

Work Conditions and Marriage Dissolution

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The new economy in the United State influences deeply on employment, marriage and family. Although previous research paid attention upon the relationship between work and marital dissolution, the mechanisms are still unclear. The study uses 1979-2010 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979, which is national representative dataset, and follows the lives of American youth born between 1957 and 1964. The study employ demands-resources (JD-R) model to specify the mechanisms of working conditions, as well as consider both individual-level and contextual-level working conditions to see the impacts of specific dimensions of work on marriage dissolution, and disentangle the black box regarding mechanisms of education disparity in marital quality and stability. The preliminary descriptive result shows that people who stay in marriage have less number of job, and have better work conditions, such as paid vacation, paid sick day, parental leave, child care provided by companies, flexible schedule, health insurance, and job satisfaction.

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INTRODUCTION

The 24/7 economy in the United States influences employment, marital, and parental relations deeply. The work devotion and family devotion models become prevalent scenarios (Blair-Loy 2003), and the conventional prototype of family, that men are breadwinners and women are homemakers, has changed dramatically. A large number of people in the United States work in the labor market. 53 percent of them are women¹, and the majority of them are mothers. As of 2012, 47.4% of all married couples were dual-earners², and 59% of married-couple families with children under 18 years old were both parents employed³. In addition, Americans, both men and women, professionals as well as low-paid workers, have longer work hours than before (Schor 1991; Mishel et al. 2001). Working mothers increasingly fit the profile of working fathers, and fathers work as long as childless men (Hochschild 1997).

Otherwise, not only women but men are expected to, in addition to financial support, dedicate to love- and time-intensive care for children. Bianchi's (2000) and Nomaguichi's (2009) studies show that fathers spend more time with their children than in the past. More hours spent at work compress the time with the family, and the time for housework, leisure and sleep. Many parents are torn between these seemingly irreconcilable commitments to work and family. Under the competitively demanding devotion schemas, it is difficult to find balance. Especially, in the United States the business and popular press often treat work-family conflict as a private problem or a personal choice, which could exacerbate work-family tension.

Nearly 40% -50% of marriages in the United States end in dissolution (e.g., Raley and Bumpass 2003; Schoen and Standish 2001). The fairly high rate draws much attention, since marriage disruption generally brings negative consequences of financial, physical, and emotional well-being (e.g., Liu and Umberson 2008; Smock et al. 1999; Amato 2010). Work conditions play an influential role on marriage quality and risk of divorce. For example, studies find that workers with less education or low earnings and status are less likely to access flexible work schedule (McCrate 2002; Golden 2001; Brescoll et al. 2013) as well as the usage of family-friendly policies, which could help balance the strain of the work and family. Furthermore, Cherlin (2010) mentions that divergent pattern that the probability of marriage disruption

¹ Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

<http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat12.pdf>

² The source is from Bureau of Labor Statistics. <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/famee.t02.htm>

³ The source is from Bureau of Labor Statistics. <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/famee.t04.htm>

becomes divergent across education groups, such as the risk of a marriage to end in disruption declines among couples with college degrees, while the dissolution probability stays about the same for the less educated couples (e.g., Raley and Bumpass 2003; Martin 2006), is highly associated with the labor market. However, the mechanisms remain unclear. Although much research discusses work-family relation through psychological well-being or perception of conflict (e.g., Voydanoff 2004, 2005; Nomaguchi 2009; Schieman et al. 2009), the lack of objective outcomes, as well as the lack of the association between work conditions and marriage dissolution, could not point out the substantial influence of the work on the family. The study would like to discuss (1) understand the impacts of specific dimensions of work on marriage dissolution, and (2) disentangle the black box regarding mechanisms of education disparity in marital quality and stability.

Previous research concerning the issue basically covers the explanations of the contextual level and the individual level. As for the contextual level, the studies discuss the impact of the aggregate level of work conditions on divorce. Amato and Beattie (2011) show that the higher state unemployment rate, the less divorce rates, which reflects the cost of the divorce is becomes high during economic recession. Greenstein's (1985) article shows occupation prestige has no a consistent negative association with risk of divorce. South and Lloyd (1995) and McKinnish (2004, 2007) point out people working in an industry or occupation with a greater share of opposite sex have a higher propensity to divorce. As White (1990) mentions "a shift in the lifetime divorce probability from 10% to well over 50% cannot be explained at the micro level", the social context marriage dissolution is embedded in cannot be ignored. As for individual level, studies are few as well. The U.S. Bureau of Census (1908) reports that actors, physicians, and dentists have relatively high divorce rates, and farmers are less likely to divorce. Other studies show that professional occupations have the lowest divorce rates, whereas semiskilled, unskilled, and service workers have the highest (Weeks 1943; Monahan 1955; Kephart 1955; Bernard 1966). However, the studies are outdated and have rather limited samples (Greenstein 1985). Also, they focus on the titles of occupations, not working conditions, which brings little understanding of features of work and inconsistent results if working conditions of occupations change. Therefore, the goal of this study is to examine the association between working conditions and marriage dissolution from contextual and individual level, focusing on specific mechanisms that connected the relationship between education, work and marriage dissolution. The further understanding of the association between working conditions and marriage dissolution help to explain how the new economy competes and negotiates with family, and what the cost people pay to sustain the system.

