

The Happy Husband?

Working Wives, Homemakers, and Life Satisfaction¹

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Abstract

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Competing theoretical perspectives lead to alternative hypotheses as to whether the husbands of homemakers or men with employed wives are happier. All things considered, multi-level models using ISSP data from 29 countries find that homemakers' husbands are modestly happier than husbands whose wives are full-time workers. This finding is robust to controls for the economic and family life variables which are hypothesized to mediate the relationship between wife's work status and husband's happiness. Cross-level interactions between country characteristics and wife's work status suggest that public child care may narrow this gap in husband's happiness.

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The historic rise in married women's labor force participation has had far-reaching implications for gender relations, family life, and equality at all levels of society. The significance of paid employment for women's lives has been extensively analyzed. From 19th Century liberal feminists to *The Feminist Mystique* of the mid 20th Century to contemporary conservatives and cultural feminists, a debate has raged as to whether work outside the home brings women greater satisfaction than full-time homemaking does. The implications for husbands of their wives' work outside the home have generated much less attention.

There are contradictory expectations as to how wives' employment affects husbands' happiness. One line of theorizing predicts that married women's labor force participation will lead to negative outcomes for men. Whether one argues for essentialist notions of gender, the rational economic gains to household specialization, or the painful loss of male privilege, the rise in women's work force involvement portends a cost to men and their subjective well-being. Presumably, negative outcomes of wives' employment are mediated by aspects of the relationship, such as the partners' marital quality, relative resources, or division of housework. Another line of thought, however, sees wives' employment--and the more egalitarian relationships it implies--as benefitting men. This argument rests, in part, on political and

economic changes, which place single-breadwinner couples at an economic disadvantage and subject them to greater risks than dual-earner partnerships. Furthermore, with new cultural models undermining hegemonic masculine ideals and expressive marriages challenging gender segregation, working wives no longer reflect poorly on men. Whether men whose wives work for pay are more or less happy than men whose wives are full-time homemakers remains an empirical question. According to trends for the past three decades, there is scant evidence that the happiness of American or European men has declined as women's employment has increased (Easterlin 2001; Stevenson and Wolfers 2009), but little research has specifically addressed how a husband's subjective well-being might relate to his wife's employment.

Using cross-national survey data for 29 countries, this paper considers how husbands' reports of happiness relate to their wives' work status. Are homemakers' husbands happier than men whose wives work for pay? Does the relationship between wife's work status and husband's happiness depend on such mediating variables as the division of household labor? Do some countries have unique characteristics that buffer the influence of wife's employment on husband's satisfaction? By bringing a multi-level and cross-national perspective to these questions, this paper makes an original contribution to the understanding of how men's subjective well-being relates to changes in women's economic roles. At the individual-level, a model linking husband's perceived well-being and wife's work status incorporates variables hypothesized to mediate this relationship. At the country-level, the paper tests several theoretical arguments about the macro-level factors that impinge on the relationship between wife's work status and her husband's happiness.

Background

Happiness, life satisfaction, and subjective well-being interest social scientists, because they constitute both a dimension of advantage for individuals and a broader quality-of-life indicator for societies. In practice, concepts, measures, and terminology are plagued with inconsistency. It is useful to differentiate two aspects of the overall appreciation of life (Veenhoven 2010). The first is life satisfaction as based on a relatively stable cognitive judgment about the fit between personal goals and their realization. Second is the subjective aspect of happiness, the relatively short-lived feeling states found to be associated with both enduring personality traits and immediate experience (Diener 2006; Haller and Hadler 2005). Given our interest in the wife's work status, we emphasize the cognitive component of well-being, which speaks to the husband's more stable assessment of his general life conditions (Ehrhardt, Saris, and Veenhoven 2000; Kohler, Behrman, and Skytthe 2005).

Whether a wife's employment enhances her husband's life satisfaction or detracts from it remains an empirical question. Arguments founded on beliefs about the essential natures of men and women or on the benefits of household gender specialization point to negative outcomes from the wife's paid work. So does theorizing which describes wife's employment as undermining male power and privilege. A newer line of thinking emphasizes the gains from gender convergence, including women's greater work force involvement. Given the restructuring of the economy and the dismantling of the welfare state, the wife's paycheck is a ticket to greater financial stability and a higher living standard for the whole family. With the decline of a hegemonic masculinity rooted in the provider role, men today may be more complacent about working wives than their grandfathers were.

Homemakers and Happy Husbands: Several theoretical traditions hold that both sexes are better off when the wife devotes herself to the home. Although 19th Century essentialist ideologies of separate spheres seem less compelling today, social conservatives still insist that happiness is to be found in traditional gender roles, which engage women in the home and men in the workplace. According to Popenoe (1996), biological sex differences uniquely suit women for child-rearing in the home. Being out of step with this imperative, women's career desires and their demands that husbands do more around the house are symptomatic of today's normative "confusion" over marital roles. Resentful wives and angry husbands, Popenoe argues, are the inevitable product of abandoning pragmatic gender conventions. Similarly, the father of structural-functionalism, Talcott Parsons (1949), discerned the logic in the division between men's instrumental roles and women's expressive ones. Married couples avoided unpleasant status competition and conflict if wives focused on the family or had casual jobs, not demanding careers.

