

Running head: Time Pressure and Marriage

Economic Transformation, Work-Family Issues, and Marriage

Jennifer L. Glass

University of Iowa

Abstract

Economic transformations over the past 40 years have increased the time pressures and work overload (both domestic and paid) experienced by a majority of prime-aged Americans. But we know relatively little about their effects on marriage. Are time-pressured adults less likely to date/marry? If married are they more likely to report marital problems and disagreements? What kinds of alternative work arrangements create the perception of more time for family life? In this paper, a framework for understanding class-specific changes in working conditions in the post-industrial economy is developed and proposed to help explain changes in the formation and stability of partnerships. While existing economic theories of marriage focus narrowly on earnings and unemployment, we may pay a stronger "marriage penalty" for institutional pressures to decrease time in partnering in favor of paid work and child care.

Economic Transformation, Work-Family Issues, and Marriage

“Clock time is our bank manager, tax collector,
police inspector; this inner time is our wife.”

-J.B. Priestly, *Man and Time*

Introduction

Over the past 40 years, cataclysmic changes in both the social organization of work and the social organization of families have occurred. The last third of the twentieth century witnessed noticeable economic transformations toward service sector employment, the outsourcing and mechanization of jobs, temporary and contract employment, greater diversity in work hours and work schedules, greater inequality in wages, weakened job security, and heightened skill requirements (Hipple, 1998; Kalleberg, Reskin, and Hudson, 2000). Concomitant declines occurred in the availability of high wage manufacturing jobs, defined pensions and benefits for workers, and employer stability over the life course (Hacker, 2006). Young men and women have responded to these global and technological forces by increasing their educational attainment (and by definition, time spent in schooling), while young women have also increased their labor force participation and earned income, especially following marriage and childbirth. (Casper and Bianchi, 2002) During this same period, rapid changes in family structure and functioning occurred. Marriage and fertility dropped across all racial and ethnic groups, while divorce, cohabitation and nonmarital childbearing rose. By 2000, the majority of marriages, even when dependent children were present, contained two earners and nonparental care of preschoolers became a ubiquitous feature of family life. While these changes showed a sharper trajectory among some demographic groups (notably blacks and poorly educated whites), all groups were affected to some degree.

Scholars have long accepted the notion that work systems and family systems are intricately interrelated, but the precise mechanisms through which changing work environments

impact marriage and family formation remain contested. The dominant research paradigm has been a narrow economism in which earned income alone is causative. Contemporary debates in the United States have tended to focus on whether the weakening economic fortunes of young men, especially young black men, can explain the decline and postponement of marriage and the rise of divorce among already married couples. Such work shows that at best about a quarter of the decline in marriage can be explained by men's weakening economic position (Lichter et al 1992; Lloyd and South, 1996). Concomitant debates over the role of women's economic independence in declining marriage and rising divorce rates have generally shown how ineffectual monocausal explanations that assume female dependency and male provisioning are likely to be (Oppenheimer 1997; Xie et al 2003). Moreover, the emphasis on economic provisioning blinds scholars to the more profound changes in the organization of work that impact the time, energy, and value placed on marriage and partnering.

As early as 1986, Goldscheider and Waite (1986) were warning demographers that the classic models of sex-specific exchange (Becker, 1981) used to theorize marriage rates and marital stability could rapidly lose explanatory power should marriage preferences change toward "dual earner" family forms. In this scenario, husbands seek wives with strong human and social capital to share provisioning while wives seek husbands who will become involved fathers as well as providers. What would happen if marital search criteria shift toward what Gornick and Meyers (2003) refers to as a "dual earner-carer" marriage? Some tantalizing evidence that such a shift is underway already exists (Fuwa, 2006; Gager and Sanchez, 2003; Raley and Bratter, 2004; Sassler and Schoen, 1999; White and Rogers, 2000). If this is in fact the case, declining marriage and rising divorce may reflect mismatches in this transitional period between (1) what type of marriage young women and men want, and (2) what young women and men are committed to provide within marriage. But just as important as the changing *cultural* ideas about the ingredients of a good stable marriage that stem from profound labor market transformation are the *material* impacts of increased job instability, longer work hours for managerial and professional jobs, and nonstandard work hours on the ability to find a partner and sustain such a

dual earner-carer marriage. These often overlooked features of the transformed American economy (what some have termed the “second industrial revolution”) may eventually be shown to affect marriage and partnering to a much greater extent than the simple shift from single breadwinner to dual earner structure.

The remainder of this essay is devoted to exploration of how the transformed American economy might affect both the type of union preferred by young adults, and the ability of young adults to form and maintain their type of preferred partnership. In particular, the growing dominance of global capitalism coupled with weak state intervention to protect family time, and the incursion of the market into services formerly provided mostly through marriage deserve more thorough exploration as causes of marital decline in the United States.

Emerging Theoretical Issues

The overarching issue that current explanations of marriage and divorce have undertheorized is the potential impact of the changing organization of work on mate selection criteria, dating and courtship, union formation and subsequent union stability. We know little at present about how new workforce realities affect either the perceived benefits of marriage (motivation) or the ability of individuals to create and sustain long term partnerships (efficacy). Clearly, today’s labor force is characterized by increased job instability, increased wage inequality, increased demands for productivity by employers, substantial growth in non-day shifts for workers in what has been coined the “24/7” economy, substantial growth in work hours for salaried workers in good jobs with benefits, and substantial growth in the number of part-time, temporary, and contract positions that carry no benefits and lower wages. The leaner and meaner U.S. work force that accompanies what economist Richard Freeman calls the “great doubling” of the available global wage labor force creates no disincentive to marry in itself. Indeed, the meaner world of work may make partnership even more valuable as a hedge against future hardship and workplace stress. But these new economic realities may create higher thresholds of

performance to “make marriage pay”; thresholds that fewer potential partners can reach and fewer current partners can sustain.

