Sex-Roles and Marital Satisfaction of Employed and Homemaking Mothers of Pre-School Children

Fall 1981

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SEX-ROLES AND MARITAL SATISFACTION
OF EMPLOYED AND HOMEMAKING MOTHERS
OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN

BY

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THESIS
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Abstract

A group of college educated mothers of pre-school children were compared on ratings of the Bem Sex-Role Inventory and the Marital Satisfaction Inventory in order to examine what effect sex-role orientation may have on marital satisfaction in working and in homemaking wives. The subjects were grouped according to employment status, that is employed or homemaking, and according to their designation on the Bem, that is masculine, feminine, androgynous and undifferentiated. The levels of marital satisfaction for each group were then computed. When analyzing the differences between working wives in general and homemaking wives, no statistical significance was noted, although it had been hypothesized that working wives would experience greater marital satisfaction. Further hypothesis for which no statistical significance was noted included the assumption that androgynous working wives and feminine homemakers would reveal greater marital satisfaction when contrasted with feminine working wives and androgynous homemakers respectively. Although not to the point of significance, the results did reveal a tendency for androgynous women, regardless of their employment status to be more satisfied in their marital relationship.
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Working women and especially working mothers are a relatively common sight in our society today. This progressive trend has been increasingly true in the years since World War II. At that time, women who traditionally had been mothers and homemakers entered the work force to continue the work left by men who were drafted in the war effort. This was the greatest influx of women to the labor market in our history. In spite of a return of women to the home following the return of the men whose jobs these women had assumed, women continued to join the ranks of the employed. In the past 20 years, the female employment rate has risen 50% (Hofferth & Moore, 1979). Additionally, there has been a marked increase in the number of married women in the work force. In 1940, 30% of all working women were married. By 1973, this number had increased to 58.5% of all working women (Hopkins, 1978). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (Working Women Resist Husbands' Transfer, 1981), the number of employed married women rose from 11.6 million in 1960 to 24.1 million in 1980. The percentage of married women working or looking for work is expected to rise according to the United States Labor Department from roughly 50% today to 90% in 1990 (Working Women, 1981). Of particular note is the number of mothers, especially
mothers of young children, in the labor force. In 1948, 32% of mothers of school-age children were working, and 13% of mothers of pre-school children were working. By 1975, these figures had risen to 52% and 32% respectively. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1976).

It would be a logical development to question how these changes in the number of married women in the labor market have affected the basic structure of the family, and the marital relationship in particular. One would expect that a 40 hour work week for a wife would necessarily decrease the amount of time and energy she could give to the family and would in most cases increase the amount of time the husband must give to the family. Blood (1963) in his investigation into this area was able to confirm that the wife's working changed the "traditional" structure of the marital relationship, requiring more of the husband than previously required. The net effect of this change, as reported by Burke and Weir (1976), is that wives who enter the work force tend to be expanding into roles that have more perceived value, whereas there is little evidence to indicate that men perceive their increased participation within the household as contributing to their increased growth and fulfillment. This leads to the inference that while working wives are feeling better about themselves in their new roles, husbands may view their changing roles as best as having a neutral effect on the
marital relationship. Hofferth and Moore (1979) in fact observed this tendency when they reported the following:

...employment outside the home has an independence effect and may increase the odds of divorce by enabling spouses to support themselves if the marriage breaks down.

[However, they also note a counterbalancing tendency in that] ...the income produced by two working members of a family may add to marital stability, because the combined income increases the family's standard of living and hence benefits the marriage. (p. 122)

In the early stages of the entry of women into the work force, studies indicated the marriage partners were faced with the problem of resolving the division of domestic labor. Blood and Hamblin (1958), in a study of 100 couples, found that marriage partners had worked out an egalitarian division of domestic labor based upon who was available to perform the tasks. As they stated,

...because she shares responsibility for economic support of the family, the working wife can appeal to her husband to share in the housekeeping tasks on the grounds of fairness. By contrast, the non-working wife has less of a basis for appealing to her husband to help with the housework. (p. 351)
They further found that husbands of working wives, on the average, do a greater proportion of housework than husbands of housewives and that important decisions were influenced by whichever of the couple had greater expertise in the area, and hence, they tended to recognize and capitalize on each other's areas of competence.