According to economist Gary Becker (1981:21), women have a comparative advantage in the household, because they have a greater "biological commitment" than men to the care of children. From neo-classical economics, mutual benefit derives from the heightened productivity made possible by household gender specialization. Even without a comparative advantage, each partner maximizes output and household well-being when learning-by-doing is concentrated in just one realm. Such pragmatic, gender-neutral ideologies are sometimes invoked by husbands and wives in accounting for their own arrangements (Pyke 1996).

Other arguments focus on the costs to men of wives' employment. Historically, the provider role has been central to cultural understandings of masculinity (Griswold 1993).

Assuring material welfare and maternal care of children is part of the “package deal” for American fathers (Townsend 2002). Wives’ employment, particularly their superior career attainment, threatens the provider role, demoralizes their husband, and even undermines his health (Springer 2010). In household bargaining, the wife’s paycheck translates to greater say in decision-making, thus diminishing her husband’s marital power (Blood and Wolf 1960; Treas 1993). Beyond the household, the institutional presumption that husbands will be the main breadwinner means that men who do not conform pay a price in awkward social relationships and lower earnings (Nock 1998). Indeed, Wilcox (2004) describes the “soft patriarchy” ideology of conservative Protestants as a salve for men whose personal circumstances do not permit their wives to stay home full-time.

Men’s subjective well-being may also suffer from the time-binds which occur because employed women are less available to meet household needs (van der Lippe and Peters 2007). As women’s labor force participation grew, their time devoted to housework declined while men’s increased (Gershuny 2000; Sayer 2005). Besides greater demands to help out around the house, men may experience substantial deterioration in the quantity and quality of the domestic services that they receive from wives. Fatigue and emotional stress from the workplace may spill over to the home (Stevens, Minnotte, Mannon, and Kiger 2007). Dual-earner couples report more negative spillover than single-earner couples (Benin and Neinstedt 1985). Being linked to lower marital satisfaction (Allen, Herst, Bruck, and Sutton 2000), time binds and spillovers likely mediate the relation of work and well-being.

Working Wives and Happy Husbands: Despite the dreary speculation, husbands of working women have advantages that may offset or even outweigh any downside. Household income, which is positively associated with subjective well-being (Diener and Biswas-Diener 2002; Ball and Chernova 2008), will be higher when the wife works for pay. Shared breadwinning liberates men from the pressure of being the sole provider. Given the partitioned skill sets in breadwinner-homemaker marriages, highly specialized partners are poorly prepared to substitute or augment one another's efforts in the labor force or at home (Treas 2008). Couples with flexible gender orientations seem more successful at weathering contingencies, including a spouse's unemployment, disability, or career change (Gerson 2010). The wife's job has become more important to family well-being over time, if only because wives are often better educated than their husbands, increasingly likely to have incomes surpassing their partners', and, in the recent recession, at lower risk of unemployment (Fry and Cohen 2010).

Another line of thinking asks whether wives' employment is still a big deal. The scientific reasoning that equated masculinity with breadwinning has been under assault since the 1950s (Ehrenreich 1983). With the rise in women's labor force participation, dual-earner couples are commonplace and widely accepted. Although women's opinions have changed more rapidly than men's, gender attitudes have moved decisively away from traditional views (Bolzendahl and Myers 2004; Scott, Alwin, and Braun 1996). Across industrialized countries, most respondents endorse a married woman working--at least if she has no pre-school children (Treas and Widmer 2000). Better-educated American women are more likely to marry than those with less schooling, which suggests that men now expect their wives to work most of

their lives (Sweeney 2002). Young men may privilege their own jobs, but they are reconciled to the idea of having wives who work for pay (Gerson 2010). Unless her accomplishments greatly outstrip his own or they embrace a very unconventional lifestyle (e.g., a stay-at-home dad), the wife's employment poses little threat to her husband's masculinity and subjective well-being (Nock 1998). In fact, men who embrace more egalitarian gender attitudes report increases in the quality of their marriage (Amato and Booth 1997).

Even if men remain ambivalent about wives' employment, it is not clear that work-family conflicts matter much for men's well-being. Because wives' earnings often purchase domestic services (de Ruijter, Treas, and Cohen 2005), husbands are protected against deteriorating housekeeping standards or extraordinary household demands on their time. Sometimes, wives who earn more than their husbands take on extra housework to protect them from additional discomfort (Bittman, England, Sayer, Folbre, and Matheson 2003). If the wives' employment does introduce stress into the household, their husbands' emotional well-being may be less sensitive than their own to the quality of marital and family life (Gove, Hughes, and Style 1983; Nock 2001; Reid 2004). Given men's traditional investment in breadwinning, employment may be relatively more important to their well-being than mediating family factors.

Prior Research: Results from studies of wife's work status and husband's happiness are mixed. Some report no difference between homemakers' husbands and other married men (Campbell 1981), including a panel study showing that neither wife's full-time nor part-time work has an impact on life satisfaction for Australian men working full-time (Booth and van Ours 2009).