BACKGROUND

Individual-Level Working Conditions

The study employs job demands-resources (JD-R) model (Bakker and Geurts 2004) as the framework of individual-level analysis. Rather than taking work and family as two distinct spheres of life, or focusing exclusively on the negative impact of work on the family situation, the model argues work can interfere with family life in a negative and positive way. For example, married women with children could be more contented with their jobs than single or married without children counterparts (Crosby 1982), which implies work may help married women balance their life. Job demands-resources model organizes work characteristics into two categories: job demands and job resources, which depicts the dynamic process between work and family. Job demands refer to physical or mental effort required to complete a job, such as working shift or working hours. Job resources refer to a job by the task itself as well as the context of the task provides functions to reduce physical or mental costs or facilitate personal growth and development, such as income, or fringe benefits.

The study, therefore, argues the pattern of divergence of the effect of education on divorce can be partially understood through how work characteristics, built on job demands-resources model, impact marriage dissolution (Figure 1). I develop three hypotheses in the individual level: the resource hypothesis and the demand hypothesis.

HYPOTHESIS 1 . – The resource hypothesis refers to work-related resources, such as income, flexibility, autonomy, promotion, and supervisor support, could facilitate and sustain marriage stability.

HYPOTHESIS 2 . – The demand hypothesis refers to work-related demands, such as long working hours, job insecurity, and physical or emotional demand, can enhance the risk of marriage dissolution.

HYPOTHESIS 3 . – We think work-related resources could buffer or moderate the association between demand and marriage dissolution.

Contextual-level Working Conditions

Social context is an influential force, but often invisible for people. Divorce comes to be viewed as a personal mistaken choice, not social structural failure. Some studies keep eyes on the association of contextual level and divorce, which means it still plays an indispensable role (e.g., Glass and Levchak 2014). The sea changes of the

U.S. society in decades, such as increasing wage inequality, partial closing of the gender wage gap, home production technologies, and emergence of on-line dating, influence the landscape of mating and family forms, and challenge the Becker’s theory (1981) based on household specialization, in which husband and wife specialize in the market and domestic spheres. The wage inequality, which has increased since the 1970s, could increase the opportunity of remaining unmarried. Gould and Paserman’s (2003) finding shows that the marriage rate declines in cities where wage inequality grows fast, which could imply wage inequality could affect marriage stability since the inequality brings economic insecurity and influences working conditions. Thus, the study proposes the wage inequality in occupations may contribute to risk of marriage dissolution, and tests the following claim:

HYPOTHESIS 4 .—*The polarization in the U.S labor market, which may be reflected on the relative wages between occupations, partially explains the variation of marriage dissolution.*

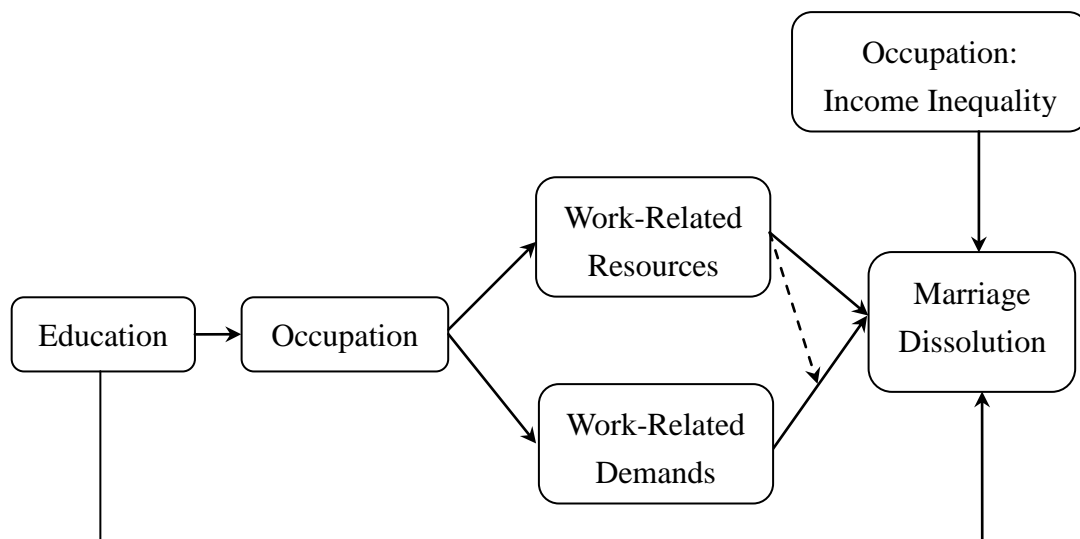


Figure 1. The Framework of the Model

DATA AND METHOD

The study uses National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79) that is a national representative sample of 12,686 youth aged 14-22 in 1979 (Hispanic, Black, and low-income youths were oversampled). The NLSY79 was an annual survey from 1979 to 1994, and did interviews biennially after 1994. The study covers 24 survey years, from 1979 to 2010. The survey collects the life and marriage history of the cohort and working conditions, as well as the spouse’s information, which facilitates

to clarify the association of work conditions and the risk of marriage dissolution and takes the lasting effects of work conditions into consideration. Also, the study uses Current Population Survey (CPS) to generate dispersion of income in occupations as a supplement for contextual-level information.