Clearly, marriage is still beneficial for most American adults because of the material and emotional care that accompanies union formation (Waite, 1995). But evidence suggests that the type of marriage preferred may be changing and the alternatives to marriage may be becoming more palatable. The desirability of marriage itself does not seem to be the major issue. When scholars increasingly found that declining economic resources could not totally explain either the overall decline in marriage or the black-white gap in marriage rates, they turned more closely to the study of values and preferences (Bulcroft and Bulcroft, 1993; Raley and Bratter, 2004; Thornton and Young-DeMarco, 2001). The underlying logic was that somehow the value of marriage itself had changed, or at least the value of marriage relative to the available alternatives of cohabitation and remaining single. Yet studies of the impact of changing attitudes or preferences on marriage probabilities show that these have limited explanatory power, at least as currently conceptualized (Sassler and Goldscheider, 2004). Empirical research demonstrates two important points: (1) preferences for marriage remain high in most race/class groups even as the proportion married declines and (2) preferences appear only weakly linked to behavior, especially among women. That is, there are many individuals who value marriage highly but do not subsequently marry and many individuals ambiguous or uncertain about marriage who nevertheless do.

There IS, however, evidence that today’s young adults hold more stringent preconditions for marriage than earlier generations (Edin and Kefalas, 2005; Sassler and Schoen, 1999; Testa and Krough, 1995) and are more content to wait until these conditions are realized before marrying. While still highly valued, marriage has come to be seen as something to be achieved rather than a normative life cycle transition. This may be a direct reflection of the new mate selection criteria that have emerged with the dual earner-carer marriage. While a specialization and trading model of marriage links male desirability to income and wealth and female desirability to fecundity and homemaking skills, the dual earner-carer marriage requires both

breadwinning and homemaking capacities from both partners. There is growing evidence that women's education and earnings improve their prospects for marriage (Sweeney and Cancian, 2004), and that both young men and women prefer partners with greater earning potential (South, 1991). Less is known about the emotional and parenting skills sought by single women and men, but empirical research on marriage suggests that perceived fairness in the division of household labor and time spent together are important determinants of wives' marital happiness and thoughts of divorce (Gager and Sanchez, 2003).

If, in fact, young adults now have more comprehensive and less gendered expectations of their partners, potential mates now have multiple dimensions on which they can fail. Unlike Becker's (1981) formulation in which sex-specialized marriages create stronger interdependencies that stabilize marriage, the greater fragility of dual earner-carer marriages lies not in their lessened interdependency. Indeed, one could argue that couples in dual earner-carer marriages have increased interdependencies – they can sustain neither household income nor domestic labor by themselves. What these marriages paradoxically produce may be heightened vulnerability to crisis. In their provocative book, *The Two Paycheck Trap*, Warren and Tyagi (2003) claim that the movement to the dual earner household eroded the “reserve army of labor” that housewives provided in times of fiscal crisis. A household sustained by one earner but with a second held in reserve can better weather a job loss or income reduction than a household needing two incomes to pay basic expenses. If both partners' incomes are required to pay the mortgage and health care expenses, the loss or reduction of either partner's income can precipitate an immediate fiscal crisis. Not only is such a family unit more exposed to the probability of job loss (having at least two vulnerable jobs instead of one) but each partners' individual probability of experiencing a job loss has gone up over the past two decades with the globalization of labor (Hacker, 2006).¹

A similar calculus operates with respect to housework and child care. If either partner restricts the emotional work or physical labor they put into marital interaction and parenting, the other is left with a serious care deficit. Given the cultural shift towards companionate marriage in

which intimacy and shared activities are central expectations (Gager and Sanchez, 2003) as well as expectations of shared parenting embedded in modern notions of “good dads,” withdrawal of time and energy away from home centered pursuits may be perceived as diminished commitment to the relationship itself. This is a particular issue for women seeking men, since involvement in household work is a relatively new expectation for potential mates, and one that is still heavily gendered as female. While currently married women are often satisfied with less than equitable divisions of labor (or perceive them as equitable despite the greater burden on wives; see Greenstein, 1996; Lennon and Rosenfield, 1994), the continued burden of the “second shift” seems to be propelling younger women to expect more shared domestic work and more younger men in households to provide it (Bianchi, 2000; Gershuny, Bittman, and Brice, 2005; Hochschild, 1989).

Little research to date has explored marital search criteria dealing with domestic labor, shared child care, and shared emotional intimacy/activities, yet it seems plausible to hypothesize that women have heightened expectations for household work from men just as men have heightened expectations of wage earning from women. Moreover, it makes sense to conceptualize marital searches as more difficult when potential mates have to meet multiple and sometimes conflicting criteria that are hard to investigate premaritally. In sum, while the expected benefits of a companionate marriage with shared breadwinning and housework are quite large, the difficulties inherent in putting such a relationship together are quite large as well (marriage as high risk/high payoff life strategy).

Finally, the expansion of global capitalist markets has not only expanded the number of people involved in the creation and exchange of goods, but also created new markets for services formerly provided by families more generally and marriage specifically (particularly domestic labor and child care). While the penetration of markets providing domestic labor and child care is uneven across countries and social classes, the United States is quite advanced relative to other countries in the availability of such services (although issues of cost and quality complicate their use). Markets for other marital services, including the creation and gestation of children, home

health care, shopping, and companionship are in various stages of development.² These “markets for care” may affect the calculus used to decide whether a particular partner is a candidate for marriage in class-specific and potentially contradictory ways. On the one hand, the availability of market substitutes may lower conflicts over the division of housework and child care for affluent workers by outsourcing as much of this work as possible, lowering the motivation and competence expected of marital partners with respect to domestic work. On the other hand, the benefits of marriage for affluent workers can now be weighed against the use of market-based substitutes for the same services, potentially raising the standard for marital partners on such criteria as emotional support or sexual fidelity.

