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Marital Separation and Its Relationship to the Working Status of Women

Linda Rae Hermelin

MARITAL SEPARATION
AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE
WORKING STATUS OF WOMEN

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An Abstract Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate
School of Lindenwood College in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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Abstract

This study was concerned with the working status of married women and what impact, if any, that work status had in motivating these women to initiate marital separation.

The methodology used in this culminating project was qualitative. Research was conducted through personal interviews of approximately one hour in length. The sample consisted of 15 women who volunteered to be part of this study, the majority of whom had participated in one of a number of divorce support groups co-facilitated by the researcher.

The intent of this study was to determine whether or not women who are working full time outside the home will initiate marital separation more often than women who did not work outside the home. The study also looked at women who worked part time outside the home prior to marital separation and what effect, if any, that had on initiating marital separation.

The researcher concluded that working full time is not a primary motivating factor for women to initiate marital separation. Fear of being alone

and losing their life styles were more impactful in keeping women in negative marriages longer than desired even when they were in a position to be self-supporting. This study also provides information about women's relationships with their former spouses, feelings about the work they were doing (in or out of the home), and the effects of working on self-esteem.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Married women have always "worked." Historically, prior to industrialization, that "work" was located in the home "producing goods and services for the family" (Greenstein, 1990, p.657) and caring for the children while her husband worked outside the home to provide for this family. Ulbrich (1988) described these defined gender roles as the characteristics of a complementary marriage. If a women worked outside the home, the chances were that she was single.

This traditional system changed dramatically after World War II. In our post-war society, more and more married women have entered the work force (Greenstein, 1990). According to Greenstein (1990),

> In the four decades following the war, the labor-force participation rate for married women increased with an annualized rate of 2.6% and by 1978 for the first time over half of all married women were in the paid labor force. Statistics for 1987 indicate that 55.8% of all married women either held a paying job or were looking for one (p.658).

This increase of married women in the labor force has created a new marriage pattern -- the two-income household (Ulbrich,1988), "a symmetrical marriage in which breadwinning and homemaking roles are shaped by both spouses" (Ulbrich, 1988, p.121). Children growing up in households today are experiencing families whose complexion bears little resemblance to those of merely two decades ago (MacKinnon, et al., 1982). New roles are being shaped. Day care has become a major business. While this transition is occurring, there will likely be stress for both spouses. This may be because "men and women are guided by the norms and values that define gender relations in complementary marriage while they are shaping alternatives to it" (Ulbrich, 1988, p.121), i.e., new value and norms for this shared-role marriage relationship.

Coupled with this increasing proportion of women in the work force is the dramatic and simultaneous rise in the post-war divorce rate in this country (Booth, et al, 1984; Greenstein, 1990). According to Greenstein (1990), "each of these rates [women in the work force and divorce] has doubled since the late 1940s" (p.657). This does not necessarily indicate a causal relationship, even

though on an individual level prior research does indicate a positive relationship between these two issues (Booth, et al, 1984; Greenstein, 1990). There is an economic theory that relates divorce rate with the business cycle, claiming that there is a rise in the divorce rates in times of prosperity and a reversal, or fall, in times of economic downturns (South, 1985). Empirically, however, studies done in post-war years and thus relevant to contemporary society have not been able to confirm this hypothesis (South, 1985). Until more data is available, this theory remains unproved. It is only within the last two decades that these variables have even begun to be explored, and more longitudinal research needs to be done.

Divorce is a complicated, multi-faceted, dynamic issue. It is difficult to pinpoint cause and effect in any one area. The research presents a confusing pattern. From one point of view it can be theorized that "there is something inherent in the employment of married women that serves to destabilize the marriage (Greenstein, 19990, p.661). Conversely, it can be argued that in marriages where conflict already exists, employment outside the home perhaps makes divorce more attractive and becomes a

facilitating factor" (Greenstein, 1990, p.661).

Marriage as an institution seems to be more positive for men than women. Research indicates that married men are happier, healthier, and live longer than single men and need marriage more than women do (Pines, 1988). For women, the data are more discouraging. Marriage is not so positive for women. Pines (1988) cites Jessie Bernard's The Future of Marriage (1983) in which Pines describes Bernard's references to studies indicating that

> wives lose self-esteem and a sense of personal identity because they conform to their husband's needs and expectations. Married women are more likely than married men to experience psychological stress, including depression, passivity, anxiety, phobias, and nervous breakdowns. Since single men showed more distress in these same areas, when compared with single women, the conclusion seems justified that marriage is harder on women than it is on men.

Further, more wives than husbands report feeling frustrated and dissatisfied with their marriages, while fewer wives than husbands report enjoying positive feelings

> of companionship; more wives than husbands seek marriage counseling and therapy; more wives regret their marriages; more wives consider separation and divorce; and more wives than husbands actually initiate divorce proceedings. After a divorce, women are far less eager than men to get married again (p. 124).

It remains to be seen whether or not a high incidence of working women and a high divorce rate are permanent trends in our society or cyclical. If the fact of women in the work force becomes a permanent norm, will the definition of marriage shift to include that phenomenon and make the necessary adjustments? If so, will that shift our expectations of marriage, blur the gender roles, and stabilize our relationships into new patterns? If women enter marriage already working, will that have an impact on the stability of the husband-wife dyad, or will dual-careers produce competition?

As we enter the nineties, married women in the workplace is a reality. Will these women stay in a marriage they do not want, or will they remove themselves? What is necessary to empower women to take the initiative to do the latter?

Purpose

The present study was designed to determine whether or not married women report a connection between the working status and their initiating separation from their spouses. An initial hypothesis was that working women will initiate separation from spouse more often than wives who do not work outside the home, and that women who work full-time will initiate separation from spouse more often than women who work part-time.

This study will also address whether or not there is a correspondence between women who work outside the home and the issues of self-esteem and empowerment.

Objectives

This study explored the issues of the working status of married women, feelings of self-worth as relates to working in or out of the home, the issue of empowerment as it relates to women's working status, and the issue of initiating or not initiating marital separation.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

Current research on whether or not there is a direct cause-effect relationship between married women in the workplace and divorce is sporadic and non-conclusive. Most research addresses the issue in an indirect way (Ambert, 1983; Booth, et al, 1984; D'Amico, 1983; Greenstein, 1990; Rankin & Maneker, 1987; South, 1985; Spitz, 1988; Yang & Lester, 1988). Conclusions can be conflicting. Greenstein (1990) noted that scholars in the first half of the twentieth century seemed convinced that "the empowerment of women in general, and of wives in particular, was linked to marital disruption" (p. 659). Further, Greenstein reported that other research did not confirm this hypothesis. Booth, Johnson,White, & Edwards (1984) confirmed that predicting a causal relationship between increases in women in the workplace and the divorce rates is premature "because little is known about the mechanisms through which female employment relates to marital instability" (p. 567). Yang & Lester (1988) differentiated between full-time employment and part-time in their research and concluded that

"divorce rates were higher in regions where more wives worked full-time" (p. 546). They also suggested that although a consequence of full-time employment possibly leads to higher risk of divorce, the alternative is equally compelling and needs examination. Perhaps wives who perceive themselves as candidates for divorce are more likely to enter the market as a way to protect themselves. Booth, et al (1984) agreed, stating that "the wife's starting employment may reflect the presence of marital instability" (p. 579). This concept challenges the cause-effect theory.

