

Dual-Earner Middle-Class Ecologies, Life Course “Fit,” and Health: Super Couples or Couples Stretched Thin?

Phyllis Moen and Qinlei Huang

Minnesota Population Center, University of Minnesota

September 22, 2008

Direct correspondence to Phyllis Moen, McKnight Presidential Chair in Sociology, University of Minnesota, 909 Social Science Building, 267 19th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55455, phylmoen@umn.edu Thanks to Jane Peterson for her bibliographic work and for her statistical analysis.

This research was supported by a grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation (#2002-6-8). We especially appreciate and thank Kathleen E. Christensen, who has led the Foundation’s work family initiative (see <http://www.sloan.org>). This research was also conducted as part of the Workplace, Family, Health and Well-being Network, which is funded by a cooperative agreement through the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (Grant # U01HD051217, U01HD051218, U01HD051256, U01HD051276), National Institute on Aging (Grant # U01AG027669), Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research, and National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (Grant # U01OH008788). The contents of this publication are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of these institutes and offices. Persons interested in learning more about the Network should go to <https://www.kpchr.org/workplacehealth>.

**Dual-Earner Middle-Class Ecologies, Life Course “Fit,” and Health:
Super Couples or Couples Stretched Thin?**

ABSTRACT

This paper offers an integrated *ecology of the gendered life course* approach to understanding the “good life” of couples in the U.S., in terms of both spouses’ mental and physical health, as well as both of their beliefs about their own personal mastery, income adequacy, and satisfactory family life. The sample consists of 1046 middle-class dual-earner couples, all of whom have at least some college, with most occupying professional or managerial jobs. How is the “good life” distributed across these middle-class couples, arguably the most advantaged in terms of resources, education and options? Dual-earning is not yet institutionalized in working environments or in the broader culture, meaning couples must navigate within outdated (social and institutional) *convoys of time*: patchworks of rules, regulations, relationships, policies, and practices designed for one earner-one homemaker arrangements. We find that fewer than one in six of the dual-earner middle-class couples in this sample are “super” couples in terms of the quality of life of both husbands and wives. Half have low or else only “good enough” couple life quality, suggesting that even these privileged middle-class couples are stretched thin. Couples living in childfree egalitarian family environments and those where wives’ job environments offer more flexible schedule control and greater job security are more apt to experience “super” couple life quality. This underscores the absence of “life course fit” between 1) the temporal inflexibilities of jobs and the absence of job security, on the one hand, and 2) the goals and needs of dual-earner couples, on the other. The “good life” is elusive for working couples, even those who are most advantaged.

INTRODUCTION: DUAL-EARNING AS DIVIDING TIME

Today most employees are part of dual-earner couples. Moreover, dual-earning is increasingly necessary to sustain working-class and increasingly even middle-class lifestyles, given the decline in single-earner wages. But society, employers, organizations, and scholars think about and study employees as individuals, not as simultaneously family members. And yet, from the perspective of families and children, it may matter less that one member of a couple is thriving if the other one is experiencing considerable psychological distress. How can we think about and study employees as members of dual-earner couples? How can we capture *couple* health and life quality? What is the role of work and family environments, and especially flexibility and schedule control, for couple-level life course “fit” in the form of shared health and well-being?

This chapter addresses these issues. We draw on an ecology of the gendered life course paradigm (Moen, Elder and Lüscher 1995; Moen and Spencer 2006; Moen, Kelly, and Magennis 2007) to identify specific job and family conditions constituting the *couple ecologies* (e.g. Bronfenbrenner 1979) of middle-class dual-earners: their temporal divisions of paid and unpaid labor and leisure, their temporal flexibility in terms of schedule control on the job, and another form of flexibility in terms of job security (which enables both employees and couples to plan for the future), and their collective experiences of health and life quality. In doing so, we focus specifically on the *couple* as the unit of theoretical and empirical analysis.

Contemporary couples in the U.S. are caught within a web of uncertainties and inflexibilities associated with a global (and presumably “flexible”) economy, one cross cut by associated time pressures on the job, time pressures in the family (given the

absence of full-time homemakers), and time speed-up fostered by the internet, cell-phones, and other communication and information technologies . This global risk economy, with its corresponding and constantly shifting technologies, markets, and management strategies, is transforming temporal work rhythms, expectations, and vulnerabilities -- even for advantaged, middle-class, dual-earner employees.

Simultaneously, contemporary career paths as well as work days and work weeks are also increasingly managed *in tandem*, as husbands and wives seek to coordinate two jobs: his and hers, along with “their” family life. How are middle-class, dual-earner couples strategizing in the face of outdated *temporal inflexibilities* in human resource and labor market policies and practices, rising job demands, and mounting insecurity, all combined with persisting gender and life stage norms and expectations embedded in the contemporary culture and distribution of both work and family time?

Families have always functioned as economic units, operating as adult “role budget centers” by making strategic allocations of family members’ time, money, and energy in ways that sustain the household (Goode 1960). These strategic processes of allocation, coordination, and distribution are called the *family economy*. The use of the words like “strategy” and “coordination” implies a sense of agency, the ability of individuals and families to make and implement choices. But most of their “choices” are, in fact, constrained by existing realities. In particular, jobs come *prepackaged* in ways that may limit time-related choices and temporal flexibility. Women and men in different life stages experience different demands in both their work and personal lives; they also have different expectations, as well as different amounts of rewards and resources. Consequently, they may well seek out jobs with more flexible schedule control and/or job

security, or may find themselves in job with little of either, unable to opt out of “bad” jobs or to qualify for better ones.

Dual-earner couples are living and working – and relating to one another -- in *inflexible organizational, policy, and cultural environments* allocating time in ways that made sense for single-earners with the backup of homemakers (Christensen and Gomory 1999). What Merton (1968) called “social givens:” the range of established or institutionalized norms around time (such as the 40-hour plus work week, the 50-week work year and the lock-step career mystique model of occupational development) continue to constrain options, even though these “social givens” may be out of date (Moen and Roehling 2005).

This contemporary absence of life course “fit” between time for work and time for family and personal life reflects structural lag (Riley, Kahn and Foner 1994) in schedule control and career flexibilities. What has been variously called the *time famine*, the *time squeeze*, or *work-family conflict* reflects the new time demands, pressures, and uncertainties produced by the confluence of changes in families, workforces, technologies and economies described above.

Theorizing conflicts and strain, cycles of control, health and life quality as being related to person-environment “fit” or “misfit” has a long scholarly tradition (e.g. Elder 1974; Edwards 1996; Goode 1960; Kahn 1981; Karasek 1979; Lewin 1935; Wilensky 1981). Overloads and contradictions resulting the absence of “fit” around the social organization of time are endemic to understanding the dual-earner couple as the new family norm, and the dual-earner employee as the new workforce norm. Our life course and ecological perspective, in contrast, conceptualizes the person and context as

inherently interactive. One of the earliest, and perhaps best known, formulations is Lewin's (1938) dictum that behavior is an interactive function of person and the environment; $B = f(P, E)$. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) *Ecology of Human Development* extended the formula to emphasize development as the interactive function of a changing person and dynamic environment (see Lerner 1998 for review of the importance of context in current theorizing).

Shifting from an *individual* to *couple* theoretical unit of strategic work-family time divisions and decision-making is insufficient to understanding the mechanisms leading to particular dual-earner arrangements absent recognition of their *embeddedness* in multiple social and institutional conditions, especially about the social organization and clockworks of employment. These conditions view employees as individuals, but may nevertheless be experienced directly and indirectly by each partner within a couple. Moreover, these working conditions and contracts are themselves in the process of change—producing uncertainty, ambiguity, and ambivalence regarding occupational time investments, intentions, and options (see also Breiger 1995; Krüger 1999; Marshall et al 2001; Meiksins and Whalley 2002; Moen and Orrange 2002; Sweet, Moen and Meiksins 2007). In order to understand the choices and experiences of contemporary dual-earner couples, it is essential to examine the gaps between what has and hasn't changed, as well as between the time flexibilities and control dual-earners value, want and need versus the real-world time flexibilities and control they are able to arrange in their jobs and families.

In this “half-changed” world, employees are discovering that the routines and temporal norms associated with traditional jobs and career paths are no longer guideposts (see Orenstein 2000; Moen 2003; Moen and Orrange 2002; Moen and Roehling 2005).

Old norms and templates about the clockworks of paid work may no longer be relevant, but they nevertheless persist, and new ones have yet to emerge. This is particularly evident in the case of women (see Blair-Loy 1999, 2003; Krüger and Baldus 1999; Moen 2003). Most contemporary American women have been socialized to believe (1) they can (and should) pursue “good” jobs and move up career ladders in male-centric occupations, and (2) they can (and should) simultaneously have a successful marriage and family life. Similarly, growing numbers of American men have come to believe (1) they can (and should) continue to be the family breadwinners following the traditional linear, lock-step career path, and (2) they can (and should) actively participate in child rearing and domestic work on the home front. But “good” jobs (those with benefits) seldom provide people with the necessary time to function effectively both at home and at work, even as wage scales have failed to keep pace with the costs of living. Members of the New American workforce - men as well as women - are increasingly without any backup (such as full-time homemakers, relatives, stay-at-home neighbors) on the domestic front, making time control a scarce resource, with more hours than available doubly required at home and at work. The result? Individuals, often as couples, make time allocations and occupational career choices through processes of ad hoc decision-making. And they do so in constricted climates of conflicting, inflexible time commitments and outdated time scripts.