Sample is constrained to first-married persons. The study observes the period from getting married to the dissolution of first marriage and see whether work conditions play roles in the risk of disruption. In addition to basic demographic variables, we also control age, race, number of children, occupation, education, spouse's information of occupation. The dependent variable and explanatory variables are listed below.

Dependent Variable

Marital status is record every year. The study recodes separate and divorce as 1, and others are 0.

Explanatory Variables

1. Individual-level variables

a. Work-related demand

- *Working shift*: due to the limited categories in 1988 and 1989, the variable is constructed into two categories: same or fixed shift, and shift rotates.
- *Number of jobs*: calculate the number of job in past year.
- *Working hours*: calculate hours worked in past year.

b. Work-related resource

- *Income*: use total income from wages and salary in past year, which is dichotomy.
- *Vacation day*: whether current/ most recent job provides paid vacation, which is dichotomy.
- *Sick day*: whether current/ most recent job provides paid sick leave, which is dichotomy.
- *Maternity/paternity leave*: whether current/ most recent job provides maternity/paternity leave, which is dichotomy.
- *Child care*: whether current/ most recent job provides child care, which is dichotomy.
- *Flexible hours*: whether current/ most recent job provides flexible hours, which is dichotomy.
- *Health insurance*: whether current/ most recent job provides health insurance, which is dichotomy.
- *Training or education*: whether current/ most recent job provides training or Education, which is dichotomy.

- *Job satisfaction*: the question is that how do you feel about the job you have now? The variable is recoded as 4 like very much, 3 like fairly well, 2 dislike somewhat, and 1 dislike very much.

2. Contextual-level variables

- a. income inequality: calculate the variance of income in occupations for each year.

Control Variables

The study put control variables in the model, such as age, gender, race, number of children, occupation, education, spouse's occupation and period.

Method

The study uses discrete-time hazard model, which take care of time-variant variables and time-invariant variables. The study keeps the people unmarried in 1979 in order to observe the duration of marriage, and creates a person-year dataset that started in the year which the respondent first get married and ended in the year in which the respondent separate/ divorce or exited the dataset. Time-invariant variables include race and gender, and the rest of them are time-variant variables. I use one-year earlier time-variant variables to predict marital dissolution.

RESULTS

The preliminary descriptive result (Table 1) shows that people who stay in marriage have less number of job, and have better work conditions, such as paid vacation, paid sick day, parental leave, child care provided by companies, flexible schedule, health insurance, and job satisfaction. The further step is to use discrete-time hazard model to see which work-condition mechanisms play a crucial role and whether work-condition mechanisms could explain part of effect of education on marital dissolution.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables (Individual-Level)

	Total Sample		Divorced/ Separate		Stay married	
	Mean or %	SD	Mean or %	SD	Mean or %	SD
Time-invariant						
Male	49.78%		49.03		49.76	
Race						
White	72.47%		68.17%		73.27	
Black	2.10%		2.93%		1.44	
Hispanic	5.99%		7.45%		5.96	
Asian	0.89%		1.24%		0.77	
Others	18.55%		20.21%		18.56	
Time-variant						
Working shift						
Same or fixed shift	87.40%		88.05%		87.38%	
Shift rotates	12.60%		11.95%		12.62%	
Number of job	1.58	0.96	1.62	1.08	1.57	0.95
Paid vacation	69.50%		65.03%		70.34%	
Paid sick day	67.24%		60.18%		67.62%	
Parental leave	68.10%		62.88%		68.37%	
Child care	8.67%		7.8%		8.72%	
Flexible Schedule	53.08%		49.01%		53.29%	
Health insurance	80.98%		74.89%		81.3%	
Training/ education	56.63%		48.44%		57.07%	
Job Satisfaction						
dislike very much	2.23%		3.32%		2.18%	
dislike somewhat	6.55%		7.38%		6.51%	
like fairly well	44.32%		43.84%		44.34%	
like very much	46.89%		45.46%		46.97%	
Education						
Elementary	0.17%		0.36%		0.16%	
High school	31.94%		38.92%		31.6%	
College/ Undergraduate	67.89%		60.72%		68.23%	
Number of Kids	1.23	1.13	0.73	1.06	1.26	1.13
N(number of marital years)	71,761		3,553		68,208	

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