Statistical research in predicting divorce has only recently been looking at wives' incomes, i.e., only within the last two decades (Greenstein, 1990). Several research studies have examined wives' incomes in relationship to marital disruption (Booth, et al, 1984; D'Amico, 1983; Greenstein, 1990). Greenstein (1990) approached the problem by looking at three factors, two of which relate to wives' incomes. He explored wives' incomes, wives' earnings as they relate to husband's earnings, and the effects of the absence of the wife due to work. Historically, when these issues were examined there was a confusing and conflicting pattern of results;

very little research addresses simultaneously the issues of whether wives' working destabilizes the marriage or whether working facilitates divorce in an already conflicted relationship (Greenstein, 1990).

Greenstein's (1990) study does not corroborate the cause-effect theory. On the contrary, he finds that "there is no consistent positive effect of wives' earnings on marital disruption" (p. 674). Whatever negative effects wives' earnings may have on marital stability are offset by the stabilizing influence of that income. Spitze (1988) concurred, "Wife's employment may improve marital relations or solidarity by providing spouses with similar experiences and concerns" (p. 598). Greenstein (1990) concluded that "increases in the employment of married women are probably not the primary factor responsible for recent increases in the divorce rate (p. 674). They may in fact <u>decrease</u> the likelihood of marital disruption. A corollary to this is the fact that premarital employment may delay first marriages and thus reduce the probability of marital disruption.

D'Amico (1983) also looked at both husbands' and wives' incomes as they related to the

probability of marital dissolution from the perspective of disruptive competition as a result of wives' employment. D'Amico tested two theories, T. Parson's status competition and V. Oppenheimer's status maintenance.

Parson's theory, according to D'Amico (1983), states that "intrafamilial stress could result if both husband and wife were career-oriented. Such status competition...might threaten marital stability, and this, in typically functionalist fashion, might deter the wife from labor market pursuits and foster sex-role segregation within marriage" (p. 1187). Oppenheimer, according to D'Amico (1983), conversely postulated that "if one takes the family as a basic unit in the societal stratification system -- which Parson's surely does -- then the family's efforts to consolidate or enhance its status might impel the wife to seek employment" (p. 1187). In terms of marital instability, these two theories lead to conflicting deductions. Using Parson's model, one would deduce that "marital instability might <u>more</u> frequently occur, other things being equal, if spouses with roughly <u>equivalent</u> socioeconomic status (SES) both seek employment" (D'Amico, 1983, p. 1188). For

Oppenheimer, the opposite holds, i.e., "marital instability would be more frequent if spouses were employed in discrepant statuses" (D'Amico, 1983, p. 1188).

In terms of the effects of employment on marital instability, both theories agree that under varying circumstances wives' employment can have negative consequences for marital stability. It is in the specific circumstances where they differ.

> For Parson's, a wife's employment at wages competitive with her husband's generates conflict which could prove unsettling to the marital relationship. For Oppenheimer, by contrast, a wife's employment at relatively much lower wages defines a status inconsistency which can precipitate a stress-inducing power imbalance between spouses. (D'Amico, 1983, p. 1199)

Although D'Amico's (1983) results supported Oppenheimer's model, he admitted that there are no clear-cut findings and that status maintenance and status competition are not mutually exclusive. In fact, status competition emerged as a consideration in marital discord with women with higher relative potential wages more likely to suffer marital

disruption (D'Amico, 1983, p. 1202). Each theory may be more relevant depending on the sub-population. Parson's theory is perhaps more applicable to relationships where the male ego and feelings of self-worth are tenuous, whereas Oppenheimer's may apply more to relationships where the husband favors a more equal division of household labor (D'Amico, 1983).

South (1985) explored the divorce rate in more global terms by examining the theory that the divorce rate rises in times of prosperity and falls during economic downturns. A major factor here is the post-war change in the economic opportunities for married women. South cited several studies from the late 1970s and early 1980s establishing a link between the rise in divorce rate and economic opportunities for women. His references include Cherlin (1981) who maintained that working wives have the "economic wherewithal to dissolve unhappy marriages" (p. 32); Huber & Spitze (1980) who concluded that working wives are more likely to think about getting a divorce; Becher, et al (1977), Cherlin (1977, 1979), Mott & Moore (1979), and Ross & Sawhill (1975) who all confirmed that "wives whose earnings are higher relative to their

husbands' have an increased probability of experiencing marital dissolution" (p. 32); and Land & Felson (1977) who positively linked women's increase in the labor force with divorce trends. While South (1985) agreed that economic prosperity makes divorce more affordable, deteriorating economic conditions also place strains on the marriage relationship and therefore "it seems at least as likely that economic prosperity will reduce the divorce rate as raise it" (p. 33).

South's (1985) results contradicted the macro-theory that he was testing. To the contrary, he found that "the divorce rate tends to fall following periods of relative prosperity...and tends to rise following periods of economic contraction" (p. 35). In looking for an explanation, he concluded that the relationship between economic conditions and divorce has changed over time, specifically pre- and post-World War II. In theory, prosperity raises the affordable opportunity but can lower the motivation because there is a reduction in financial stress. Negative economic conditions, conversely, decrease affordability but can increase motivation by increasing levels of stress and tension. Social context plays a role. In pre-war

United States, where income was low and divorce expensive, economic expansion provided opportunity and facilitated divorce. In post-war United States, higher incomes, relatively lower costs for divorce, plus a more liberal climate relating to the reduced stigma attached to divorce and to the increasing numbers of women in the work place have all provided a context in which motivation to divorce overrides the opportunity factor. "Whereas the 'opportunity effect' of economic conditions dominated in the prewar period, the 'desire effect' dominates in contemporary America" (South, 1985, p. 39).

Spitze (1988) believed the opportunity factor and the desire factor both have an effect on divorce in our society. Employment not only increases the opportunity for divorce by increasing the wife's financial independence, but might also affect her desire for divorce by exposing her to "alternative marital partners or sources of fulfillment (p. 596).

