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## A Correlation Study of Male Coping Skills and Marital Satisfaction in Dual Career Families

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Running head: A CORRELATION STUDY

A CORRELATION STUDY  
OF  
MALE COPING SKILLS AND MARITAL SATISFACTION  
IN DUAL-CAREER FAMILIES

Marian Neumarker Petri

Lindenwood University

## **Abstract**

This study examined the relationship between male coping strategies and marital satisfaction among men in dual-career couples. Thirty-one male subjects who are currently in a dual-career family participated in this study. These subjects were white, Non-Hispanic, college graduates, living in a mid-west city in the state of Missouri. Participants were voluntary and at least one person of each couple was a professional educator. Each male individual completed a demographic questioner, Dual Employed Coping Scale (DECS), and the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMS). The survey was returned by mail as to retain anonymity. The results did not show that there is a significant relationship between male coping skills and marital satisfaction.

**COMMITTEE IN CHARGE OF CANDIDACY**

Professor Pamela Nickels, Ed.D, LPC  
Chairperson and Advisor

Anita Sankar,  
Assistant Professor

Nancy Shaw, MSW, LCSW  
Program Director, Shelter The Children

## DEDICATION

To my husband Michael, without whom I may have never started my Master's program. You remind me everyday to believe in myself first and foremost and that I can achieve any goal that I set my mind to. Most importantly, you believe what I am doing will bring joy to others and bring us more riches than all the money in the world.

To Geda Henry and Anita Sankar who provide such incredible feedback in making this project attainable. Your editorial comments were always helpful and well respected in guiding me throughout this study.

To my family, friends, colleagues, and the parents and children of my 1997-98 Third Grade class. I appreciate your endless support and understanding of the times I was unavailable to attend the many festive functions. You offered words of encouragement through the many tears shed, and simple smiles that showed you care.

Your support will stay in my heart forever!

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

The American family has changed dramatically in just a few generations. Most families today participate in a dynamic, alternative approach to family lifestyle and career wherein both the husband and wife espouse long-term commitment to their work while maintaining a family that includes children, versus the traditional structure of the past. Employment for both of these spouses involves their personal commitment to the development of a career. Spiker-Miller & Kees state, "...each partner perceives their work to be essential to the psychological sense of self and as integral to their personal identities" (p. 32). Such a career commitment is characterized by a large investment of time and energy in job training, high personal satisfaction, substantial ego rewards, and a continuous developmental quality where advances in responsibility, power, pay, and status are accrued over time (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976).

The dramatic changes in the family structure can be observed by comparing the average family of the 1960's to the average family of the 1990's. According to Hamburg (1993) most Americans shared common beliefs about family life until around 1960. Americans believed that a family should consist of a husband and wife living together with their children. Until the 1960's it was also believed that the father should be the head of the household and earn the family's income (p. 63).

Hamburg (1993) also stated that over the last three decades these ideals have drastically changed. Although these ideals are still recognizable, approximating them in practice is impossible because of the change in the work force (p. 62). Women are now a part of the paid labor force in great numbers.

This change was brought on by both economic need and a new belief in women's capability, as well as the right to pursue career opportunities.

According to recent statistics released by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics published by Bill Leonard, nearly half of all United States workers are part of a dual-income household. This rising number of dual-career couples continues to increase as most college students, men, and women anticipate involvement in a career as well as a family (Spiker-Miller & Kees, 1995).

Over the past two decades a significant number of young men and women have been encouraged to adapt a more egalitarian attitude regarding work and family roles, to broaden their range of work options, and to pursue non-traditional career and family paths. According to Leonard (1996), approximately 48 percent of all employees come from dual income married couples, while only 9.4 percent of employees represent the "traditional family"--where the male partner is the primary bread winner (p. 8).

These numbers support the current trend that seems to be pushing towards more dual income families in the future. According to Farber (1988), "Conceived in idealism, nurtured by the feminist movement, the dual-career lifestyles have grown and developed over the past two decades" (p. 46). Recent projections state the dual income couples will account for 51 percent of the United States work force by the year 2000--compared to 41 percent of the work force in 1980 (Leonard 1996).

Dual-career or dual-income families are more common in the 1990's than ever before. Behind the facts and figures are men, women, and children working out alternative life-style changes, each with their own integral piece to fit into this dual income family puzzle of life. These individuals are faced with a number of challenges as they attempt to integrate successfully their



occupational and family roles. Spiker-Miller & Kees state "Because more women are entering what was traditionally the work domain of men, researchers have mainly focused on how traditionally female roles have been affected and how women have coped with the new demands of the work world" (p. 33). Researchers have also invested large amounts of time analyzing the effects on children in dual family incomes. What about the other element that makes up this sound structure? I.E. the father and/or husband of the family.

The male in turn is affected by this change, but few studies have reviewed this population and the effects it may have on the family structure. There were few studies done in the early eighties analyzing the affects on the men and now entering the new millenium, there is a renewed interest in this subject. Researchers are re-examining the male populations and the effects it has on the family unit.

