Mexican-origin husbands' work contexts and spouses' personal well-being and marital quality

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Abstract:

Relative to other men, Latino immigrant men are disproportionately likely to experience challenging working conditions, including too many or too few hours, discrimination, and job (in)security. Previous research suggests that work contexts (particularly husbands') may affect interactions between family members, which in turn, spill over into family functioning. The present study examined the patterning of 118 Mexican husbands' self-reported workplace characteristics (i.e., job security, workplace discrimination, and work hours) and links with husbands' and wives' marital warmth and negativity. First, using a 2-step cluster analysis, we identified 3 work context groups: (1) Moderately Secure, Overtime, Minimally Discriminatory Workplaces, (2) Highly Secure, Full-Time, Moderately Discriminatory Workplaces, and (3) Minimally Secure, Full-Time, Highly Discriminatory Workplaces. Second, using mixed-model ANCOVAs, we found (a) a main effect for work context on marital warmth, indicating that husbands in Group 2 reported more marital warmth than husbands in Group 3, and (b) a spouse-by-group interaction showing that whereas Group 2 husbands expressed more warmth relative to their wives, Group 3 husbands expressed less warmth relative to their wives. No significant effects were found for spouses' marital negativity. Taken together, the same job opportunities that motivate low-wage Mexican-origin workers to migrate to the United States may also strain their close relationships. Researchers and practitioners should address links between work contexts and family well-being in other Latina/o samples and explore in greater depth how work characteristics that would otherwise serve to buffer and protect family functioning may have hidden costs for couple and family functioning.

Keywords: discrimination | racism | work contexts | marital quality | Mexican-origin couples

Article:

Employment is frequently cited as a key reason Mexican families migrate to the United States; however, upon arrival, many are likely to experience poor daily working conditions, such as long hours, workplace discrimination, and a lack of job security (Crouter, Davis, Updegraff, Delgado, & Fortner, 2006). The severity of these experiences is often amplified among undocumented individuals, who lack workplace protections and thus are especially vulnerable to exploitation

(Taran, 2000). Although the negative association between poor working conditions and marital quality is well established among White samples (e.g., Crouter, Bumpus, Head, & McHale, 2001; Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, & Crouter, 2000), very few scholars have expanded the work and family literature to include the unique experiences of Mexican or other Latina/o families.

Latina/o Americans are the largest ethnic minority group in the United States (Krogstad, Lopez, & Rohal, 2015). Despite the disproportionately greater risk of underemployment and temporary/seasonal work (Shierholz, 2013), on average, Hispanic men work slightly more hours than non-Hispanic Black and White men (Roehling, Hernandez Jarvis, & Swope, 2005). The majority of Latina/o Americans are of Mexican ancestry (Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, & Cuddington, 2013). Relative to Whites and other Latinos, Mexican-origin men are overrepresented in work contexts characterized by too many (or too few) hours, discrimination, and a lack of job security (Crouter et al., 2006; Updegraff, Crouter, Umaña-Taylor, & Cansler, 2007). This is likely explained by the volatility of the low-income labor market and the added vulnerability for those who are undocumented and thus may not be able to protest their working conditions. For families that are already disproportionately likely to experience stress related to immigration, legal status, language barriers, poverty, and family separation, these challenging working conditions may be costly to families' daily interactions (e.g., MacEwen & Barling, 1994; MacEwen, Barling, & Kelloway, 1992). Indeed, "stressful environments not only present couples with more challenges, but they diminish couples' ability to deal with their challenges effectively" (Karney & Bradbury, 2005, p. 174). Taken together, an examination of the potential for within-group variability in Mexican-origin men's work contexts and links with their own and their spouses' marital quality is merited (Crouter et al., 2006; Helms, Supple, & Proulx, 2011; Trail, Goff, Bradbury, & Karney, 2012; Updegraff et al., 2007).

There are several reasons why the focus on Mexican-origin husbands' work contexts and family functioning is particularly important. First, lower rates of employment for Mexican-origin women (relative to U.S.-born women; Gonzales, 2008) and social pressure for husbands to be primary providers increases families' dependence on husbands' jobs. Second, men report more experiences of cultural, racial, or ethnic discrimination in their daily lives than do women (Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Trail et al., 2012). Although the explanations for these differences remain unknown, the experiences assessed may be more relevant for men (i.e., people acting afraid around them; Trail et al., 2012) or men and women may experience discrimination differently. Third, though many families immigrate for financial reasons and may have realistic expectations about life in the United States, working in difficult circumstances—long hours, daily microaggressions, and job insecurity—may weaken spouses' capacity for warmth and amplify negativity. Even when long work hours may be desirable, the combination of these aspects may create a stressful environment that depletes spouses' energy to invest in and maintain connectedness in their relationships (Karney & Bradbury, 2005; Updegraff et al., 2007). Finally, previous research suggests that men's well-being (and perhaps ability to "filter" spillover into family life) is more strongly affected by poor work conditions than women's (Flores et al., 2008). The goals of the present study were to (a) identify and describe groups of Mexican-origin husbands' work experiences that capture within-group variability across a variety of work characteristics (i.e., job security, workplace discrimination, and work hours) and (b) link the groups to husbands' and wives' capacities to express warmth and inhibit negativity in their marital relationships.