Booth, et al (1984) limited their research to examining the effects of wives' outside employment on marital instability, as distinct from marital dissatisfaction and divorce. They believed this had to be studied before any causal relationship between a wife's outside employment and propensity for

divorce could be assumed. For them, a marriage that has ended in divorce has already stabilized. Marital instability, then, refers to a marriage that is unstable or shaky but not necessarily one that will culminate in divorce (although preliminary actions that may be taken prior to ending a marriage is one of their measures of instability). In defining marital instability, Booth, et al (1984) considered it to be the negative pole of a continuum measuring marital cohesion. "If a cohesive marriage has many forces binding the spouses together, an unstable marriage has forces pulling them apart" (p. 568). One factor may be the wife's income.

Once again, as we have seen in South (1985), there are two equally compelling views when looking at wives' income. While a woman's income can have an independence effect enabling her to leave a troubled marriage, her income can also enhance marital stability and offset the costs of an otherwise unsatisfactory marriage (Booth, et al, 1984).

In addition to wives' income, the authors looked at other family income, division of labor, spousal interaction, marital disagreement, and marital satisfaction. In their research on the

relationship between wife's employment and marital instability, Booth, et al (1984) assumed that these variables are causally ordered. Wife's income, for example, affects total family income. Regarding the relationship between employment and instability, their argument was as follows:

> The way we conceptualize work as influencing instability suggests that various aspects of the work experience (income, hours away from home, etc.) alter family structure (division of labor, spousal interaction), leading in turn to spousal disagreement. All these structural changes then affect marital satisfaction, which in turn affects marital instability. (p. 570)

This causal order is open to challenge. For example, marital satisfaction may be a cause of interaction rather than an effect. The authors, however, were mainly concerned with the relationship between employment and instability and believed the causal sequence would not alter their conclusions.

With respect to wife's income, Booth et al (1984) found no significant effect on marital happiness, but did find an important effect on marital instability. A wife's employment increases

marital instability "especially if her job entails working more than 40 hours per week" (Booth, et al, 1984, p. 581). Specifically, her income is an important factor in the erosion of stability. A wife's income cannot be directly and causally linked to divorce although there is some expectation that her income facilitates it. The independence effect arising from employment may also contribute as well, but for more subtle reasons than those focused on in this research (Booth, et al, 1984). Thus, although there is a link between women's employment and marital instability, whether or not this translates into higher divorce rates remains to be proved.

In a study on the relationship between a wife's employment status and marital duration to separation, Rankin & Maneker (1987) studied already divorced couples to determine whether or not wives' employment was a factor in reducing the length of time from marriage to separation as compared with marriages in which women were unemployed outside the home. Their hypothesis, "Duration of marriage to separation will be longer for housewives" (p. 94), was confirmed. They found that "housewives were more likely to be married over five years to the point of separation than were employed wives" (p.

102) except for wives who were married as teenagers, age 14 to 17. This finding was consistent with their expectations, i.e., women who do not work outside the home would be expected to incur greater economic costs in terms of vulnerability and greater emotional costs since it is assumed that those whose "career" is homemaking would be more committed to the institution of marriage. Important in this study was the control for children in the marriage which is an exacerbating variable.

Spitze (1988) reviewed research concerning the effects of women's employment on families. While the drawback of much of the research is neglect of minorities, working-class, and single-parent families, there is much to be gained from reviewing the work of the past decade. She covered the effects of women's employment on the formation and dissolution of marriage, marital quality, and health and well-being of spouses. She examined division of housework and how it relates to power and equity, interaction of husbands' and wives' jobs, effects on fertility, outcomes for children, and a brief look at relations with extended family members. She concluded with some suggestions regarding future trends and research directions.

Spitze's (1988) review confirmed the fact that there is no clear process through which wives' employment leads to higher divorce rates. On the contrary, employment may improve marital relations in many instances or be the result of, not the cause of, marital unhappiness (see Yang & Lester, 1988). Much of the polarity in the research is probably due to the fact that as the context for women's employment has changed, becoming more the norm, the effects of that employment have changed as well. Women's employment is a complex phenomenon with many characteristics each one of which has possible consequences. One thread that ran consistently throughout Spitze's (1988) review was that

> consequences of women's employment (e.g., for mental health, marital satisfaction, children's well-being) are favorable when women's employment status is consistent with theirs (and their husband's) preferences about it. In other words, women who are employed and who want to be employed are happiest. (p. 619)

While divorce tends to be a major occurrence in our present society, some research has followed up with studies on remarriage with some interesting

conclusions that may ameliorate the impact of divorce and women's employment in relationship to divorce. Marriage today seems to be redefined (Ambert, 1983; Bjorksten, 1984). The high marriage rate in the United States represents a strong commitment to the institution of marriage, but a lack of tolerance for unhappy or unfulfilling ones (Ambert, 1983; Bjorksten, 1984). According to Bjorksten,

> The focus of marriage today seems to be less family alliance and more couple happiness...These changes would seem to be the first steps leading to increased divorce and remarriage rates since couples will have less reason to tolerate an unfortunate marriage and more reason to attempt 'adjustment' by finding a more suitable partner... (p. 35)

thereby strengthening the marriage bonds through remarriage as opposed to destroying them.

An important component in this is the financial independence of women. Women with a lower remarriage rate are those who are financially secure and independent, i.e., a woman who "can fulfill all her material needs on her own, has a position which

gives her sufficient revenues to lead a life style that is secure and bereft of economic worries, and who has the security of employment" (Ambert, 1983, p. 45). These women behave differently toward potential mates and prefer to be alone rather than being unhappy with a partner. The financially independent woman "has alternatives, a sense of control over her destiny, has resources, all of which contribute to her self-esteem and sense of autonomy" (Ambert, 1983, p. 52). The issue of self-esteem relates to married women as well (Yang & Lester, 1988). In a study on the relationship between the participation of married women in the labor force, both part-time and full-time, and rates on personal violence (suicide and homicide), Yang and Lester (1988) postulated that employment may have positive value for married women by improving their self-esteem and sense of personal control. Yang and Lester corroborated Spitze's (1988) conclusions.

While past research tried to link women in the workplace with negative consequences, the literature relating to the impact of working mothers on children has some positive outcomes. Female children appreciate the importance of financial

independence (Wallerstein, 1987). Working mothers provide positive role models for their daughters. Pines (1988) found that

> daughters of working mothers were more likely than daughters whose mothers stayed home to choose their mothers as role models and as the people they most admired. Adolescent daughters of working mothers were active and autonomous and admired their mothers but were not unusually tied to them. For daughters of all ages, having a working mother meant seeing the world as a less restrictive place. (p. 117)

The literature suggests that the relationship between married women's employment and the divorce rate in this country is a complex and complicated issue with many polarized views and perspectives and one which deserves and requires further research and study.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not women who work full time outside the home will be more likely to initiate marital separation, as a result of their working, more often than women who do not work outside the home, and whether or not women who work part-time are similarly motivated to initiate marital separation. The specific concerns of this study included the following:

1. Did working full time motivate and empower women to initiate marital separation?
2. Is there a difference between women who work outside the home and women who do not in terms of which segment is more likely to initiate marital separation?
3. Did working outside the home or not working outside the home have an impact on the marital dyad?
4. Did working outside the home have an impact on the family?