While Blood and Hamblin's early study indicated an egalitarian division of domestic labor, by 1977 Heckman, et al, reported that women retain primary responsibility for homemaking and child care in the majority of cases. As stated by Heckman, it seems that

...in our culture, being a good or real man is still centered on working and competing successfully at the breadwinner role, and being a good or real woman is still centered on the domestic scene. (p. 328)

This study consisted of 200 couples, all professional American Psychology Association members, and the researchers controlled for sex, age and number of children. Subjects responded to open-ended questions in a self-report situation. All of the females questioned reported high commitment to their work. Given the inherent weaknesses of self-report studies and the "professionalism" of the respondents, the applicability of this study to the mainstream of the working wife is questionable.

How does one explain the apparent conflict between
the early studies indicating egalitarian divisions of labor and the later studies indicating that females still maintain the bulk of homemaking responsibilities? Araji (1971) found that there really isn't an either/or situation, but rather that both possibilities can in fact exist. As she stated,

Both sexes tend to express egalitarian or role sharing attitudes, but women enact the majority of duties related to all roles (childcare, kinship, etc.) with the exception of the provider role, which is mainly performed by men. Thus, the general conclusion is that role-behavior incongruence exists, both married men and women express egalitarian role attitudes but this egalitarianism is not generally reflected in role behavior. (p. 309)

Although the explanation offered by Araji may partially explain the differences reported between eras in the division of domestic labor, a more comprehensive explanation for these differences would require more research than could be contained within the scope of this study.

In addition to studies designed to measure family life participation, since World War II numerous researchers have examined the effect of the wife's employment on marital satisfaction. The issues that seem important to this question seem to fall into four general categories. The
first of these is global measures of marital satisfaction and happiness in working and homemaking wives. The second of these is the relative effect that the educational level of the wife has on her level of marital satisfaction. The third is the effect that children in the family may have on marital satisfaction of working and homemaking wives. The last category is the effect of the working wife on the reported marital satisfaction of her spouse. As this study will address only the first three categories, research involving the effect on the working wife's spouse was not reviewed.

In reviewing the literature regarding working versus homemaking wives for marital satisfaction, the findings are conflicting, especially when early studies (pre 1970) are compared with later studies (post 1970). Several of the early studies (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Safilios-Rothschild, 1967; Michel, 1967) reported finding less marital satisfaction among working wives than among homemaking wives. The applicability of Michel's and Safilios-Rothschild's studies to American women is questionable as their studies used French and Greek female subjects respectively. Blood and Wolfe's study also has to be challenged as it was done in 1958 prior to the large influx of women into the labor market. Therefore, although it may be representative of the early entry of women into the labor market, it may not be applicable to the current
situation. Orden and Bradburn (1969), in a study distinguishing between women who are impelled into the labor market for perceived economic necessity and those who enter by choice, reported that work due to economic necessity tended to increase reports of marital tension and a decrease in the positive side of the marital relationship. They also noted tensions in marital relationships were less in higher socio-economic groups where it could be suspected their reason for entering the labor market was more by choice than out of economic necessity. Bailyn (1970), in another study of non-American females, found a drop in the level of very happy marriages as the wife became more career and work oriented. It is important to point out that this study was based upon data collected in 1960 and might have questionable application with today's working wife some 20 years later.

While the previous cited studies found homemaking wives express greater marital satisfaction than working wives, other early studies (Feld, 1963; Locke & Mackeprang, 1949) indicated finding no difference in marital satisfaction between working and homemaking wives. Locke and Mackeprang's (1949) finding that no difference in marital satisfaction existed between working and homemaking wives is questionable due to the age of the study, the small sample size and the failure to control for independent variables, especially whether or not children were
present in the family. Feld (1963) found that while in general the health of working wives was better than homemaking wives, there were still no reported difference in marital satisfaction. Working wives also were found to experience widespread guilt and anxiety about their ability to adequately fulfill parental and housewife roles in addition to work roles (Feld, 1963; White, 1972). Nye and Hoffman (1963) found working wives to be more satisfied with their daily work than were homemakers, and to be more satisfied with respect to their communities, family income, homes, relationships with their children and their recreational lives. However, the authors also found that these women experienced guilt and anxiety about their ability to function in multiple roles.