Dimensions and Importance of Marital Quality

The challenges of immigration are likely to take a toll on marriage (Updegraff et al., 2007). And given the rapid growth of the Mexican-origin population in the United States in recent years, it is particularly timely to examine how Mexican-origin couples maintain connectedness in the face of cultural adaptation and the inevitable changes and conflicts they experience. We used a two-dimensional measure of marital quality that captures both positive (i.e., warmth) and negative (i.e., negativity) aspects of marriage. Warmth refers to feelings of love, belonging, and interdependence in the relationship; negativity refers to feelings of resentment and anger, and the frequency and severity of conflicts. Whereas marital negativity may be viewed as detrimental to marriage, it is also an important channel through which spouses express their needs (Braiker & Kelley, 1979). Higher relationship quality is positively related to personal well-being, mental and physical health, and job and life satisfaction and inversely related to stress, alcohol use, domestic violence, and divorce (Proulx, Helms, & Buehler, 2007; Cano & Vivian, 2003; Gager & Sanchez, 2003; Ren, 1997; Rogers & May, 2003).

Review of the Literature

Responding to calls for studies emphasizing within-group variability (O'Brien, 2005), we applied an exploratory person-centered approach to examine patterns across husbands' work contexts. Our approach examined "relations among individuals as opposed to relations among variables" (Jobe-Shields, Andrews, Parra, & Williams, 2015, p. 433); in other words, this approach allowed us to create a nuanced, multifaceted typology of Mexican-origin husbands' work contexts that better represent their everyday workplace contexts in a manner that is difficult to capture in variable-centered approaches. Our approach is superior to bivariate associations that attempt to isolate the influence of specific factors, rather than examining how they operate together (Jobe-Shields et al., 2015). We believe that the effects of structural inequalities evidenced in workplace characteristics such as underemployment, long work hours, and workplace discrimination are important areas of inquiry that are needed to "better understand the marital experiences of couples across the diverse demographic landscape of the 21st century" (Helms, 2013, p. 247). Thus, we selected three elements of work context that we expected to affect husbands' daily working conditions, rather than more general measures of social class (e.g., income), including: job security, workplace discrimination, and work hours.

In this section, we review the literature linking these three factors to marital quality. We frame our review in terms of spillover and crossover effects to better explicate how spouses' marital quality is shaped by multifaceted work contexts. Whereas spillover effects are within-person effects in which one life domain spills over into another, crossover effects are within-couple effects in which spouses' experiences affect their partners (Erel & Burman, 1995). Because few studies have examined links between work and marital quality among Mexican-origin or Latino individuals, our review necessarily draws on studies of Black and White Americans and Europeans and highlights the few studies that include Mexican or Latino samples. To our knowledge, this study is the first to apply a person-centered examination of Mexican-origin men's work contexts and to link such a typology to spouses' marital quality among Latina/os.

Job Security

Men who work for low-wage, manual labor jobs, and/or who identify as ethnic minorities report lower job security than other populations (Sverke, Hellgren, & Naswall, 2002). The majority of studies that examine job (in)security have focused on spillover to individuals' well-being (e.g., Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995; Rocha, Crowell, & McCarter, 2006), rather than crossover effects or measures of marital or relationship quality. Overall, this research has found that although the material consequences of job loss should not be minimized, uncertainty about the long-term sustainability of a job can have comparable effects on well-being (Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995). The absence of job security, particularly for single-earner families, can be detrimental to family functioning (Rocha et al., 2006). With regard to couples, spillover studies find that husbands' lack of job security is associated with (a) lower marital adjustment (Larson, Wilson, & Beley, 1994), (b) less partner support and more conflict (Leach & Butterworth, 2012), and (c) lower marital satisfaction for husbands (but not wives) via the mediating variables of job exhaustion and psychosomatic health (Mauno & Kinnunen, 1999). Previous research been limited in the examination of job security and marital quality and the link between job security and implications for marital quality has yet to be studied among a Latina/o sample.

Work Hours

Mexican-origin men are overrepresented in low-wage jobs that require long hours (González, 2002). Given that working too many hours can be as much of a problem as working too few hours (Perry-Jenkins & MacDermid Wadsworth, 2013), and that it is usually the highest and lowest status jobs that have the longest hours (Crouter et al., 2001), the research linking work hours and marital quality has been mixed. Some studies find negative spillover from husbands' work hours to marital quality (e.g., Doumas, Margolin, & John, 2003; Lingard & Sublet, 2002; Pedersen & Minnotte, 2012) and others find no effect (Nangle, Kelley, Fals-Stewart, & Levant, 2003). When crossover effects are examined, more work hours for husbands have a negative effect (Pedersen & Minnotte, 2012) or no effect (Nangle et al., 2003) for wives. Mixed findings in previous work emphasize the importance of examining work hours in combination with other salient aspects of work, specifically job security and workplace discrimination (Crouter et al., 2006; Updegraff et al., 2007).