5. Does the ability to support themselves motivate women to initiate marital separation?
6. Do women who work part-time correlate with women who work full-time or women who do not work outside the home, or are they different from both groups?
7. Did working outside the home affect a woman's self-esteem?
8. Did not working outside the home affect a woman's self-esteem?

The methodology employed in this study was an informal personal interview to determine the subjective data. The questionnaire was designed to facilitate the interview and provide demographic information.

Subjects

The subjects for this study were all female and were either separated or divorced from their husbands. Eligible candidates were contacted by phone by the researcher and asked to volunteer to participate in this study. The researcher explained the nature and purpose of this research study including cover letter, informed consent and

confidentiality. Eleven of the women had participated in one of four divorce support groups which the researcher had co-facilitated over the past three years. The fifteen subjects fit into one of three categories -- worked full-time, part-time, or not at all at least one year prior to marital separation. During the personal interview, participants were given the cover letter to read (see Appendix A) asked to read and sign the informed consent form, and asked to fill out the demographic questionnaire.

Of the fifteen women who participated in this research study, five had worked full-time prior to marital separation, five had worked part-time prior to marital separation, and five did not work outside the home prior to marital separation. All the women lived in the St. Louis metropolitan area.

The fifteen women were between the ages of 33 and 58 with a mean age of 44. Of the five full-time working women, the youngest was 41 and the oldest was 58 with a mean age of 47. Of the five part-time working women, the youngest was 33 and the oldest was 49 with a mean age of 41. Of the five non-working women, the youngest was 33 and the oldest was 58 with a mean age of 44.

In terms of the age of the women when they separated from their husbands, the youngest age for the total group was 30 and the oldest age was 57 with a mean age of 39. In the full-time working women category, the youngest age at time of separation was 30 and the oldest age was 41 with a mean age of 37. In the part-time working category, the youngest age was 31 and the oldest age was 47 with a mean age of 39. Within the group of women who did not work during the marriage, the youngest age was 30 and the oldest age was 57 with a mean age of 41.

There were 13 white women and 2 black women in this study. The two black women each worked full time during their respective marriages. All of the women who worked part time and those who did not work were white. Ten of the women were divorced from their husbands, four were separated, and one had remarried. Of the full-time working women, four were divorced and one was separated. Of the part-time working women, two were divorced, two were separated, and one was remarried. Of the non-working women, four were divorced and one was separated.

Thirteen of the 15 women had children; two were

childless. There was a total of 36 children, 20 males and 16 females. All of the full-time working women had children with a total of 17, nine males and eight females. One of the part-time working women had no children; the other four had a total of eight children, six males and two females. One of the non-working women had no children; the other four had a total of 11 children, five males and six females.

At the time of separation, the youngest aged child was three, the oldest 34, with a mean age of 14. Of the full-time working mothers, the youngest aged child was seven, the oldest, 16, with a mean age of 12. Of the part-time working mothers, the youngest aged child was three, the oldest, 17, with a mean age of 11. Of the non-working mothers, the youngest aged child was three, the oldest, 34, with a mean age of 22.

In terms of the total number of years married before separation, the longest was 36 and the shortest was six and a half, with a mean of 15.6 years. The longest term marriage prior to separation among the full-time working women was 18, the shortest, 12 with a mean of 15. The longest term marriage prior to separation among the

part-time working women was 23, the shortest four, with a mean of 14.3. The longest term marriage prior to separation among the non-working women was 36, the shortest six and a half, with a mean of 16.9.

Of the ten women who worked either full or part time prior to separation, the greatest number of years worked was 18, the least four, with a mean of 10.8 years. Of the five full-time working women, the greatest number of years worked was 18, the least four, with a mean of 12.6 years. Of the five part-time working women, the greatest number of years worked was 18, the least four, with a mean of nine years.

The majority of the women, 11 out of 15, had personal income at the time of separation of between $0 and $10,000. Of that 11, two worked full time, four worked part time, and five did not work. One full-time working woman had personal income of between $10,000 and $20,000.

One full-time and one part-time working woman each had personal income between $40,000 and $50,000. [The woman who worked part-time had received an inheritance that generated investment income. Her working actually provided her with income between $0

and $10,000.] One full-time working woman had personal income over $50,000.

With regard to highest level of education completed, three of the women finished high school, one had attended vocational/technical school, one had an A.A. degree, seven had either a B.A. or B.S degree, and three had a graduate or professional degree. Of those who had completed high school, two worked full time and one did not work. The woman who had attended vocational/technical school and the woman who had the A.A. degree both were non-working wives. Of those who had B.A. or B.S. degrees, two worked full time, three worked part time, and two did not work prior to separation. Of those holding graduate or professional degrees, one worked full time and two worked part time.

In terms of which spouse initiated marital separation, seven women indicated that they did and eight indicated that their husbands did. Of the full-time working women, four of the five women initiated marital separation. Of the part-time working women, only one initiated marital separation. Of the non-working wives, two of the five initiated marital separation.

Procedure

The following procedures were used in the study:

1. Eligible women were located either from among participants in one of four divorce support groups co-facilitated by the researcher or by referral.
2. The women were contacted by phone, an explanation of the research was presented, and five women for each category, i.e., whether or not they worked full time, part time, or not at all during the period prior to marital separation, were selected. The two black women were referrals from two of the women in the study.
3. After determining which women would be included in the study, the women were contacted by phone and a personal interview was arranged. The interviews were conducted in the homes of the women except for one whose interview was at her place of employment and two who were interviewed in the researcher's home. The interviews were one hour in length

with only the researcher and the woman present. The interviews were audio-tape recorded and later transcribed by the researcher.

4. Before commencing with the interview, each woman was presented with an announcement to read about the project (Appendix A). Next she was requested to sign an informed consent form (Appendix B) stating the basic purpose of the research and securing her agreement to participate in a confidential study. After signing this, she was requested to fill out a personal data sheet (Appendix C) developed for this study by the researcher to provide demographic information.
5. The women were then interviewed according to the interview format (Appendix D).
6. The researcher transcribed each interview verbatim which then provided the basis for an analysis of the relationship between the working status of women and the initiation of marital

separation.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis and Results

After examining the data from the interviews, the researcher classified the women into categories according to work status prior to separation to determine whether or not there was any pattern unique to each sub-group.