Other studies point to homemakers' husbands as happier than men married to working women (Crompton and Lyonette 2005). When wives stay at home, husbands have reported greater life satisfaction (Burke and Weir 1976), as well as less depression and higher self-esteem (Kessler and McRae 1982). The happiness of homemakers' husbands is consistent with recent cross-national studies, which find greater happiness for the homemakers themselves (Haller and Hadler 2005; Treas, van der Lippe and Tai in press). In 30 European countries, however, respondents in single-earner couples were less happy than their dual-earner counterparts (Soons and Kalmijn 2009).

The general arguments point to factors mediating the relation between wife's work status and husband's subjective well-being. Decomposing 1980-2000 changes in the U.S., increases in wife's full-time, but not part-time, employment depressed marital happiness (Amato, Johnson, Booth and Rogers 2003). The difference between full-time and part-time work suggests that time-binds mediate any effects of wife's work status on husband's well-being. On the other hand, the negative influence of full-time work is offset by higher family income (Amato, Johnson, Booth and Rogers 2003). The wife's own income is sometimes negatively associated with husband's well-being (Kessler and McRae 1982), but longitudinal evidence shows that it is her relative, not absolute, income that matters (Rogers and DeBoer 2001). Men, especially if highly paid, report deteriorating marital quality when wives' relative incomes increase (Brennan, Barnett, and Gareis 2001). Men dissatisfied with the division of housework also report lower marital satisfaction (Stevens, Kiger, and Riley 2001). Given male breadwinning norms, men's employment situation may also mediate the relationship with their

wife's employment. Cross-national analyses show that job insecurity takes a toll on life satisfaction, particularly in Southern and Eastern Europe (Drobnic, Beham, and Prag 2010). Tellingly, the Australian men unaffected by their wives' employment were husbands working full-time (Booth and van Ours 2009).

Cross-national Contexts

Life satisfaction varies from country to country (Christoph and Noll 2003; Daly and Rose 2007). The association between wife's work status and husband's happiness may depend on context. In Germany, single-earner couples are happier than two-earner couples (Stutzer 2006), likely reflecting the strong cultural support for the breadwinner-homemaker arrangement (Pfau-Effinger 2010). Because life satisfaction is negatively associated across countries with work-family conflict and perceived time pressure (Bohnke 2005), a wife's work status may matter less where family-friendly policies help married women to reconcile work and family. In societies with readily available public child care, the advantages from a full-time homemaker would be small. Similarly, wives' work status may be of less consequence for men's life satisfaction in wealthier countries. There, happiness is less dependent on one's own income (Bohnke 2005; Easterlin 1973), and welfare programs protect against labor market inequality (Clarke, Georgellis, Lucas, and Diener 2004). With generous social insurance schemes, the wife's homemaking or paid work will reflect the couples' preferences, rather than mere economic necessity. Countries where men confront high job insecurity, however, may influence life satisfaction disparities based on wife's work status, if only because her employment offers greater economic stability to the family.

Hypotheses: Competing theoretical arguments lead to alternative hypotheses on wives' employment and husband's subjective well-being. Essentialism and efficiency considerations, as well as the primacy of the masculine provider role, imply that *husbands of homemakers will be happier than husbands of working wives*. Other reasoning holds that *husbands of working wives will be happier than homemakers' husbands*. This hypothesis emphasizes not only the greater economic security from a second paycheck, but also contemporary public opinion, which is generally approving of women's employment and converging gender roles.

If there is an effect of wives' work status on husbands' subjective well-being, it is likely mediated by other micro-level variables. If wives' employment causes demoralizing time-binds for their husbands, we might expect that *husbands' household task-sharing (net of paid work hours) will relate negatively to their happiness*. Speaking to marital quality, *evaluations of housework unfairness, housework conflicts, and family stress will be negatively associated with husband's happiness*. If the masculine provider role is threatened, *husbands whose wives make more money than they do will be less happy than other husbands*. Alternatively, if a higher living standard and greater economic security is important, *family income will be positively associated with the husband's happiness*. If household demands spill over to work, *the husbands' job stress will be negatively associated with his happiness*.

Despite country-to-country consistency in the micro-level determinants of happiness, institutional characteristics are important, particularly in the countries we consider where most people have basic needs met (Graham 2009). If wife's work status affects husband's subjective well-being, the characteristics of countries may moderate this influence. Thus, our interest lies

not in the main effects of country-level variables, but rather in how they interact with wife's work status to influence husband's life satisfaction. We anticipate that *the effect of wife's work status on husband's happiness will be smaller in wealthier societies and in those with higher levels of social spending*. With basic needs met, economic deprivation need not compel wife's employment; her work status will more closely match the couples' preferences, thus contributing to happiness. We expect, however, that *the work status differences in husband's happiness will be larger in countries with high male unemployment*, assuming the benefits of wives' employment in the face of male job insecurity compensate for any disadvantages. We also hypothesize that *the availability of public childcare will minimize the happiness disparities based on wife's work status*, because formal childcare lowers the value of maternal care provided by the homemaker. *High female labor force participation rates will be positively associated with husband's happiness*, because the male provider role will be less salient in societies with many dual-earner couples.

