

Economic Resources, Marital Bargains, and Marital Quality

Liana C. Sayer
The Ohio State University
Sayer.12@sociology.osu.edu

Lisa Leach Nicholson
The Ohio State University
Leach.61@sociology.osu.edu

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Abstract

Under what conditions do spouses have more “voice” or bargaining power to get what they want from their marriages? The objective of this research project is to explore how spouses’ economic resources affect marital bargains and outcomes. The main hypothesis is that spouses with more resources are able to strike bargains about marital roles that they perceive to be more fair and that lead to more satisfying marriages. In this analysis, we use longitudinal data from 3 waves of the NSFH to assess whether changes in a wife’s relative earnings, amount of and perceptions of fairness of housework, and marital conflict are associated with changes in marital quality. Because of the omnipresent effects of gender on individual identities, interactions, institutions, and societal norms, we examine variation by gender in the relationship among changes in resources, amount of and perceived fairness of housework, marital conflict, and changes in marital quality. We find that equity perceptions and change in conflict level are stronger predictors of marital happiness and feelings that one would be better off divorced, compared with relative earnings and absolute amounts of paid work and housework. Wives’ and husbands’ who perceive that household chores and working for pay are unfair to them are less likely to think that the marriage is very happy and more likely to think they would be better off divorced than remaining married. Higher marital conflict also decreases marital happiness and increases wives’ and husbands’ feelings that they would be better off divorced. Results in suggest that wives are not able to use greater economic resources to negotiate better marital bargains; instead higher economic resources may be inclining them towards exercising an exit option.

Under what conditions do spouses have more “voice” or bargaining power to get what they want from their marriages? Do these conditions differ for wives and husbands? These questions are central to research on gender and intimate relationships. The institution of marriage has undergone a period of tumultuous change since the 1960s (Bianchi and Casper 2000; White and Rogers 2000). The once dominant 1950s style marriage characterized by breadwinner husbands and homemaker wives has been eclipsed by families where both husbands and wives play an economic role (Casper and Bianchi 2002). Additionally, although women continue to do more household labor than men, mounting evidence suggests that husbands have increased investments in housework and childcare (Fuwa 2004; Sayer 2005; Sayer, Bianchi, and Robinson 2004), and their domestic labor is somewhat responsive to changes in wives’ economic situations (Gershuny, Bittman, and Brice 2005).

Assumptions about the relationship between changes in husbands’ and wives’ marital expectations and behavior and marital satisfaction and stability form the crux of the debate on whether marriage is declining as an institution or simply evolving (Cherlin 2004). Sociological exchange theory and economic bargaining models suggest that spousal resources should be related to bargains about the division of labor, to perceptions of whether bargains are equitable, and to assessments of marital quality (Howard and Hollander 1997; Lundberg and Pollak 1996). Marriage is a type of exchange relationship in which each partner brings a bundle of resources to the relationship and attempts to maximize well-being through negotiating an optimal division of labor. Marital behavior is motivated by a rational calculation of costs, benefits, and alternatives and implicitly a spouse’s satisfaction is maximized when they get more and give less. Exchange relationship dynamics flow from different levels of individual dependence on the relationship, however, meaning that a spouse with fewer resources to exchange has less power to negotiate

favorable bargains. Hence, spouses with greater resources have the ability to buy out of tasks they do not wish to do, such as unpleasant household labor, and to engage in preferred activities, such as leisure (Blumberg and Coleman 1989).

This perspective has some support in the empirical literature. In the U.S., some studies find that as wives' relative earnings increase, they do less housework and their husbands do more (Bittman et al. 2003; Brines 1994; Greenstein 2000; Presser 1994). Other work indicates that feeling that the division of labor is equitable increases wives' and husbands' marital satisfaction (Frisco and Williams 2003; Voydanoff and Donnelly 1999; Wilkie, Ferree, and Ratcliff 1998). This research is limited, however, in its ability to enhance our understanding of how couple dynamics within marriage are related to marital satisfaction and stability. First, few studies have examined the effects of changes in economic characteristics and the division of labor on marital quality. Second, most studies assume that characteristics or processes associated with marital stability operate the same way in all marriages (White and Rogers 2000). Yet, it is plausible that the economic resources affect marital processes differently for husbands and wives and thus differentially affect the relationship between changes in bargains over the division of labor and changes in marital quality. Moreover, since negotiation is a process, it is necessary to examine the effects of changes in resources and changes in marital bargains on marital quality. Qualitative work suggests that wives with a higher level of resources feel more entitled to an equitable division of housework, and often attempt to renegotiate bargains about housework (Hochschild 1989). This finding is precisely what the bargaining perspective would predict, but has yet to be investigated systematically with quantitative data from a representative sample of married couples.