Clearly, then, these early studies indicate that a wife's working outside the home carries with it both positive and negative aspects. The women studies experienced an increased role load in attempting to balance employment, parental duties and household responsibilities while at the same time experiencing increased satisfaction in performing these roles. Of particular interest to this study is the contrast in these early studies between satisfaction in occupational roles and those in the marital role. They indicate an increased satisfaction for the working wife in her new role, while reporting lessened or unchanged satisfaction levels in their marital relationship when compared to the same measures for homemaking wives. This
author questions whether these findings are valid for today's woman when it is remembered that the results of these studies were diminished by the following factors:

1. Completion of the study before women were a significant part of the labor force
2. Use of non-American subjects
3. Use of self-report as major evaluation tools
4. Failure to control for important variables such as children and reason for entering the labor market

After 1970, different findings began to appear in the research literature. In general, what began as the negative effect of work on marital happiness in working wives has been reported differently since then as "little effect", or in some cases a "positive effect". Several of the more recent studies (Ferree, 1976; Burke & Weir, 1976) suggest that working women may actually be happier and more satisfied in their marital relationships. Burke and Weir (1976) reported working wives were more satisfied and performed more effectively than homemaking wives. Specifically, working wives were found to value communication with their husbands and to engage in it more often than did homemakers. They were also reported to have a more positive self-perception with respect to mental well-being. Working women may be less concerned with reaching fulfillment through their relationships and more oriented toward control of
their own destiny than homemakers.

Hofferth and Moore (1979) concluded from their review of the existing research on this issue that to view marital satisfaction as it is affected by the wife working outside the home simply by contrasting working versus homemaking wives is too simplistic. As the later studies began to control for different variables, educational level and socio-economic status in particular, differences in levels of marital satisfaction became more obvious and understandable.

An important variable in considering the marital satisfaction of working wives is the level of education these women have attained. It is presumed that with education comes greater flexibility in career/job choice and a greater opportunity to derive satisfaction from one's job. Women with more education also may work from choice rather than economic necessity, a factor that seems to have a bearing on marital satisfaction. Among educated women, the trend of higher levels of marital satisfaction reported by homemakers as compared to working wives that was documented in early studies was not as evident.

Even the earlier studies, when controlled for the educational level of the subjects, seem to indicate that overall levels of marital satisfaction may be elevated in educated women. Locke and Mackeprang (1949) looking at 41 employed and 51 homemaking wives and their husbands
concluded that high levels of marital satisfaction correlate positively with high educational levels. It could be that higher educational levels correlate with greater financial stability which allows for greater marital satisfaction. Although they used a small sample of college or professionally trained women and failed to match carefully for such variables as children and living arrangements, they found no significant difference in the marital satisfaction of these two groups of women. Perhaps most importantly, this study indicates an awareness of the role of educational level, and need versus desire to work in assessing the marital satisfaction of working women.

In a more recent study Staines, et al (1978), found no change from this earlier study, when examining the marital satisfaction of educated women. Data collected from two surveys of a combined sample of 3,604 individuals, indicated that working wives whose husbands also work reported wishing that they had married someone else and having thought about a divorce significantly more often than homemakers. However, they do not score lower on ratings of marital satisfaction or happiness, or on four other components of marital adjustment (financial disagreements, understood by spouse, understand spouse, companionship). This study seems to indicate that while working wives may be somewhat less satisfied with their marital choice, they may be relatively satisfied with their marital relationship.
Other studies such as those by Burke and Weir (1976) and Birnbaum (cited in Smith, 1979), however, indicate that among highly educated wives, those that are employed may actually be more satisfied with their marriages than are comparable educated full-time homemakers.

Another variable that seems to effect the marital satisfaction of working wives is children. It seems that working mothers, particularly those with young children, experience a greater amount of conflict than other working wives and homemaking mothers. In part, this increase seems a function of divisions of household and parenting responsibility along traditional sex-role dimensions. Research reported by Staines, et al (1978) indicates that working mothers of pre-school age children scored lower on marital satisfaction, as well as on indicators of satisfaction with choice in marital partners, than did mothers of pre-school age children who did not work outside the home. The authors presume this difference to be the result of high role load, that is, increased pressure to perform many types of tasks such as parenting, housekeeping and working. However, the measures, such as desire for help from husband, used by these researchers to determine high role load may not be accurate measures of this variable. This measure may not accurately identify the pressured women, who due to traditional values or other reasons, would not ask for or desire help from their husbands.
Another study (Holahan & Gilbert, 1979) reported that dual career parent couples experience high role conflict as a function of traditional attitudes and longer working hours. In addition, unfavorable attitudes of spouse towards his wife's employment, lack of spouse support, and negative feelings from a spouse regarding one's degree of education add to a working wife's feelings of conflict regarding the number of roles she must fill. The bias in this study exists for a number of reasons, including that the sample size was relatively small (28 couples), both sexes were relatively profeminist, and the husbands were highly supportive of the wife's employment and career goals. Therefore, these husbands probably shared in household and parenting responsibilities to a greater degree than other husbands and hence, reduced the role load of their wives. As cited earlier (Feld, 1963; White, 1972), the working mother was often found to experience guilt and anxiety about her ability to adequately fulfill her parental and housewife roles. However, Nye and Hoffman (1963) found working wives to be more satisfied with their relationships with their children than homemaking wives.