DUAL-EARNER ECOLOGIES AND CONVOYS OF TIME

Our thesis is that couple time allocations and pressures are *co-constructed* by both couple members within the confines of multiple inflexible time frames operating as *time convoys*. These are termed “convoys” of institutionalized constraints, norms and options because they change with age, job tenure, and family development, creating variation at different

career and life course stages (Moen and Kelly 2007; Moen, Kelly and Magennis 2007). What Sennett (1998) calls the *iron cage of time* thus differs by age, biography, and social location. These time cages are in fact *convoys* in that they are age-graded: conveyor belts of opportunities and constraints that expand, contract, and shift at different career and life stages and in response to larger forces of social, technological and economic change.

Kahn and Antonucci (1980) first identified ongoing stable but also shifting relationships as *social* convoys -- supporting, enabling, or constraining individuals as they move through their life courses. But lives and life quality are also shaped by *institutional* convoys in organizations, in families, and in government policies (Moen and Kelly 2007; Moen, Kelly and Magennis 2007). The “time convoys” concept recognizes that both *relational* regimes (social convoys) and *bureaucratic* regimes (institutional convoys) of policies, practices, rules and regulations shape the social environments of jobs, family life, health, and life quality.

To summarize our argument: Dual-earner lives are negotiated and strategized within convoys of time characterized by 1) structural lag (Riley, Kahn and Foner 1994) in the form of outdated clockworks of work characterized by both inflexibility and an absence of employee control over the time and timing of their workdays, workweeks, workyears and working life. Simultaneously, 2) new time demands, speed-ups, risks and uncertainties flow from social, economic, technological, and organizational forces increasing work demands, time pressures and risks. Add to this 3) increased family demands and time pressures brought about by having all adults in a household in the workforce. Taken together, inflexible policies and practices, shifting time expectations, rising job insecurity in a global information society, and intransigent family care needs

and expectations can create an absence of life course “fit” between the real-life exigencies of dual-earner living and outdated institutional options and expectations about the time and timing of paid work, career paths, family work, and relationships at different ages and life stages.

Sewell (1992:16) makes the point that there are a multiplicity of structures shaping society and individual lives, existing and operating at different levels and in different modalities, with different logics and dynamics. It is the multiplicity of social clocks, rigid time demands, and inflexible calendars that constitute the institutional and social convoys of time. But middle-class, dual-earner families have more resources than most to deal with these challenges. Middle-class dual-earners are doubly blessed with two jobs, two good salaries, and often two people with college educations. Is the result “super couples” who “have it all” in terms of life quality? Or else couples stretched thin?

TIME, ECOLOGY AND DUAL-EARNER HEALTH AND LIFE QUALITY

In periods of large-scale social upheaval, old templates become obsolete, and the only thing that is clear to one generation is that their lives will *not* resemble those of their parents. The life course paradigm (e.g., Elder 1974, 1978, 1985; Elder and Shanahan 2006; Macmillan 2005; Mortimer and Shanahan 2003; O’Rand 1996) invites an analysis of dual-earner couples’ life quality with recognition of the multi-layered historical, institutional, organizational and biographical forces shaping dual-earner lives. One could focus, for example, on the impacts of new technologies or of global markets on relationships within dual-earner couples. But both of these forces touch the linked lives (Elder 1974) of dual-earners through the filters of *time* and *life course “fit”* (see Figure 1).

Some temporal “givens,” are dissolving. The 9-to5 workday has blurred around the edges, offering both earlier and later starting and stopping times (and increased employer expectations of employees putting in more than 40 hours a week). Retirement at age 65 has also blurred. People are retiring earlier, later, or several times. Still, employees continue to struggle with the outdated clockworks that remain in people’s heads as well as in organizational structures and cultures. To understand dual-earner relationships requires understanding how couples adapt to these cross-currents of mixed and ambiguous messages; in other words, how members of couples as women and men strategize about their allocation and division of time within the time cages and convoys of two jobs, two sets of gender expectations, and two sets of family goals and responsibilities. .

The concept of control cycles (Elder 1985; Moen and Yu 2000) provides a window on the processes by which dual-earners strive for health and life quality. Gaps between needs and demands and resources occur on both home and job fronts, with individuals as employees and as family members at more or less risk of time pressures, overloads and conflicts at various life stages. We investigate dual-earner ecologies and life-course “fit” through this prism of time demands and allocations: time spent at work, in housework, and in leisure, as well as time flexibility and control needed to raise children, nurture marital relationships, and care for aging relatives. Note that our focus is on perceived time allocations and time control: not “objective” time use so much as the “subjective” sense of it (in contrast to, for example, Clarkberg and Merola 2003; Clarkberg and Moen 2001; Jacobs and Gerson 1998, 2004).

Figure 1 about here

Studying constellations of health and quality of life within and across couples is a window into the impacts of the strategic choices they make in light of their constrained options. Women and men as dual-earner couples select or are selected into the social and institutional time convoys that prevent or promote the “good” life in the form of subjective assessments of health and well-being. These allocations tend to also perpetuate gender strategies, differences, and inequalities, as dual-earner women and men seek to gain or regain a sense of control over their time and their lives (see Figure 1).

The 20th century conceptualization of career (e.g. Arthur and Rousseau 1996; Barley 1989; Hall 1995; Rosenfeld 1992) incorporated a view of time as linear, providing workers with incremental status and security in return for their commitment to continuous, full-time, full-year employment throughout “prime” adulthood. This provides a useful backdrop for considering how much *time itself* has changed, as employers and employees move away from linear clockworks of paid work and career paths. Global economies and new technologies are reconfiguring time, enabling time shifting as well as 24-hour time demands, time speed up, multi-tasking, and increases in low value work.

The concept of career also underscores the framing of workers as *individuals moving through institutions*. Not surprisingly then, scholars studying work-family issues typically focus on the conflicts and strains experienced by *individuals* as employees and family members (e.g. Marchand, Demars and Durand 2005). But linear time has never characterized family development (e.g. Aldous 1996) or most women’s work histories (Hochschild 1989; Moen 2001). Our focus therefore is on the ecology, health and life quality of *couples* as a unit.

THE ECOLOGY OF MIDDLE-CLASS DUAL-EARNER LIVING AND LIFE

COURSE “FIT”

Jessie Bernard (1981) understood that every marriage consists of two marriages: “his” and “hers”. What is fundamental to understanding contemporary dual-earner relationships is the fact that each partner is simultaneously a member of both families and workplace organizations. Each partner is also located in, and perpetuates, the larger opportunity structure of “enduring inequalities” (e.g. Tilly 1997) associated with gender. The result is a confluence of overlapping clockworks -- each with their attendant goals, expectations, patterning, constraints, and possibilities for *both couple members* as employees, spouses of employees, marital partners, adult children of aging parents, parents of young children, neighbors, and community members. It is through this prism of multiple roles, rules, and relationships and the resources and demands related to them that dual-earner partners assess life course “fit” in terms of their health and the quality of their lives.

Most contemporary sociological research assumes both independence and linearity of, for example, an individual’s work conditions or family conditions, on outcomes. Scholars of work and occupations, family relationships, and the life course all emphasize the importance of time and context, but theories and methodologies tend to reinforce the decontextualized individual as the unit of analysis, or (even more decontextualized) variables as the focus of interest. Popular analytical methods such as linear regression techniques promote a view of disembodied variables as having “net” effects, “controlling” for other potentially influential factors. By contrast, our ecology of the gendered life course framing theorizes identifiable and patterned couple ecologies.

We focus on mapping these ecologies: his and her working environments and their family environment, not each dimension of a job or of family life “net” of all others.

We similarly conceptualize and measure “health and quality of life” as couple-level constellations based on each partners’ separate cognitive assessments of their own income adequacy, physical health, and other dimensions of psychological and emotional well-being or strain. Couples who “have it all” are those in which both the husband and the wife score high on all these dimensions of life quality.

Moving to a couple level of analysis raises a number of questions. Do both wives and husbands report similar levels of health and life quality or are these independent of one another? Or is it the case that the life quality of one partner in a dual-earner couple typically comes at the cost of the life quality of the other? If so, is this a gendered patterning? Are there identifiable constellations of *couple-level* health and life quality? We operationalize the “good life” as the optimal ranking on the health and life quality measures of *both partners*. Do either “his” or “her” job ecologies or “their” ecology of family life predict the good life? Or do some combinations of these constellations matter for couple life quality?