In this analysis, we use longitudinal data from 3 waves of the NSFH to measure whether changes in resources, hours of housework, perceived fairness of household chores, and marital conflict across NSFH1, NSFH2, and NSFH3 are related to changes in marital quality across NSFH-NSFH3. Because of the omnipresent effects of gender on individual identities, interactions, institutions, and societal norms, we examine variation by gender in the relationships among changes in resources, housework, perceived fairness, marital conflict and changes in marital quality.

Resources, Bargains, and Marital Satisfaction

Social exchange theory rests on assumptions that human behavior is motivated by a rational calculation of costs, rewards, and alternatives and that the exchange relationship process results from different levels of individual dependence (Howard and Hollander 1997; Sabatelli and Shehan 1993). Marriage is a type of exchange relationship, in which partners trade resources and services. Bargaining models of marriage are a parallel intellectual stream in economics. According to bargaining models, access to a higher level of economic resources will increase individuals' bargaining power because of the concept of "threat points" (Lundberg and Pollak 1996). Marital bargains are negotiated in the shadow of the possibility of divorce, and the external "threat point" is established based on what an individual has to fall back on if the marriage dissolves. The "fall-back" position is influenced by personal earnings, access to other sources of income, such as state-provided support or child support, marriage market position, and other skills and preferences related to the utility of being single. Hence, individuals decide whether to remain in or leave a relationship by comparing the utility they experience in marriage to the anticipated utility they would experience if they exited the relationship. Historically, the

lower levels of women's labor force participation and earnings have translated into less advantageous "threat points" for married women, and consequently a weaker bargaining position vis-à-vis their husbands. As women's economic resources have improved, women's "threat points" have improved. Thus, women should be able to negotiate more satisfying bargains, such as a more equitable division of labor (England and Kilbourne 1990). Borrowing Hirschman's (1970) terms of "exit, voice, and loyalty" as three possible responses to a situation a party finds problematic, we call successfully using resources to bargain for more satisfying marital terms the response of "voice."

Social exchange and economic bargaining models assume a "gender-neutral" process, in which either partner, male or female, can use resources to negotiate favorable bargains. However, it is likely that women's ability to bargain is constrained by gender norms about male and female marital roles. Gender norms establish the default baseline around which negotiation occurs, and if bargaining is unsuccessful, the "fall-back" position is for each spouse to do what is "traditional" (Lundberg and Pollak 1996). Despite the extensive movement of women into paid labor, normative expectations persist that wives will be the primary caregiver, and secondary earner, while husbands will be the primary breadwinner, and secondary caregiver (Coltrane 2000). Moreover, men's resistance to taking on traditionally female tasks and roles is probably greater than women's resistance to traditionally male roles (England and Kilbourne 1990). Thus, women may find particular resistance when what they are trying to bargain for is male participation in "female" activities such as female-typed household chores and, when such bargaining is unsuccessful, assessments of the costs and benefits of the relationship become more negative. When women and men are able to exercise voice to achieve successful marital bargains remains an open empirical question to which this research seeks to provide some answers.