At present, we know very little about whether or how market substitutes for marital services affect the perceived gains to marriage. It is also conceivable that gender differences in preferences for market versus nonmarket care services exist as well. For example, anecdotal literature suggests that wives are frequently more reluctant than husbands to put children in substitute care for long periods of time, or use lower quality prepared food instead of healthier home cooked meals (Blair-Loy, 2003; Hays, 1996). If so, market substitutes might reduce the gains to marriage for men more than women, but also reduce the time pressures associated with the dual earner-carer marriage for men more than women.

Economic Transformation and Mate Selection

How have economic transformations affected young men and women’s capacities to search and find a suitable partner for a dual earner-carer marriage? Here, the growing inequality in hours and income among jobs may create class cleavages in marital search behaviors (Jacobs and Gerson, 2004). Among better educated managers and professionals, the competition for career-entry jobs has intensified while the demands of career-entry jobs have escalated. The price of admission and retention in increasingly scarce permanent full-time jobs may be long work hours, frequent travel, and psychological commitment to work as a “master status.” These uses of time directly compete with non-work relationships, potentially affecting dating,

relationship development, relationship quality, and transitions into cohabitation and from cohabitation into marriage. For both men and women, a partner with a time-consuming job may not provide the social support and psychological/sexual intimacies that have become the primary benefits of marriage (Blair-Loy and Jacobs, 2003. Roxburgh, 2006). Both men and women in time-consuming jobs may perceive greater relationship demands than relationship benefits in their limited non-work time (Hochschild, 1997), while work groups provide access to a constant flow of potential new partners.

We know little about class differences in time spent dating and seeking romantic partners, but it may be the case that class structures the locations and methods used to find potential partners as well. New forms of courtship (especially the rise of internet dating services, “speed dating” and other institutions that require sometimes substantial membership fees and background checks) arise as market commodities for this affluent class to hasten and shorten the search process for a suitable partner. Lengthy periods of education and training away from one’s family of origin, frequent changes in residence, and smaller family sizes combine to limit familial influence in the process of meeting and selecting romantic partners.

For workers at the opposite end of the class spectrum, especially those without a college degree, marital search processes are significantly different, and cohabitation may play a much larger role. The low waged and less secure jobs in retail and service sectors that have replaced industrial employment for these workers provide fewer resources with which to establish a separate household. Moreover, fewer students from working class and poor families have a residential college experience that would prepare them for independent living, though some will attend community college or four year institutions. The scarcity of full-time secure employment at a living wage structures the dating and sexual experiences of these youth as well. Many will find themselves living at home and taking part-time jobs with irregular hours or nonday shifts. Creating a predictable schedule with enough money and privacy to conduct a normative courtship, especially for young men, becomes a challenge under such circumstances. Proving

that one has the financial and familial skills to make a good marital partner over the long haul is made more difficult as well.

In this context, cohabitation may be particularly attractive before marriage among low income workers. While economic explanations have generally focused on the greater gains to co-residence as individual incomes fall, it may also be the case that independent living (out of their parental home) can only be accomplished by working class couples pooling their resources. Cohabiting may also provides fuller information about the financial and emotional stability of partners, and the likelihood that partners will be faithful providers of family care. Among more affluent and time-stressed college graduates, independent single living may be easier to undertake and more difficult to relinquish in favor of cohabitation unless the relationship has progressed to a serious “almost married” phase. Particularly among affluent single adults who own their own residence, casual cohabitation poses serious risks (either the transaction costs of selling real estate that cannot be recouped if the relationship fails, or the emotional difficulties of evicting an unwilling partner who resides in property you own). These processes may help explain why cohabiting unions transition into marriage at a higher rate among more affluent couples as well.

These difficulties in the marital search process that are both class-specific and favor cohabitation over marriage also produce class-specific increases in nonmarital childbearing. If the large time commitments required of professionals and managers do indeed interfere with the family building tasks of mate selection and marriage during the prime marrying ages (22-35), there are both supply and demand reasons for women to increase nonmarital childbearing. Relatively affluent women who wait until their careers are secure may find themselves with a limited pool of partners able or willing to commit to a long term dual earner-carer relationship. Nonmarital childbearing may be the best way to deal with the biological risks of further delaying fertility. In addition, employed middle class women maybe more willing to forego marriage and parent children solo because middle-class men in time-intensive careers bring less domestic work to the table anyway (or may even add to the total amount of women’s domestic labor following

marriage rather than decreasing it; see Gupta, 1999). As well, the availability of market substitutes for family care enable more affluent women to make choices about parenting alone that might have overwhelmed earlier generations of women, even if contemporary women view market substitutes as generally inferior to family care.

Less affluent women who increasingly give birth solo or in cohabiting partnerships may feel that a less formal relationship to their partner increases their ability to leave or end the union should their partner prove to be an incapable care provider or insecure income contributor to the household (Edin and Kefalas, 2005). While this interpretation places agency in the hands of women in cohabiting or visiting relationships, it may also be the case that low income men eschew early marriage either to resolve a pregnancy or to intentionally have children because they doubt their ability to meet the financial demands of their partners. Again, the decline in poorly educated young men's wages during the economic transformation to a global labor force changes both their absolute contributions to family income and the security of their future earnings in relation to their partners' income.