METHODOLOGY

The sample consists of data from middle-class dual-earner couples (defined by at least one spouse having attended college --most have college degrees). The sample was drawn from the Ecology of Careers Study of employees working at one of 12 organizations. Their spouses were interviewed as well (for a fuller description of sample see Moen 2003). We analyze a subsample of couples where both partners are employed (N =1046).

Cluster Analysis

Since no single variable can capture the temporal environments in which couples' lives are embedded, we use cluster analysis to categorize cases into couple-level patterns based on sets of variables capturing conditions of the husband's job, the wife's job, their family life, and the nature of their combined health and quality of life. We obtain identifiable patterns by minimizing the variability within the clusters and maximizing the differences between clusters.

We use the SPSS two-step cluster method, since it handles large data sets well and allows the use of both continuous and categorical variables to formulate clusters when continuous variables are normally distributed and categorical variables have a multinomial distribution. The two-step cluster analysis procedure groups cases into pre-clusters by constructing a modified cluster feature (CF) tree first and then applies standard hierarchical clustering methods to the pre-clusters in the second step. The number of clusters is determined automatically by the two-step cluster procedure based on the Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC). Cases are assigned to the closest cluster according to the log-likelihood distance measure. We label women, men, and couples in each ecological context (cluster) after its prominent characteristic. The variables we use to define the multiple ecologies of dual-earner lives are described below:

1. Job Environments

We categorize job ecologies using four job conditions: psychosocial job demands (on a scale of 1 for low work load to 4 for high work load), job security (on a scale of 0 for certain will lose job to 100 for certain will keep it), flexible time control (an

index of eight time control questions¹, based on a five point scale ranging from very little to very much, [$\alpha=0.77$ for women, $\alpha=0.74$ for men]), and total hours worked per week. All of these factors relate directly or indirectly to the *pressures and flexibilities of time*.

2. Couple Family Environments

We constructed family ecologies at the couple level using the following eight variables: husband's and wife's self-reported minutes of housework per work day, wife's proportion of total family housework time, number of children, dummy variables for family life stage (no children at home [wife under 40]; preschooler at home; children 6-12 at home; teenager at home; no kids at home [wife above 40] and adult kids at home), dummy variables for couples' caregiving for aging relatives (neither spouse caregiving, husband only caregiving, wife only caregiving, and both caregiving), and husband's and wife's leisure time per day. All of these factors are also related directly or indirectly to time pressures and obligations.

3. Profiles of Couple Health and Life Quality

Our goal is to capture couple-level health and well-being on a variety of dimensions that represent each partner's assessments of their own health, as well as judgements about important resources contributing to life quality. Accordingly, we seek identifiable profiles of couples based on a range of indicators, including both spouses' reports of their personal mastery (on a scale of 1 for low mastery to 4 for high mastery), perceived constraints (on a scale of 1 for fewer constraints to 5 for more constraints), personal growth (a scale of 1 for low to 4 for high growth), negative affect (a scale of 1

¹ The eight questions are: choice ending workday, choice of hours worked, choice of working at home, choice of amount of work at home, choice of vacations/day off, choice of a few hours off, choice of personal phone calls received, and choice of personal email received, based on Ganster and Fusilier (1989).

for never negative to 5 negative all the time), perceived income adequacy (a scale of 0 for very inadequate to 100 for much more than adequate), self-reported health rating (a scale of 0 for serious health problems to 10 for very best health), and satisfaction with family life (a scale of 1 for never satisfied to 5 for always satisfied).

We next present our findings about the job environments of each spouse, as well as their shared family environment. After assessing whether there are identifiable couple constellations of both spouses health and life quality (there are), we then examine the various couple health and life quality profiles and their distribution. Finally, we develop and test a multivariate model predicting couple health and life quality, in other words, “the good life.”

DUAL-EARNER COUPLES' JOB ECOLOGIES

Husbands

On average, husbands in this dual-earner sample work over 46 hours a week, report psychosocial demands of 2.85 on a 1-4 scale, and have some flexible time control over where and when they work (rating themselves 3.58 on this 1 -5 scale). On a scale of 0 to 100, these men rank their job security at an average of 76.81. But this “average” profile obscures the diverse environments in which these men work.

We find four distinctive job ecologies for husbands in this middle-class sample. First are men working under job conditions characterized by high *time control* over where and when they work (scoring 4.42 on the 1 to 5 the time control scale) Those in this high time control job environment tend to work over 45 hours a week, have somewhat lower than average job demands, and slightly above average job security.

About 21% of the husbands in our study work in these job environments offering them considerable time control over where and when they work.

Second is what we label a *routine* job ecology (routine in terms of having only the conventional 40 hours full-time employment.). Husbands working in this job environment have the least flexible time control but also the lowest work load demands ($x=2.57$). They also put in the fewest hours on the job ($x=39.95$). Men working in these “routine” job environments report high ($x=87.75$ on a hundred point scale) certainty they will keep their jobs. Over three in ten (31.65%) of the men in our sample work in such routine job environments, putting in only full-time hours but also in jobs characterized by little flexible schedule control as to where and when they work.

About one in five (21.9%) of men are in an *intensive* job ecology: working under conditions characterized by long hours, heavy workload demands, and high (but not the highest) schedule control. Men in these intensive job environments put in an average of over 54 hours a week on their jobs, and score high ($x=3.37$) on the 1-4 demand scale. Despite the long hours and high job demands, men working in intensive job environments also tend to have a high degree of schedule control (3.65) and also report high job security (89.78 on a scale of 1 to 100. (See Table 1A)

Table 1 about here.

Another one in five (20.65%) husbands in this middle-class dual-earner sample work in an *insecure* job environment, scoring an average of only 39.42 on the job security scale, meaning they have extremely low certainty of keeping their jobs.

Wives

The picture of wives' job environments is both similar to and different from that of their husbands. On average women report the same job demand scores as do husbands, but put in considerably fewer hours on the job (averaging 37.25 hours per week, compared to men's 46.48). Moreover, wives report a higher average job security rating than do the husbands (80.46 to 76.81) in this sample.

A more nuanced picture is provided by the clusters characterizing five distinctive ecologies of dual-earner women's paid work. They are 1) "*intensive*," 2) "*low hours*," 3) "*insecure*," 4) "*routine*," and 5) "*low demands*." Three of the categories -- *intensive*, *insecure* and *routine* -- are similar to the environments in which the men in this dual-earner sample work (See Table 1B). Over one in five (23.67%) women work in what we label an *intensive* job ecology; they put in the longest hours ($x=45.51$) of all women in the sample and deal with the highest job demands ($x=3.23$). Those working in this type of job environment also report the highest levels of schedule control ($x=3.96$). Women working under these conditions can be expected to have the least amount of time for leisure or family relationships, but may well experience a level of life quality in that they have flexibility and control over the scheduling of their work, if not the amount of working time and other demands.

Fewer than one in five (18.07%) dual-earner wives work in an *insecure* job environment, and an even smaller proportion (16.7%) work in *routine* ecologies (with conventional full-time working hours).

There are also two job ecologies that are distinctive to the wives in our sample and not the husbands. First is the part-time ecology of *low hours* ($x=17.65$) with lower than average demands, higher than average schedule control, and higher than average job

security. Additional qualitative analyses suggest that the dual-earner middle-class women in this job environment have typically scaled back in their occupational aspirations and occupational investments in order to achieve better “fit” with their husbands’ working conditions and with their family goals and obligations (see Becker and Moen 1999; Moen and Sweet 2003; Sweet and Moen 2004). Fewer than one in five (18.70%) wives work in such part-time job ecologies.

The second job environment unique to wives is what we label the *low demands* ecology, similar to the *routine* ecology but with women having extremely low schedule control over where and when they work (scoring on average 2.29 on the 1-5 scale). This is the second most common ecology (23.27%) for wives in this dual-earner sample. Table 1 presents details about the job ecologies of the dual-earner, middle-class men and women in the study.

DUAL-EARNER FAMILY ECOLOGIES

The two-step cluster procedure identified five distinctive couple-level family ecologies. Couples in these family environments differ by two time-related conditions: family life stage (in terms of the presence of children, the age of the youngest child, and whether one or both members of the couple is caring for an aging relative). They also differ by how they view their amounts of leisure time and time spent on housework. We label these family ecologies by life stage. First is the ecology of *parents of grade-schoolers* (20.87% of sample) characterizing households where the youngest child ranges in age from 6 to 12 and the wives spend the most time proportionally (62%) on housework. Second is the ecology of *childfree egalitarian* couples (11.71% of the sample) in which husbands and wives in couples each see themselves as spending similar amounts of time on housework

and enjoying the greatest amount of leisure time. Third is the ecology of *sandwich couples* (29.43% of the sample) where one or both spouses is caring for an aging relative and over three-fourths (77%) of the couples have one or more children under age 18 still at home. Fourth is the ecology of *parents of preschoolers* (17.72% of the sample) with a youngest child under age six and the lowest reported couple leisure time. And finally the fifth group of dual-earner couples lives in a combined ecology of *parents of teenagers* and *empty nester* couples (20.27% of the sample) where half of the families have children ages 13-18 and half have children who are already grown and no longer part of the household. Table 2 presents descriptive analysis for couples living in these five distinctive family environments.