Research on Relationship between Women's Resources and Marital Quality

A substantial literature focuses on the association between women's and men's economic resources and marital stability, much of it specifically on how women's resources affect divorce. The empirical evidence is inconclusive: In their decade review of the relationship between women's economic resources and marital stability, White and Rogers (2000) state "perhaps the safest conclusion is that there is no consistent evidence that wives' success as co-providers reduces marital stability." Findings on the effect of men's earnings are more conclusive: When men's earnings are lower divorce is more likely (Hoffman and Duncan 1995; South and Lloyd 1995) or declining (Weiss and Willis 1997). Some scholars have posited that women's employment or earnings lead to marriages of poor quality which are then more prone to disruption. This conjecture is not supported by the literature, however (Rogers 1999; Spitze 1988). Recent research does indicate, however, that divorce is more likely when women's and men's economic contributions to marriage are more similar, perhaps because in this situation each spouse perceives less felt obligation to remain in the marriage (Nock 2001; Rogers 2004).

Greater use of "voice" could either increase marital satisfaction or it could increase marital conflict and unhappiness. In addition, a wife's use of voice might increase her satisfaction but at the same time decrease her husband's satisfaction. Although the empirical evidence is mixed, some studies report that as wives' relative earnings or employment hours increase, they do less housework and their husbands do more (Bittman et al. 2003; Brines 1994; Gershuny et al. 2005; Greenstein 2000; Presser 1994). How this reallocation affects marital quality is a key question which this research seeks to address.

Research on Division of Labor and Marital Quality

Negotiations about marital responsibilities should be a particularly salient issue around which marital conflict develops (Kluwer, Heesink, and VandeVliert 1996). Yet, empirical research on the relationship between the amount of time spent in household tasks and marital satisfaction is inconsistent (Shelton and John 1996). One study reports that a wife's higher amount of housework reduces her marital satisfaction (Perry-Jenkins and Folk 1994), while two report that a husband's higher level of housework reduces his marital satisfaction (Blair 1993; Robinson and Spitze 1992). However, other studies report no association between wives' housework time and her marital satisfaction (Blair 1993; Pina and Bengston 1993; Voydanoff and Donnelly 1999) or husbands' level of housework and his marital satisfaction (Perry-Jenkins and Folk 1994; Voydanoff and Donnelly 1999).

Recent work suggests that how husbands and wives interpret their time in household labor may be a more salient determinant of marital quality than the actual amount of time spent in housework (Frisco and Williams 2003; Voydanoff and Donnelly 1999; Wilkie et al. 1998). Wives' perceptions of unfairness in household labor decrease her marital quality, but some work indicates that husbands' perceptions of unfairness are unrelated to his marital quality (Blair 1993; Kluwer et al. 1996; Perry-Jenkins and Folk 1994; Robinson and Spitze 1992; Ward 1993).

In this analysis, we focus on examining the conditions associated with spouses' use of voice. Specifically, we plan to answer the following questions:

1. Are changes in wives' and husbands' relative economic resources associated with changes in wives' and husbands' perceptions of marital quality?

2. Are changes in wives' and husbands' housework, perceptions of fairness about housework, and marital conflict associated with changes in wives' and husbands' perceptions of marital quality?
3. Is the effect of relative resources, if any, on marital quality mediated by the effects of change in amount of housework, fairness perceptions, and marital conflict?

If resources enable "voice," then we should find that positive changes in a wife's relative economic resources allow her to negotiate a better bargain, from her perspective, within the marriage. To test this, we assess whether increases in a wife's relative earnings, net of amount of her housework, her husband's housework, perceptions of fairness of household chores, and marital conflict, are associated with greater marital happiness and reduced feelings that she would be better off outside the marriage. Conversely, if the effect of wives' relative earnings on marital quality is not significant, this suggests that wives are not able to leverage economic resources into greater "voice," perhaps because of discount effects from societal gender stratification (Blumberg and Coleman 1989).

We also examine whether the use of voice appears to work through greater satisfaction with the gender division of labor or greater conflict. We test this by examining whether positive changes in the wife's perceptions of fairness increase her marital quality and whether increased conflict decreases the wife's marital quality. We also examine gender differences in these relationships. In particular, we are interested in whether increases in women's resources are more likely to increase conflict whereas increases in men's resources (e.g. wives' lower relative earnings) are more likely to allow successful bargaining by husbands that raises their sense of being better off in than out of the marriage.