These processes may also *help* explain the racial difference in marriage, which persists even after controlling for income differences between black and white men. While income differences alone between black and white men explain at most around a quarter of the racial gap in marriage (White and Rogers?), the greater parity in earnings between black men and women than between white men and women creates a different context for partnering as well. African-American women now exhibit markedly higher rates of college and professional school attendance compared to African-American men, which helps shape the gender imbalance in the marriage market they face. The risk of marrying a partner who proves to be an unreliable wage earner and care provider may be greater for African American women, perhaps even resulting in a net drain on her resources. More affluent black men, on the other hand, find a larger pool of eligible mates with resources to share. Irrespective of whether this encourages better educated black men to marry or not, it leaves a larger pool of educated black women without mates than similarly educated white women. These marital search differences can also help explain the

weaker relationship between education and nonmarital childbearing among African American women relative to whites, as educational attainment does not necessarily increase the pool of “earner-carer” mates for African-American women with whom they can create a marital context for childbearing.

Economic Transformation and Relationship Quality and Stability

Turning to relationship quality within existing unions, research has focused more on the rise in wives’ employment and the decline in male earnings over time than on the changing context of work per se. Studies have revealed generally positive effects of husbands’ employment and work hours and sometimes conflicting or contextualized effects of wives’ employment and work hours on marital quality and stability. In their decadal overview of this research, White and Rogers (2000) conclude that husbands’ employment and earnings continue to be important determinants of divorce risk, but that research is inconsistent on the impact of wives’ work hours and earnings. While several studies show positive impacts of income on marital stability no matter the source, other show negative impacts of wives’ employment and earnings when couples hold traditional gender ideologies or husbands’ earnings are low. Rogers (1999), using panel data, showed that wives may increase their work hours and earnings in response to marital discord and urged caution in interpreting any positive association between wives’ employment and the hazard of divorce.

While husbands’ work hours and earnings generally enhance marital quality and stability, the effects of excessive work hours are less well known, even as work hours in the labor force become more variable and work weeks lengthen for managerial and professional workers. The number of couples in which one or both spouses work excessively long hours is increasing in the United States, making this a prime candidate for further exploration of marital instability (Gornick and Meyers, 2003). Poortman (2005) cautions that husbands’ overtime hours are frequently associated with financial problems in the household and multiple job holding among working-class men, so financial pressures must be controlled to investigate the causal impact of

work hours per se on marital quality. In the studies that have investigated husbands' work hours directly, Poortman (2005) found negative effects on marital stability at extremely high work levels while Crouter, Bumpus, Head, and McHale (2001) found negative effects on marital interaction and, when combined with feelings of role overload, negative effects on marital quality. Roxburgh (2006), using a Midwestern sample of married couples with children, reports both husbands and wives were discontent with their spousal time together as husbands' work hours increased and when his domestic labor totaled less than 10 hours a week.

The underlying presumption of work relating wives' employment and husband's long work hours to declining relationship quality is that longer hours of work decrease the time available for couple interaction and shared activities, increase the time spent with potential alternative partners, raise the potential for conflict over responsibilities for domestic work, and increase the stresses associated with the 'second shift' of domestic labor, especially for wives. Irregular work shifts and non-overlapping work shifts between partners have the same potential to destabilize relationships by decreasing shared time and activities. The number of couples in which partners work non-overlapping work shifts is increasing as work schedules diversify across evenings and weekends (Presser, 2000), potentially reducing marital interaction while simultaneously "training" both husbands and wives to perform as single parents.

There is substantial evidence supporting the link between time spent together and marital quality. Booth, Johnson, White and Edwards (1986), Hill (1988), and Poortman (2005) all report positive associations between time spent together and marital stability. Gager and Sanchez (2003) report that wives' perceptions of greater couple interaction are associated with lower odds of divorce, while husbands' perceptions of more time spent together (especially when wives' perceptions are lower) are associated with greater odds of divorce. Presser (2000) reports an increased risk of divorce among married couples working separate shifts with little overlap at home during the week, as do White and Keith (1990). Strazdins, Clements, Korda, Broom, and D'Souza (2006) found that nonstandard work schedules were associated with lower family

functioning in marital and parental roles among Canadian dual-earner families, as well as more depressive symptoms among wives.

Yet, this deficit model of the impact of paid work on marital interaction and satisfaction has its critics. Barnett and Gareis (2000) found that part-time work among highly educated women physicians was associated with *lower* marital quality than full-time employment, in large part because cutting back to part-time increased wives' responsibility for domestic labor and child care as well as the income inequality between spouses. For those educated and career committed women who expect shared domestic labor and career involvement in their marriages, the retreat to part-time work among wives following marriage or childbirth may breed resentment and unmet expectations. Similarly, several studies have found that wives' perceptions of fairness in the distribution of household work are strongly associated with marital satisfaction and thoughts of divorce (Blair, 1993; Frisco and Williams, 2003; Greenstein, 1996; Sutor, 1991; Wilkie, Ferree, and Ratcliff, 1998), although wives' marital dissatisfaction is less likely to lead to divorce than husbands'. To the extent that cultural definitions are shifting towards a dual earner-carer ideal, wives' disproportionate reduction in work involvement to engage in family care while husbands' career involvement intensifies may not improve the quality or stability of unions (Blair-Loy and Jacobs, 2003).