Table 2 about here

DUAL-EARNER QUALITY OF LIFE

The answer to the question as to whether partners in dual-earner middle-class households experience similar levels of life quality is both yes and no. We identify five constellations of couple-level life quality, what we will refer to in short hand as CLQ (Couple Life Quality). They are 1) *both high CLQ* couples; 2) *husband higher CLQ* couples; 3) *wife higher CLQ* couples; 4) *both low CLQ* couples; and 5) “*good enough*” *CLQ* couples (see Table 3). Three of these constellations have husbands and wives with similar levels of life quality (both high, low, or good enough). In the other two one partner reports higher life quality than the other.

Table 3 about here

Dual-earners who are living the “good life” (high CLQ) tend to have both partners scoring highest on the self-rating of physical health (wives average 8.76 and husbands

average 8.58 on a 0-10 scale) and assess their family income adequacy high (wives score 79.6, husbands 78.7 on a 0-100 scale). Wives in this constellation typically rank highest on personal mastery and personal growth scales, and lowest on a scale measuring perceived constraints. Their husbands also rank comparably high on personal mastery and growth, and lowest on a scale of negative affect. These are the “super couples” with the greatest collective quality of life. Note that this is the *least common* couple life quality constellation; only 15.7% of those in this sample are blessed with this “good life.”

In some cases one spouse is doing better in the quality of their lives than the other. Couples where husbands rank higher than their wives on life quality constitute 16.7% of the dual-earners in the study. Husbands in this CLQ constellation score highest on mastery and growth scales and lowest on the perceived constraints measure. By contrast, their wives score lowest on mastery (see Table 3).

In the constellation of couples where wives score higher on quality of life measures than their husbands, wives report the second highest scores on the personal mastery and personal growth scales, while their husbands score the lowest on these same measures. This is both the third most and the third least common pattern of CLQ; 17.9 % of the sample falls within this constellation.

The next configuration represents dual-earners reporting low couple life quality. Both husbands and wives in this constellation score the highest on the perceived constraint and negative affect scales, and lowest in their self-ratings of physical health. Couples with this low quality of life represent over a fourth (26.5 %) of this dual-earner, middle-class sample. That the most common constellation in this sample of middle-class

dual-earners is *low* life quality underscores the difficulties experienced by those trying to manage two jobs and a family in a world of inflexible and outdated clockworks.

The final constellation is more difficult to label. Couples in this category score higher than average on self reported health, lower than average on negative affect, and lower than average (but not the lowest) on personal mastery and personal growth scales. This group represents adequate or “good enough” couple life quality – not the best, but not the worst. Over one in five (23.3%) couples in the sample fall within this “good enough” CLQ constellation, making this the second most common pattern.

What then, can we conclude about the life quality of contemporary and supposedly advantaged middle-class dual-earner couples?.. Fewer than one sixth experience the good life (high couple quality of life), while half (49.8%) experience either low or only “good enough” couple life quality, and the remaining couples having one spouse with considerably lower life quality than the other. These profiles suggest that most dual earner couples may well indeed be “stretched thin.”

WHAT DUAL-EARNER ECOLOGIES PREDICT LIFE QUALITY?

We theorized that both spouses’ job ecologies as well as the ecology of their family life would predict couples’ constellations of life quality. Cross-tabulations show, however, that only *wives*’ job ecologies are statistically significant in predicting couple quality of life. Wives in the *intensive* job ecology (characterized by long hours, high demands, but also high flexible schedule control) are about equally distributed across the five quality of life categories. But wives working in *low hour* (part time) environments are the least likely to be in the high couple life quality constellation or in the constellation where the wife only has high life quality. Thirty percent of those in the low hour cluster are in the

“good enough” life quality constellation. This suggests that having wives scale back on their work hours may “work” as a couple strategy to manage the multiple time pressures and demands at work and at home, but does not promote life quality for couples as a unit or for the wives themselves (see also Moen and Yu 2000; Moen 2003).

Almost three in ten (29.6%) couples where wives are in *insecure* job environments fall into the low couple life quality constellation. These couples are the least likely to be living the good life in terms of both spouses high quality of life. Over three in ten (33.3%) couples where wives have *routine* job conditions – working minimal full-time hours in jobs with low demands and low flexible schedule control – are in the “good enough” life quality constellation. Couples in this job environment are least likely to be in the “husband only” high life quality category. Almost three in ten (27.1%) couples with wives working in *low flexible schedule control* job environments are in the “low” life quality constellation and are the least likely to be in the “wife only” high quality of life category.

Multinomial logistic analysis (Table 4) of the combination of job ecologies and family ecologies reinforces the primacy of wives’ job environments for couple life quality, but also specifies the conditions under which family ecologies and husbands’ job ecologies predict the quality of life in dual-earner households. The results are summarized below:

Table 4 about here

1. Predicting High Couple Life Quality

The expected odds of the good life (high couple life quality) decreases by 53% for couples where wives’ working in high *job insecurity* environments, (compared to couples

where wives are working in an *intensive* ecology with long hours, high demands and high schedule flexibility and control). This means that couples where wives' job ecologies are characterized by job insecurity are 1.89 times as likely to have a low life quality than the good life. For couples with grade-schoolers (compared with couples in egalitarian childfree families), the expected odds of high dual-earner life quality decreases by 56%, meaning that childfree couples are 1.77 times as likely to experience the good life in terms of indicators of couple life quality than are parents of grade-schoolers. Couples living in childfree egalitarian arrangements are 1.69 times as likely to have the good life than are parents who are raising teens or are empty nesters (the odds of high couple life quality decreases at about the same rate, by 59%). This evidence suggests that childfree egalitarian couples in this dual-earner middle-class sample are far more apt to be "super couples" compared to those with grade-schoolers, teens or grown children.

2. Predicting Husbands' Higher Couple Life Quality

Husbands' job ecologies predict the constellation where husbands have higher life quality than their wives. The expected odds of husbands with higher quality of life than their wives is 45% lower when husbands' work in either *low flexible schedule control* or *job insecure*, environments. The contrast group is couples where husbands work in long hour, high demand "intensive" work environments, who are 2.22 times more apt to experience high life quality for themselves only. Husbands' constellations of working conditions do not predict the good life in terms of *couple* quality of life, but does matter for husbands' life quality at the expense of that of their wives.

3. Predicting Wives' Higher Couple Life Quality

Both wives' own working conditions and the couples' family environment predict wives having higher life quality than their husbands. The expected odds of wives only scoring high on the life quality measures decrease by 46% and 57% respectively when wives work in job environments that are *insecure* or that offer them little *schedule control*. In contrast, couples where wives work in *intensive* (long hours, high demands, but also high schedule control) job environments are 2.17 and 1.75 times more likely (than those in insecure and low control conditions) to have the wife only report high life quality.

Family environments matter as well. Couples *raising grade-schoolers* (who have the greatest disparity in men's and women's housework) have an expected odds of wives' higher life quality 57% lower than *couples without children* living in a family environment characterized by gender equity in housework and leisure (who are 1.75 times more likely to have wives only with life quality). Couples *with teens or else whose children are grown* (the empty nesters) have a similar expected reduced odds of 48%, meaning that couples *who are childfree* are 2.08 times likely to have wives only with high quality of life. Wives having higher life quality than their husbands is best predicted by both wives' own job environments and whether or not they are childfree.

4. Predicting "Good Enough" Couple Life Quality

Couples with wives in jobs characterized by *low hours* as well as wives in *routine* job environments have higher expected odds (1.73 and 1.75) of being in the "good enough" life quality constellation (rather than having low life quality). This suggests that middle-class couples' strategy of having wives scale back to part time hours or else have

a minimally full-time, low demand *routine* job ecology predicts a minimally acceptable but not optimal quality of life for both partners.

CONCLUSIONS: DOUBLE VISIONS, DOUBLE BURDENS, DOUBLE STANDARDS

Sociologists as well as other social scientists focus on roles, relationships, and resource distributions, seldom reflecting that all of these phenomena occur within the prism of time. Time itself remains regulated by the lock-step template of paid work that gives a linear order to time by sequencing the life course (as first education, then employment, then retirement) and creating the clockwork of paid work (as 40-hour or more workweeks, 50 weeks a year, from the end of schooling to retirement or death, whichever comes first). This ordering of time emerged from a view of (male) workers as individual decision-makers whose “decisions” about the time and timing of their paid work were more or less already prescribed as “social givens.”

But contemporary middle-class life is increasingly a conjoint “project” of managing two jobs, “his” and “hers,” along with the unpaid daily work of family life, reflecting the linked lives (Elder 1994) of dual-earner couples. It is also a *gendered* project, embedded in a gendered division of both paid (job) and unpaid (family and community) labor (Moen and Kelly 2007; Moen, Kelly, and Magennis 2007).