There are many questions about the male population that one needs to examine for a better understanding and treatment of these future clients. For example, are males in dual career families coping unequivocally better than in the traditional family structure, where the male is the primary bread winner? Are men in dual career families really happily married, or are they experiencing high levels of stress which in turn negatively affect this fundamentally sound family structure?

### **Significance of the Problem**

Men and women's lives are strongly linked. Changes in women's roles and goals, personally, and in their marriages have an enormous impact on men. Both men and women are faced with a number of challenges as they attempt to integrate successfully their occupational and family roles. The movement of

women into the workplace has clearly affected marital and family life. Literature makes it evident that the focus of studies of this trend have been based on women and how this change has affected them. In essence, much of the research and literature took the view that women were the ones whose roles had been changing. However, from the recent research based on recommendations from the women-focused literature, it seems men have been justifiably making many changes in their lives. Few researchers have analyzed the coping mechanisms of men and the effects on their family life, job, and marital satisfaction.

Men are and have been making changes in order to balance and enhance this evolving type of family lifestyle. Some of these changes include: being more responsible for domestic jobs and taking an active role as a caretaker. These changes of behavior need to be examined by counselors and psychologists for a deeper understanding of dual-career clients.

It seems imperative that counselors of today be aware of the emotional issues their dual-income families may be encountering. Knowledge and understanding about this issue is vital. It is impossible to fully understand the dynamics of the dual-career lifestyle unless enough is known about the issues concerning both partners. There seems to be an abundance of literature and media concentration on the effects of women maintaining a full career and family, mainly because women are the ones history has shown as experiencing all the changes. Based on information found, it would appear that the male population has not been considered. The need for researching males and their coping mechanisms in a dual-income family is yet another piece of the puzzle that needs to be put in place.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Dual-career families are becoming the norm in society. However, society does not yet wholly support non-traditional roles for men or women (Sekaran, 1986), and dual-career couples may be subject to mixed messages from various sources--that is, parents, community, institutions, and media--about how they "should" live their lives. Energy of these couples is spread among many important roles: worker, parent, spouse, adult, child, friend, and citizen, all of which demand considerable attention. The dual-career lifestyle is relatively new, and couples have few role models to help them manage multiple demands.

Quality of the marital relationship of these couples is put to the test by themselves and others. When the pressure mounts and problems become unbearable, some divorce. Others are drawn closer together because of their common commitment to make this lifestyle choice work. Coping behaviors exhibited by men could prove to be a way to relieve stress of role overload. These coping behaviors are strategies being continuously developed and refined in the relationship to prevent, reduce, divert, avoid or control emotional stress. The problem to be investigated is the relationship between male coping strategies and marital satisfaction among men.

## CHAPTER II

### Literature Review

#### Types of Family Structure

Literature identifies the variations of the nuclear family structure in terms of marital status and career involvement. In recent United States history three specific family types have evolved due to societal circumstances and couples' personal desires. These family types include the traditional family, the dual-earner family, and the dual-career family (Gilbert & Rachlin, 1987). The traditional nuclear family can be characterized by a breakdown of expectations that each spouse is to uphold. One spouse, typically the husband, is primarily involved in paid work and the other spouse is primarily involved in family work, that is, child care and domestic activities.

In the dual-earner family, both spouses are involved in the paid labor force. One spouse may be pursuing a career and the other spouse views his/her occupation as a job. Another alternative is both spouses consider themselves to hold jobs. Gilbert and Rachlin (1987) state, "jobs are more likely than careers, to be taken for economic reasons, are more subject to interruption, and are more likely to lack clear developmental stages and accumulation of experience" (p. 9).

The dual-career family structure represents a unique subset of the broader category of dual-earner. The distinctive feature of this family structure is that both spouses are committed to occupational careers and to maintaining a family life together (Gilbert & Rachlin, 1987). To meet the criteria of a dual-career couple, Spiker-Miller and Kees (1995) suggest the couples' occupations must meet three basic requirements to be considered a career: 1) the employment is personally salient to its occupant, 2) it has a developmental

sequence over time, 3) it requires a high degree of commitment from the occupant. Gilbert and Rachlin concluded, "this life-style involves the coordination, balance, and integration of career and family roles for each spouse individually and as a couple" (p. 10).

### **Dual Earnings vs. Dual Careers**

In discussing dual-career couples, one critical distinction has to be made. Every dual-career couple is a dual-earner couple, but not every dual-earner couple is a dual-career couple. It is easy to overlook the differences, which go beyond mere semantics.

In a dual-earner couple one of the two working spouses-- historically the wife-- does work for pay, but is really intent just on bringing in an income, not on furthering specific career goals (Serlen, 1989). In dual-career couples, both spouses are equally motivated to succeed at their jobs, both want the status and the financial rewards that successful careers confer, and both are prepared to compete for them.

While dual-earner couples face time-management and child-care problems, they're not likely to deal with other conflicts, such as professional jealousy and competition over salaries (Spiker-Miller & Kees, 1995).