The relationship between work hours and union stability is particularly tricky in the United States because part-time jobs (those generally requiring fewer than 30-35 hours per week) tend to be "bad jobs" in the United States, while those requiring very long hours tend to be "good jobs", at least in terms of income potential and job security. Without statutory protections for part-time workers in employment law, these jobs disproportionately occur in the worst paid labor market sectors, involving little autonomy, control over the pace or timing of work, and few benefits or job protections (Kalleberg, et al., 2000). This affects not only what is available for wives who wish to cut back on their work hours, but also what husbands with lower levels of human capital who have difficulty finding secure full-time employment can expect to attain. The trade-off of shorter hours for serious reductions in job quality (not just earnings) makes part-time

work problematic as a solution to the time-deficit in family care. Moreover, lingering gender ideologies defining housework as emasculating make it especially problematic for underemployed men to contribute to family care in lieu of earnings. As Brines (1994) and others (Bitman, et al, 2003) have shown, unemployed men and those with wives who significantly outearn them are *less* likely to contribute to household labor than men who are stably employed.

In sum, the best that can be said of existing research is that there are strong countervailing influences that intervene in the relationship between long work hours for husbands and wives and lower marital quality and stability. Income effects favor longer work hours, and many low income full-time workers with children actively seek longer, not shorter, work hours (Jacobs and Gerson, 2004). Perceptions of financial hardship may be stronger determinants of marital quality than perceptions of shared time together (Poortman, 2005). Because autonomous and highly skilled jobs with substantial intrinsic rewards are frequently accompanied by employer demands for excessive work hours, many educated workers report a desire to cut back on their work hours but do not wish to jeopardize their future upward mobility or wage growth by doing so. Depending on the ideological context of the family, work reductions (especially those in which only the wife cuts back on paid work) may generate disappointment and perceptions of inequity rather than enhanced marital satisfaction. In other households with traditional ideologies and no significant fiscal constraints, wives' reduction in work hours may produce more marital interaction, less time pressure, and the desired sexual division of labor while husbands' reduction of work hours may signal an alarming change in his ability to meet the financial obligations of the household.

Overall, more empirical research is needed that directly investigates work hour thresholds that interfere with family interaction and marital stability, and how work hours and work shifts structure the division of labor at home among cohabiting or married partners. In particular, we need to know more about the extent to which husbands' long hours create unwanted reductions in wives' hours in order to care for family needs. There is also a need for data that can explore the impact of job instability or insecurity on marital quality, particularly working class

households that are more vulnerable to both the loss of income and benefits from good jobs that support family health and well-being.

It is clear that economic transformations that increase work hours or spread work into nonstandard work hours or multiple job holding have the potential to reduce marital quality and stability, especially for couples with children. The lifestyle produced by such high intensity work efforts shortchanges family life in ways that cross boundaries of gender and class. Roxburgh (2006) found very high levels of perceived time pressure in marital and parental relationships in couples with children, with no overall differences by gender or class. She also found that many respondents, particularly women, were concerned about the quality of the family time they did have together, reporting a shortage of unhurried interaction and shared leisure pursuits with spouses. One solution to this time squeeze would be to increase reliance on market substitutes for family care rather than decrease time in paid work. While not necessarily increasing the quantity of time spent together in the household, market substitutes could improve the quality of shared time by relieving wives of the demands of housework and routine child care and relieving husbands of wives' expectations that they perform more domestic labor. Yet there is very little research on the place of market substitutes in the calculus that couples' use to determine the division of labor at home and the time allocation of husbands and wives in paid and unpaid work.

We need to identify both barriers to the use of market substitutes and limitations to their efficacy in helping couples relieve the time pressures associated with the "second shift" of domestic work. Cost is the most significant barrier to the use of time-saving market substitutes for most households (Van Der Lippe, Tijdens, and de Ruijter, 2004). Cleaning services, in-home child care, and take-out meals are much more expensive than their home-provided counterparts in an era when male incomes are either stagnant or declining for all but the top quarter of wage earners, and the costs of bearing and raising children outstrip inflation. But it may also be the case that rationalized and commodified family care for profit produces unacceptably low quality or creates feelings of guilt and inadequacy in the purchaser of such

services. This may particularly be the case with nonparental child care as normative standards for good parenting have risen over time for both women and men (Glass, 2000). Roxburgh (2006) found husbands and wives were more likely to desire additional time with their children than with their spouses. Moreover, even commodified family care has to be (sometimes extensively) researched and managed – the schedule of pick-ups or deliveries, payment, and communication with service providers all create transaction costs for the purchaser of domestic labor substitutes (De Ruijter, Van der Lippe, and Laub, 2003). Child care again is a good example of this problem – the search process for child care that meets quality, convenience and cost parameters for parents can be quite cumbersome and the results suboptimal (Gordon and Hognas, 2006)

In addition, there may be significant gender differences in mothers' and fathers' willingness to use market substitutes for family care rather than their own time (differences that may not be as acute among childless couples). Evidence suggests women often have higher quality standards for market substitutes and are more often held accountable for their families' consumption behavior (too much fast food, television, time in child care). De Ruijter, Treas and Cohen (2005) found that partnered women were less likely to use domestic labor substitutes for female typed tasks than single women, for example, and that the presence of even very young children in the home decreased rather than increased the use of domestic labor substitutes. Cultural standards of "intensive mothering" (Hays, 1996) require mothers to spend large amounts of time ensuring that children receive direct maternal attention and healthy higher quality home-produced goods. Employed wives may avoid the very services that could create more relaxed couple interaction and shared activities (as well as conflict over the division of family work) because of the greater salience of homemaking and motherhood to their gender identity (Simon, 1995).³ In fact, the "devotion to family schema" that Blair-Loy (2003) describes is so pervasively gendered that many highly successful and highly paid women executives relinquish time intensive careers altogether rather than subject their children to market substitutes for child care. Others may move to nonstandard work shifts to intentionally avoid

care provided by the poorly regulated child care market, despite the marital hazards involved in split-shift parenting (Glass, 1998). Finally, the transaction costs associated with market substitutes are disproportionately borne by women in partnered relationships (Glass, 1998; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001), limiting the potential gain in family time experienced by employed mothers.