Workplace Discrimination

Several studies have examined links between discrimination and dimensions of marital quality. Given that discrimination is a major stressor for many people of color, and stressors (particularly in combination) are negatively related to marital quality, discrimination has a detrimental impact on both partners' marital quality (Bryant et al., 2010; Trail et al., 2012). Previous research has demonstrated spillover effects linking discrimination with lower marital satisfaction (Lincoln & Chae, 2010), lower marital quality (Trail et al., 2012), and higher spousal relationship strain (Doyle & Molix, 2014). Trail et al. (2012) tested crossover effects and found that husbands' discrimination was negatively related to wives' marital quality, but only when husbands' reported lower ethnic identity.

Although the bulk of research on discrimination and families has focused on African American couples, several studies have examined these outcomes among Latina/o couples (e.g., Crouter et al., 2006; Trail et al., 2012). Though work may be the major setting of discrimination, a limitation of the literature is that not all studies specify the work context in their questions about discrimination. To the extent that Mexican-origin families migrate for better work opportunities, experiences at work—including discrimination—are likely to be particularly salient and should be considered separately from general discrimination. However, whereas some studies specifically examine workplace discrimination (e.g., Crouter et al., 2006), others do not specify a context (e.g., Trail et al., 2012). Trail et al. found that the negative association between husbands' reports of discrimination and wives' marital quality was moderated by husbands' ethnic identity, such that husbands' stronger ethnic identity was protective of wives' marital quality. Ethnic identity may have been especially important given the wide range of variability in generational status in Trail et al.'s sample. Though discrimination is not ideal in any work environment, the link with marital quality may operate differently in combination with job security and work hours.

The Present Study

Utilizing a sample of 118 Mexican-origin couples who were part of a larger study of family relationships, we expanded on the largely variable-centered approach of the existing literature to examine how combinations of work stressors shape marital quality. Specifically, we (a) identified and described a typology of Mexican-origin men's work contexts based on their work hours, job security, and workplace discrimination and (b) examined the links between the work context typology groups and both husbands' and their wives' marital quality. To address our first goal, we used a two-step cluster approach (e.g., Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007). A major advantage of this person-centered analytic strategy is that it classifies individuals based on similar patterns across variables of interest and provides fit statistics to identify the appropriate number of groups. Mixed-model ANCOVAs (which treated spouse as a repeated measure to account for nonindependence within couples) were conducted to examine the links between husbands' work context groups and both spouses' marital quality (Maguire, 1999), our second goal. The mixed-model approach is commonly used to account for the inherent dependency in dyadic data (e.g., Crouter et al., 2001; Stanik & Bryant, 2012) and allows for the examination of both spillover and crossover effects of group membership.

Method

Participants

The present study is based on data collected in 2007–2008 as a part of a larger study on marriage and contextual stress among Mexican-origin couples with children living in North Carolina (The Unidos Study). Couples were (a) living together, (b) parents of their biological children, and (c) legally married or "living as married." At least one spouse had to be of Mexican origin and both spouses had to be of Latin American origin. Given the high prevalence of common-law marriages in Latin American countries and that undocumented immigrant couples cannot legally marry in the United States, the inclusion of "living as married" couples is important as it allows for a more inclusive definition of marriage among this population (De Vos, 1999; Helms et al.,

2011; Wheeler, Updegraff, & Thayer, 2010). Two unemployed husbands were not included; thus our study is based on a sample of 118 couples (236 individuals). For 90.0% of couples, both spouses were of Mexican descent (95.8% of wives, and 93.2% of husbands) and in all but eight couples both spouses were first-generation immigrants. Ninety-six percent of wives and 96.6% of husbands were first-generation immigrants; the remaining participants were second-generation immigrants, meaning they were born in the United States to parents who emigrated from Mexico.

The majority of families were low-income, earning less than twice the federal poverty level. Within this low-income classification, 21% percent of families were classified as living in poverty based on the 2008 Department of Health and Human Services criteria. Despite many families' eligibility, families rarely utilized any type of social assistance. Participating couples resided in small towns (55%), cities (26%), and rural areas (19%). According to 2008 Census data, 95% of couples lived in neighborhoods characterized by high poverty (i.e., ranging from a poverty rate of 19%–32%). Forty-nine percent of couples lived in neighborhoods classified as 50% Hispanic, 29% percent of couples lived in neighborhoods ranging from 10–25% Hispanic, and 21% resided in neighborhoods classified as less than 10% Hispanic.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

Characteristics ($N = 118$)	M	SD	Range
Age (years)			
Wives	28.14	5.48	18–47
Husbands	30.33	5.79	18–48
First born child	5.80	3.86	<1–14
Years in the United States			
Wives	8.81	4.43	<1–22
Husbands	11.44	5.28	2–27
Nuclear family size	4.07	0.92	3–7
Marital duration (Years)	6.94	3.96	1–15
Education (Years)			
Wives	9.70	3.18	0–16
Husbands	9.00	3.20	1–18
Income (annual)[a]			
Wives	$15,460	$6,378	$2,500–31,600
Husbands	$24,367	$7,731	$8,000–48,000
Family	$33,212	$11,708	$12,000–62,000