Dual-career couples, on the other hand, get to deal with all these aspects.

### **The Dual-Career Lifestyle**

In this study, the dual-career family is the primary focus of discussion. In theory, during the last 20 years, society has gone through many changes. Increasing numbers of young men and women have been encouraged to adopt more egalitarian attitudes regarding work and family roles, to broaden their range of work options, and to pursue non-traditional career and family paths

(Amatea & Cross, 1983). These changes in society have caused many married women and men to combine substantial work and family obligations.

Apostal & Helland (as cited in Smith & Reid, 1986) stated "partners in dual career families strive toward achieving an equality of worth and opportunity for each other, including equality of obligations, entitlements and rewards" (p. 122). These couples marry with the understanding that both spouses have strong commitments to their respective careers. They also embrace the belief of independence and agree to give their skills, energy and time to both work and family (Apostal & Helland, 1993).

### **Marital Satisfaction in the Dual-Career Family**

Although the dual-career lifestyle provides its participants with many economic and psychological benefits, it also creates many pressures and stresses. Increased discretionary income allows the family more freedom from monetary concerns. By both spouses working a sense of self-fulfilling accomplishment exists. They feel proud of their contribution to the family's economic status. However, marital and family satisfaction can be at risk when both spouses find themselves with no one to turn to after dealing with complications at work, but also, have to use their back-up energy solving new unexpected situations and find that they may have already over-extended themselves (Spiker-Miller & Kees, 1995). The dual-career couple is faced with several stresses and a limited support system. Unfortunately, research cited by McCook, Folzer, Charlesworth, and Scholl (1991) indicates that many dual-career couples never learn to manage their problems. Their divorce rate is higher than that of single-career couples (p. 42). Thomas, Alright, and White (1984) summarized the high risk to marital satisfaction in the dual-career lifestyle:

The union of two highly educated individuals with diverse goals, strong achievement needs, demanding schedules, and multiple role responsibilities requires considerable skill in dealing with conflicts and negotiating compromises. If parenting roles are added, further complications arise” (p. 18 )

Furthermore, research cited by Thomas et al. (1984) pointed out that because high achievement orientation and self-esteem enhancement are characteristic of individuals in a dual-career marriage, marital satisfaction can be sabotaged by unrealistically high expectations that each partner holds for the relationship and their spouse. Research indicates that marital satisfaction for the dual-career couple can be related to two highly distinctive factors: 1) the stage of their family life and 2) the gender role attitudes of both the husband and the wife in this lifestyle choice.

The presence of young children sharply increases the total family life work load (Pleck, 1983). Stress involving child care may intensify when couples in their 20's and early 30's begin families at the same time they are trying to become established in their careers. Both the early parenting phase and the work establishment phase require the most time and energy of all other phases of family or work cycles (Sakaran, 1986). Thus, both spouses feel strain as they simultaneously try to raise children and establish careers.

### **Roles Within Families**

Conceived gender roles can be an interpersonal concern for dual-career couples as well. Stress occurs when dealing with identity issues, defined as discontinuity between early gender roles, socialization, and current wishes or practices (Kater, 1995, p. 75). Men who have been socialized to play the game “king of the hill” in their careers, must neglect family roles if they are going to make it to the top. If instead they share the family role with their spouse, they

may feel like failures. Men may also feel uncomfortable in nurturing roles as a result of past experiences (Wilcox-Mathew & Minor, 1989).

Because of their experience women may expect to be employed full time without relinquishing any of the home roles to their husbands. Women may feel guilty about career ambition at any expense to their home role. In their careers women may find they are expected to adopt the traditional male definition of success, which involves competition and total devotion to the job (Coswell, 1985). Both men and women may experience a great deal of stress from these interpersonal dilemmas.

According to Paden and Buehler (1995) the change in the employment patterns have many married men and women combining substantial work and family obligations. These obligations have led to "role overload and conflict resulting from increased roles and incongruent roles expectation" (Paden & Buehler, 1995, p. 101).

One of the largest aspects of every dual-career family are the multiple roles that each partner accepts. This acceptance requires compromise and flexibility for a positive marriage interaction. A study was designed by Apostol and Helland to assess: 1) a couples level of commitment, 2) identify type and number of role changes, and 3) examine the relationship between commitment and role change in a sample of dual career couples.

Rosin found that dual career couples have a high commitment to making this family structure work. However, with this structure, comes higher levels of stress. The sample of their study found, "stress is a natural part of our lifestyle." The analysis of the domestic tasks (cleaning, laundry, and cooking) indicate that the roles for this sample are gender-specific rather than shared equally, and that the role change of these tasks were low. Role



changes of non-domestic activities were much higher than role changes of domestic tasks.

Paden and Buehler (1995) report that up to one-third of all dual-income couples experience role overload in one form or another. Role overload can be defined as the stress that develops from the different number of roles that a person occupies. Role overload is also characterized by the stress of not being able to handle these roles due to a shortage of time and energy.