This couple level analysis reveals that few middle-class dual-earners are in fact “super” couples who experience an optimal and equal quality of life. Half (49.8%) of the dual-earner couples we studied have patterns of either low (26.5%) or only “good enough” (23.3%) life quality based on both spouses’ assessments of their income adequacy, self-rated health, personal mastery, personal growth, personal constraints, and

negative affect. Less than one in six (15.7%) couples experience the good life in terms of a high quality of life constellation for both spouses.

We find that job ecologies offering *little job security* for wives and family ecologies including *school age or older children* predict low couple quality. This suggests that time pressures, overloads and conflicts associated with raising children and low security in women's jobs may be consequential for the couple and, hence, for their families. But having wives "scale back" on their obligations at work does not appear to be the solution. Couples with wives in job ecologies characterized by *low hours* or minimally *routine* full-time obligations typically report only "good enough" couple life quality.

This dearth of high couple life quality may well represent the absence of life-course "fit" between jobs, families, and dual-earner goals and needs for couples who are trying to raise families as well as hold down two jobs within an atmosphere of risk and uncertainty in a global economy.

What about parents of preschoolers who are noticeably missing in our findings? One explanation is that couples raising preschoolers who are experiencing overloads and strains follow the strategy of having one spouse – the wife—leave the workforce for a time (Moen and Huang 2007). Doing so effectively selects them out of this dual-earner sample, suggesting that those parents of preschoolers who remain as dual-earners may be the ones able to manage their lives in effective ways.

The overall evidence from this study suggests that dual-earner couples are paying the price of the fundamental absence of "fit" between work and family over the life course, *except* when they do not have children. The ecologies of time demands and goals

on the home front differ by life stage, with couples having school-age, teens, or grown children especially at risk. . It is noteworthy that the odds of experiencing the good life tend to be enhanced for couples who are childfree and more egalitarian in their divisions of housework time and time for leisure.

The evidence also suggests the importance of working conditions enhancing schedule control: the ability of employees to manage where and when they do their jobs. Such temporal flexibility may well be a key resource for life quality, as are job ecologies offering *job security*.

Lives and relationships play out in multilayered clockworks that create identifiable constellations of job and family ecologies that require at minimum the flexibility and control over the time and timing of paid work.. Single “one size fits all” clockworks of jobs, career paths, and the life course simply do not correspond to real-time needs and goals of dual-earners, single parents, older workers – in other words, most of today’s and tomorrow’s workforce. ..

New and more flexible job ecologies will come about when the economic and social costs of retaining existing clockworks outweigh the costs to organizations and governments of redesigning paid work and career paths. Our data suggest that many advantaged middle-class dual-earner couples, key members of an educated skilled workforce, are at best “stretched thin.” A global innovation economy can’t operate optimally on a workforce that is “stretched thin”, suggesting that the nation is rapidly approaching the tipping point that will move toward job redesign fostering control and flexibility.

REFERENCES

- Aldous, J. (1996). *Family careers: Rethinking the developmental perspective*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Arthur, M.B., & Rousseau, D.M. (1996). *The boundaryless career: A new employment principle for a new organizational era*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Barley, S.R. (1989). "Careers, identifies, and institutions: The legacy of the Chicago School of Sociology." In M.B. Arthur, D.T. Hall, & B.S. Lawrence (Eds.), *The handbook of career theory* (pp. 41-65). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Becker, P.E., & Moen, P. (1999). "Scaling back: Dual-career couples' work-family strategies." *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61: 995-1007.
- Bem, S. L. (1993). *The lenses of gender: Transforming the debate on sexual inequality*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Bernard, J. (1981). "The good provider role." *American Psychologist*, 36: 1-12.
- Blair-Loy, M. (2003). *Competing devotions: Career and family among women executives*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- _____. (1999). "Career patterns of executive women in finance: An optimal matching analysis." *American Journal of Sociology*, 104: 1348-97.
- Blossfeld, H-P., & Hakim, C. (1997). *Between equalization and marginalization: Women working part time in Europe and the United States of America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Blossfeld, H.-P., & Hofmeister, H. (2006). "Globalization, uncertainty and women's careers: An international comparison." Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.
- Brieger, R. (1995). "Social structure and the phenomenology of attainment." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 21:115-136.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Cherlin, A. (1978). "Remarriage as an Incomplete Institution. *American Journal of Sociology* 84:634-650.

- Christensen, K., & Gomory R.E. (1999, June 2). "Three Jobs, Two People." *The Washington Post*, p. A.21.
- Clarkberg, M., & Merola, S. (2003). "Competing clocks: Work and leisure." In P. Moen (Ed.), *It's About Time: Couples and Careers* (pp. 35-48). Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Clarkberg, M., & Moen, P. (2001). "Understanding the time-squeeze: Married couples' preferred and actual work-hour strategies." *American Behavioral Scientist*, 44:1115-1136.
- Edwards, J.R. (1996). An examination of competing versions of the person-environment fit approach to stress. *Academy of Management Journal*, 39(2), 292-339.
- Elder, G.H., Jr. (1974). *Children of the great depression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Elder, G.H. Jr. (1978). Approaches to social change and the family. *American Journal of Sociology* 84, S1-S38.
- Elder, G.H. Jr. (1985). *Life Course Dynamics, Trajectories and Transitions, 1968-1980*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Elder, G.H. Jr. (1994). Time, human agency, and social change: Perspectives on the life course. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 57 4-15.
- Elder, G.H., Jr. (1998). "The life course as developmental theory." *Child Development* 69:1-12.
- Elder, G.H., Jr., & Shanahan, M. (2006). "The life course and human Development." In W. Damon and R.M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology, (volume 1), 6th Ed: Theoretical models of human development*, (pp. 247-291). New York: Wiley and Sons.
- Ganster, D.C., & Fusilier, M.R. (1989). "Control in the Workplace." In *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, edited by C.L. Cooper and I.T. Robertson, 235-80. London: John Wiley and Sons.
- Giele, J.Z., and Elder, G.H., Jr. (1998). *Methods of life course research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Goode, W. J. (1960). "A theory of role strain." *American Sociological Review*, 25: 483-496.

- Hall, C. (1995). "Entering the labor force: Ideals and realities among Evangelical women." In *Work, Family, and Religion in Contemporary Society*, edited by N. Tatom Ammerman and W. C. Roof, 137-56. New York: Routledge.
- Han, S.-K., & Moen, P. (2001). "Coupled careers: Pathways through work and marriage in the United States." (pp. 201-231) In H.-P. Blossfeld & S Drobnic (Eds.), *Careers of couples in contemporary societies: From male breadwinner to dual earner families*, (pp. 201-231). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Heinz, W.R. (2003). "From work trajectories to negotiated careers: The contingent work life course. In J. Mortimer & M. Shanahan (Eds.), *Handbook of the life course* (pp185-204). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- Heinz, W.R., & Krüger, H. (2001). "Life course: Innovations and challenges for social research." *Current Sociology*, 49: 29-45.
- Hochschild, A. (1989). *The second shift*. New York: Avon Books.
- Jacobs, J., & Gerson, K. (1998). "Who are the overworked Americans?" *Review of Social Economy*, 56(4): 442-59.
- _____. (2004). *The Time Divide: Balancing Work and Family in Contemporary Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kahn, R. L. (1981). *Work and Health* New York: Wiley.
- Kahn, R. L., & Antonucci, T. C. (1980). Convoys over the life course: Attachment, roles, and social support. In P. B. Baltes, & O. Brim (Eds), *Life-Span Development and Behavior* (Vol. 3). New York: Academic Press
- Karasek, R. (1979). "Job demands, job decision latitude, and mental strain: Implications for job redesign." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24: 285-308.
- Kelly, E.L. & Moen, P.M. (2006). "Rethinking the Clockwork of Work: Why Schedule Control May Pay Off at Home and at Work." Under review for *Advances in Developing Human Resources*.
- Krüger, H. (1999) "Gender and Skills: Distributive Ramifications of the German Skill System." In P.D. Culpepper & D. Finegold (Eds.) *The German Skills Machine: Sustaining Comparative Advantage in a Global Economy*, (pp.189-227). New York: Berghahn Books.
- Krüger, H., & Baldus, B. (1999). "Work, gender and the life course: Social construction and individual experience." *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 24(3): 355-379.