[a] The value for one outlier on family income, that reported over $20,000 more income than the next highest-earning family, was dropped from this estimate

Sample characteristics are shown in Table 1. All husbands were employed, relative to 53% of wives. When husbands were asked an open-ended question about why they immigrated to the United States, 59% referenced work as a major reason.[1] Husbands' work hours ranged from 20 to 80 hours per week and averaged 43 hours per week. Eight husbands worked less than 35 hours per week, and only one husband worked less than 32 hours per week, specifically working 20 hours. One-third of the sample held their primary jobs for a year or less, another third from more than a year to 5 years, and the final third for more than 5 years. Typical jobs for husbands were landscapers, home appliance mechanics, painters, construction workers, upholsterers, meat cutters, factory machine operators, and welders. Ninety-six percent of husbands did not have

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[1] Other reasons husbands cited included improved quality of life for (future) family members (41%) and family of origin decision making or reunification (11%).

access to employer-sponsored health insurance nor paid sick leave. Five percent of husbands worked two jobs.

Of the 118 participating couples, 81 (69%) were legally married and 37 (31%) were living as married. Average ages for husbands and wives were 30 and 28 years old, respectively, and there was an average spousal age gap of 3.48 years. Couples had been married or living as married for an average of 7 years. Thirty-six percent of couples had other adults living in the home, most often reporting one or two additional household members. Couples in the sample had two children, on average, and the mean firstborn age was 6 years old. Wives and husbands averaged 10 and 9 years of formal schooling, respectively. Husbands' average length of time in the United States was 11 years, whereas wives had been in the United States for about 9 years.

Procedure

The following procedures conformed to the requirements of the institutional review board at the study's home institution. Cultural insiders and snowball sampling methods were used to recruit couples within predetermined census tracts with high concentrations of Latina/o households. Latina project staff, social service workers, and community contacts made initial contacts either in families' homes or at social service agencies that served Latina/o families. During initial contacts, families were informed of the goals of the research study, the nature of the interview, and the eligibility criteria. Interested couples received a flyer with the project's contact information. All eligible couples who were willing to participate were interviewed with the exception of one couple who withdrew prior to the interview. Data for both husbands and wives were collected during 2–3-hr individual in-home interviews conducted by bilingual Latina project staff. Husbands and wives responded separately to questions about their background, marital quality, and work contexts. To account for variations in literacy, interviewers read each survey question aloud and participants indicated their response by pointing to numbers on a response card for each scale. Interviewers recorded participants' responses. All but one interview was conducted in Spanish. Participating families received a $50 gift card.

Table 2. Correlations Between Study Variables (N = 118)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Marital status								
2. H. Workplace discrimination	−.11							
3. H. Job security	.08	−.06						
4. H. Work hours	−.02	−.11	−.17					
5. W. Warmth	.24**	−.08	.06	−.02				
6. H. Warmth	.16	−.00	.20*	.01	.31**			
7. W. Negativity	−.28**	.04	−.09	−.01	−.30**	−.14		
8. H. Negativity	.03	−.09	−.13	.08	−.28**	−.31**	.34***	
M	.69	2.41	3.95	43.21	8.19	8.29	3.77	3.04
SD	.47	.62	1.02	8.07	.79	.70	1.81	1.50
α	—	.86	—	—	.72	.59	.86	.84

Note. H. indicates husbands' reports, W. indicates wives' reports.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Measures

All measures in the study were available in both Spanish and English and had been applied in prior research with Latina/o populations. Staff trained in translation with local Mexican-origin populations at the Center for New North Carolinians verified that the measures were appropriate for use with the study sample. Alphas for the study measures (shown in Table 2) were all within an acceptable range.

Marital quality. Marital quality was conceptualized as husbands' and wives' marital warmth and negativity. We used Braiker and Kelley's (1979) 9-item warmth scale and three items from the negativity subscale. The warmth subscale (Wheeler et al., 2010) and reduced negativity subscale (Helms et al., 2014) were previously validated with Mexican-origin couples. Husbands and wives were asked to rate their warmth and negativity on 9-point scales based on the last year. A sample warmth item is "How close do you feel toward your spouse?" and a sample negativity item is "When you argue, how serious are the arguments?" Separate scores for marital warmth and negativity were calculated as the average of the respective nine-item and three-item subscales. Higher values indicate greater warmth and greater negativity.

Workplace discrimination. Workplace discrimination was measured using Hughes and Dodge's (1997) Institutional Discrimination and Interpersonal Prejudice in the Workplace Scale, which has been used previously with Mexican American samples (Crouter et al., 2006). Twelve items assess participants' perceptions of institutional discrimination (i.e., the extent to which experiences, such as salary allocation and promotion opportunities, are unfavorably biased) and interpersonal prejudice (i.e., racial bias in coworker interactions). Example items include: "There is discrimination against Mexicans in hiring" and "You deal with people on your job who are prejudiced against Mexicans." Husbands rated items from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*) and values were averaged across items. Higher values indicated more discrimination.