Transforming the Transformed Workplace – Workplace Flexibility Practices and Union Formation and Stability

The dilemmas of work-family conflict are not unnoticed by employers, and some have made accommodations to family needs through worklife programs or quality of life initiatives. While employers are more concerned about the impact of work-family conflict on the recruitment and retention of workers, measures of family-to-work conflict and work-to-family conflict have also been shown to diminish marital satisfaction and heighten marital risk (Voydanoff, 2005). Work-family accommodations occur in many forms. While some involve innovative work hour reductions or the creation of part-time options, most accommodations occur around the timing or location of work tasks. Flextime, telecommuting, parental leaves for childbearing and sick child care are all forms of employer support for family life that could potentially affect marital quality and stability. While not necessarily reducing work hours, these accommodations allow workers to maximize their time with family members when those other family members are available. This reduces the need for market substitutes for family care, and reduces the tensions felt when work schedules do not mesh with school or partner's work schedules.

Few studies have directly tested the impact of workplace flexibility practices on marital quality or stability. None have researched the impact of workplace flexibility on marital search behaviors and union formation. Yet several studies suggest that autonomy and self-direction at work minimize work-family conflict and heighten marital quality, strongly suggesting that work schedule flexibility allows workers to better mesh their work hours with family needs and more

easily schedule family activities (Crouter, et al., 2001; Poortman, 2005; Roxurgh, 2006; Voydanoff, 2005). Since workplace flexibility practices are strongly tied to workers' level of education, as is autonomy and self-direction at work (Osterman, 1995), their usefulness as tools for improving union quality and stability are class-specific in the weakly regulated labor market of the United States. Among those groups least likely to marry and most likely to either cohabit or engage in nonmarital childbearing, workplace flexibility policies are rare (Golden, 2001; Elaine McCrate, 2003).

In more strongly regulated work regimes, and in countries with better welfare state provision for families, incentives to marry and marital quality following parenthood may be significantly improved. Fuwa (2006) reports more positive attitudes toward marriage among women in countries with public policy supports that facilitate dual earner-carer marriages. Extensive public child care, and relatively short paid parental leaves (less than one year) are associated with public policy regimes that facilitate women's employment rather than a gendered division of labor within marriage. These regimes diminish the negative association between women's economic resources and attitudes toward marriage and strengthen the positive association between educational attainment and marriage. Though no research has yet explored cross-national supports for male employment and earnings stability and marriage in low-income populations, there are strong theoretical reasons to suspect that any state actions to improve men's capacities to economically provide for their families while facilitating involvement in domestic labor and child care may improve marriage rates and union stability as well.

Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Research

The study of how work environments impact partnering and marriage is still in its infancy, despite significant work over the past 10 years. In particular, we lack knowledge of how changes in economic institutions (not just earnings in jobs) affect workers' motivation and efficacy in forming committed relationships. Some cross-class trends, including increasing educational attainment and female dominated service sector employment opportunities, seem to

have discouraged early marriage and encouraged new forms of marriage, while enabling adults to more easily avoid or dissolve unsatisfactory relationships. Trends in the bifurcation of work hours and increasing inequality in wages across jobs seem to have accompanied class and race specific differences in the ability and motivation of workers to form relationships and restrict childbearing to such relationships. But we have not yet seen research that can determine the causal linkages between economic transformations and trends in marriage, cohabitation, and divorce.

Although we know that marriage is increasingly postponed or foregone among young adults, tracking concomitant changes in work regimes and changes in partnering is difficult because of weaknesses in our major federal data collection procedures. Surveys such as the NSFH, and NSFG concentrate on family formation and fertility without significant information on work histories, current working conditions, and job stability. Other surveys, such as the NLSY panels and SIPP concentrate on economic mobility and earnings but fail to ask detailed questions on new forms of workplace flexibility and family processes. Few surveys of any kind ask questions about past experiences, motivations, and preferences that would enable researchers to test hypotheses about the underlying causes of observed associations between work and family variables (such as nonday work shifts and the increased risk of divorce).

Given what scholars now believe are major dependencies between economic transformations and family transformations, new “work-family” longitudinal surveys are badly needed that contain (a) detailed information on work practices at each job held, including job benefits and formal and informal workplace flexibility, that can be paired with (b) detailed information on dating behavior, relationship expectations, and relationship formation and dissolution processes. There are several different types of data that could be collected to improve our existing knowledge base. More data on the dating or marital search behaviors of single individuals would be helpful in longitudinal panels that tend to track only status transitions (marriage, cohabiting unions, divorce, etc.), especially any impact of current work characteristics on perceptions of the costs and benefits of marriage or thoughts of dissolution among the already

partnered. Better data on work hours, work shifts, formal and informal availability of flexible work arrangements, and patterns of use of flexible work arrangements would be incredibly helpful, especially if accompanied by questions on the decision-making processes used by workers to take or avoid certain job arrangements and how family obligations (or the lack thereof) condition responses. We also need better information on perceptions of for-profit (commodified) and nonprofit domestic labor substitutes in single individual and partnered households, as well as patterns of their use and changes in the utilization of services over time as household status changes. Finally, longitudinal data on work shift/work intensity changes need to be paired with mental health, marital quality, and family interaction data so that workplace transformation processes can be directly linked to family interaction processes.