- Lewin, K. (1935). *A dynamic theory of personality*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Macmillan, R. (2005). *The structure of the life course : Standardized ? Individualized? Differentiated?* (volume 9). Greenwich, CT: Elsevier/JAI Press.
- Magnusson, D. (1995). "Individual Development: A Holistic, Integrated Model." Pp 19-60 in Moen, Elder and Luscher (Eds.). *Examining Lives in Context: Perspectives on the Ecology of Human Development*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association Press.
- Marchand, A., Demars, A., & Durand, P. (2005). "Does work really cause distress? The contribution of occupational structure and work organization to the experience of psychological distress." *Social Science and Medicine*, 61: 1-14.
- Marshall, V.W., Heinz, W.R., Krüger, H., & Verma, A. (2001). *Restructuring work and the life course*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Meiksins, P., & Whalley, P. (2002). *Putting work in its place: A quiet revolution*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Merton, R.K. (1968). *Social theory and social structure*. New York: The Free Press,
- _____. (2001). "The gendered life course." In L. George & R.H. Binstock (Eds.), *Handbook of aging and the social sciences*, (5th ed., pp. 179-96). San Diego: Academic Press.
- _____. (2003). *It's about time: Couples and careers*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Moen, P., & Altobelli, J. (2007). "Strategic selection as a retirement project: Will Americans develop hybrid arrangements?" In J. James and P. Wink (Eds.), *The Crown of Life: Dynamics of the Early Postretirement Period (Vol. 26)*, pp. 61-82. New York: Springer Publishing Company.
- Moen, P., Elder, G.H., Jr., & Lüscher, K. (1995). *Examining lives in context: Perspectives on the ecology of human development*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Moen, P., & Han, S.-K. (2001). "Gendered careers: A life course perspective." In R. Hertz and N.L. Marshall (Eds.), *Working families: The transformation of the American home*, (pp. 42-59). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Moen, P., & Huang, Q. (2007). "Flexible Careers and Turnover: Dual-Earning as an Incomplete Institution, Dual-Earners Seeking Life-Course 'Fit'". *Why Workplace Flexibility Matters: A Global Perspective* (Sloan Conference Proceedings - Summer 2006).

- Moen, P., & Kelly, E. (2007). "Working Families Under Stress: Socially Toxic Job Ecologies and Time Convoys." In Hill, E. J., & Crane, D. R., (Eds., in preparation). *Handbook of Families and Work*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Moen, P., Kelly, E., & Magennis, R. (forthcoming 2007). "Gender strategies: Social and institutional convoys, mystiques, and cycles of control." In M.C. Smith and T.G. Reio, Jr. (Eds.) *Handbook of Research on Adult Development and Learning*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Moen, P., & Orrange, R. (2002). "Careers and lives: Socialization, structural lag, and gendered ambivalence." In R. Settersten & T. Owens (Eds.), *Advances in Life Course Research: New Frontiers in Socialization* (Vol. 7, pp. 231-260). London: Elsevier Science.
- Moen, P., & Roehling, P. (2005). *The career mystique: Cracks in the American dream*. Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Moen, P., & Spencer, D. (2006). "Converging Divergences in age, gender, health, and well-being: Strategic selection in the third age." In R. Binstock and L. George (Eds.), *Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences*, (pp. 127-144). Burlington: Elsevier Academic Press.
- Moen, P., & Wethington, E. (1992). "The concept of family adaptive strategies." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 18: 233-51.
- Moen, P., & Yu, Y. (2000). "Effective work/life strategies: Working couples, work conditions, gender and life quality." *Social Problems*, 47: 291-326.
- Mortimer, J., & Shanahan, M. (2003). *Handbook of the life course*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- O'Rand, A.M. (1996). "Linking social structures to personal development." In A. Weymann & W.R. Heinz (Eds.), *Society and Biography*, (pp 67-81). Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag.
- Orenstein, P. (2000). *Flux: women on sex, work, kids, love, and life in a half-changed world*. New York: Random House.
- Powell, W., & DiMaggio, P. (1991). *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ridgeway, C.L., & Walker, H.A. (1994) . "Status structures." In K.S. Cook, G.A. Fine, & J.S. House (Eds.), *Sociological perspectives on social psychology*, (pp. 281 – 310). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

- Riley, M. W., Kahn, R.L., & Foner, A. (1994). *Age and structural lag: The mismatch between people's lives and opportunities in work, family and leisure*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Rosenfeld, R.A. (1992). "Job mobility and career processes." *Annual Review of Sociology*, 18: 39-61.
- Sennett, R. (1998). *The corrosion of character: The personal consequences of work in the new capitalism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Settersten, R.A., Jr. (2005). "Toward a stronger partnership between life-course sociology and life-span psychology." *Research in Human Development*, 2, 25-41.
- Sewell, W.H., Jr. (1992). "A theory of structure: Duality, agency, and transformation." *American Journal of Sociology*, 98: 1-29.
- Sweet, S., & Moen, P. 2004. "Coworking as a career strategy: Implications for the work and family lives of University employees." *Innovative Higher Education*, Vol. 28, No. 4, Summer 2004, 255-272.
- Sweet, S., Moen, P., & Meiksins, P. (forthcoming 2007). "Dual earners in double jeopardy: Preparing for job loss in the new risk economy." In B. Rubin (Ed.) *Research in the Sociology of Work, 17: Work Place Temporalities*.
- Tilly, C. (1997). "Durable inequality." In P. Moen, D. Dempster-McClain, & H. Walker (Eds.), *A nation divided: Diversity, inequality, and community in America*, (pp. 15-33). Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Tolbert, P., & Valcour, M. (2003). "Gender, family and career in the era of boundarylessness: Determinants and effects of intra- and interorganizational mobility." *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 14: 768-787.
- Townsend, N. 2002. *The package deal: Marriage, work, and fatherhood in men's lives*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Weymann, A., & Heinz, W.R. (1996). *Society and biography: Interrelationships between social structure, institutions and the life course*. Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag:
- Wilensky, H.L (1981). "Family Life Cycle, Work, and the Quality of Life" in *Working Life*, edited by Bertill Gardell and G. Johansson John Wiley and Sons pp. 235-265

Figure 1. Theorizing Dual-Earner Couples' Job and Home Ecologies and Life Quality

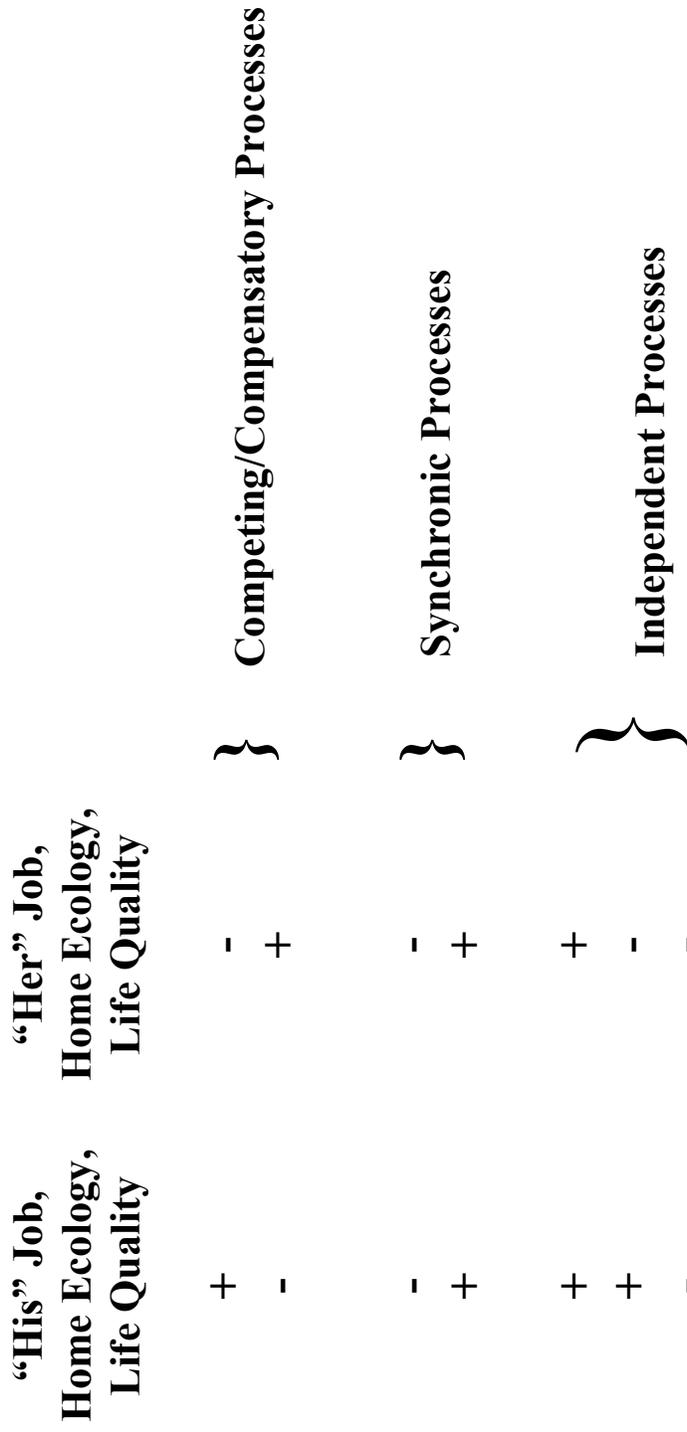


Table 1A. Dual-Earner Middle-Class Men's Job Environments

<i>His Job Ecologies (N)</i>	<i># of Hrs Worked</i>	<i>Job Demands</i>	<i>Schedule Control</i>	<i>Job Security</i>
Hi Control (286)	45.66	2.6702	4.4183	82.31
Routine (351)	<i>39.95</i>	<i>2.5674</i>	<i>3.0337</i>	87.75
Intensive (243)	54.67	3.3704	3.6490	89.78
Insecure (229)	48.83	2.9694	3.3137	<u>39.42</u>
Total (1109)	46.48	2.8529	3.5834	76.81