Clearly, then, these studies seem to indicate that the presence of children in a marriage tend to provide added pressures for the working wife to handle. It appears that children, especially pre-school children, add stress to
the marriage relationship particularly when the husband does not assume part of the homemaker role.

While researchers have examined the effect that educational level and children have on marital satisfaction of the working wife, little attention has been directed at how the wife views herself regarding "traditional" sex roles. Women have begun to behave in a less traditional manner and to experience themselves as not being tied down to traditional sex-typed behavior and attitudes. This is partially due to their new positions within the labor force and the growth and visibility of the feminist movement. Researchers, notably Sandra Lipsitz Bern, have recently examined the concept of androgyny as it relates to women and the changing roles they are defining for themselves. Bem (1975) defines the androgynous individual as one who:

...is able to remain sensitive to the changing conditions of the situation and engage in whatever behavior seems most effective at the moment, regardless of its stereotype as appropriate for one sex or the other. (p. 634)

In another study, Welch (1979) administered the Bem Sex Role Inventory to three groups of women: (1) wives with no outside employment, (2) wives employed in non-professional occupations and (3) wives employed in professional occupations. She found that while the obtained femininity scores
for the three groups were high and relatively equal, "masculinity increases as a direct function of degree of departure from the housewife role." (p. 308) Essentially what she found was that a woman who has taken on a masculine role, i.e. employment outside the home, has not lost feminine traits but added masculine traits. These results must be viewed with the information in mind that the sample was relatively narrow in that all were University of Kansas faculty wives. Also, she controlled for children but did not distinguish the ages of the children. As cautioned by the researchers, it must be remembered that these results do not address the issue of cause and effect but rather show a correlation.

The question, then, is not so much how many roles a woman has to perform as how she perceives herself in relation to these roles. Does she identify with those things that would aid her in filling a traditional role within her marriage? If so, does she behave accordingly by filling a supportive, nurturing role within the family? Or is she functioning counter to these perceptions of herself in assuming the determination, aggressiveness and action necessary to be an employed worker as well as a wife and mother. On the other hand, does she identify with a mixture of feelings, traits and ideas that include the traditionally feminine as well as the typically masculine? If so, does she easily find those traits within herself
to balance employment, spouse and family? Or has she found a way to mesh her sense of herself with her roles within home and family. What effect does a woman's perception of herself and her chosen roles have on the degree to which she is satisfied with her marital relationship?
Summary

Researchers have been interested in the effects of wives' employment on marital satisfaction since the great influx of women to the labor market in the 1940's. A review of the early studies reveals that a wife may experience both negative and positive effects when adding the role of wage earner to her other roles. These women tended to experience lessened marital satisfaction, while at the same time experiencing greater satisfaction in their daily lives than did homemakers. A review of later research indicates that while working wives may divorce or separate more often, they may actually experience greater satisfaction in their marriage than homemaking wives. It seems that it may be difficult, but not impossible, to keep a dual career marriage together.

However, it seems clear that to view marital satisfaction simply as it is affected by a wife's employment is too simplistic. More recent research has examined the impact of other variables such as educational level, socio-economic status, level of commitment to employment, husband's attitude toward his wife's employment and the existence of children on the marital satisfaction of a working woman. In many of these studies, changing values and roles were mentioned as perhaps being important to the findings. However, in none of the studies encountered
during this review of the research literature was any study discovered that dealt directly with women's changing sense of themselves with respect to their roles and their effect on marital satisfaction. Does a woman's perception of herself with respect to the roles she fills have any effect on the satisfaction she experiences in her marital relationship. Research, as reviewed by this study, leads to the hypothesis that self-perception does in fact effect the degree to which a woman is satisfied with the roles she fills and the relationships within which she lives.