A final area of investigation should be the detailed qualitative study of decision-making processes used in the allocation of time in paid and unpaid labor in partnered relationships. Depending on the level of conflict between partners' expectations or desires, the same allocation of labor could produce quite different relationship sequelae. While we have some existing research on the role of preferences in determining the outcomes of different courses of action (shifting to part-time work, becoming self-employed, outsourcing child care or cleaning, etc.), there is still much to learn about the conditions under which work alterations lead to family distress or instability.

References

- Barnett, Rosalind C. and Gareis, Karen C. 2000. Full-time and reduced-hours work schedules and marital quality: A study of female physicians with young children" *Work and Occupations* 29: 364-379.
- Becker, Gary 1981. *A Treatise on the Family*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Bianchi, Suzanne. 2000. "Maternal Employment and Time with Children: Dramatic Change or Surprising Continuity." *Demography* 37: 401-414.
- Bittman, Michael; England, Paula; Folbre, Nancy; Sayer, Liana; Matheson, George. 2003. "When Does Gender Trump Money? Bargaining and Time in Household Work." *American Journal of Sociology*, 109:186-214.
- Blair, S.L. 1993. "Employment, Family, and Perceptions of Marital Quality Among Husbands and Wives." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 55: 189-212.
- Blair-Loy, Mary. 2003. *Competing Devotions" Career and family among women executives*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press.
- Blair-Loy, Mary and Jacobs, Jerry. 2003. "Globalization, Work Hours, and the Care Deficit among Stockbrokers." *Gender and Society* 17: 230-249.
- Booth, Alan, Johnson, D. White, Lynn K. and Edwards, J.H. 1986. "Divorce and Marital Instability Over the Life Course." *Journal of Family Issues* 7: 421-442.
- Brines, Julie. 1994. "Economic Dependency, Gender, and the Division of Labor at Home." *American Journal of Sociology* 100: 652-688.
- Bulcroft, R. and Bulcroft, K. 1993. "Race Differences in Attitudinal and Motivational Factors in the Decision to Marry." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 55: 338-355.
- Casper, Lynne and Bianchi, Suzanne M. 2002. *Continuity and Change in the American Family*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cohen, Philip N. 1998. "Replacing Housework in the Service Economy: Gender, class, and race-ethnicity in service spending." *Gender and Society* 12: 219 - 231.
- Crouter, Ann C., Bumpus, Matthew F., Head, Melissa R. & McHale, Susan M. 2001. "Implications of Overwork and Overload for the Quality of Men's Family Relationships." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (2): 404-416.
- De Ruijter, Esther, Treas, Judith, and Cohen, Philip. 2005. "Outsourcing the Gender Factory: Living arrangements and service expenditures on female and male tasks." *Social Forces*

94: 305-322.

- De Ruijter, Esther, Van der Lippe, Tanja and Raub, W. 2003. "Trust Problems in Household Outsourcing." *Rationality and Society* 15: 473 - 507.
- Edin, Kathryn and Kefalas, Maria. 2005. *Promises I Can Keep: Why poor women put motherhood before marriage*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Frisco, M. and Williams, K. 2003. "Perceived Housework Equity, Marital Happiness, and Divorce in Dual-Earner Households." *Journal of Family Issues* 24: 51-73.
- Fuwa, Makiko. 2006. "Social Policy and Women's Attitudes toward Marriage in 31 Countries." Unpublished paper. University of California-Irvine.
- Gager, Constance T.; Sanchez, Laura. 2003. "Two as One? Couples Perceptions of Time Spent Together, Marital Quality, and the Risk of Divorce". *Journal of Family Issues*. Vol. 24. pp. 21-50.
- Gershuny, Jonathan, Bittman, Michael & Brice, John. 2005. "Exit, Voice, and Suffering: Do Couples Adapt to Changing Employment Patterns?" *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67: 656-665.
- Glass, Jennifer. 1998. "Gender Liberation, Economic Squeeze, or Fear of Strangers: Why Fathers Care for Infants in Dual Earner Households." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 60: 821-834.
- Glass, Jennifer. 2000. "Toward a Kinder, Gentler Workplace: Envisioning the Integration of Family and Work", *Contemporary Sociology* 29: 129-143.
- Golden, Lonnie. 2001. "Flexible Work Time: Correlates and Consequences of Work Scheduling", *American Behavioral Scientist*. Vol.44. p.1157.
- Goldscheider, Frances; Waite, Linda. 1986. "Sex Differences in the Entry into Marriage". *American Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 92. pp. 91-109.
- Gordon, Rachel A. & Högnäs, Robin S. 2006. "The Best Laid Plans: Expectations, Preferences, and Stability of Child-Care Arrangements." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 68: 373-393.
- Gornick, Janet and Marcia K. Meyers. 2003. *Families That Work: Policies for Reconciling Parenthood and Employment*. NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Greenstein, Theodore. 1990. "Marital Disruption and the Employment of Married Women". *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. Vol. 52. pp. 657-676.
- Greenstein, Theodore. 1996. "Gender Ideology and Perceptions of the Fairness of the Division of