Table 1B. Dual-Earner Middle-Class Women's Job Environments

<i>Her Job Ecologies (N)</i>	<i># of Hrs Worked</i>	<i>Job Demands</i>	<i>Schedule Control</i>	<i>Job Security</i>
Intensive (255)	45.51	3.2288	3.9586	91.10
Low Hours (205)	<i>17.65</i>	2.5447	3.5111	84.40
Insecure (198)	43.20	3.0522	3.3719	38.52
Low Demands (183)	39.65	<i>2.3461</i>	3.3782	89.04
Routine (255)	38.40	3.1301	<u>2.2902</u>	93.06
Total (1096)	37.25	2.8956	3.2838	80.46

* highest value for each column is bolded and lowest value for each column is italic and underlined

Table 2. Dual-Earner Middle-Class Family Ecologies: Five Constellations

<i>Constellation (N)</i>	<i>Housework</i>		<i>Leisure time</i>		<i>Kid no.</i>	<i>Life Stages (%)</i>					<i>Care giving (%)</i>				
	Her hw	His hw	Her # min	His # min		No kid <40	Kids 0-6	Kids 6-12	Kids 12- 18	No kid >40	Empty nester	Neither care	Hus. care	Wife care	Both care
1 Parents of Grade-schoolers (212)	186.65	106.69	51.16	<i>61.01</i>	2.40						32.1		0		
2 Egalitarian, Child free (119)	<i>120.17</i>	144.25	102.18	134.50	<i>0.71</i>	100.0	0.8	0.6	1.2	100.0	1.1	9.5	16.5	14.4	17.0
3 Sandwich Couples (299)	180.52	103.95	64.81	81.24	2.35	26.6	32.1	38.6		38.6		83.5	85.6	83.0	
4 Parents of Preschoolers (180)	163.92	117.28	<i>40.54</i>	62.08	2.17	72.6					27.2				
5 Parents of Teens & Empty Nesters (206)	160.12	<i>98.34</i>	99.37	110.56	2.30			60.2		60.2	31.2	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total (1016)	167.65	110.47	69.05	85.81	2.13	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

* highest value for each column is bolded and lowest value for each column is italic and underlined

Table 3. Dual-Earner Couple Health/ Life Quality: Five Constellations

<i>Constellation (N)</i>	<i>Mastery scale</i>		<i>Perceived constraints</i>		<i>Personal growth</i>		<i>Negative affect</i>		<i>Health rating</i>		<i>Perceived Income adequacy</i>		<i>Satisfaction with family</i>	
	<i>her</i>	<i>his</i>	<i>her</i>	<i>his</i>	<i>her</i>	<i>his</i>	<i>her</i>	<i>his</i>	<i>her</i>	<i>his</i>	<i>her</i>	<i>his</i>	<i>her</i>	<i>his</i>
1 High Couple Health/Life Quality (198)	3.66	3.61	<u>1.54</u>	1.63	3.79	3.72	1.83	<u>1.84</u>	8.76	8.58	79.61	78.73	4.40	4.43
2 Husband Higher Health/Life Quality (206)	<u>2.92</u>	3.65	2.19	<u>1.47</u>	3.26	3.78	2.17	1.85	8.46	8.58	73.76	77.20	4.05	4.25
3 Wife Higher Health/Life Quality (225)	3.55	<u>3.02</u>	1.59	2.11	3.75	<u>3.15</u>	1.82	2.08	8.34	7.96	78.15	76.07	4.27	4.10
4 Low Couple Health/Life Quality (257)	3.08	3.05	2.23	2.16	3.33	3.22	2.34	2.26	<u>7.09</u>	<u>7.58</u>	<u>67.23</u>	<u>67.39</u>	<u>3.61</u>	<u>3.76</u>
5 "Good Enough" Couple Health/Life Quality (308)	2.98	3.07	2.03	2.09	<u>3.15</u>	3.19	<u>1.79</u>	1.87	8.66	8.49	77.20	74.36	4.29	4.29
Total (1194)	3.21	3.24	1.94	1.92	3.42	3.38	1.98	1.98	8.24	8.23	75.04	74.40	4.12	4.16

* highest value for each column is bolded and lowest value for each column is italic and underlined

Table 4. Odds Ratio of “Good” Couple Health/ Life Quality Predicted by Middle-Class Job Ecologies and Dual-Earner Family Ecologies

	<i>High Couple Quality of life</i>		<i>Husband Higher Quality of life</i>		<i>Wife Higher Quality of life</i>		<i>“Good Enough” Couple Quality of Life</i>	
	Exp(B)	95% CI	Exp(B)	95% CI	Exp(B)	95% CI	Exp(B)	95% CI
<i>Her job ecologies</i>								
Her Low Hours	.942	.477 1.862	1.071	.557 2.060	.819	.425 1.578	1.736†	.952 3.169
Her Insecure	.467*	.239 .913	.627	.333 1.180	.535*	.291 .983	.679	.374 1.232
Her Low Demands	.884	.439 1.782	.686	.334 1.411	.925	.481 1.776	1.754†	.951 3.233
Her Routine	.701	.389 1.263	.631	.352 1.131	.425**	.235 .768	.817	.474 1.408
Her Intensive								
<i>His job ecologies</i>								
His High Control	.889	.483 1.635	1.031	.574 1.850	1.055	.567 1.965	1.051	.599 1.842
His Routine	.690	.386 1.235	.550*	.307 .987	.923	.512 1.664	1.038	.616 1.752
His Insecure	.633	.330 1.212	.547†	.287 1.041	1.150	.617 2.145	.877	.492 1.563
His Intensive								
<i>Couple family ecologies</i>								
Parents of Grade-schoolers	.444*	.207 .949	.885	.384 2.038	.434*	.208 .906	.719	.354 1.458
Sandwich Couples	.578	.280 1.194	1.421	.641 3.151	.656	.328 1.312	.954	.482 1.891
Parents of Preschoolers	.835	.386 1.808	1.249	.525 2.975	.629	.291 1.362	1.047	.499 2.198
Parents of Teens & Empty Nesters	.414*	.190 .902	1.102	.480 2.530	.524†	.252 1.087	.833	.410 1.693
Egalitarian, Child free								

* reference group for multinomial logistic regression is low well-being

** significant predictors are bolded

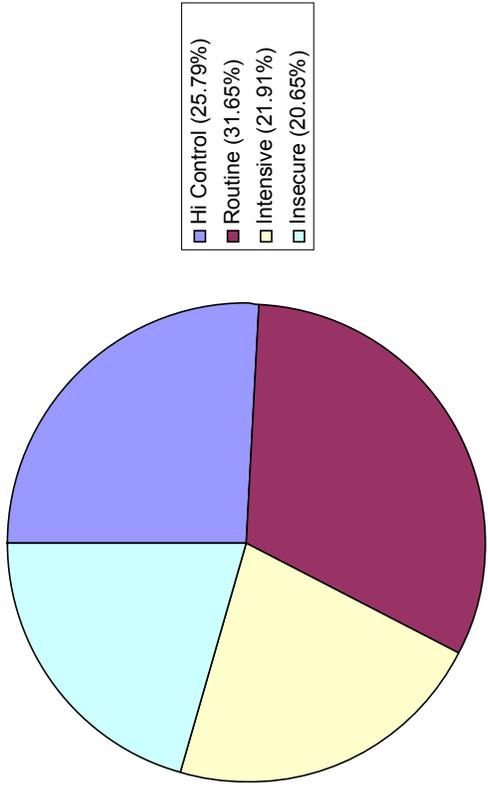
**Table 5. “Good” Couple Health/ Life Quality
Odds Ratio of His Job Ecology by Couple Family Ecologies**

