor Support Index	3.40	0.64	3.37	0.58
Supportive Work Culture Index	3.11	0.77	3.03	0.70
Female = 1	0.58			
Race				
Black = 1	0.07		0.08	
Other = 1	0.07		0.07	
Child Under 13 = 1	0.43		0.44	
Age				
Under 30 = 1	0.19		0.15	
30 – 39 = 1	0.30		0.27	
40-49 = 1	0.31		0.35	
Education				
Some Postsecondary = 1	0.34		0.31	
4 yr. Or More = 1	0.40		0.40	
Occupation				
Manager = 1	0.19		0.19	
Professional = 1	0.28		0.22	
Service/Technical = 1	0.45		0.27	
Log of Family Income	11.17	0.56	11.20	0.55

Table 2. Odds Ratios for Multinomial Regression on Marital Satisfaction for Dual Earners, 1997 and 2002 NSCW, N = 1889.
 Some = Some or Little Satisfaction with Partner, Very = Very Satisfied with Partner
 Standard Errors in Parentheses

Variable Name	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5		
	Some	Very		Some	Very		Some	Very		Some	Very		Some	Very	
Traditional Consistent	1.90** (0.19)	1.52** (0.15)		1.79** (0.20)	1.51** (0.15)		1.86** (0.20)	1.55** (0.15)		1.75** (0.20)	1.57** (0.16)		6.23 (1.25)	8.08* (1.05)	
Trad. Div. Of Labor	1.38 (0.17)	1.40** (0.13)		1.15 (0.18)	1.28 (0.13)		1.17 (0.18)	1.28 (0.13)		1.15 (0.18)	1.31* (0.13)		0.36 (0.79)	0.41 (1.00)	
Traditional Mom Work	1.38 (0.21)	1.04 (0.16)		1.56* (0.22)	1.12 (0.17)		1.62* (0.22)	1.16 (0.17)		1.54* (0.22)	1.13 (0.17)		0.30 (1.37)	0.70 (1.08)	
Female				1.45* (0.16)	1.15 (0.11)		1.46* (0.16)	1.16 (0.11)		1.08 (0.23)	1.28 (0.17)		1.43* (0.16)	1.15 (0.12)	
Race															
Black				2.36** (0.23)	1.13 (0.21)		2.30** (0.23)	1.13 (0.21)		2.41** (0.23)	1.07 (0.21)		2.18** (0.24)	1.11 (0.21)	
Other				1.13 (0.25)	0.95 (0.21)		1.36 (0.25)	0.97 (0.20)		1.07 (0.24)	0.98 (0.21)		1.32 (0.25)	0.90 (0.21)	
Child Under 13				2.39** (0.16)	1.92** (0.12)		2.51** (0.16)	1.97** (0.12)		2.39** (0.16)	1.92** (0.12)		2.44** (0.16)	1.89** (0.12)	
Age															
Under 30				0.58* (0.19)	0.53** (0.25)		0.57* (0.25)	0.54** (0.19)		0.53* (0.25)	0.52** (0.19)		0.57* (0.25)	0.53** (0.19)	
30-39				0.66 (0.23)	0.77 (0.17)		0.67 (0.23)	0.80 (0.17)		0.63* (0.23)	0.79 (0.17)		0.64 (0.23)	0.79 (0.17)	
40-49				1.12 (0.20)	1.00 (0.15)		1.11 (0.02)	1.03 (0.15)		1.06 (0.20)	1.01 (0.15)		1.08 (0.21)	1.02 (0.15)	
Education															
Some Postsecondary				1.07 (0.15)	0.97 (0.11)		1.15 (0.18)	0.96 (0.14)		1.13 (0.18)	0.92 (0.14)		1.11 (0.18)	0.91 (0.14)	
4 Years Or More				1.04 (0.22)	0.90 (0.16)		1.05 (0.22)	0.90 (0.16)		1.07 (0.22)	0.84 (0.17)		1.00 (0.22)	0.85 (0.17)	
Occupation															
Manager				0.61* (0.25)	1.04 (0.19)		0.61* (0.25)	1.04 (0.19)		0.63 (0.25)	1.04 (0.19)		0.71 (0.26)	1.19 (0.20)	
Professional				0.52* (0.26)	1.00 (0.20)		0.52* (0.26)	1.00 (0.20)		0.51* (0.26)	1.00 (0.20)		0.63 (0.27)	1.13 (0.20)	
Service/Technical				0.61* (0.21)	0.89 (0.16)		0.61 (0.21)	0.87 (0.16)		0.60* (0.21)	0.90 (0.17)		0.66* (0.21)	0.95 (0.21)	
Log of Family Income				0.92 (0.11)	1.03 (0.15)		0.92 (0.14)	1.03 (0.11)		0.89 (0.15)	1.06 (0.11)		0.94 (0.15)	1.05 (0.11)	