Role overload can occur in one domain of life or in several domains. It can occur only at work, or only at home, or in both places. Role overload from one domain can carry over into the other domains as well. Which is known as spillover. According to Paden and Buehler (1995), spillover is just one aspect of role overload for the dual-career family. This occurs because of the dual-career spouse's heavy involvement in paid work as well as family domains.

Role conflict can be defined as the conflict that arises among the expectations of two or more roles that a person adopts. One example of role conflict can be seen in the women of dual-income relationships. According to Paden and Buehler (1995) at work the professional woman is expected to be aggressive, competitive, and committed to her work, while at home she is often expected to be nurturing to her children, compassionate, supportive, and caring to her husband. "These differing expectations may require a complex display of potentially incompatible personality characteristics at work and home" (Paden & Buehler, 1995, p. 101). The stress that arises from dealing with role overload and role conflict can put the dual-career spouse at greater risk for physical and emotional problems.

Thomas et. al (1984) found the following continuing factors to be directly related to marital quality: 1) socioeconomic adequacy, 2) spousal satisfaction with the wife's employment, 3) satisfaction with outside social interaction, 4) satisfactory levels of emotional gratification, 5) effective communication, 6) appropriate role sharing, and 7) shared activities and companionship. Findings indicate that most negative effects on marital satisfaction are related to specific problems, as outlined above, when the family system is involved in the dual-career lifestyle.

Because of this type of lifestyle choice daily stress seems apparent. However, is one gender under more stress or less stress? If so, how are they juggling all the roles as well as maintaining a satisfying commitment to their spouse? These factors could in turn affect their marital satisfaction.

### **Women and Marital Satisfaction within the Dual-career**

Increasing numbers of women are committing themselves to a dual-career marriage, and many are questioning traditional views of their female role. At the same time, men and women may enter into what they want to be egalitarian relationships only to find that they are ill-prepared for the psychological and attitudinal changes that may be necessary for their chosen life-style (Gilbert & Rachlin 1987).

The dual-career family challenges traditional assumptions about family roles and functioning, therefore spousal support is crucial to effective coping--particularly support from the male spouse. Women are socialized to support men's occupational roles, whereas the reverse is not the case. Some studies report that having a supportive husband is a key factor in successful dual-career marriages (e.g., Thomas, Albrecht & White, 1984; Gilbert & Rachlin, 1987). Ideally such support includes positive attitudes toward the

woman's career as well as a willingness by the man to involve himself in household and parenting responsibilities.

Studies of women in dual-career families have demonstrated that the degree to which the family accommodates a woman's career is central to the woman's success and satisfaction (Gilbert & Rachlin, 1987; Houseknecht & Macke, 1981; Houseknecht, Vaughn, & Macke, 1984). Success of a dual-career relationship rests to a large extent on women being able to strive for and achieve what they consider an equitable situation, although to an outsider it might not appear equal between themselves and their husbands. Gilbert & Rachlin (1987) indicated that women take on more and give up more than men when attempting to make this arrangement work and satisfactorily.

#### **Men and Marital Satisfaction within the Dual-Career**

It would be inaccurate to depict the dual-career family lifestyle as one replete with stress. Clearly, the choice to pursue a non-traditional lifestyle for which there are limited societal supports suggest substantial benefits for the dual-career family (Gilbert & Rachlin, 1987). One of the interpersonal benefits most consistently reported is that dual-career couples seem to experience a high level of marital solidarity (Gilbert & Rachlin, 1987). Simpson and England (1981) suggest that the high levels of marital solidarity found in studies are due to the similarity of roles in which these couples engage. Other researchers found determinants of these high-quality marriages to include: husbands' support of their wives' careers (Houseknecht & Macke, 1981), congruent perception about whose career takes precedence, communication between spouses concerning wife's employment concerns and accomplishments, shared family roles, and emotional intimacy (Thomas, Albrecht, & White, 1984).

The benefits of the dual-career marriage for men, at this point, are less dramatic. Men have not asked for change (Gilbert, 1985), instead they were pushed to change because of the societal trend of women going back to work. Literature shows that a common difficulty in marital satisfaction lies with males understanding their gender role and how it conflicts with their gender ideology from past generations. Farmer (1985) found support for the idea that couples who hold a more traditional view of gender roles have an increased level of conflict. Spiker-Miller, and Kees (1995) feel the benefits men have enjoyed as a good provider (power of the purse, ultimate decision-making power, and freedom from domestic responsibilities) have been diminished, while further demands have been added involving their increased emotional investment in the family and their sharing of household responsibilities (p. 38). Are men truly ready for these added tasks?

It seems apparent men are not given the choice and are thrown into this situation without much guidance or societal support. These men become overloaded and are forced to figure out how to cope. But how are men coping with this new form of thinking and acting? Can it eventually affect their marital satisfaction?

### **Coping Strategies of Males in Dual-Career Families**

Individuals continually develop perceptual and/or behavioral coping strategies to prevent, reduce, divert, avoid, or control emotional stress (Paden & Buehler, 1995; Folkman, 1984; Good, 1960; McCubbin, 1979; Moos, 1984; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). The stress that arises from dealing with role overload and role conflict can put the dual-income male spouses at greater risk for physical and emotional problems.