Job security. Job security was measured using husbands' responses to a single item about their primary job: "How safe do you feel you are from layoffs, downsizing, cutbacks, and so on at work?" Husbands responded using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*insecure*) to 5 (*secure*); higher scores indicated greater job security.

Work hours. Husbands reported their total work hours across all jobs.

Marital status. Wives' reported legal marital status (coded 0 = *living as married*, 1 = *legally married*) was treated as control variable in the analyses because nonmarried couples tend to report lower relationship quality than married couples (Rodriguez, Helms, Supple, & Hengstebeck, 2016).

Results

In this section, we discuss (a) preliminary findings highlighting the variation across husbands' workplace characteristics (i.e., job security, workplace discrimination, and work hours), (b) the bivariate correlations between study variables, (c) a two-step cluster analysis used to identify and describe work context typology groups based on husbands' workplace characteristics, and (d) the results of mixed-model ANCOVAs, which allowed us to examine links between husbands' work context groups and spouses' marital quality, and account for the nested structure of the couple-

level data. The mixed-model ANCOVAs approach enabled us to examine (a) separate effects linking husbands' work context groups to each spouses' marital warmth and negativity, (b) average effects linking husbands' work context groups to couples' marital quality, and (c) spouse-by-group interactions to assess whether within-couple differences in marital quality existed based on husbands' work context groups (Crouter et al., 2001).

Preliminary Findings

Means, standard deviations, alphas, and bivariate correlations among the study variables are presented in Table 2. There was notable variation across husbands' workplace characteristics. First, although the mean workplace discrimination value of 2.41 ($SD = 0.62$) on a 4-point scale would suggest only a moderate level of discrimination in the sample overall, 54% of husbands' indicated overall agreement with statements about discriminatory experiences in their workplace. On average, husbands indicated that they had experienced about half of the discriminatory work experiences in the scale. Only eight husbands (7%) indicated disagreement with all 12 statements about discriminatory experiences at work. Second, husbands reported feeling moderately secure in their primary jobs ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.02$). Specifically, 81 (68.6%) husbands scored in the secure range of the 5-point scale, 30 (25.4%) scored indicated some job security, and 7 (5.9%) participants ranked their jobs in the insecure range of the scale. Third, husbands worked an average of 43.21 ($SD = 8.07$) hours per week with 11 (9.3%) working less than 40 hours, 67 (56.8%) working 40 hours, and 40 (33.4%) working more than 40 hours.

All bivariate correlations among aspects of husbands' work contexts were nonsignificant. Workplace discrimination and work hours were uncorrelated with study variables. Though husbands' job security was positively related to marital warmth for husbands, $r = .20$, $p = .03$, job security was unrelated to wives' marital warmth and both spouses' marital negativity. For wives (but not husbands), being legally married was linked with greater warmth, $r = .24$, $p = .01$ and less negativity, $r = −.28$, $p = .002$. The differential importance of this variable for husbands' and wives' marital quality offered additional support for treating legal marital status as a control variable. Within couples, husbands' and wives' reports of warmth, $r = .31$, $p = .001$ and negativity ($r = .34$, $p < .001$) were positively correlated. In addition, wives' marital warmth was inversely related to husbands' marital negativity, $r = −.28$, $p = .002$ and husbands' marital warmth was unrelated to wives' negativity ($r = −.14$, ns).

Group Identification and Description

To identify a typology based on husbands' workplace characteristics, we used a two-step cluster approach (e.g., Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007). In this procedure, the first step involves merging cases into similar existing subclusters or starting new subclusters based on the mean and variance of cluster variable, and the second step involves grouping subclusters hierarchically and statistically evaluating the optimal number of clusters (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007). This approach is preferable over earlier clustering methods in which the number of clusters was based on researchers' interpretations rather than an empirical test. In general, when selecting the number of groups, the algorithm chooses the typology with the lowest Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) value and highest ratio of distance measure (see Table 3). Using this approach, SPSS produced a typology consisting of three work groups.

Table 3. Information on Cluster Solutions 1 Through 10

Number of clusters	BIC	BIC Change[a]	Ratio of distance measures[b]
1	270.36	—	—
2	249.87	−20.49	1.15
3	235.92	−13.95	1.57
4	237.39	1.46	1.97
5	252.23	14.84	1.24
6	269.74	17.52	1.03
7	287.56	17.82	1.12
8	306.49	18.93	1.33
9	327.80	21.31	1.04
10	349.41	21.62	1.50

Note. BIC = Bayesian Information Criterion.
[a] The changes are from the previous number of clusters in the table. [b] The ratios of distance measures are based on the current number of clusters against the previous number of clusters.