Data & Measures

We use Waves 1, 2, and 3 of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH). The NSFH is a national probability sample survey of 13,007 adults age 19 and older interviewed in 1987-88. The sample includes a main cross-section of 9,643 households, plus an oversample of Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, single-parent families and families with stepchildren, cohabiting couples, and recently married persons. One adult per household was randomly selected as the primary respondent. In married couple and cohabiting households (57 percent of the total sample), the spouse or partner also completed a self-administered questionnaire (Sweet, Bumpass, and Call 1988).

The overall response rate for NSFH1 was 74%; 83% of spouses of respondents completed questionnaires. NSFH2 follow-up interviews were conducted in 1992-1994 and the overall response rate was 82% (86% of the 6,875 NSFH1 married couples were reinterviewed at NSFH2, with both spouses reinterviewed in 65% of couples and one spouse reinterviewed in 20% of couples). NSFH3 follow-up interviews were conducted in 2001-2003 and the overall response rate was 57% (63% of primary respondents and 56% of spouses were reinterviewed). Note that because of budget constraints, NSFH3 did not include follow-up interviews with primary respondents under age 45 at NSFH3 unless an eligible focal child was present in the primary respondent's household at NSFH1.

The NSFH covers many aspects of family life, including detailed questions on social background, individual characteristics, marital experiences, employment histories, earnings, income, and respondents' assessments of their marital relationship. Our analysis sample (N=1166) includes couples continuously married at all three waves of the NSFH (e.g. couples that divorced and those in which one spouse died are excluded) and in which both spouses were

interviewed at each time point. Of the 5,048 NSFH1 married couples with NSFH1 primary respondent and spouse questionnaires, 662 were widowed and 769 divorced by NSFH3, 13 claimed not to have been married at NSFH1, 490 did not have interviews from both spouses at NSFH2, and 1708 did not have interviews from both spouses at NSFH3 (the high number of incomplete interviews is due both to NSFH3 sample follow-up restrictions and panel attrition). In addition, we exclude 240 spouses in which either the wife or the husband is over age 55 at NSFH1 because transitions into retirement are likely to be common among this group and also likely to affect marital dynamics and processes differently than among younger couples. Missing data were nonparametrically imputed using the approximate Bayesian bootstrap method (Rubin and Schenker 1991). Descriptive analyses are weighted; multivariate analyses are unweighted and standard errors estimated with the Huber White sandwich correction.

We examine two dependent variables. The first is change in Marital Happiness. Marital happiness was assessed at NSFH1, NSF2, and NSFH3 with an identical question in the self-administered questionnaire, “Taking all things together, how happy are you with your relationship?” Responses ranged from 1= very unhappy to 7 = very happy. Responses to this question are highly skewed at both time points with the majority of wives and husbands assessing their marital happiness as happy. We construct husband and wife dummy variables with assessing the marriage as very happy (responses of 7) coded 1.

Our second dependent variable taps change in perceptions about the costs and benefits of remaining in the marriage. NSFH1-NSFH3 interviews included questions on how respondents perceive their standard of living, social life, career opportunities, overall happiness, and sex life would change if they separated. Responses range from 1 = much worse, to 5 = much better. Responses are combined into separate scales for husbands and wives, with values that range

from 5 to 25. Higher scores on the Better off Divorced (BOD) scale indicate that the respondent feels she would be better off divorced than remaining in the marriage; lower scores indicate a more positive assessment of the benefits of the marriage.

Table 1 shows wives' and husbands' assessments of marital quality at each wave. The proportion of wives who assess their marriage as very happy ranges from 45% to 49%; husbands' assessments range from 39% (NSFH2) to 48% (NSFH3). Average BOD scores are reasonably stable across NSFH1-NSFH3 (about 11 for wives and 12 for husbands at each time point) but there is substantial fluctuation of the BOD within couples across waves (results not shown): for example, 43% of wives' BOD scores are higher at NSFH2 compared with NSFH3, and 50% of wives' BOD scores are higher at NSFH3 compared with NSFH2.

[Table 1 here]

Key independent variables include change in spouses' relative earnings, contributions to female-typed housework, employment status, perceptions of household chores fairness and marital conflict.