Want More Time With Spouse	0.78	0.83		
	(0.15)	(0.11)		
Income Contribution	1.43	1.36		
	(0.41)	(0.30)		
* Female	0.49	1.35		
	(0.52)	(0.38)		
Earn Enough For Family	0.66	0.94		
	(0.24)	(0.25)		
* Female	1.65	0.75		
	(0.33)	(0.25)		
Difference in Hours	1.00	1.00*		
	(0.01)	(0.00)		
* Female	1.00	1.00		
	(0.01)	(0.01)		
Autonomy	0.91	0.92		
	(0.16)	(0.11)		
* Trad. Consistent	0.89	0.95		
	(0.28)	(0.23)		
* Trad. Div. of Labor	0.89	1.02		
	(0.26)	(0.19)		
* Trad. Working Mom	0.59	0.93		
	(0.30)	(0.24)		
Supervisor Support	0.60*	0.72*		
	(0.20)	(0.15)		
* Trad. Consistent	0.84	0.42**		
	(0.31)	(0.23)		
* Trad. Div. of Labor	1.82	1.39		
	(0.31)	(0.23)		
* Trad. Working Mom	1.52	1.03		
	(0.39)	(0.31)		
Supportive Work Culture	0.85	0.87		
	(0.16)	(0.12)		
* Trad. Consistent	0.90	1.54		
	(0.31)	(0.26)		
* Trad. Div. of Labor	0.85	0.96		
	(0.26)	(0.19)		
* Trad. Working Mom	1.79	1.21		
	(0.35)	(0.27)		
Negative Log Likelihood	-1858.71	-1808.64	-1793.90**	
Constant	0.23	0.55	0.84	1.70
			0.56	4.26
			0.39	1.70

Appendix A: Workplace Indices Construction

Autonomy (Mean of 3 items) $\alpha = 0.68$

- I have the freedom to decide what I do on my job.
- It is basically my own responsibility to decide how my job gets done.
- I have a lot of say about what happens on my job.

Supervisor Support (Mean of 9 items) $\alpha = 0.90$

- My supervisor or manager keeps me informed of the things I need to know to do my job well.
- My supervisor or manager keeps me informed of the things I need to know to do my job well.
- My supervisor or manager has expectations of my performance on the job that are realistic.
- My supervisor or manager recognizes when I do a good job.
- My supervisor or manager is supportive when I have a work problem.
- My supervisor or manager is fair and doesn't show favoritism in responding to employees' personal or family needs.
- My supervisor or manager accommodates me when I have family or personal business to take care of -- for example, medical appointments, meeting with child's teacher, etc.
- My supervisor or manager is understanding when I talk about personal or family issues that affect my work.
- I feel comfortable bringing up personal or family issues with my supervisor or manager.
- My supervisor or manager really cares about the effects that work demands have on my personal and family life.

Supportive Work Culture (Mean of 4 items) $\alpha = 0.73$

- There is an unwritten rule at my place of employment that you can't take care of family needs on company time.
- At my place of employment, employees who put their family or personal needs ahead of their jobs are not looked on favorably.
- If you have a problem managing your work and family responsibilities, the attitude at my place of employment is: "You made your bed, now lie in it!"
- At my place of employment, employees have to choose between advancing in their jobs or devoting attention to their family or personal lives.

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