Husbands in the first and smallest group ($n = 15$; 13% of the sample) reported the longest work hours, moderate job security, and low workplace discrimination. Husbands in the second group ($n = 61$; 52%) reported the highest job security, full-time work hours, and moderate workplace discrimination. Husbands in the third group ($n = 41$; 35%) reported the lowest job security, the highest workplace discrimination, and full-time hours (see Figure 1 for standardized scores and Table 4 for means across work context groups). One husband was excluded due to a missing value for job security. We labeled the first group Moderately Secure, Overtime, Minimally Discriminatory Workplaces; the second group Highly Secure, Full-Time, Moderately Discriminatory Workplaces; and the third group Minimally Secure, Full-Time, Highly Discriminatory Workplaces. Notably, there were no differences between groups on family income, $F2 = 0.48$, $p = .62$, nor wives' employment status, $F2 = 0.64$, $p = .53$, indicating that group membership was not a proxy for income or wives' employment.
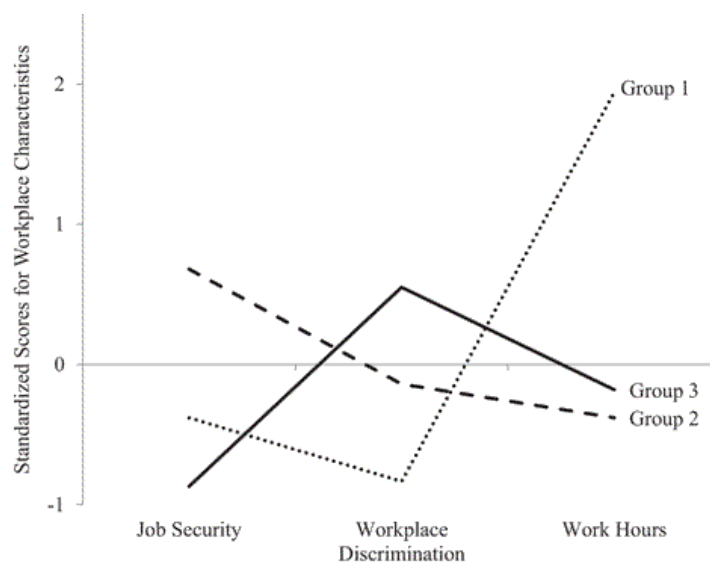

Figure 1. Husbands' workplace characteristics by work context groups. Group 1: Moderately Secure, Overtime, Minimally Discriminatory Workplaces ($n = 15$); Group 2: Highly Secure, Full-Time, Moderately Discriminatory Workplaces ($n = 61$); Group 3: Minimally Secure, Full-Time, Highly Discriminatory Workplaces ($n = 41$).

Table 4. Means (SDs) For Workplace Characteristics by Husbands' Work Context Groups

Workplace characteristics	Scale	Group 1: Moderately Secure, Overtime, Minimally Discriminatory Workplaces (n = 15 couples)	Group 2: Highly Secure, Full-Time, Moderately Discriminatory Workplaces (n = 61 couples)	Group 3: Minimally Secure, Full-Time, Highly Discriminatory Workplaces (n = 41 couples)
Job security	1–5	3.60 (1.12)	4.64 (.48)	3.07 (.79)
Workplace discrimination	0–4	2.02 (.48)	2.32 (.55)	2.74 (.49)
Work hours	20–80	59.60 (7.85)	40.13 (4.88)	41.70 (3.73)

Table 5. Means (SDs) for Spouses' Marital Quality by Husbands' Work Context Group

Spouses' marital quality	Group 1: Moderately Secure, Overtime, Minimally Discriminatory Workplaces (n = 15 couples)	Group 2: Highly Secure, Full-Time, Moderately Discriminatory Workplaces (n = 61 couples)	Group 3: Minimally Secure, Full-Time, Highly Discriminatory Workplaces (n = 41 couples)
Warmth			
Wives	8.17 (.87)	8.15 (.72)	8.23 (.88)
Husbands	8.31 (.56)$_{a,b}$	8.47 (.45)$_a$	8.00 (.93)$_b$
Couple[a]	8.24 (.54)	8.31 (.51)	8.12 (.73)
W-H[b]	−.14 (.97)$_{a,b}$	−.31 (.00)$_a$	.23 (1.07)$_b$
Negativity			
Wives	3.67 (2.34)	3.66 (1.67)	3.97 (1.85)
Husbands	3.58 (1.72)	2.87 (1.41)	3.12 (1.54)
Couple[a]	3.63 (1.92)	3.26 (1.25)	3.54 (1.29)
W-H[b]	.08 (1.46)	.79 (1.82)	.85 (2.22)

Note. Group differences for significant effects on marital quality are determined by Tukey HSD tests are indicated by means in the same row that do share subscripts. Scales for marital warmth and negativity range from 1–9.
[a] Scores represent the average of husbands' and wives' reports. [b] Scores represent wives–husbands difference.