Control Variables: Correlates of life satisfaction have been identified by previous research. Happiness relates positively to both age and education (Argyle 1999; Bohnke 2005), as well as gender egalitarian attitudes (Kaufman and Taniguchi 2006). Religiosity has a positive association with subjective well-being (Bohnke 2005; Robinson and Martin 2008; Snoepe 2008). Although children may be less consequential for men's than women's well-being (Kohler, Behrman, and Skytthe 2005), they have complex effects, leading to lower well-being in poorer European countries but higher in wealthier ones (Bohnke 2005). Although men's work hours

are not linked to psychological distress (Boye 2010), controls for work hours are indicated, because unemployment portends low satisfaction (Bohnke 2005).

Data and Methods

To evaluate the association of wives' employment and husbands' happiness, we employ data from the 2002 Family and Gender module of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP). The data are representative of 29 populations: Australia, Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Chile, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany (East and West, separate), Great Britain, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Latvia, Mexico, New Zealand, North Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the US.

Analysis focuses on married male respondents, ages 18-65. Given high levels of missing data, country-specific means were imputed for family income and gender attitudes; non-significant flags (not included in models shown) indicate imputation does not distort findings. Respondents answering "don't know," refusing to respond, or giving no answer for other variables are excluded. The effective total sample size (unweighted) is 6,172. Country samples range from 86 in East Germany to 340 in Spain.

The dependent variable, happiness, comes from the following question: "If you were to consider your life in general, how happy or unhappy would you say you are, on the whole?" The seven, reverse-coded response categories range from "completely unhappy" (1) to "completely happy" (7). Because the item asks for a global assessment, the variable gauges the cognitive component of well-being as opposed to its more fleeting emotional aspect. Because it emphasizes respondents' assessment of general life conditions rather than emotions at the

time of the survey (Lucas, Diener, and Suh 1996), the variable is suitable to investigate the link between wife's work status and husband's well-being (Ehrhardt, Saris and Veenhoven 2000; Kohler, Behrman and Skytthe 2005). Addressing universal emotions and gratification of basic needs, this concept of well-being lends itself to cross-national research (Veenhoven 2010).

Wife's work status, the main independent variable, is measured with four dummy variables: full-time worker (the reference category), part-time worker, homemaker (i.e., homemaker, helping family members, retired), and others not in the labor force (i.e., student, unemployed, disabled, others). Five mediating variables include family income, relative income, and four measures tapping the couple relationship and home environment. Reported for different categories in different countries, *family income* data are harmonized into six categories that follow the distribution for Portugal, which had the fewest categories (i.e., 6). The category distribution is approximately normal, so family income is treated as interval data with values from 1 to 6. The partners' *relative income* is measured by three dummy variables: wife's income higher, both about the same, and husband's higher (the omitted reference). To measure household *task-sharing*, the extent of the husband's participation in each task was averaged over five female-typed chores—cleaning, laundry, grocery shopping, meal preparation, and caring for sick family members (Cronbach's alpha=.76). Recoded responses range from one (always the woman) to five (always the man). The small numbers stating "done by a third person" are coded as "about equal" (Batalova and Cohen 2002). A five-point scale gauges the husband's evaluation of the *fairness* of the household division of labor, ranging from "more than my fair share" (1) to "less than my fair share" (5). An item on *marital conflict* considers

how often husbands and their wives disagree on sharing housework; responses range from never (1) to several times a week (5). *Family stress* is based on Likert responses to the statement, “My life at home is rarely stressful,” which range from “strongly agree” (1) to “strongly disagree” (5). A parallel item measures *job stress*.

The six control variables are husband’s age, age-squared, number of minor children in the household, and education (six-point scale of educational qualifications, ranging from no formal qualifications (0) to university degree completed (5)). Frequency of attendance at religious services ranges from never (0) to at least once a week (4). To scale liberal gender ideology (Cronbach’s alpha = .73), we factor analyze disagreement with five Likert items: 1) A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works; 2) Family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job; 3) A job is all right, but what most women really want is a home and children; 4) Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay; 5) A man’s job is to earn money; a woman’s job is look after the home and family.

Country-level variables are expected to contribute to husband’s well-being and to interact with work status. Based on the data from the World Bank’s World Development Indicators (World Bank 2011), the International Monetary Fund’s Government Finance Statistics Yearbooks (IMF 2004, 2005, 2006), and the International Labor Organization (2009, 2010), we evaluate 2002 GDP per capita (logged and measured with purchasing power parity), social protection welfare expenditures as a percent of GDP (includes spending on health but not housing and education; Mexico data from 2000, New Zealand from 2004), percent of the male

labor force unemployed, and proportion of women, 25-54, in the labor force. A family-friendly policy variable is the percentage of children enrolled in public childcare (Fuwa and Cohen 2007).

Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) tests for the association of happiness with individual-level and country-level variables while taking account of the clustering of respondents within the 29 countries.