Cohen and Wills (1995) proposed that, theoretically, coping mechanisms (e.g., use of social support) buffer the negative effects of role strain on individual well-being. The double ABCX model of family stress also suggests that coping resources moderate the family's responses to life events (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982). From these theoretical perspectives, coping can mitigate the effects of stressful events by modifying, strengthening, or developing family resources and perceptions, and by helping the family to adapt to the situation (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982).

Although coping most often has been conceptualized at the individual level, it is also considered at the family level. Family coping may be viewed as coordinating problem solving behaviors of the whole system (Klien & Hill, 1979), but it could also involve complementary efforts of individual family members, which fit together in a synergistic whole (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982).

In McCubbin, Thompson, and McCubbin (1996) work with families faced with a crisis, they identified four broad headings that characterize the ways in which coping facilitates adaptation. They are: 1) involve direct action to eliminate the number and intensity of demands created by illness, 2) involve direct action to acquire additional resources not already available to the family, 3) involve managing the tension associated with ongoing strains, and 4) involve family-level appraisal to create, shape, and evaluate meanings related to a situation to make it more constructive, manageable, and acceptable.

In summary, McCubbin, Thompson, and McCubbin (1996) found coping and problem solving may be directed at the reduction or elimination of stresses and hardships, the acquisition of additional resources, the ongoing management of family system tension, and shaping the appraisal at both the

situational and the schema level. These coping strategies are vitally important and often work simultaneously.

Unfortunately, little is known about the use and effectiveness of coping strategies used by men in dual-career families (Paden & Buehler, 1995). Researchers have found that active coping mechanisms that involve other (e.g., social support and external role redefinition), as well as cognitive restructuring, appear to be the most useful coping mechanisms for dual-income couples (Amateur & Fong-Beyette, 1987).

Paden and Buehler (1995) identified five different coping mechanisms which are very relevant and important to dual-career couples. Coping mechanisms provide the means to contend with difficulties and act to overcome them. These five coping mechanisms are: planning or organization, seeking support through talking to others or using social support, withdrawing or avoiding responsibility, cognitive restructuring, and limiting job responsibilities or subordinating one's career.

Planning involves structuring work and/or family activities by organizing, prioritizing, and working more efficiently. Seeking support through talking to others refers to communicating with others who can empathize with one's situation and provide a support system to relieve stresses. Withdrawing is defined as temporarily avoiding stressful situations and responsibilities to reduce tension. Cognitive restructuring refers to an individual's attempts to redefine stressful, negative situations as neutral or positive experiences. Limiting job responsibilities is defined as restricting participation in occupational activities (Paden & Buehler, 1995, p. 102-1-3).

Guelzow (1991) found that the use of cognitive restructuring was related to lower psychological stress, while limiting demands was linked to higher stress levels for men. Guinta and Compass (1993) found that husbands who coped by withdrawing had high levels of psychological symptomatology.

A study done by Bolger, Dealings, Kessler, and Wethington (1989) concluded that men have more trouble coping with the stress of home, children, and housework because they have not been socialized to this role.

These five coping mechanisms are the foundation of this study. The authors Skinner and McCubbin (1981) define a coping behavior as a specific effort (cover or overt) by which an individual family member or the family functioning as a whole attempts to reduce or manage a demand on the family system and bring resources to bear to manage the situation (p. 49). Specific coping behaviors may be grouped into patterns. These coping patterns are generalized ways of responding that transcend different kinds of stressful situations (McCubbin, Thompson, & McCubbin, 1996).

Skinner and McCubbin (1981) designed a test, The Dual Employed Coping Scale which was used in this study to address specific coping behaviors. The specific behaviors were categorized into four coping patterns. These patterns or subclass on the test are 1) Maintain a Family System, 2) Procurement of Support, 3) Modifying Roles and Standards, and 4) Maintain Perspective, reducing Tension. These patterns will be discussed in greater degree in chapters four and five.

Consequently, it is important to study different coping mechanisms and counseling strategies used with dual-career families. Through study and application of these different coping strategies we may be able to greatly reduce the risk of physical and emotional problems among dual-career families, and, in turn, establish stronger marital partners.

The purpose of this study is to examine two hypotheses. The null hypothesis states there is no relationship in dual-career families between male coping strategies and marital satisfaction. The alternative hypothesis states that men in dual-career families who adopt a significant level of coping

strategies will have a higher marriage satisfaction rate than males who do not exhibit a significant level of coping strategies.



## CHAPTER III

### Method

#### Subjects

The sample consists of 31 individual males who are currently in a dual-career family in a Midwest city in the state of Missouri. Participation was voluntary.

The sample is derived from the male population in St. Peters, Missouri. Using cluster sampling two out of seventeen elementary school in the district were chosen. The names of forty volunteer dual-career couples were obtained through a roster of educators from two elementary public schools within the same district. Using this volunteer sampling procedure ment that the profession of at least one partner in the dual-career family was that of an educator, either a male teacher or the husband of a female teacher.