Full-time Working Women

The women who worked full time had a variety of careers during their marriages. One was a nurse, one a school counselor, one a unit secretary at a hospital, one worked for a cleaners, and one worked in public relations for a major St. Louis company. With the exception of the latter, none of the women had high income-producing jobs. None of the women in the study had professional careers. When asked to describe their relationships with their husbands, the most common response was polar ambivalence, that the marriage was both good and bad. One woman explained:

> I would say that it alternated between being enjoyable and fun and being filled with

> conflict, moodiness, and anger on both sides. At those times I would describe it as an emotionally abusive relationship from him...We had no way of resolving conflict.

Another said:

> I think he was unable to communicate...and I think I just assumed that the marriage was great and found out one day that the marriage wasn't great for him.

A third recounted:

> At first it was real good...After five years he wanted to fight. He would fight and he would drink. Men are users; they take kindness for weakness.

When asked how their working affected their relationships with their husbands, the consensus was that working did not affect the relationship, in fact, some husbands were supportive and expected that their wives would help out financially. One woman experienced some ambivalence, however:

> Outwardly he seemed very supportive in some ways, and I think in other ways I think my competence in the workplace sort of undermined this whole issue of his own feelings about himself.

While working did not seem to impact their relationships with their husbands, the marriages were impacted. As one woman explained:

> I think it did give me a sense of being a completely equal partner in the marriage and that I should have had the power to be an equal decision maker about certain things.

Equality was also an aspect in another woman's marriage:

> He supported my working by being an equal partner in getting other things done.

Working brought in extra money that was often needed and prevented complete dependency:

> If he brought money we needed it and if he didn't it wasn't like we was going to starve.

In general, the women not only liked the work they were doing, but found working to have positive value. One woman felt it was a way to relieve stress from the marriage. Another considered it a challenge that provided her with growth, enabling her to put her background to the test every day. Working fed a need for one woman to "be a caregiver all day long and get paid for it." One woman summed it up for herself this way:

> If you came to work and you didn't have enough money to eat lunch, you had two or three friends if they had two or three dollars, hey, they bought lunch; we all ate...So it was just like a family in a family.

Four out of the five women who worked full time indicated that they initiated marital separation. Reasons for ending the marriage were varied, but all knew when it was over. One woman summed up the process:

> Like I said, I think everything that he did, you know, was like cutting through this table [at which she was seated], eventually it's going to go all the way through. With the last thing, it's going to come apart.

None of the women impulsively ended their marriages even though all believed they could support themselves and that working made it easier. There was a lot of ambivalence for years before the final break, but when the time came, there was no indecision. One woman recounted:

> I thought about divorce from about the time my daughter was two on. I was very unhappy in my marriage but then we had these moments

> of having very good times together...but my husband did something that I felt was just so crazy and off the wall and so self-destructive that I just couldn't see me attached to a person who would do something like that.

Another was married eighteen years before she separated. It was the emotional illness of her son that triggered her action:

> We started going through some family stuff at Hyland and I began to take a very very close look at our family...began exploring the marital relationship and those problems, the problems with the kids and realized it wasn't just making me sick, it was making the kids sick, too. They were subject to the same behaviors I was, the withdrawal and the silence and anger, exposed to that.

One woman who stayed married seventeen years before separating commented:

> You get in a situation where my father always said, or my mom, if you make your bed hard you have to lie in it and then a whole lot of time things don't go right but you're there in the situation and you have kids,

> some in school, some not in school, and you just put up with a whole lot because I should not have stayed with him seventeen years

One woman reached a point of no return:

> I'd had it, you know, up to here. I had had it. You know sometimes I don't remember the thing that really set it off. I don't even remember what it was. It seems so unimportant this time, but at that time it was important to me.

One of the major concerns expressed when deciding to end a marriage was fear. Although the women could support themselves, financial security was not strong enough to overcome the emotional factor of being alone. One woman recalled:

> I think I was afraid to be alone on my own with three kids even though I had a full time job and could have supported myself and the kids...You're attached in the physical and you're very dependent on that person. Even though they might not do much in the house, there's another adult person there. And it's very difficult to think that, the security that that implies, although there

> wasn't really much security when you look at it more closely.

Another woman echoed her same sentiments:

> I think the two major feelings I had...when I finally separated from my husband were relief and terror because it was so scary to be on my own. It was so scary to be responsible for those home repairs and to worry that I might have done some kind of irreparable damage to my child by separating. It was really scary.

On the other hand, this same woman felt that working gave her confidence, too, to overcome her fear:

> Although I had some sort of irrational feelings that "Oh, I can't really support myself" and so on, rationally I knew that I'd always been able to find a job and that even if this particular job didn't work out that I could grit my teeth and find some job to do and be able to support myself and my child.

Neither of the black women mentioned the fear factor when discussing separation. Their marriages were more intensely conflicted. Both mentioned

drinking and arguing as common occurrences. As one woman concluded:

> A lot of men start arguing to keep you from asking too much about their business, you know...So, if he started an argument about something then he wouldn't have to answer to nothing, you know.

Although both women struggled to keep their marriages intact, separation for these women, when it finally happened, was a clear, pragmatic decision. One woman stated her philosophy:

> I believe black women are strong[sic] when it comes to leaving men than most white women are, from what I've read...White women have more to lose.

Later she stated that she went to work two years before she finally left to plan ahead because "I was going to have to have a job." [as suggested by Booth, et al, 1984]. She continued:

> I needed the job for more than one reason. The fact that I left home. I knew it was over, and I knew I'd have to be alone.

One of the complications for all the women was their children. Caring for them was an unquestioned and accepted responsibility:

> A lot of people say you have to take care of the kids and the men. A man has got to have part of your time. You know, you try to blame the woman, but you still have to take care of those kids, so I didn't blame myself for having to do this.

All the women clearly viewed their jobs as positive for their self-esteem. Working gave them confidence, a feeling of competence, positive feedback, and financial independence. One woman felt that she stayed married longer [as suggested by Booth, et al, 1984] because her marriage did not provide her with enough validation whereas her work did. (She also stated that working enabled her to be healthier when the marriage finally did end.) One of the women sums up the general feelings of all the women who worked full time during their marriages:

> It made me feel much better. No matter what you're doing, when you have your own money coming in, you're doing a lot better. You feel a lot better when you don't have to depend on somebody for everything. It makes you feel a lot better.

Part-time Working Women

The jobs held by the women who worked part time during their marriages included jewelry saleswoman, contract therapist with a small private practice, marketing coordinator for an architectural firm, office manager for a psychologist and a counselor, and a parent educator in the Parents as Teachers program for a county school district. With the exception of the therapist, none had the potential to be highly income producing as full-time work. These women described their relationships with their husbands much as the women who worked full time, i.e., positive at the beginning, often for many years, and negative near the end, with swings between these two polarities. Emotional withdrawal, passivity, and poor communication were complaints by several of the women. As one woman described:

> The longer we stayed together, the less interest he seemed to take in me and my life, and he seemed to withdraw emotionally from the relationship. He seemed to shut down. He never had very good communication skills.