Measures of a wife's relative earnings are constructed by summing a wife's wage and salary earnings and then expressing her earnings as a proportion of total family earnings. Since in most husband-wife households, the other major source of income is the husband's earnings, as the wife's proportionate contribution to family income increases, the husband's decreases. Hence, this specification also measures the symmetry, or interdependence, of the wife and husband on each other's economic contributions. Table 1 indicates that the proportion of earnings contributed by wives increased from 25% to 35% across NSFH1-NSFH3.

Measures of marital bargains are constructed from questions about usual employment hours per week and typical weekly hours of housework. In each wave, respondents were asked

about the number of hours worked in the past week and, if hours worked last week were unusual, about their usual number of work hours per week. Responses to these questions were used to construct husband and wife measures of weekly hours of paid work at each wave and then used to construct three measures of wives' employment status, not employed, employed part time (between 1 and 30 hours), and employed full time (30 or more hours); and two measures of husbands' employment status, employed less than full time and employed full time.

Responses to questions on the usual number of hours per week the respondent spends on five household tasks (preparing meals, washing dishes, cleaning house, shopping, and washing and ironing) were used to construct husband and wife measures of weekly hours of female-typed household work at each wave. Estimates exceeding the 99th percentile were recoded to the 99th percentile.

Perceptions of fairness about the gendered division of labor were measured from a question that asked respondents to rate fairness in household chores and working for pay as 1 = very unfair to me, 2 = somewhat unfair to me, 3 = fair to both, 4 = somewhat unfair to spouse, and 5 = very unfair to spouse. Two three category variables were constructed for the husband and for the wife: unfair to the wife, fair to both, and unfair to the husband. While the use of the fairness variable has been questioned in one study (Smith, Gager, and Morgan 1998), research suggests that the use of the measure is appropriate when reports of both spouses are used and when both the household chores and working for pay indicators are used (DeMaris and Longmore 1996; Nock and Brinig 2000). As shown in Table 1, a higher proportion of wives and husbands perceive the division of household chores as fair at NSFH3 (70% for each) compared with NSFH1 (61% of wives and 63% of husbands) and the close to a majority of wives and husbands report a fair division of household chores at each wave. The majority of couples at

each wave also perceive the division of paid work to be fair to both; interestingly slightly more wives and husbands perceive working for pay to be unfair to the wife than unfair to the husband.

Last, we include husband and wife measures of the frequency of marital disagreements, constructed from three questions about how often couples have open disagreements about money, spending time together, and sex. Responses ranged from 1 = never to 6 = almost every day. Wives (husbands) responses are summed into a scale that ranges from 3 to 18. Table 1 indicates that, on average, wives and husbands report low conflict at each wave (average score is about 6 at NSFH1 and NSFH2 and about 5 at NSFH3).

Results

Fixed effects regressions are used to model changes in wives' and husbands' assessments of marital quality and perceptions of relationship costs and benefits. Fixed effect models have the advantage of differencing out additive effects of unmeasured variables that might otherwise be causing omitted variable bias. That is, omitted variables that affect the level but not the change in the variable do not create bias in such models.

Table 2 shows odds ratios from fixed effect logistic regressions that estimate the effect of changes in wives' relative earnings, and husbands' and wives' female housework, employment status, perceptions of household chores and working for pay fairness, and conflict on wives' and husbands' assessments that the marriage is very happy. Table 3 shows coefficients from fixed effect regressions that estimate the effect of changes in the same independent variables on wives' and husbands' assessments that they would be better off divorced than remaining married. For all models, the Hausman test was conducted to determine whether random effects models should be estimated and results indicated that fixed-effects models were preferable.

[Tables 2 and 3 here]

Model 1 in Tables 2 and 3 shows the gross effect of changes in wife's relative earnings on the marriage being very happy, and in Table 3, on the BOD score; Model 2 shows the effect of relative earnings, net of female-typed housework and employment; Model 3 adds measures of change in perceptions of household chores fairness, working for pay fairness, and marital conflict to determine whether the effects of relative earnings and change in the gendered division of labor on marital happiness and the BOD score are mediated by perceptions of fairness and conflict level.