Links Between Groups and Marital Quality

The second goal of our study focused on the links between husbands' work context groups and husbands' and wives' marital quality. To address this goal, we conducted a series of 3 (work context groups) × 2 (spouse) mixed-model ANCOVAs treating spouse as a within-couple factor, marital status as a covariate, and spouses' marital warmth and negativity as dependent variables. Because cell sizes were unequal, we used Type III sums of squares. We examined (a) separate effects linking husbands' work context groups to both spouses' marital warmth and negativity, (b) average effects linking husbands' work context groups to couples' marital warmth and negativity, and (c) spouse-by-group interactions to assess whether within-couple differences in marital quality differed by husbands' work context groups. Significant univariate findings were followed up using Tukey's HSD test. Results are displayed in Table 5. First, an association between work context and husbands' marital warmth indicated that husbands' marital warmth differed across groups, $F2$ = 5.21, p = .007. Tukey follow-up tests revealed a significant difference in husbands' marital warmth between Group 2 (i.e., Highly Secure, Full-Time, Moderately Discriminatory Workplaces) and Group 3 (i.e., Minimally Secure, Full-Time, Highly Discriminatory Workplaces). Specifically, husbands in Group 2 reported more marital warmth than husbands in Group 3. Second, this effect was qualified by a significant spouse-by-group interaction which indicated that the within-couple patterning of husbands' and wives' perceptions of marital warmth varied across husbands' work context groups, $F2$ = 5.49, p = .005.

Tukey follow-up tests identified within-couple differences in marital warmth between Groups 2 and 3, indicating that whereas Group 2 husbands ($M = 8.47$, $SD = 0.45$) reported more warmth relative to their wives ($M = 8.15$, $SD = 0.72$), Group 3 husbands ($M = 8.00$, $SD = 0.93$) reported less warmth relative to their wives ($M = 8.23$, $SD = 0.88$). Taken together, given similar work hours across Groups 2 and 3, husbands working in less secure and more discriminatory workplaces (Group 3) perceived lower marital warmth relative to their wives and husbands working in more secure and less discriminatory workplaces (Group 2) perceived higher marital warmth relative to their wives. Husbands' work context was unrelated to wives' marital warmth. Notably, neither husbands' nor wives' marital negativity was related to husbands' work context groups.

Discussion

The current study advanced scholarly understanding about how Mexican-origin husbands' work contexts spill over into marriage. We used a two-step cluster approach (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007) to identify a typology of three work context groups of Mexican-origin husbands and linked them with husbands' and wives' marital quality. Our dyadic, person-centered approach captured variability in husbands' work contexts based on their job security, workplace discrimination, and work hours. Rather than attempting to isolate specific aspects of husbands' daily work experiences—a variable-centered approach that has dominated the work-family literature to date—our person-centered analytic approach allowed us to depict a more holistic picture of Mexican-origin husbands' multifaceted work contexts and identify important distinctions in workplace characteristic among what scholars typically think of as a relatively homogenous group (i.e., predominantly low-income, Mexican-origin married men). We identified three groups: (1) Moderately Secure, Overtime, Minimally Discriminatory Workplaces, (2) Highly Secure, Full-Time, Moderately Discriminatory Workplaces, and (3) Minimally Secure, Full-Time, Highly Discriminatory Workplaces. The lack of differences between groups on family income and wives' employment status suggests that for husbands in the Moderately Secure, Overtime, Minimally Discriminatory Workplaces Group, working overtime (i.e., approximately 60 hours per week) may be a necessity for husbands to support their families. Importantly, we also found significant differences for husbands' marital warmth between two of the work contexts groups, indicating that when employed 40 hours per week in contexts with relatively higher job security and relatively lower levels of discrimination (Group 2), husbands expressed more warmth than husbands whose work contexts were characterized by similarly long hours but relatively lower job security and relatively higher discrimination (Group 3). Further, husbands in Group 2 reported more marital warmth than did their wives, whereas the opposite pattern was found in Group 3. Husbands' work contexts were not linked to either spouse's reports of negativity, suggesting that stress related to the combination of workplace discrimination, job (in)security, and long work hours may spill over into marriage via husbands' decreased capacity for expressions of warmth to their wives rather than heightened marital conflict. Our study offers one of the first tests to identify and link multifaceted work contexts to spouses' marital quality and the only study to date to do so with Mexican-origin couples.

Taken together, consistent with our expectations, we found support for the link between husbands' workplace characteristics and positive dimensions of marital interactions. Given that warmth and positive affect are important for marital stability over time (Lavner & Bradbury,

2010; Lorenz, Conger, Simon, Whitbeck, & Elder, 1991), our findings propose an important mechanism through which to strengthen marital quality among Mexican-origin couples. Counter to our expectations and previous research (e.g., MacEwen & Barling, 1994; MacEwen et al., 1992), we did not find support for the link between husbands' workplace characteristics and negative dimensions of marital interactions. This discrepancy may be due to differences in the measurement of work contexts. For example, MacEwen and Barling (1994) incorporated participants' perceptions of work-family conflict rather than the present study's approach of examining characteristics of participants' daily work contexts. Although husbands' work contexts were linked to their own reports of marital warmth in the present study, some studies (e.g., Crouter et al., 2001; Perry-Jenkins et al., 2000) found that workplace characteristics were linked with family functioning indirectly via individuals' perceived work–family distress. Future research with Mexican-origin workers may benefit from the inclusion of workers' perceptions of work–family balance as an intervening factor in the link between workplace characteristics or composite workplace contexts and marital functioning.