Another reported:

> I think he was very passive and a lot of

> things didn't get said or didn't get done or didn't get thought about perhaps and so the communication was not nearly as well [sic] as I thought and I guess I took a dominant role when things didn't get done.

One woman described her husband as "cold, unemotional and unaffectionate". Having been rejected physically by her husband, who was also having affairs, she described verbal abuse as well:

> He just ripped me apart verbally all the time telling me I was fat, stupid, ugly, a terrible mother, a terrible wife, a terrible cook, a terrible housekeeper.

Other relationships changed after major life cycle events. One woman pinpointed the birth of their child after 17 years of marriage as the turning point:

> It started to go sour after we finally had a child after 17 years of marriage and the system changed and I didn't take care of him anymore. I didn't treat him like my child anymore. I didn't nurture him. I wasn't there for him in the same way that I had been before.

Another described it this way:

> At a certain point [my husband] sold [his] company. He had a contract to work for them, but they fired him, his sister died, and he had a heart attack all in that time span and he began to feel I guess in retrospect worthless. And he sat around and didn't work for three years and I lost a lot of respect for him and he decided he would be better off if he just started all over again...I now feel that he was right, that I had really fallen out of love with him and that he wanted a place where he could feel more loved and I wasn't giving it.

Similar to women who worked full time, several women who worked part time during the marriage considered themselves the dominant partner in their marriages, taking on the leadership role often out of necessity. One woman recounted:

> I guess I took on a more dominant role when things didn't get done.

Another said:

> I'm a stronger person than he is...I just overwhelmed him...I was too strong a person for him.

And another:

> I was the more stable, stronger, leader person.

When asked how working affected their relationships with their husbands, the responses were varied. Two women felt that it made no difference whether they worked or not. Neither felt her job was a threat to her marriage. One woman said her husband encouraged her working, but minimized and discounted it:

> Unless I was doing something where I was bringing home a lot of money, I think he thought the job was just playing...just a time filler to him.

For other women, there was an impact on the relationship. One husband felt threatened by the part- time work his wife was doing:

> I think it might have been in his unconscious mind that I was going to soar far and above him at some point...I have a business sense and I have the ability in our world to be very successful in a way that he doesn't.

For another, there was a positive effect to her relationship with her husband:

> It was something for me to do; it was money

that we really needed.

One woman felt a lot of pressure, not only to work, but to be successful at it quickly, as she had been for much of the marriage before the birth of her child. She felt the stress of this unrealistic expectation and the strain it placed on the relationship:

> I think he was glad to have me working, but I think he expected the same level of performance and emotionally that he expected before the child was born and that was impossible for me.

All of the women has positive feelings about the work they were doing, similar to the women who worked full time. One, however, had some underlying anger at what she perceived to be society's flaw:

> We live in a society that doesn't value motherhood and staying at home. It doesn't matter what people say, this culture doesn't value women and children and so the only way you can prove your identity is by that paycheck...Otherwise there would be decent daycare, more opportunities for women and children.

When asked what impact their working had on

their marriages, the women reiterated much of what they said about the effect on their relationships with their husbands. Two women felt that there was no imposition on their marriages in terms of time or routine. One woman said working had a positive impact, and another that it was essential to her marriage in terms of earning money. Another stated that working part time restricted her financially more than working full time and kept her in her marriage longer than perhaps she might have stayed if she had been working full time. She qualified this statement by saying that she also kept thinking that maybe they could work it out. Her childhood experiences revealed her real fears:

> In my mind, when you get divorced, you kind of have to pretend that that person is dead. Even if they have to pay child support, I have to go on the assumption that he's not going to pay and that I'm going to have to support these children because I lived through that where my biological father chose not to pay child support so I know that the courts can't really help so I'm not in the rush that I might have been had I been working full time.

Although all the women had problems in their marriages, only one of the five actually initiated marital separation and she never intended to follow through with divorce. She explained:

> My idea behind the separation was strictly to absolutely scare him to death to force him back into counseling which hadn't worked before obviously because he had lied through the whole thing, but to scare him sufficiently so that he would do something in terms of our marriage.

Among the other four women, all of whose husbands had committed adultery, only one stated that she was trapped financially and was therefore unable to consider separating even though she believed on one level in trying to make the marriage work and was in counseling. The other three women stated that working was not a factor in deciding whether or not to initiate marital separation. Commitment to marriage was a strong motivating factor for these women. One woman said that in spite of her unhappiness, she did not think that she "would ever have considered separation or divorce regardless of work or not work." Another woman, who could have gotten full time work and supported

herself, said that that did not matter to her. She explained:

> I still just didn't want to be divorced. I did okay as a divorced person, I'm doing okay now, but I didn't get remarried because I was afraid of being single. But I sure didn't want to be single. I was really afraid of that. I just think that most of my social life as I see it in retrospect depended on me being part of that couple...I didn't want all of that lifestyle to change.

Another woman was more emphatic:

> I believe in marriage and I don't believe in divorce. I believe that people make mistakes.. We live in a disposable society and one of the things we dispose of is marriage because maybe there's something better that'll come along. But you have to look at what you think you had in the beginning and try to make it better and try to take those things that you enjoyed and were positive with the other person and renegotiate it and it would be as though coming apart and realigning it in a different way...I never wanted to put my

> children through that trauma...I don't think the studies are back yet on what the real impact is on this whole generation of children.

Concurring with the women who worked full time, these women all stated that work had a positive effect on their self-esteem and made them feel good about themselves. One woman described work as a place where

> I had success in a least a portion of my life, that people liked being with...where I got a lot of nurturing, a lot of support from the people that I worked with, a lot of positive feedback. It made me feel good.

Another summed it up like this:

> It made me feel that this is the starting point for the rest of my life.

Non-Working Women

The women who did not work during their marriages prior to marital separation had mixed comments when asked to describe their relationships with their husbands. Three described relationships similar to the women who worked full and part time, i.e., happy early in the marriage, but strained, non-communicative, and emotionally distant in the

later years. As one woman explained:

> He's a very secretive person and was not able to communicate, but I'd sort of grown used to that and I buried my head I'm sure the last couple of years.

Another stated it this way:

> Not being there for me. I was lonely. I was married, but I was lonely.

Two of the women had marriages that were negative almost from the beginning. One woman admitted:

> I married him but I didn't love him...I think for a lot of reasons I got married, but we had never really established any kind of a relationship or friendship..I knew from the very beginning that I wasn't happy.