	High Couple Quality of life		Husband Higher Quality of life		Wife Higher Quality of life		“Good Enough” Couple Quality of Life	
	Log-OR	Odds Ratio	Log-OR	Odds Ratio	Log-OR	Odds Ratio	Log-OR	Odds Ratio
<i>Parents of Grade-schoolers</i>								
His High Control	-.393	.675	1.636	5.133	1.082	2.852	.298	1.347
His Routine	2.891	18.014*	-.401	.669	1.267	3.551	.576	1.780
His Insecure	2.842	17.154*	2.410	11.131†	1.488	4.426	1.265	3.542
His Intensive (reference)								
<i>Sandwich Couples</i>								
His High Control	-.357	.700	2.430	11.354†	2.068	7.910†	.928	2.530
His Routine	1.340	3.818	-.036	.965	1.618	5.043	.769	2.157
His Insecure	1.432	4.188	1.104	3.016	2.080	8.002*	.634	1.885
His Intensive (reference)								
<i>Parents of Preschoolers</i>								
His High Control	.274	1.316	1.975	7.208	.973	2.646	.876	2.402
His Routine	.023	1.024	-.649	.522	-.302	.740	.076	1.079
His Insecure	.760	2.138	1.822	6.186	.626	1.871	-.804	.447
His Intensive (reference)								
<i>Parents of Teens & Empty Nesters</i>								
His High Control	-.071	.932	1.984	7.271	1.515	4.551	.709	2.032
His Routine	1.328	3.773	-.1293	.274	1.576	4.937	.167	1.182
His Insecure	1.120	3.064	.551	1.735	.879	2.409	-1.020	.361
His Intensive (reference)								
<i>Egalitarian, Child free</i>								
His High Control	.002	1.002	-.1904	.149	-1.111	.329	-.575	.562
His Routine	-1.630	.196†	-.207	.813	-1.031	.357	-.409	.664
His Insecure	-1.758	.172	-1.932	.145	-.979	.376	-.340	.711
His Intensive (reference)								

**Table 5. “Good” Couple Health/ Life Quality
Odds Ratio of His Job Ecology by Couple Family Ecologies**

	High Couple Quality of life		Husband Higher Quality of life		Wife Higher Quality of life		“Good Enough” Couple Quality of Life	
	Log-OR	Odds Ratio	Log-OR	Odds Ratio	Log-OR	Odds Ratio	Log-OR	Odds Ratio
<i>Parents of Grade-schoolers</i>								
His High Control								
His Routine	2.261	3.529*						
His Insecure	1.084	2.956*	0.478	1.613†				
His Intensive (reference)								
<i>Sandwich Couples</i>								
His High Control			0.526	1.692†	1.037	2.021†		
His Routine								
His Insecure					1.101	3.007*		
His Intensive (reference)								
<i>Parents of Preschoolers</i>								
His High Control								
His Routine								
His Insecure								
His Intensive (reference)								
<i>Parents of Teens & Empty Nesters</i>								
His High Control								
His Routine								
His Insecure								
His Intensive (reference)								
<i>Egalitarian, Child free</i>								
His High Control	.002	1.002	-1.904	.149	-1.111	.329	-.575	.562
His Routine	-1.630	.196†	-.207	.813	-1.031	.357	-.409	.664
His Insecure	-1.758	.172	-1.932	.145	-.979	.376	-.340	.711
His Intensive (reference)								

**Figure 2A. Dual-Earner Middle-Class Men's
Job Environments**



**Figure 2B. Dual-Earner Middle-Class Women's
Job Environments**

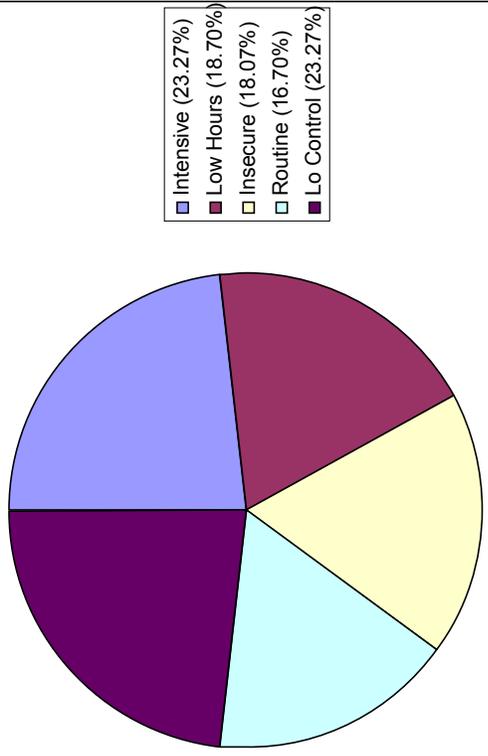


Figure 2C. Dual-Earner Family Ecologies

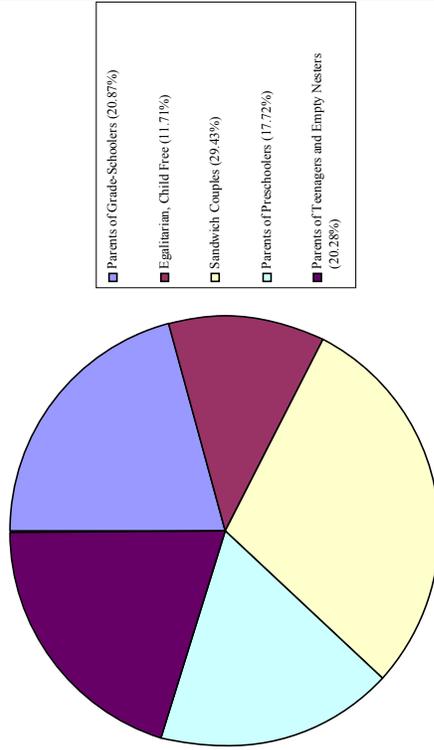
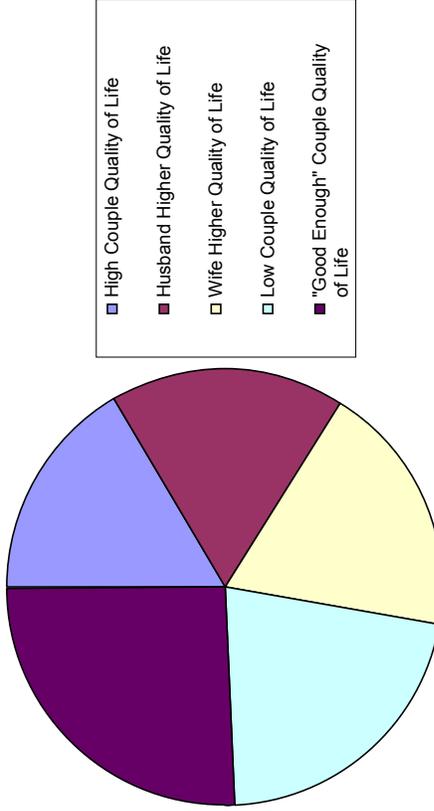


Figure 2D. Dual-Earner Couple Health/ Life Quality



APPENDIX A

Descriptive Statistics for Dual-Earner Husbands' Job Ecologies

	<i>N</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
# of Hours Worked	1214	5	100	46.45	10.444
Job Demands	1117	1.00	4.00	2.8530	.52677
Schedule Control	1170	1.00	5.00	3.5774	.81469
Job Security	1112	0	100	76.86	24.178
Valid N	1109				

Descriptive Statistics for Dual-Earner Wives' Job Ecologies

	<i>N</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
# of Hours Worked	1214	3	100	37.16	12.965
Job Demands	1103	1.00	4.00	2.8966	.55613
Schedule Control	1163	1.00	5.00	3.2916	.91174
Job Security	1099	0	100	80.42	24.513
Valid N	1096				

Descriptive Statistics for Dual-Earner Family Ecologies

	<i>N</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
Her total # of mins on chores-workday	1030	.00	720	167.71	103.27
His total # of mins on chores-workday	1026	.00	1200	110.40	82.70
Couple Life Stages	1214			3.64	
No kids at Home (respondent under age 40)	39			3.2%	
Launching (kids under 6 at home)	301			24.8%	
Early Establishment (kids 6-12 at home)	371			30.6%	
Late Establishment (kids 13-18 at home)	193			15.9%	
No kids at home (respondent age 40 and above)	104			8.6%	
Adult Kids (kids at home 19+)	63			5.2%	
Empty Nesters (kids no longer at home)	143			11.8%	
Total # of Children	1214	0	5	2.12	1.19
Wife Help Infirm Relatives	1123			25%	
Husband Help Infirm Relatives	1123			21%	
Her Total # of mins free-time-workday	1027	0	600	69.10	61.26
His Total # of mins free-time-workday	1029	0	900	85.22	72.06
Valid N	1016				

Descriptive Statistics for dual-earner couples' Quality of Life clusters

	<i>N</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
Her Mastery	1213	1.50	4.00	3.2135	.46332
His Mastery	1213	1.00	4.00	3.2456	.46198
Her Constraints	1211	1.00	3.75	1.9354	.47968
His Constraints	1212	1.00	3.50	1.9238	.47524
Her Personal Growth	1214	2.00	4.00	3.4246	.41906
His Personal Growth	1214	2.00	4.00	3.3792	.43292
Her Negative Affect	1214	1.00	3.80	1.9817	.50946
His Negative Affect	1214	1.00	4.20	1.99	.49249
Her Income Adequacy	1212	0	100	74.99	17.007
His Income Adequacy	1214	0	100	74.36	17.353
Her Health Rating	1214	0	10	8.25	1.576
His Health Rating	1213	0	10	8.23	1.397
Her Satisfaction with Family	1205	1.00	5.00	4.12	.59000
His Satisfaction with Family	1206	1.40	5.00	4.15	.60779
Valid N	1194				