The individual-level model is:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}X_{1ij} + \beta_{2j}X_{2ij} + \beta_{3j}X_{3ij} + \beta_{kj}X_{kij} + R_{ij}$$

where Y_{ij} is the level of happiness reported by husband i in country j . β_{0j} is the individual-level intercept. β_{1j} , β_{2j} , and β_{3j} are the coefficients of dummy-coded wife's work status categories: homemakers, part-time workers, and others not in the labor force (full-time workers reference category). $\beta_{kj}X_{kij}$ are other individual-level predictors, including control variables (husband's age and age-squared, highest degree, the numbers of children in household, the frequency of attendance at religious services, gender attitude liberalism) as well as the mediating variables (family income, relative income, perceived fairness of the division of housework, husband's household task-sharing, disagreements over housework, family stress, and work stress). The error term, R_{ij} , is assumed to be normally distributed with mean zero and variance σ^2 .

An example of the random-intercept, country-level model is:

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}Male\ Unemployment\ Rate_j + U_{0j}$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11}Male\ Unemployment\ Rate_j$$

$$\beta_{2j} = \gamma_{20} + \gamma_{21} \text{Male Unemployment Rate}_j$$

$$\beta_{3j} = \gamma_{30} + \gamma_{31} \text{Male Unemployment Rate}_j$$

$$\beta_{kj} = \gamma_k$$

where γ_{00} is the country-level intercept, and γ_{01} represents the effect of male unemployment rate (or another country-level variable) on the model intercept. The country-level intercepts for the slopes of the three dummy-coded work status categories are γ_{10} , γ_{20} , and γ_{30} . The effects of male unemployment rate on β_{1j} , β_{2j} , and β_{3j} are γ_{11} , γ_{21} , and γ_{31} . The random effect at the country level is U_{0j} . Except for dummy variables, all variables are centered at their grand means. An intercept may be interpreted as the happiness level reported by a husband whose income is higher than his full-time employed wife's, who has average characteristics for the sample and resides in a country with average characteristics.

We also estimated two variants of random slope models, which are appropriate if country-specific associations for work status and happiness differ. With models for random slopes with random intercepts, the variance component of the slope of wife's work status was not statistically significant, arguing against country-to-country differences in work status and happiness associations. Random slope models with fixed intercepts did show statistically significant variance components, but the likelihood ratio test found no significant difference between random intercept and random intercept with random slope models. We present random intercept models constraining the residual variance for wife's work status slopes to zero, which yielded similar substantive results but better fit than the other two models.

Findings: Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics for the individual-level and country-level variables appear in Table 1. On average, husbands fall just short of being “very happy” (5.48 out of 7 points). Fully 43% of husbands are married to women with full-time jobs, 19% to part-time workers, 29% to homemakers, and 8% to women otherwise not in the labor force. Husbands’ mean age is about 46 with one child younger than 18 in the home. Mean work hours show most employed full-time. Three-fourths report higher incomes than their wives. On average, they say that the wife usually does household tasks, acknowledge that they do less than their fair share, and report housework conflicts several times a month. There is considerable variation in evaluations of stress with family life registering lower levels than the job.

Individual-level Findings

In the baseline Model 1 in Table 2, the husbands of women employed full-time are not significantly happier than men whose wives are part-time workers, homemakers, or otherwise

--Table 2 About Here--

not in the labor force. Model 2 adds the control variables. Although there is no significant difference between the full-time and part-time groups, homemakers’ husbands enjoy a statistically significant ($p < .01$) advantage over men wed to full-time working women. The standardized mean difference between husbands of full-time workers and homemakers (.09) is admittedly quite small. Nonetheless, for the 27 countries with wife’s work hours data, a

scatterplot of husband's happiness by wife's weekly work hours shows a significant and negative correlation ($-.43, p < .05$) (Figure 1).

When controls are added one by one to identify variables suppressing the differences by wife's work status (results not shown), husband's age, education, work hours, and gender ideology all result in a statistically significant coefficient for homemakers' husbands. With homemakers as the omitted reference group (results not shown), husbands with all other wife's work statuses are significantly less happy than husbands of homemakers. As for the control variables, happiness declines with age, bottoming out at older ages. Although children are not statistically significant, other variables—educational attainment, work hours, liberal gender ideology, and frequency of attendance at religious services—are all linked to reports of greater happiness. Because homemakers' husbands have a small advantage in happiness, the next step is to consider whether mediating mechanisms link husband's satisfaction with wife's employment or homemaking.

In Model 3, most mediating variables prove to be statistically significant, but they do nothing to diminish the happiness advantage of homemakers' husbands vis a vis the husbands of full-time working wives. In analyses not shown, homemakers are similarly happier than husbands of part-time workers and others not in the labor force. As anticipated, higher family income is positively associated with husband's happiness. A husband whose wife makes more money than he does, however, is linked predictably to lower well-being. Two indicators of marital quality, family stress and conflict over housework, are also negatively associated with happiness. Husbands who report on-the-job stress experience lower levels of happiness. Even

when standardized, however, any influence of job stress is notably smaller than that for family stress. The husband's housework participation and his evaluation of the fairness of this division of labor is not statistically significant at the .05 level. In short, various aspects of family and economic life predict husbands' subjective well-being, but they do not account for the modest happiness bonus reported by men married to homemakers. Recall that homemakers' husbands were advantaged compared to men whose wives were full-time workers, part-time workers, and otherwise not in the labor force. These three groups presumably differed in the extent to which they faced time-binds from employment. Thus, fewer time-binds seem to be an insufficient explanation for the apparent benefits that the homemakers' husbands register.