Focusing on Table 2 first, the results indicate that change in wife's relative earnings has no effect on wives' or husbands' feelings that the marriage is very happy. The effects are nonsignificant in all three models, indicating that marital bargains over the gendered division of labor, perceptions of fairness and conflict do not mediate the relationship between wives' relative earnings and marital happiness. Table 3 shows that higher relative earnings of wives increase her perception that she would be better off divorced (compared with remaining in the marriage) but have no effect on husbands' perceptions of whether he would be better off divorced. The effect of wives' relative earnings on the BOD scale is also not mediated by the amount of housework, paid work, perceptions of fairness, and marital conflict (Model 1 beta is .853 and Model 3 beta is .892, both significant at $p < .01$). Together, results in Tables 2 and 3 suggest that wives are not able to use greater economic resources to negotiate a better bargain, but may be inclining them towards exercising the exit option. Wives may be attempting to leverage more earnings into "voice," but perhaps exercise of voice is muted by societal gender stratification, making leaving the marriage more attractive.

Results in Model 3, Table 2 also indicate that the amount of female-typed housework is unrelated to wives' and husbands' perceptions that the marriage is very happy and to the BOD scale. Wives' movement from not being employed to being employed part-time increases the husbands' odds of thinking the marriage is happy by 42%, and change in husbands' employment status from not full-time to full-time decrease the wives' odds of thinking the marriage is very happy (both effects are only marginally significant, however). Model 3 in Table 3 shows that change in wives' employment status from not employed to part-time or full-time decreases the wife's perception that she would be better off divorced. Change in husbands' employment from not full time to full time also decrease the wives the perception that she would be better off divorced. The latter finding makes theoretical sense because full-time employment of husbands likely benefits the wife and these benefits are not portable outside the marriage. The negative association of wife's employment with her BOD scale is perplexing, however, because one would think that wife's employment would increase perceptions of being better off outside the marriage because of the economic and nonremunerative benefits of employment.

The lack of significant effects of relative earnings and wives' and husbands' allocations of time to paid and unpaid work on marital happiness bolster previous findings that spousal interpretations of time in paid and unpaid work are more salient predictors of marital quality than are absolute levels of paid and unpaid work. The effects of the fairness measures shown Tables 2 and 3 offer additional support for the perspective that believing household chores and working for pay are equitable, or having inequity recognized by ones' spouse – perhaps with accompanying compensating emotion work – matter more to marital quality than absolute levels of housework and paid work.

Model 3 in Table 2 shows that wives' odds of thinking the marriage is very happy are reduced by 30% when she also thinks that household chores are unfair to her, relative to her thinking that household chores are fair. Wives' perceptions that household chores are unfair to her increase her perceptions that she would be better off divorced; her husband feeling that household chores are unfair to her decreases her perception that she would be better off divorced (see Table 3, Model 2). Likewise, husbands who feel that household chores are unfair to him and that working for pay is unfair to him have increased perceptions that they would be better off divorced. Husbands who feel that working for pay is unfair to their wife have lower BOD scores or, in other words, more favorable assessments of marital utility. The negative effect of the husband thinking that household chores are unfair to the wife on her BOD scale suggests that economies of gratitude may compensate for marital inequities (Hochschild 1989). The negative effect of the husband thinking that working for pay is unfair to the wife on his BOD scale may be tapping feelings of financial interdependence or may reflect a more complex swirl of gratitude for a wife's economic contributions leavened with gendered perceptions of an appropriate division of labor.

Effects of increases in marital conflict on happiness and the BOD scale are as expected. A wife's report of higher conflict decreases her odds of thinking the marriage is very happy by about 15%; and her husbands' odds by about 12% (see Model 3, Table 2). A husband's report of higher marital conflict decreases his odds of thinking the marriage is very happy by about 17% but has no effect on the wife's perceptions of marital happiness. Higher conflict also increases wives' and husbands' feelings that they would be better off divorced, but spouse reports of conflict have no effect on wives' and husbands' BOD scales (Table 3, Model 3). These findings are intriguing in that they suggest that exercise of voice may indeed lead to greater conflict, as

theorized, and, when better bargains aren't achieved, to lower marital quality. The similarity of effects for husbands and wives also suggests that neither spouse is more able to use voice to get what they want from the relationship.