Our findings underscore variation in Mexican-origin husbands' work contexts, and the potential for husbands' work to shape marital interactions (Crouter et al., 2006). Our findings highlight the importance of exploring the larger context in which couples' relationships are embedded for better understanding of environmental factors that may undergird or compromise marriage for Mexican-origin couples adapting to life in the United States (e.g., Helms et al., 2011; Huston, 2000). Fifty-nine percent of husbands referenced work as a primary motivator to immigrate. Unfortunately, Mexican-origin men are overrepresented in low-wage jobs where they are likely to experience discrimination, job insecurity, and too many or too few hours (Crouter et al., 2006; González, 2002). In addition, because nearly half of our sample was dependent on only husbands' wages, it is particularly concerning that the minimally secure, full-time, highly discriminatory workplaces took a toll on husbands' capacity for warmth in their marital interactions. Marital warmth is likely to be important for Mexican-origin couples' ability to maintain a sense of connectedness or "we-ness" in the face of the changes and challenges associated with cultural adaptation (Helms, Hengstebeck, Rodriguez, Mendez, & Crosby, 2015).

Strengths and Limitations

This study is one of the first studies to adopt a person-centered, pattern-analytic approach to the study of workplace characteristics (for an exception, see Crouter & Manke, 1997) and the first within a sample of Mexican-origin families. Confirming previous research that Mexican-origin men are overrepresented in undesirable work contexts (Crouter et al., 2006) and despite within-group variability evidenced here, none of the work contexts identified are interpreted as "ideal" for family life. We expanded previous research by examining crossover effects linking husbands' work contexts to wives' marital quality. The lack of findings suggests that perhaps wives are more resilient to husbands' work contexts or that husbands do a better job of protecting their families from the transmission of stress from their work (e.g., through a stronger ethnic identity; Trail et al., 2012) than initially expected. Complementary research examining how wives' work contexts shape spouses' marital quality and how both husbands' and wives' work contexts interact is an important area for future research.

Despite this study's strengths, there were several limitations that point to directions for future research. First, we were limited to a cross-sectional design and cannot make a case for causality. Future research should examine the effects of negative work contexts on marital quality over time, and whether chronic negative work contexts have the potential to erode spouses' capacity for warmth, and in turn, long-term marital satisfaction and stability. Second, previous work has highlighted the importance of acculturation and enculturation in understanding the link between work contexts and family well-being (Crouter et al., 2006), and future research to assess whether these factors moderate the association between work contexts and marital quality is merited. Third, given our emphasis on low-income Mexican-origin families, it is important for future research to explore variability in work contexts across social class, job status, education, generation, and legal status. Finally, future research should expand to examine the influence and interaction of both spouses' work contexts on coparenting and child outcomes.

Implications

There are several implications of this research for policy and practice. First, though it may be challenging to enforce, it is important to encourage employers to provide and enforce policies that will improve work contexts and reduce discrimination (MacDermid & Targ, 1995). Notably, only 13% of husbands fell into the group characterized by the lowest discrimination, but not without the cost of working nearly 60 hours per week. Not only does the present study provide evidence of husbands' experiences of workplace discrimination, it also expands previous research on how multifaceted work contexts have the potential to impact the marriages of Mexican-origin couples (Crouter et al., 2006; Trail et al., 2012). Reductions in warmth and connectedness may be detrimental during the process of cultural adaptation, which will likely have long-term implications for family functioning and coparenting (Helms et al., 2015). Second, practitioners who work with Mexican-origin families may be able to help couples, and husbands in particular, develop strategies to prevent the effects of negative work contexts from depleting their capacity for warmth in their marriages. It is worthwhile to inform couples that work contexts may take a toll on their relationships and help them maintain a sense of connectedness against the backdrop of adapting to life in a new country. Practitioners may find it helpful to frame this issue in terms of protecting culturally endorsed values of familism from the challenging work contexts that many families encounter in the United States (Helms et al., 2015). Finally, immigration reform has the potential to improve the lives of immigrant families by reducing the exploitation of low-wage workers and providing more opportunities for quality jobs. The combination of strong cultural values related to marriage (Oropesa & Landale, 2004) and an elevated divorce risk (Frank & Wildsmith, 2005) emphasizes the importance of examining the potential for work experiences to undermine (or enhance) Mexican-origin couples' marriages.

Conclusion

Because many Mexican-origin men migrate in search of better work opportunities to improve their ability to provide for their families, the conditions of their employment are likely to be central to family life and well-being in the United States. Indeed, the present study provided evidence that husbands' work contexts are related to marriage, and particularly husbands' expressions of warmth toward their wives. For many low-income immigrant populations,

suboptimal work contexts may undermine the potential benefits of employment by limiting affective expressions between partners. Future research is needed to examine potential intervening variables and interventions that may be helpful in strengthening the family and marital relationships of the growing Mexican-origin population.

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