The differences in husbands' happiness by wife's work status are not only statistically significant but also robust to alternative specifications. Ordered logit with robust clusters—a model which does not assume a normally distributed, interval level, dependent variable—yielded similar results. That is, the husbands of homemakers, but not part-time workers and others, were significantly happier than husbands of women employed full-time. We also estimated country-specific regressions. Small country samples work against finding statistically significant results, but husband's happiness showed the expected positive association with wife's work status in 21 of 29 countries. In four countries (Cyprus, France, Poland, Sweden), the relationship was statistically significant at the .05 level. In no country was there a significant, negative association. The happiness advantage for the homemaker's husband is small, but it is robust.

Country-level Findings

Compared to men whose wives hold full-time jobs, the homemakers' husbands enjoy a slight advantage in happiness--even when possibly mediating variables are taken into account. According to the random-intercept models in Table 2, the variance component of the between-country intercept differs significantly ($p < .001$) from zero. Thus, there are significant country differences in husbands' overall happiness. It remains to be seen whether country characteristics moderate or exacerbate the gap in happiness between men. Multi-level models, which include all macro-level control and mediating variables, evaluate whether country-level mechanisms alter the association between wife's work status and husband's happiness. Although the relation of country-level variables with happiness is interesting, our concern is whether macro-level variables interact with the wife's work status to influence the gap in happiness between the husbands of homemakers and working wives. For example, while negatively impacting husband's happiness, higher male unemployment rates might also narrow the group differences in husband's happiness if a second income is more welcome in the face of employment insecurity.

Multi-level HLM models in Table 3 display the main effect of a given macro-level characteristic and its cross-level interactions with the wife's work status categories, controlling for individual-level mediating and control variables. Macro-level variables are included

--Table 3 About Here--

in five separate analyses. Because these variables are highly associated (female labor force participation and social spending correlate .75), each model considers only one country-level variable and its interactions. In terms of main effects, men are happier in countries with higher

per capita GDP ($p < .01$). Male unemployment and female labor force participation are associated with significantly ($p < .001$) lower happiness. As for the public policy indicators, neither social spending nor child care is statistically significant at the .05 level. In a country with at least 29% of children, ages 0-6, enrolled in public child care, homemakers' husbands are no happier than husbands of full-time workers $[(-.044) * .29 + .08 - .238 * .29 = .00]$.

Considering cross-level interactions, only one variable, percent of children in public child care, is predictably associated with a narrower happiness gap for homemakers' husbands versus full-time workers' husbands ($p < .05$). Per capita GDP, male unemployment, social spending, and family labor force participation register no significant interactions for the well-being disparity between men wed to homemakers and full-time workers. As we did not find happiness differences between men married to full-time and part-time workers, it is not surprising that none of the interactions are significant for part-time workers. For the husbands whose wives are otherwise not in the labor force versus full-time employed, public child care enrollments are marginally significant ($p < .10$). As suggested, public childcare may minimize husbands' happiness disparities by reducing the value of having a wife who provides maternal care. Higher female labor force participation is linked ($p < .05$) to a narrower happiness gap between husbands of homemakers and others not in the labor force.

Conclusion

The analysis of 29 countries demonstrates the happiness advantage for homemakers' husbands compared to other married men. While small, this difference is statistically significant and robust. The greater relative well-being of the homemaker's husband argues against the notion

that societal changes have altered the emotional landscape for married men. The economic benefits to the wife's job have increased and public opinion has become more supportive of dual-earner couples; so far, these factors seem insufficient to overcome any male demoralization associated with having a working wife. Higher family income does contribute to men's greater well-being, but men whose wives have higher incomes than they do have lower life satisfaction, even controlling for egalitarian values. Finding relative income effects suggests that masculine provider norms are alive and well. Gender specialization may still give an edge in happiness to the husband with a homemaking wife: Countries with more public child care have narrower differences in well-being between men whose wives keep house and those whose wives work full-time, perhaps because they lower the advantage of maternal care.

We anticipated that the wife's work status would impact the husband's well-being by way of its influence on family life. Family stress and couple conflict do take a toll on husband's happiness. Indeed, family stress is a larger impediment to men's happiness than the stress of their job. None of the potentially mediating variables, however, accounts for the differences in men's happiness by wife's work status. In contrast to results for wives' well-being (Treas, van der Lippe, and Tai In press), the household division of labor and evaluations of its fairness do not figure in husbands' happiness. Nor do controls for men's work hours, a key predictor of time-bind dilemmas, narrow the gap in well-being based on wife's work status. Further discounting time binds as a driver of men's dissatisfaction, there are no significant differences between men married to full-time workers, part-time workers, or women otherwise not in labor force—despite the very different constraints on these women's household time. Men's

subjective well-being may be indifferent to issues of “women’s work” around the house, or they may be insulated from disheartening domestic burdens arising from wife’s employment. Wives may outsource the most unpleasant chores (de Ruijter, Treas and Cohen 2005) or settle for only token male participation in stereotypically female tasks (Gager 1988).