- Household Labor: Effects on Marital Quality". *Social Forces*. Vol. 74. pp. 1029-1042.
- Gupta, Sanjiv. 1999. "The Effects of Marital Status Transitions on Men's Housework Performance." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 53: 622-634.
- Hacker, Jacob. 2006. *The Great Risk Shift: The new economic insecurity- And what can be done about it*. NY: Oxford University Press.
- Hays, Sharon. 1996. *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven: Yale Univ Press.
- Hill, M.S. 1988. "Marital Stability and Spouses' Shared Time: A Multidisciplinary Hypothesis." *Journal of Family Issues* 9: 427-451.
- Hipple, S. 1998. "Contingent Work: Results from the second survey." *Monthly Labor Review* 124: ??.
- Hochschild, Arlie R. 1989. *The Second Shift*. New York: Avon Books.
- Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette. 2001 *Domestica: Immigrant workers cleaning and caring in the shadows of affluence*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press
- Jacobs, Jerry A. and Gerson, Kathleen. 2004. *The Time Divide: Work, family and gender inequality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press.
- Kalleberg, Arne L., Reskin, Barbara F. and Hudson, K. 2000. "Bad Jobs in America: Standard and nonstandard employment relations and job quality in the United States." *American Sociological Review* 65: 256-278.
- King, Anthony EO. 1999. "African American Females' Attitudes toward Marriage: An Exploratory Study". *Journal of Black Studies*. Vol. 29. pp.416-437.
- Lennon, Mary Clare and Rosenfield, Sarah. 1994. "Relative Fairness and the Division of Housework: The importance of options." *American Journal of Sociology* 100: 506-532.
- Lichter, Daniel; LeClere, Felicia; McLaughlin, Diane. 1991. "Local Marriage Markets and the Marital Behavior of Black and White Women". *The American Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 96. pp. 843-867.
- Lichter, Daniel; Mclaughlin, Diane; Kephart, George; Landry, David. 1992. "Race and the Retreat From marriage: A Shortage of Marriageable Men?". *American Sociological Review*. Vol. 57. pp. 781-799.
- Lloyd, Kim; South, Scott. 1996. "Contextual Influences on Young Men's Transition to First Marriage". *Social Forces*. Vol. 74. pp. 1097-1119.
- Oppenheimer, Valerie K. 1997. "Women's Employment and the Gain to Marriage: The

- Specialization and Trading Model". *Annual Review of Sociology*. Vol. 23. pp. 431-453.
- Osterman, Paul. 1995. "Work/family programs and the employment relationship." *Admin. Science Quart.* 40:681-700.
- Presser, Harriet B. 2000. "Nonstandard Work Schedules and Marital Instability." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 62: 93-110.
- Poortman, Anne-Rigt. 2005. "How Work Affects Divorce-The Mediating Role of Financial and Time Pressures". *Journal of Family Issues*. Vol. 26. pp. 168-195.
- Roxburgh, Susan. 2006. "I Wish We Had More Time to Spend Together: The distribution and predictors of perceived family time pressures among married men and women in the paid labor force." *Journal of Family Issues* 27: 529-553.
- Sassler, Sharon; Goldscheider, Frances. 2004. "Revisiting Jane Austen's Theory of Marriage Timing: Changes in Union Formation Among American Men in the Late 20th Century". *Journal of Family Issues*. Vol. 25. pp.139-166.
- Simon, Robin W. 1995. "Gender, Multiple Roles, Role Meaning, and Mental Health". *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. Vol. 36. pp.182-194.
- South, Scott. 1991. "Sociodemographic Differentials in Mate Selection Processes." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 53: 928-940.
- Strazdins, Lyndall, Clements, Mark, Korda, Rosemary, Broom, Dorothy, and D'Souza, Rennie. 2006. Unsociable Work? Nonstandard Work Schedules, Family Relationships, and Children's Well-Being. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 68: 394-410.
- Suitor, Jill. 1991. "Marital Quality and Satisfaction with the Division of Labor Across the Family Life Cycle." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 53: 221-230.
- Sweeney, Megan and Cancian, Maria. 2004. "The Changing Importance of White Women's Economic Prospects for Assortative Mating." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66: 1015-1028.
- Thornton, Arland and Young-Demarco, Linda. 2001. "Four Decades of Trends in Attitudes Toward Family Issues in the United States: The 1960s through the 1990s." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63: 1009-1038.
- Van Der Lippe, Tanja, Tijdens, Kea, and deRuijter, Esther. 2004. "Outsourcing of Domestic Tasks and Time-Saving Effects." *Journal of Family Issues* 25: 216-240.
- Voydanoff, Patricia. 2005. "Social Integration, Work-Family Conflict and Facilitation, and Job and Marital Quality." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67: 666-679.

- Waite, Linda. 1995. "Does Marriage Matter?" *Demography* 32: 483-507.
- Warren, Elizabeth, and Tyagi, Amelia 2003. *The Two-Paycheck Trap*. New York; Basic Books.
- White, Lynn K. and Rogers, Stacy. 2000. "Economic Circumstances and Family Outcomes" *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 62: 1035-51.
- Wilkie, Jane Riblett; Ferree, Myra Marx; Ratcliff, Kathryn Strother. 1998. "Gender and Fairness: Marital Satisfaction in Two-Earner Couples." *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 60: 577-594.
- Xie, Yu; Raymo, James; Goyette, Kimberly; Thornton, Arland. 2003. "Economic Potential and Entry into Marriage and Cohabitation". *Demography*. Vol. 40. pp. 357-367.

Endnotes

¹ Poortman (2005) reports growth in multiple job holding among working class husbands to cope with declining wages and full-time jobs, which could increase the vulnerability of working class households to job loss even further.

² Egypt and other Middle Eastern nations are even experimenting with temporary or “contract” marriages that resemble a spot market for labor with few long lasting obligations between partners.

³ Cleaning and take out meals may be an exception here, as Cohen (1998) finds that household expenditures on these services increase as women’s relative contribution to household income increases. Either lower-income wives do not feel entitled to spend money on market substitutes, or their higher earning husbands restrict spending on such services.