After considering the questions presented previously and the findings of increased level of marital satisfaction in educated women and the added stresses of pre-school children, this study addresses the following hypotheses:

1. In educated working mothers, androgyny is positively correlated with marital satisfaction.
2. In educated homemaking mothers, femininity is positively correlated with marital happiness.
3. Among college educated mothers of pre-school children, working women report higher levels of marital satisfaction than do homemaking mothers.
Method

Subjects

All subjects for this study were voluntary. One hundred women were identified through private nurseries, the Orlando Public Library, the Junior League of Orlando - Winter Park, the Parent Resource Center of Valencia Community College and through previously identified subjects. The women who were selected for this study were all currently married, held a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree and had at least one child under the age of 6 years. Further, they were either working full-time or homemakers.

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions apply regarding the subjects involved:

1. Married shall mean legally married and currently living together.

2. Full-time workers shall mean those women who were gainfully employed outside their homes for not less than 30 hours per week, and for the major portion of the two year period prior to the study.

3. Women whose employment was interrupted during the two year period prior to the study for the purpose of a maternity leave of six months or less, shall still be considered as having been employed for the previous two years.
4. Homemakers shall mean those women who were not employed full-time and who had been homemakers for the major portion of the two year period prior to the study.

Of the 100 women identified as possible participants for this study, 10 could not be located through phone numbers provided. Five of the women contacted declined to participate due to time pressures. Of the 85 who agreed verbally to participate, 3 later declined, 2 failed to meet basic criteria for the study, and 31 failed to complete and return their materials. For details regarding the 49 subjects who met all criteria see Results section.

The 49 women who completed the materials and became the subjects of this research were divided into the following groups (see Procedures section for details):

1. Working Wives: This group was composed of 24 women classified as working full-time.

1a. Androgynous Working Wives: This group was composed of 8 of the working wives who were considered to be androgynous.

1b. Feminine Working Wives: This group was composed of 9 of the working wives who were classified as being feminine.

2. Homemaking Wives: This group was composed of 25 wives who did not work full-time outside their home.
2a. Androgynous Homemakers: This group was composed of 7 of the homemaking wives who were classified as being Androgynous.

2b. Feminine Homemakers: This group was composed of 10 of the homemaking wives who were classified as being feminine.

Materials

For the purpose of this study, two variables have been identified as important for the hypotheses presented. The first of these is the degree to which the subjects will identify themselves as having traits that would be considered androgynous or feminine. The second variable would be the reported level of satisfaction within the marital relationship.

For the purpose of determining the level of self-reported androgyny or femininity, the subjects were administered the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI). This inventory consists of a short self-report form of characteristics the subject is asked to rate as to the degree of accuracy when applied to oneself. According to Bem (1979), this inventory is designed to assess the "extent to which the culture's definitions of desirable female and male attributes are reflected in an individual's self-description" (p. 1048).

The BSRI treats masculinity and femininity as two independent dimensions which allow for the classifications
of androgynous, masculine or feminine as a function of the difference between endorsement of masculine and feminine personality characteristics. The BSRI was normed in 1973 on 444 male and 279 female Stanford University Introductory Psychology students, and 117 male and 77 female paid volunteers at Foothill Junior College.

The internal consistency of the Bem Sex-Role Inventory was estimated by computing the coefficient alpha for the Masculinity, Femininity and Social Desirability scores. Social Desirability is measured by assessing neutral items included on the BSRI for the tendency to answer in the socially desirable manner. All three scores were found to be highly reliable (Masculinity = .86; Femininity = .80; Social Desirability = .86). The reliability of the Androgyny difference was .85 for the Stanford sample and .86 for the Foothill sample. When product-moment correlations were computed for both normative samples, both Masculinity and Femininity were found to be correlated with Social Desirability. However, the near-zero correlation of Social Desirability with Androgyny confirm that the androgyny score is not measuring a general tendency to respond in a socially desirable way, but rather, a specific tendency to describe oneself in accordance with sex-typed standards of desirable behavior for men and women.

The four scores of Masculinity, Femininity, Androgyny and Social Desirability were found to be highly reliable.
when tested over a four week interval (Masculinity $r = .90$; Femininity $r = .90$; Androgyny $r = .93$; Social Desirability $r = .89$). At the same time, the BSRI was found to be not at all correlated with the Guilford-Zimmerman Temperment Scale and to be moderately correlated with the Masculinity-Femininity scales of the California Psychological Inventory (Masculinity males = -.42, females = -.25; Femininity males = .27, females = .25; Androgyny males = .50, females = .30). These low correlations indicate that the BSRI is measuring another aspect of sex-roles than those tapped by either of these two scales.