The multi-level analyses of country characteristics determined that higher GDP is linked with higher levels of happiness while higher social spending and public child care enrollments are associated with lower levels. The macro-level context matters, although not particularly for the importance of wife’s work status for husband’s happiness. As cross-level interactions demonstrate, only public child care reduces the happiness advantage for men whose wives keep house versus those whose wives work full-time. This finding resonates with the notion that alternatives to maternal care will reduce the benefits associated with having a wife who stays home. At least as compared to results reported for married women with ISSP data (Treas, van der Lippe, and Tai in press), married men show that any link between their happiness and their wives’ work status is not particularly responsive to the broader societal context.

Different data, different countries, or different measures might yield different results, as research on income and happiness has demonstrated (Graham, Chattopadhyay, and Picon 2010). Although there are other country-level characteristics of societal context and public policies which might be explored, we have considered a set of macro-level variables addressing an array of economic and public policy considerations. Furthermore, our results are relatively compatible with those from recent cross-national studies of life satisfaction and women’s work

status, studies relying on different data, countries and measures (Haller and Hadler 2005; Michon 2007; Soons and Kalmijn 2009; Treas, van der Lippe, and Tai in press).

We cannot rule out the possibility that the differences in husbands' life satisfaction result from selection processes. If, as Nock (1998) suggests, the decline in gender specialization minimizes commitment to the marriage, men with working wives will be subject to stronger forces of selection out of marriage. Further, selection may shuffle wives into different work statuses. A woman wed to a chronically dissatisfied spouse may want or need a full-time job outside the home. According to U.S. panel data, married women who shift to full-time jobs do report less marital satisfaction than other wives (Schoen, Rogers, and Amato 2006). Because we control for a number of the husband's characteristics (work hours, religiosity, housework contributions, education), it seems unlikely that a problematic husband's inadequacies lead his wife to full-time work. Similarly, we do not believe that husbands of full-time workers are comparatively unhappy because they are married to unhappy women. Unfortunately, the design of the ISSP does not include both partners' reports so we cannot ascertain wives' level of happiness. Although women who work full-time are not as happy as homemakers, the differences are modest (Treas, van der Lippe, and Tai in press). Furthermore, controls for the husband's reports (e.g., on family life stress or disagreements on housework) offer some check on the wife's well-being. Our finding that homemakers' husbands are happier than other married men calls for future efforts to understand how wives' work status relates to husband's well-being.

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Figure 1: Husband's Happiness by Wife's Work Hours