Summary and Next steps

Our preliminary results indicate that changes in wives' and husbands' relative economic resources are not associated with changes in wives' and husbands' perceptions of marital happiness. This finding suggests that wives are not able to leverage higher economic resources into more bargaining power perhaps because of discount effects from societal gender stratification (Blumberg and Coleman 1989). We also find that the relationship between relative earnings on marital happiness and the BOD scale is not mediated by the effects of the amount of housework, fairness perceptions and marital conflict.

Equity perceptions and change in conflict level are stronger predictors of marital happiness and feelings that one would be better off divorced, compared with relative earnings and absolute amounts of paid work and housework. Wives' and husbands' who perceive that household chores and working for pay are unfair to them are less likely to think that the marriage is very happy and more likely to think they would be better off divorced than remaining married. But, wives with husbands who recognize that household chores are inequitable for the wife have reduced feelings that they would be better off outside the relationship. Further, husbands who feel that working for pay is unfair for their wife also have reduced feelings that they would be better off divorced. These intriguing findings suggest that processes associated with recognizing inequity may be important in cementing marital satisfaction and stability. We plan to pursue this possibility in next steps by adding measures of "emotion work" to our models.

We also find that higher conflict is negatively associated with wives' and husbands' measures of marital quality, suggesting that exercise of voice may increase conflict but not increase a spouse's ability to negotiate better bargains. In future work, we plan to examine whether increases in wives' economic resources interact with increases in conflict such that higher relative earnings of wife are more likely to increase her reports of conflict whereas increases in men's resources (e.g. wives' lower relative earnings) decrease his reports of conflict, thus reflecting his sense that he is better off in than out of the marriage.

Last, in results not shown we find that wives' relative earnings have substantial, significant effects on wives' and husbands' perceptions that housework is unfair to the wife (with higher relative earnings decreasing the odds of thinking housework is unfair to the wife) and on amount of female housework (with higher relative earnings decreasing a wife's housework and increasing a husband's housework). We plan to explore the endogeneity of relative earnings with alternative regression strategies, such as structural equation models.

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Table 1. Wives' and Husbands' Characteristics, NSFH1, NSFH2, and NSFH3

	<i>NSFH1</i>		<i>NSFH2</i>		<i>NSFH3</i>	
	Wives	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives	Husbands
Proportion Assessing Marriage as Very Happy	0.48	0.46	0.45	0.39	0.49	0.48
Better off Divorced Scale (range 5 to 25)	10.8	11.9	10.9	11.9	11.3	11.8
Wife's Relative Earnings	0.25		0.30		0.35	
Couple Earnings (logged)	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.4	4.4
Female-Typed Housework Hours	30.5	7.5	29.2	8.8	27.4	10.5
Not Employed	0.28	0.05	0.29	0.11	0.38	0.27
Employed Part Time	0.18	0.02	0.18	0.02	0.14	0.04
Employed Full Time	0.53	0.94	0.53	0.88	0.48	0.68
Household Chores Unfair to Wife	0.34	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.26	0.28
Household Chores Fair to Both	0.61	0.63	0.60	0.61	0.70	0.70
Household Chores Unfair to Husband	0.05	0.03	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.03
Work for Pay Unfair to Wife	0.09	0.10	0.11	0.13	0.07	0.08
Work for Pay Unfair to Both	0.82	0.85	0.79	0.80	0.87	0.87
Work for Pay Unfair to Husband	0.09	0.06	0.11	0.07	0.06	0.04
Conflict Scale (range 3 to 18)	5.8	5.9	5.8	6.0	5.3	5.2
Couple N	1166					

Source: NSFH1, NSFH2, NSFH3

Table 2. Odds Ratios from Fixed Effect Logistic Regression Models Predicting Wives' and Husbands' Assessments of Marriage as Very Happy