In order to participate in the study the following criteria had to be met: (1) they must be married, (2) hold the minimum of a college degree, and (3) have held employment in a professional career throughout their marriage. A total of 31 subjects completed the survey questionnaire. The ethnic make-up of this sample consisted of all white males.

The results of this study must be cautiously discussed and reviewed with the following in mind: the limitation that at least one participant of each couple is a professional educator. This represents a small sample of the working population.

### **Instrument 1**

The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale {KMS} (See Appendix B) was developed in 1986, by Walter R. Schumm, Lois A. Paff-Bergen, Ruth C. Hatch, Felix C. Obiorah, Janette M. Copeland, Lori D. Meens, and Margaret A. Bugaighis. Its purpose was to measure marital satisfaction (Fischer and Corcoran, 1994). It was designed from the theories of Spanier & Cole (1976) and looks at conceptual differences between questions of spouse, marriage, and marital relationship satisfaction. This instrument consists of three questions: How satisfied are you with your marriage? How satisfied are you with your husband/wife as a spouse? How satisfied are you with your relationship with your husband/wife? (See Appendix B). Answers are reported on a seven point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7; (1 extremely dissatisfied, to 7 being extremely satisfied). Scores on each item were totaled to produce a final score ranging from 3 to 21. The higher the score the higher the marital satisfaction level.

The KMS shows excellent concurrent validity, and significantly correlates with the Dyadic Adjustment Scale and the Quality of Marriage Index. KMS also correlates with the measure of Marital Social Desirability, which suggests some degree of bias in responses. The KMS reliability shows an excellent internal consistency for a short scale. (Cronbach alpha is .93) (Schumm, Paff-Bergen, Hatch, Obiorah, Copeland, Meens, & Bugaighis, 1986).

### **Instrument 2**

The Dual Employed Coping Scale (DECS) was developed in 1991 by Dr. Hamilton and A. Thompson, from the University of Wisconsin. This test is a fifty-eight item instrument designed to measure the coping behaviors spouses find helpful in managing work and family roles when both partners are

employed outside the home. These specific behaviors have been categorized into four coping patterns which have emerged as significant from prior dual-employed family research and from previous coping studies. The DECS has four coping patterns: 1) maintaining the family system: (items in this pattern focus on coping behaviors utilized within the family system aimed at restructuring roles and maintaining the family system); 2) procurement of support: (this scale focuses on developing meaningful and supportive relationships outside the family as well as securing outside support, goods, and services); 3) modifying released standards: (these items focus on coping behaviors which attempt to accommodate work to family and family to work); 4) maintaining perspective/reducing tension: (these items focus on behaviors for reducing the perceived stress and demands of the present situation and believing in the value of the lifestyle). The DECS can also be used as an overall measure of coping by using the total score (Skinner & McCubbin, 1981).

To obtain a total score for DECS, the value of all the responses (i.e., Strongly Disagree = 1, Moderately Disagree = 2, Neither Agree nor Disagree = 3, Moderately Agree = 4, and Strongly Disagree = 5) should be totaled. For one of the items (45), however, the values should be reversed before totaling. The only information the authors provided on the norm that was the sample consisted of 60 individuals, half male and female. The DECS has very good internal consistency with an overall alpha of .86, as well as fair concurrent validity correlating with a measure of family adaptation (Skinner & McCubbin 1981). Skinner and McCubbin examined the intercorrelation matrix of the DECS scales and the patterns were found to correlate moderately. No additional Test-Retest or validity studies are available at this time (Skinner & McCubbin 1981).

### **Procedure**

This study took place in St. Peters, Missouri. The subjects of this study were a sample of convenience. The sample population was derived from two out of seventeen elementary schools in the district. This procedure resulted in the profession of at least one partner in the dual-career family being an educator, either male teacher, or the husband of a female teacher. Voluntary participants were individually contacted and briefed in person, on the nature and the requirements of this study (marital status, educational status, professional career) to assure their eligibility for this study. The male spouse was given a packet containing a cover letter (see Appendix A), a demographic sheet (see Appendix B), two questionnaires (see Appendix C), and an envelope addressed to the researcher. Respondents were instructed to complete the questionnaire individually, without consulting their spouse, and to return it to the researcher in the self-addressed envelope.

### **Data Analysis**

A Pearson correlation was computed between male coping strategies and marital satisfaction, in order to examine if a relationship exists between coping strategies and marital satisfaction.

## CHAPTER IV.

### Results

Descriptive statistics for the sample are displayed in Table 1. The mean number of years married for the sample was 11.87 years (with a standard deviation of 11.65). The maximum years married was 38 years and the minimum 1 year. One hundred percent of the males were white, non-Hispanic. Academic information of the sample indicated 61% were college graduates, 26% had their Masters, and 13% had their Masters Plus. Everyone in the survey made above \$50,001. Sixty-five percent of the men surveyed have children, 35% did not. When asked if they were participating in marriage or individual counseling, 10% said yes.