For the purpose of determining levels of satisfaction within the marital relationship, each subject was administered the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI). The Marital Satisfaction Inventory is a multidimensional self-report inventory developed by Douglas K. Snyder. Subjects respond "True" or "False" to each of 280 items. The eleven scales reported by the inventory include one validity scale, one global affective scale and nine scale measuring specific dimensions of marital satisfaction.

Internal consistency and test-retest reliability of the individual scales on the Marital Satisfaction Inventory have been confirmed by analysis. Coefficients of test-retest reliability range from .84 (AFC) to .94 (FAM) with a mean correlation of .89. Coefficients of Internal Consistency range from .80 (DSC) to .97 (GDS) with a mean co-
efficient of .88. The interrelationships of the scales are high, especially among global or affective components.

The Global Distress Scale has shown to be highly reliable across time, although it remains sensitive to changes in global marital affect. The GDS reflects a global measure of marital dissatisfaction. Item content falls into two categories:

1. General unhappiness with the marriage.
2. Uncertain commitment to the current relationship.

According to Snyder:

By itself, the GDS scale comprises an excellent screening measure of marital distress and is strongly correlated with instruments such as the MAT having the same purpose. (p. 26)

The MAT is the Marital Adjustment Test developed by Locke and Wallace (1959). Because of these factors, the GDS scale alone was used as the sole measure of marital satisfaction for this study. Additionally, the other scales were rejected as being more appropriate for other areas such as marital therapy.

Procedure

As stated previously, 100 possible research participants were identified. Following attempts to reach these women by phone in order to explain the research project and to obtain verbal permission to participate (90 were
contacted.) They were informed of the source from which their names were obtained and given a brief description of the examiner's degree program, current study and need for assistance. A description of the written materials they were being asked to complete and the length of time required for completion was given. Due to the personal nature of the material, they were informed that all materials were confidential and that their identities would not be released. They were then asked if they were willing to participate. If willing, arrangements were made to deliver and retrieve the materials. Following this, all subjects were queried regarding the identification of additional subjects, and thanked for their time and assistance. Five of the subjects contacted by phone declined to participate due to time pressures.

Eighty-five packets were mailed out or delivered containing the following: (see Appendices A, B, C, D)

1. Cover letter with instructions
2. Consent form
3. Personal Data Form
4. Bem Sex-Role Inventory
5. Marital Satisfaction Inventory
6. Stamped return envelope

The 54 returned packets were checked for completeness, especially with regard to the Marital Satisfaction Inventories, the Bem Sex-Role Inventories and the sections on
the questionnaire regarding obtained degree, ages of children and working status. Forty-nine subjects completed all materials and met all research criteria. Following the scoring of the BSRI, all subjects were divided into two groups on the basis of working or homemaking. These two groups were further divided by sex-role category as evidenced by the BSRI into three categories each. These were androgynous women, feminine women and all other classifications, i.e. masculine and undifferentiated women. Finally, Marital Satisfaction Inventory scores were compared as follows:

1. Working Wives versus Homemaking Wives
2. Androgynous Working Wives versus Feminine Working Wives
3. Androgynous Homemakers versus Feminine Homemakers
Results

Demographic Make-up

Total Subjects

The total study was comprised of 49 subjects responding to the Bem Sex-Role Inventory and the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI). These subjects were all female ranging in age from 23 to 37 years with an average age of 31.4 years. The subject pool in this study was almost entirely white (48 white and 1 black).

All subjects were married with 88% of them in their first marriage and 12% in the second. Conversely, 76% of their spouses were in their first marriages and 24% in their second. The average length of the marriages in this study was 8.06 years resulting in an average of 1.67 children per family (47% had one child; 41% had 2 children; 10% had 3 children; and 2% had 4 children).

Educationally, all subjects had a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree (63% had a Bachelor's Degree; 29% had a Master's Degree; and 8% had higher than a Master's Degree). Of this population, 61% were of the Protestant persuasion while 14% were Catholic and 2% were Jewish. No religious preference was reported by 22% of the subjects. In terms of income, the subjects were from the upper middle class with 47% reporting incomes higher than $35,000.00 annually.
Additionally, 20% reported incomes from $25,000.00 to $35,000.00, 24% incomes from $15,000.00 to $25,000.00, and 8% incomes from zero to $15,000.00.