	Wives			Husbands		
	M1	M2	M3	M1	M2	M3
Wife's Relative Earnings	0.978	0.76	0.738	0.939	0.83	0.778
Couple earnings logged	0.844**	0.844*	0.843*	0.857**	0.861**	0.846**
Husband Female Housework		0.992	0.989		1.004	1.004
Wife Female Housework		0.991*	0.995		1.001	1.004
Wife's Employment Status (not employed omitted)						
Part Time		1.194	1.318		1.185	1.416*
Full Time		1.105	1.268		1.08	1.259
Husband Employed Full Time (not full time omitted)		0.755	0.694*		0.888	0.911
Wife's Perception of Household Chores Fairness (fair to both omitted)						
Unfair to Wife			0.704**			0.828
Unfair to Husband			1.092			0.888
Husband's Perception of Household Chores Fairness (fair to both omitted)						
Unfair to Wife			1.105			0.941
Unfair to Husband			0.854			0.667
Wife's Perception of Working for Pay Fairness (fair to both omitted)						
Unfair to Wife			0.982			0.923
Unfair to Husband			1.401			1.182
Husband's Perception of Working for Pay Fairness (fair to both omitted)						
Unfair to Wife			0.908			0.746
Unfair to Husband			0.918			0.693
Wife's Conflict Scale			0.847***			0.880***
Husband's Conflict Scale			0.979			0.831***
Couple N with Change in Marital Happiness	398			562		
Total Couple N	1194			1686		

* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Source: NSFH1, NSFH2, and NSFH3

Table 3. Fixed Effects Regressions of Wives' and Husbands' Better off Divorced Scale

	Wives			Husbands		
	M1	M2	M3	M1	M2	M3
Wife's Relative Earnings	0.853*** [0.213]	0.869*** [0.239]	0.892*** [0.236]	-0.065 [0.250]	-0.007 [0.276]	0.107 [0.271]
Couple earnings logged	-0.038 [0.055]	0.041 [0.062]	0.037 [0.060]	0.085 [0.056]	0.032 [0.062]	0.06 [0.061]
Husband Female Housework		-0.001 [0.007]	0 [0.007]		-0.006 [0.008]	-0.006 [0.008]
Wife Female Housework		0 [0.004]	-0.002 [0.004]		0 [0.004]	-0.002 [0.004]
Wife's Employment Status (not employed omitted)						
Part Time		-0.360** [0.152]	-0.457*** [0.152]		-0.067 [0.167]	-0.176 [0.163]
Full Time		-0.257* [0.149]	-0.340** [0.148]		0.13 [0.153]	0.085 [0.148]
Husband Employed Full Time (not full time omitted)		-0.310* [0.160]	-0.296* [0.159]		0.271 [0.176]	0.186 [0.175]
Wife's Perception of Household Chores Fairness (fair to both omitted)						
Unfair to Wife			0.555*** [0.124]			0.181 [0.134]
Unfair to Husband			-0.039 [0.259]			-0.229 [0.258]
Husband's Perception of Household Chores Fairness (fair to both omitted)						
Unfair to Wife			-0.225* [0.122]			0.195 [0.125]
Unfair to Husband			0.067 [0.193]			0.866*** [0.221]
Wife's Perception of Working for Pay Fairness (fair to both omitted)						
Unfair to Wife			0.118 [0.188]			0.117 [0.167]
Unfair to Husband			-0.152 [0.173]			-0.231 [0.177]
Husband's Perception of Working for Pay Fairness (fair to both omitted)						
Unfair to Wife			0.133 [0.160]			-0.454*** [0.169]
Unfair to Husband			0.1 [0.242]			0.691** [0.294]
Wife's Conflict Scale			0.128*** [0.035]			0.026 [0.029]
Husband's Conflict Scale			0.029 [0.028]			0.173*** [0.034]
Constant	11.031*** [0.272]	11.148*** [0.316]	10.207*** [0.373]	11.617*** [0.285]	11.603*** [0.320]	10.325*** [0.395]
R-squared	0.01	0.01	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.05
Couple Years	3498			3498		
Couple N	1166			1166		

Standard errors in brackets

* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%