Descriptive statistics for the KMS and the DECS are also shown in Table 1. The mean score on the KMS was 18.09 (with a standard deviation of 4.10) given the maximum possible score of 21. This indicates the sample was in the "very satisfied" category on the instrument. Scores for the sample ranged from 3 to 21.

The mean score for the DECS was 185.74 reflecting that the sample utilized a higher level of coping behaviors than the norm of 162 reported by Skinner and McCubbin 1981. DECS scores for this sample reflect greater variability relative to the norm group.

Descriptive statistics for the DECS subscales are shown in Table 1. While there were slight differences between the sample and the norm group on the three subscales (maintaining family system, procuring support, and modifying roles and standards) no significant difference was proven. This slight difference shows the sample has maintained these same coping behaviors as the norm group of 1981.

When studying the sample's utilization of coping patterns aimed at maintaining perspective and reducing tension the mean scores for the sample in subscale IV was significantly lower than the norm group of 1981. These scores indicate that the sample group was less successful in ways to cope with the perceived stress and demands of the dual-career lifestyle.

Table 1  
Descriptive Statistics

(N=31)

Descriptive	Ave.		Standard Deviation	
	Sample	Norm	Sample	Norm
<b>KMS Scale</b>	18.09	18.27	4.10	2.72
<b>DECS Scale</b>	185.74	162.30	30.97	19.1
<b>Decs Subscale 1</b> (Maintain a Family System)	53.54	51.80	7.83	8.0
<b>DESC Subscale 2</b> (Procurement of Support)	15.96	17.80	7.95	5.3
<b>DECS Subscale 3</b> (Modifying Roles and Standards)	50.35	47.90	7.73	8.3
<b>DECS Subscale 4</b> (Maintaining Perspective, Reducing Tension)	35.96	44.80	7.92	5.4

The following statistics describe the relationship between the variables of dual-career coping behaviors and marital satisfaction. The Pearson correlation describes the magnitude or the degree and the direction of the relationship between two variables.

Table 2

Correlation of Study Variables

Correlation	DECS	Sub-Scale			
		1	2	3	4
KMS Pearson r	-.1050	-.1501	-.1522	-.0452	-.2695
P-value	.5740	.420	.414	.809	.143

\*\* $P \leq .05$

The highest correlation obtained was  $r = -0.2695$  for the relationship between KMS and DECS subscale 4 (Maintaining Perspective, reducing tension). However, this was rather low and not significant. Given that none of the correlations were significant, this would support the lack of a significant relationship between the KMS, the DECS, and its subscales.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

The results of this study must be cautiously discussed and generalized due to the limitation that at least one participant of each couple was a professional educator. The study failed to show a significant relationship between male coping skills and marital satisfaction.

With using such a narrow sample, the KMS scores fell in a restricted range of 18-21 on a scale of 3-21. This indicates that all men used in this sample were experiencing a high degree of marital satisfaction. There were no difference in scores between the sample group and the norm group of 1981, nor a significant relationship. The KMS tends to be biased because its a "self report" test. When looking at the figures of our country's divorce rate, this data does not seem to give an accurate representation. However, the fact that the men in the sample are married to educators or are educators themselves, could be the reason for the high scores.

Ninety-eight percent of the males in this study were married to a female in the teaching profession. According to Sears and Kennedy (1990) teachers generally possess certain personality characteristics. Without specifying the level of specialization (elementary, secondary, etc.), Lawrence concluded that the primary MBTI typology (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator) for educators was Sensing-Feeling-Judging (SFJ); the bipolar Extroversion-Introversion personality dimension, however, was found not to be material (1979).

Teachers who possess these personality characteristics of sensing and feeling tend to be interested in that which is real and factual. In addition, "feeling" individuals are generally adept at knowing what is important to others and at appreciating the sensitivities of interpersonal relationships. They



enjoy harmony and assume others do too. The personality characteristics of sensing and/or feeling could be the factors that are influencing a high marital satisfaction among the sample in this study. A spouse with these personality characteristics has an internal desire to insure harmony in this stressed life style of a dual-career.

As mentioned in the literature review (Apostal & Helland, 1993 and Smith & Reid, 1986) information on how men have been affected by this evolving dual-career lifestyle and how they are coping is limited and often outdated. The experience of men in nontraditional family structures is important for us to explore and understand because it represents a situation into which more men will eventually be drawn if present labor force trends continue.

Quality of the marital relationship of these couples is put to the test by themselves and others. When the pressure mounts and problems become unbearable, some divorce. Others are drawn closer together because of their common commitment to make this lifestyle choice work. Coping behaviors exhibited by men may prove to be a way to relieve stress of role overload. These coping behaviors are strategies being continuously developed and refined in the relationship to prevent, reduce, divert, avoid or control emotional stress. This study investigated this relationship between male coping strategies and marital satisfaction but failed to show a significant statistical relationship existed. Perhaps the next step in research is to investigate coping behaviors of males in dual-career couples in fields other than education.