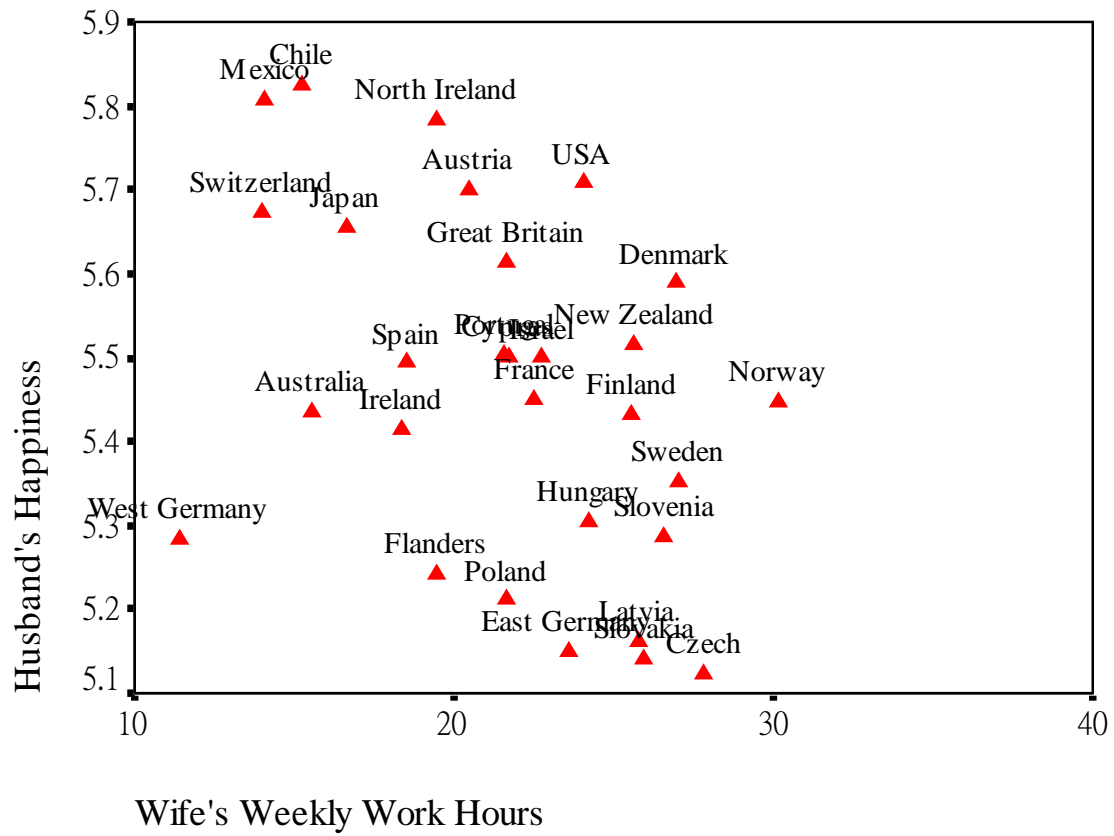


Table 1: Descriptive Statistics: Married Men, 18-65 in 29 Countries, 2002

Variable	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
<i>Individual-level</i>				
General Life Happiness	5.48	.88	1	7
Wife's Work Status				
Homemakers	.29	.46	0	1
Part Time	.19	.39	0	1
Others Not in Labor Force	.08	.27	0	1
Full Time	.43	.50	0	1
Family Income	3.67	1.33	1	6
Relative Income				
Wife's Income Higher	.11	.32	0	1
Same Income	.15	.35	0	1
Husband's Income Higher	.74	.44	0	1
Work Stress	3.07	1.36	1	5
Housework Fairness	3.51	.90	1	5
Task Sharing	2.23	.67	1	5
Family Stress	2.55	1.11	1	5
Housework Conflict	2.17	1.16	1	5
Respondent's Age	45.80	10.82	18	65
Number of Children	1.01	1.18	0	12
Respondent's Highest Degree	2.91	1.42	0	5
Respondent's Weekly Work Hours	36.86	18.84	0	60
Liberal Gender Ideology	.01	.95	-2.33	2.36
Religious Services Attendance	1.61	1.41	0	4
<i>Country-level</i>				
Logged GDP Per Capita	9.65	.74	8.26	10.56
Men's Total Unemployment Rate	7.04	3.97	2.50	19.10
Social Protection as a Percentage of GDP	21.20	6.42	4.24	30.81
Public Child Care	.41	.28	.00	.96
Female Labor Force Participation	75.16	10.30	46.54	91.59

**Table 2: Random-intercept Models of General Life Happiness:
Married Men, 18-65, in 29 Countries, 2002**

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Intercept	5.460	***	5.446	***	5.456	***
Wife's Work Status						
Homemaker	.047		.086	**	.096	**
Part Time	-.033		-.025		-.009	
Others Not in Labor Force	-.049		-.040		-.021	
Full Time (ref)						
<i>Mediating Variable</i>						
Family Income					.067	***
Relative Income						
Wife's Income Higher					-.124	**
Same Income					-.004	
Husband's Income Higher (ref)						
Work Stress					-.023	*
Housework Fairness					.024	
Task Sharing					.028	
Family Stress					-.110	***
Housework Conflict					-.100	***
<i>Control Variable</i>						
Respondent's Age			-.059	***	-.061	***
Age Squared			.001	***	.001	***
Number of Children			-.001		.011	
Respondent's Highest Degree			.018	*	-.005	
Respondent's Weekly Work Hours			.003	***	.002	*
Liberal Gender Ideology			.032	*	.024	
Religious Services Attendance			.047	***	.053	***
<i>Variance Components</i>						
Between-country Intercept Variance	.036	***	.029	***	.025	***
Within-country Variance	.739		.722		.683	

Significance Levels (two-tailed): * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 3: Cross-level Interaction Models of General Happiness: Married Men, 18-65, in 29 Countries, 2002

Variable	Logged GDP		Men's Unemployment rate		Social Spending		Public Child Care		Female Labor Force	
	Per Capita		rate		% in GDP		Child Care		Force	
Intercept	5.457	***	5.458	***	5.456	***	5.456	***	5.457	***
Main Effect	.123	**	-.029	***	-.008		-.044		-.007	*
Interaction Effect										
Wife's Work Status										
Homemaker										
Intercept	.095	**	.096	**	.090	**	.080	*	.089	**
Cross-level Interaction	-.043		.005		-.002		-.238	*	-.001	
Part-time										
Intercept	.005		3.05E-04		-.009		-.009		-.006	
Cross-level Interaction	-.093		.017		.003		-.041		.003	
Others Not in Labor Force										
Intercept	-.030		-.018		-.004		-.010		-.010	
Cross-level Interaction	-.094		-1.48E-04		-.011		-.277	+	-.010	*
Variance Components										
Between-country Intercept Variance	.019	***	.014	***	.021	***	.023	***	.019	***
Within-country Variance	.683		.683		.683		.682		.683	

Note 1: Adjusted for individual-level variables (age, highest degree, number of children in household, wife's work status, respondent's work hours, family income, gender ideology, religious services attendance, housework fairness, husband's task-sharing, family stress, housework conflict, work stress, and relative income)

Note 2: Significance Levels (two-tailed): + $p < .1$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$