Another described her relationship as "stormy." She recounted:

> When I agreed with what he wanted then everything was fine, but if I had an opinion or if my opinion differed from his, then he took offense and got angry.

When asked about the effects of their not working on the relationships with their husbands, all of the women described dependency as the major

effect, financially as well as emotionally. One woman explained:

> With my husband, it made me depend on him more. He felt that money was his; it was not our money and I would have to ask for money.

Another echoed her:

> He said that it was his money and that he was going to spend it and he deserved it.

Another woman described her dependency as follows:

> I was looking to [my husband] to be my everything, to be everything for me, and I think probably if I had had other things like a job or that kind of thing it may have taken some of the pressure off of him. I think I had unrealistic expectations from a man.

One woman stated that lack of respect from her husband was an effect of her not working:

> I think he lost respect for me when I stopped teaching even though it was just part time.. And the fact that I was a very busy volunteer with various organizations, he didn't have any respect or admiration for

> that. Not to mention mothering or homemaking.

In spite of the dependency, four of the women, all of whom have children, felt good about staying home and not working. Being a mother was an important value. As one woman stated:

> I just always knew that I would be an at-home mom. I really felt that that was important.

Another said:

> I was happy being at home for my kids and doing everything schoolwise and being involved in their lives.

And another:

> I felt that my son really needed me...I always felt good about not having to work outside the home.

The woman who had no children contrasted sharply with the others. She did not like not working or not having her own money. When asked how she felt about not working outside the home she said:

> Trapped. Like I had nowhere to go, like I was enslaved to this person.

Although four of the five women felt good about

being at home, they also felt that not working had a negative impact on their marriages. One woman said the power balance in the marriage was lost:

> He started getting more and more control over the relationship...Everything should revolve around his work schedule because obviously I was worthless if I didn't have a work schedule to revolve around.

Another said:

> I think it's going to be my working outside the home now that's going to be a positive growth experience for me. Maybe if I had done that earlier I would have been in a different situation.

One woman said that not working delayed her divorce because she was not in the job market:

> I think if I would have been out working, I probably would have divorced him a lot sooner.

Once again, the woman who had no children contrasted strongly with the others. Not working made her nervous and anxiety driven. Her reaction reflected the dynamics of her marriage:

> I always felt that I would be deserted if I didn't have my own money, my own

> independence, my own career. And he encouraged me not to have those things, and he didn't want me to have a lot of friends; he didn't want me to see the family. It was like a real dependence sort of thing. He wanted total control over every aspect of my life...There were instances of abuse.

The women were split in their responses to the question of whether or not working impacted their decision to separate or not to separate. Three of the women said that not working outside the home either delayed or prevented them from initiating marital separation, that had they been working, the marriages would have ended sooner. Said one woman:

> I didn't initiate it because I didn't have income and I didn't know what was going to happen to me. If I would have been actively working at the time, having my own independent income, I would have left him in a flash, a lot sooner...I stayed around because I was comfortable, longer than I should have.

Another woman reiterated a similar belief:

> I think if I would have been out working, I probably would have divorced him a lot

> sooner...[Not working] made it later since I was home and not out in the job market.

Two women said they would not have initiated marital separation whether or not they were working outside the home. For one, her religious beliefs prevented that as an option:

> I was raised Catholic and even if he had had an affair that I knew of it was not my place to leave, and I would have tried to work something out, and I would have stuck it out short of him beating me. Had he been physical, I would have done something. But otherwise I have these six fabulous children, I had a great life in every area except for him so I thought, eh, so what, it's not such a good deal, but I've got a lot of other things going so I would not have ever left because of my faith.

The other woman did not want to repeat a divorce:

> It was important to me to keep up our family structure. Having been married previously and then ending in divorce, I certainly didn't want that to happen again. And it was just important to me to provide a stable

> family life for our son. In addition to that, I also didn't want the failure of a second marriage.

Once again the women were split 3-2 in terms of the impact not working had on their self-esteem. Three of the women felt there was not much impact. One of the women recalled:

> I have a lot of friends who work, and two sisters-in-law who work, and I remember one suggesting that no woman could be fulfilled unless she went out and worked and I resented that. I felt I was very busy, I was productive. It did not lower my self-esteem.

Another stated:

> I don't think that just having a job gives you self-esteem. I was doing enough other things that I had confidence and felt good about myself. I wasn't getting a salary, but I was getting other rewards by volunteer work and everything that I was doing. I thought [being a mom] was an important job and something that I always wanted to do.

For the other two women, feelings of self-esteem were similar to those of the full-time

and part-time working women. High self-esteem was associated with working. One woman said:

> I think that you get your sense of self-esteem from a lot of different places. And I don't think I got a lot of good positive stuff from my parents when I was growing up so I think that working outside the home would have been a good place for me to have gotten that...I would recommend to any woman to not get married unless you're going to have your own career.

The other woman felt her self-esteem was "low, very low" as a result of not working and had strong feelings about working during marriage:

> I think that women should always have an option and not allow themselves to become dominated or dependent. I know a lot of women want to be full-time mothers and stay in the home and that's great. But I think they should at least work ten hours a week or just keep up their skills so that if something happens that they're not just staying simply for the money and the security.

An issue that came up in all three sub-groups

was that of husbands' infidelity. The women either knew or suspected that this was happening.

Chapter Five

Discussion

What is clear from the data analysis is that there are no clear-cut answers to the assumption of a connection between the working status of married women and their initiating marital separation. While there has been an increase in both the number of married women in the workplace and the divorce rate in this country, there is no conclusive evidence linking them in a cause-effect sequence, although there is a definite relationship which was confirmed by this study.

Although the majority of working women (four out of five) in this study did in fact initiate marital separation more often than the part-time working women (one out of five) or non-working women (two out of five), thus appearing to confirm the hypothesis, their motivations were diverse and psychologically complex. Working did not appear to be the primary factor in initiating marital separation, rather more the factor that made separation easier when in fact it did occur. Working

women (both full and part time) as well as non-working women were resistant to ending their marriages for a variety of reasons not the least of which was an underlying fear of being alone without the security of a partner. In fact, there were stronger pulls to stay married than to leave in spite of the ability or the potential to provide for personal financial support. While the women who worked could provide for their survival needs, i.e., food and shelter, the marriages, even though not happy, seemed to provide for some more basic psychological needs that were strong and compelling enough to prevent or postpone a split. The majority of these women remained married long after feeling that the marriage was not fulfilling.

Another variable is the claim by some of the non-working women that they would not have initiated marital separation even if they had been working full time. For these women, the pulls to stay married seemed not to depend on whether or not they could support themselves, but on other more dominant factors, such as strong religious beliefs. Contrasting this, however, is the claim by other non-working women that had they been working, they would have initiated marital separation. Further

study is needed to unravel this complex issue.