Researchers have focused mainly on how women's roles have changed and how this has affected family life for both women and children. It will be impossible to fully understand the dynamics of the dual-career lifestyle unless more research is done on how this issue affects men. The impact the

dual-career lifestyle has had on men's careers and family roles should be a focus of further research.

### **Limitations**

The greatest weakness in this particular study was the biased sample. The entire sample was white, middle class, and one participant of each couple was married to an educator. A wider range of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds might have produced different results. In addition, a larger study sample may have resulted in a significant difference from the norm. The participants were primarily well-educated and had high-median incomes, thus the results may not represent dual-career families with household incomes under \$50,000. The most influencing variable in this study was the large percentage of males being married to a female educator.

As discussed earlier, teachers are most likely to possess the Sensing-Feeling-Judging characteristics from the Myers-Briggs typology. These characteristics may influence the females' decisions in their roles and expectations of their husbands' roles. Thus, these personality traits may be influencing factors that may or may not effect marital satisfaction. More research could analyze teachers' personality traits and how they effect their personal family lives or marital satisfaction.

### **Recommendations**

Regarding future studies in the area of this current study, the following ideas are offered. In a future study it would be relevant and beneficial to look at the length of marriage and male coping behaviors to see if there is a significant relationship between marital satisfaction and the variables of years in marriage.

In addition, literature has shown children can increase marital and family stress. It would be just as relevant to compare dual-career males with children verses dual career males without children to see if there is a significant relationship between their coping strategies and marital satisfaction rate.

Further studies on male's coping strategies and consideration of other variables related to marital satisfaction are needed for a better understanding of this dual-career population. Only then will we have a clearer understanding and be better able to address issues, for males, on marital problems in dual-career families.

**APPENDIX A:**

Marian Neumarker Petri  
98 Beachcomber Dr.  
Creve Coeur, Missouri 63146  
(314)872-3121

Dear Participant:

I am a graduate student at Lindenwood University. I am completing the last requirement which is a quantitative thesis.

Thank you for agreeing to fill out the attached questionnaire. As you know, you have been asked to fill out this questionnaire because you participate in a dual-income family. The questionnaire focuses on how you cope with all of the pressure of maintaining this lifestyle.

Enclosed is a Dual Employed Coping Scale (DECS) and the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale. I would appreciate it if you would take ten minutes of your time and complete these forms. The DECS is a list of statements. You rate whether you agree or disagree with each statement about your coping behaviors. On the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale you circle the appropriate response that describes you. Once you have completed all the forms, please place in the stamped addressed envelope and return to me.

I thank you for your participation in my research. In order to include your surveys in my study I will need your forms back by May 31, 1998.

Sincerely,

Marian Neumarker Petri

## Appendix B

### Demographic Survey

1. Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. What is your ethnic origin: American Indian \_\_\_\_\_  
 Black, Non-Hispanic \_\_\_\_\_  
 Hispanic \_\_\_\_\_  
 Asian \_\_\_\_\_  
 White, Non-Hispanic \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Number of years in current marriage: \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. What is your educational background:  
 High school Non-Grad. \_\_\_\_\_  
 High school Grad. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Some College \_\_\_\_\_  
 College Grad. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Masters \_\_\_\_\_  
 Masters + \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Household Income yearly:  
 Below \$10,000 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \$10,000 - 20,000 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \$20,001 - 30,000 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \$30,001 - 40,000 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \$40,001 - \$50,000 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Above \$50,001 \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. Do you have children? No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. Number of children living at home? \_\_\_\_\_
  
8. Are you participating in individual counseling? No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_
  
9. Are you participating in marriage counseling? No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMS)

Please circle the answer that describes you best on each question.

	Extremely dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Mixed	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied	Extremely satisfied
1. How satisfied are you with your marriage?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. How satisfied are you with your husband/ wife as a spouse?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. How satisfied are you with your relationship with your husband/ wife?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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## Appendix D

Sample Descriptive

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>YEARS MARRIED</b>	<b>CHILDREN</b>	<b>KMS SCORES</b>	<b>DECS SCORES</b>
M	32	1	19	192
M	37	1	21	185
M	3	1	19	209
M	38	1	21	156
M	9	1	21	277
M	19	1	18	200
M	5	1	21	195
M	8	1	20	192
M	25	1	3	178
M	3	1	18	180
M	8	1	21	183
M	17	1	18	256
M	33	1	21	186
M	7	1	16	227
M	4	1	19	210
M	10	1	8	203
M	21	1	10	207
M	8	1	18	189
M	5	1	21	194
M	4	1	18	190
M	32	0	21	164
M	1	0	21	153
M	5	0	18	175
M	1	0	20	151
M	3	0	17	178
M	4	0	18	121
M	5	0	17	170
M	3	0	18	173
M	5	0	18	151
M	1	0	21	152
M	12	0	21	161
<b>M=31</b>	<b>AVERAGE 11.87</b>	<b>YES=20 NO=11</b>	<b>AVERAGE 18.096</b>	<b>AVERAGE 185.741</b>

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