In summary, this study was composed of primarily young white females in their first marriage with less than two children. A typical subject is probably Protestant, possesses a Bachelor's Degree and reports a family income in excess of $25,000.00.

**Subjects By Group**

Group I: Working Wives composed 49% of all the subjects (24 individuals). It was composed of females averaging 30.9 years of age, 87% were in their first marriage, were married an average of 7.12 years, and had an average of 1.3 children. Educationally, 50% of this group had Bachelor's Degrees, 42% had Master's Degrees and 8% had higher than a Master's Degree. Of this group, 67% were Protestant, 12% were Catholic, 4% Jewish, and 17% reported no religious preference. In terms of family income, 50% reported incomes higher than $35,000.00, while 17% had incomes zero to $15,000.00, 17% had incomes $15,000.00 to $25,000.00, and 17% had incomes $25,000.00 to $35,000.00. This group included 3 women who were classified as masculine by the BSRI (12% of Group I and 6% of the total sample), and 4 women who were classified as undifferentiated by the BSRI (16% of Group I and 8% of the total sample). The remainder fell within the following groups:
Group Ia: Working Wives with Androgynous Bem Scores composed 16% (8 individuals) of the total sample and 33% of Group I. Women in this group averaged 32.3 years (oldest of all groups), 75% were in their first marriage that averaged 8.1 years, and had 1.1 children (fewest of all groups). This, too, was a predominantly Protestant group (62% Protestant; 25% Catholic; 12% None) with 75% reporting incomes over $35,000.00 annually. Educationally, this group consisted of 50% Bachelor's Degrees, 37% Master's Degrees and 12% higher than a Master's Degree.

Group Ib: Working Wives with Feminine Bem Scores composed 18% of the total sample (9 individuals) and 37% of Group I. With an average age of 30.5 (youngest of all groups), women in this group were in their first marriage (89%), were married an average of 6.3 years, and had 1.5 children each. Predominantly a Protestant group (78%), women in this group had Bachelor's Degrees in 44% of the cases and Master's Degrees in 56% of the cases. In terms of family income, this group had the lowest reported income (44% 0 - $15,000.00; 22% $25,000.00 - $35,000.00; 11% above $35,000.00).

Group II: Homemaking Wives (25 individuals) composed 51% of the entire sample. Homemakers averaged 31.8 years of age, were married an average length of 8.9 years, and had an average of 2.04 children. Educationally, 76% of these subjects had Bachelor's Degrees, while 16% had Mas-
ter's Degrees and 8% had higher than Master's Degrees. This, too, was predominantly a Protestant (56% Protestant; 16% Catholic; 28% no preference) and high income group (32% $15,000.00 - $25,000.00; 24% $25,000.00 - $35,000.00; 44% above $35,000.00). Of all homemakers, 88% were in their first marriage. This group included 4 women who were classified as masculine by the BSRI (16% of Group II and 8% of the total sample), and 4 women who were classified as undifferentiated by the BSRI (16% of Group II and 8% of the total sample). The remainder fell within the following groups.

Group IIa: Homemaking Wives with Androgynous Bem Scores composed 14% (7 individuals) of the total sample and 28% of Group II. Women in this group averaged 31.8 years, were in their first marriage (86%) that average 8.7 years and had 2.14 children. Predominantly a Protestant group (86% Protestant; 14% Catholic), these women had more Bachelor's Degrees (86%) than Master's Degrees (14%). Just as in the other groups, this group had a high income level (29% $15,000.00 - $25,000.00; 29% $25,000.00 - $35,000.00; 43% above $35,000.00).

Group IIb: Homemaking Wives with Feminine Bem Scores composed 20% (10 individuals) of the total sample and 40% of Group II. Women in this group averaged 32.2 years of age, were in their first marriage (90%) that average 9.6 years and had 2.2 children. While this group was half
Protestant (50% Protestant; 20% Catholic), 30% reported having no religious preference. With 80% of these women having a Bachelor's Degree (20% Master's Degree), the income level of this group was the second highest (30% $15,000.00 - $25,000.00; 20% $25,000.00 - $35,000.00; 50% above $35,000.00).