Another issue which this researcher believes impacted decision-making was the care and consideration of children. For all of the women who had children, this was an overriding factor to consider. None of the women who had children put their own needs before those of their children. In fact, one woman who worked full time throughout her marriage and whose income was about equal with her husband's, left the marriage when it became increasingly clear that the marriage was having a deleterious effect upon her son. For her, as with others, often there was a single issue, unrelated to work status, that pushed those who initiated separation into doing so in spite of enduring years of unhappiness.

There was also a clear distinction between the working women and non-working women in terms of dependency. Working, even part time, appears to have provided the women with some empowerment at home. The power balance in the marriage was more equal for these women than for those who depended solely on their husbands for their support. Even having a small source of income, as with the women who worked part time, seemed to provide a feeling of

less dependency and less skewed power imbalance though not as much as for the women who worked full time. This seems to corroborate Rankin & Maneker's (1987) observations.

All of the women who worked either full time or part time confirmed the expectation that working was a positive aspect in their lives and a source of personal validation, self-esteem, positive identity, and confidence, confirming Yang & Lester (1988). The consensus was that even women who preferred to be full-time mothers should have some source of income other than their husbands in order to provide some independence, maintain skills and a foothold in the workplace, and as a prophylactic measure against the financial problems of a possible divorce. Working seemed to facilitate a greater internal locus of control for those who worked both full time and part time and a greater sense of emotional security. This, too, corroborates Yang & Lester (1988).

The issue of self-esteem was not as sharply defined for the non-working women. There was a split regarding where they derived self-esteem with only two feeling that the role of wife and mother related positively to their self-esteem and they

were somewhat defensive around the issue. The other three corroborated what the full time and part time working women stated.

For the majority of the women, the marriages were ambivalent, both positive and negative, as was expected. The women appeared willing to tolerate and cope with the negatives because there was some positive balance. Deciding to end a marriage was a painful struggle not easily reached and more complicated than the ability to be financially able.

Conclusion

The issue of factors contributing to marital separation is a intricate and complicated one. There are a myriad of forces at work in a marriage, both external and internal. These are woven into a relationship between a husband and wife. The decision to end a marriage is fraught with pain, indecision, confusion, ambivalence, and fear. Although the data in this study seems to corroborate the hypothesis that women who work full time during their marriages will be more likely to initiate marital separation more often than women who either work part time or who do not work at all, nevertheless a closer examination reveals that the

correlation is coincidental rather than causal and that a reductionist approach to this issue is inconclusive and misleading. Being able to support oneself does not appear to be the motivating factor to end a marriage. The reasons are far more complex. Marriage provides an identity, security, and a way to meet psychological needs that are that are difficult to resist and powerful to overcome.

Although there is a high incidence of married women in the workplace as well as a high rate of divorce in this country, there is no current statistical data linking the two in a cause-effect sequence. What seems to be confirmed is the positive effects working has on women in terms of self-esteem and feeling independent and more empowered. For children, especially daughters, working mothers provide a positive role model for them to emulate. Children will be more independent and self-sufficient.

Further research into the impact of working women and marital separation is necessary and recommended with regard to the following variables:

1. The population sample was small. A larger sample size is necessary to get a

broader representation.

2. The issue of infidelity was so prevalent that further exploration into the dynamics of this phenomenon is needed.
3. Since none of the women in this study were professional women and the majority (80%) earned less than $20,000, further study with a more diverse and higher wage-earning population would give a broader base to this study.
4. The study of black women and other minorities should be examined for cultural differences that may exist.

Married women who work outside the home have become a permanent phenomenon in our society. As this becomes the norm, reflected in today's more symmetrical marriages, the power imbalance of the traditional complementary marriage will shift and become more equal, especially as women enter marriages already employed. The causes of marital separation will be less focused on women's work status and more on the complex and often underlying psychological issues. As a society, we need to support these women and facilitate conditions to make this a positive aspect in our culture as well

as support those women who choose the role of non-working wife/mother. There can be room for both.

Appendix A

Dear Participant,

I am a student at Lindenwood College completing my Masters degree in Counseling Psychology. In order to graduate, I must do a research project. I have chosen to do a qualitative study examining the work status of married women and initiation of marital separation. I will interview women who worked full time, part time, and those who did not work during the marriage prior to marital separation and analyze the data.

I appreciate your participation in the project.

Sincerely,

Linda Hermelin

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

This qualitative research project is designed to study work status of married women and initiation of marital separation. This project is a requirement for a Masters program in counseling at Lindenwood College, St. Charles, MO.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary. I understand that the project has been designed to assure confidentiality of the information received. The data will be reported in a thesis and all questionnaires and tapes will be disposed of after completion of the project. My signature on this page indicated that I have given informed consent to participate in this project.

_____ _____

Signature Date

Linda Hermelin
78 Lake Forest
St.Louis, MO 63117
314-647-5781

Appendix C

Demographic Data Questionnaire

Your responses to the questions on this questionnaire will be used in a study of work status of married women and the initiation of marital separation. The responses will be summarized for research purposes and individual responses will not be identified. Thank you for responding.

1. Age_____
2. Age at time of separation_____
3. Race: _____white
   _____black
   _____Hispanic/Latina
   _____Asian/Pacific
   _____Native American
4. Current marital status: _____separated
   _____divorced
   _____remarried
5. Number of children: _____male
   _____female

6. Ages of children at time of separation:

_____male

_____female

7. Number of years married at time of separation:

_____

8. Occupation at time of separation

_____

(_____check if not employed outside the home at time of separation)

9. Number of years worked before separation:

_____

(_____check if not employed outside the home before separation)

10. Your personal income at time of separation:

_____$0-$10,000

_____$10,000-$20,000

_____$20,000-$30,000

_____$30,000-$40,000

_____$40,000-$50,000

_____over $50,000

11. Education (check highest level of education completed):

____high school

____vocational/technical school after high school

____A.A. degree

____B.A./B.S. degree

____graduate/professional degree

12. Who initiated marital separation:

_____husband

_____self

13. Prior to separation, I worked:

____full time

____part time

____did not work outside the home

Appendix D

Interview Format

1. Describe your relationship with your husband.
2. If you worked outside the home, describe the work you were doing at the time of your separation.
3. How did your working (or not working) affect your relationship with your husband?
4. How did you feel about the work you were doing?

   or

   How did you feel about not working outside the home?
5. What impact do you feel your working (not working) had on your marriage?
6. What impact do you feel your working (not working) had on your decision to initiate separation?

   or

   What impact do you feel your working (not working) had on your decision not to initiate separation?

7. What impact did working (not working) have on your self-esteem?

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