A Chi-square was computed between groups (I vs II; Ia and Ib vs IIa and IIb) in relation to the categories of age, length of marriage, number of children, education level, religious preference, and income level. Statistical significance was noted in the categories of number of children ($X^2 = 15.13, d.f. = 3, p > .01$) and income levels ($X^2 = 24.88, d.f. = 15, p > .05$). Working wives tended to have one child, while homemakers tended to have two or more, and 47% of the entire sample reported incomes greater than $35,000.00 annually. Two additional categories were noted to be approaching statistical significance. These were length of marriage ($X^2 = 19.50, d.f. = 13, p = .11$) with homemakers tending to be married longer, and the category of education ($X^2 = 4.13, d.f. = 2, p = .12$) with 50% of working wives having degrees higher than the Bachelor's level as compared to 24% of the homemakers.

**Test Results**

The mean Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) scores
for all subjects by group are recorded in Table I. Inspection of this table suggests higher MSI scores, indicating a greater degree of marital distress, for Feminine Working Wives ($\bar{X} = 51$). It will also be noted that the mean score for Feminine Working Wives and Feminine Homemakers was slightly higher ($\bar{X} = 49.95$) than that for Androgynous Working Wives and Androgynous Homemakers ($\bar{X} = 45.71$).
Table 1

Marital Satisfaction Inventory

Mean Score By Groups

<table>
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<th>Groups</th>
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<tr>
<td>I Working Wives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ia Androgynous Working Wives</td>
<td>46.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ib Feminine Working Wives</td>
<td>51.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Homemakers</td>
<td>47.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>IIA Androgynous Homemakers</td>
<td>45.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIB Feminine Homemakers</td>
<td>48.90</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ia &amp; IIA Androgynous Working Wives and Homemakers</td>
<td>45.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ib &amp; IIB Feminine Working Wives and Homemakers</td>
<td>49.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Two-Way Analysis of Variance was computed on the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) scores between subjects grouped according to employment status (working wives and homemakers) and sex-role orientation (feminine and androgynous). As noted in Table 2, there were no significant differences between the groups nor any significant interactional effects.
Table 2

Two-Way Analysis of Variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>D.F.</th>
<th>F-Ratio</th>
<th>P</th>
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<td>2. Homemakers</td>
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<td>1.7113</td>
<td>.1981</td>
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<td>1a &amp; 1b Androgynous Wives</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2a &amp; 2b Feminine Wives</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C. Interactional Effects</td>
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<td>.8098</td>
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<tr>
<td>1a. Androgynous Working Wives</td>
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<tr>
<td>1b. Feminine Working Wives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a. Androgynous Homemakers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b. Feminine Homemakers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because of the limited range of MSI scores, a Chi-square procedure was used to analyze the results. MSI scores were grouped high (45-77) and low (40-44.99) using a median split for the cut off. Table 3 reveals the results of this Chi-Square test. Although the Chi-Square (4.50) was not significant, there appear to be obvious differences in percentages of high and low scores between some of the groups. For example, 62% of the Androgynous Working Wives fall in the low category indicating proportion-
ately less marital distress, than the Feminine Working Wives where only 33% fell into this category. The other, although lesser, difference can be noted in the category of Androgynous Homemakers where 71% fall in the low category, compared to 40% of the Feminine Homemakers. There doesn't appear to be much of a difference between the masculine and undifferentiated sex roles so no further analysis was done on these sex role groups.

Table 3

Chi-Square Analysis
of Marital Satisfaction Inventory
by Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Low Score (40-44.9) %/Frequency</th>
<th>High Score (45-77) %/Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Androgynous Working Wives</td>
<td>62%/5</td>
<td>37%/3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feminine Working Wives</td>
<td>33%/3</td>
<td>67%/6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Masculine Working Wives</td>
<td>33%/1</td>
<td>67%/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undifferentiated Working Wives</td>
<td>50%/2</td>
<td>50%/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Androgynous Homemakers</td>
<td>71%/5</td>
<td>29%/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine Homemakers</td>
<td>40%/4</td>
<td>60%/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine Homemakers</td>
<td>75%/3</td>
<td>25%/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undifferentiated Homemakers</td>
<td>50%/2</td>
<td>50%/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Square = 4.50  d.f. = 7  P .72

To further test for a significant difference in
marital satisfaction between Androgynous Working Wives and Feminine Working Wives and between Androgynous Homemakers and Feminine Homemakers, two t-tests were performed. The t-test between Androgynous Working Wives and Feminine Working Wives failed to reveal significance ($t = -.946, d.f. = 15, P > .05$) as did the t-test between Androgynous Homemakers and Feminine Homemakers ($t = -.316, d.f. = 15, P > .05$).
Sex-role orientation in working and homemaking wives seems to have little bearing on the marital satisfaction of these two groups. In fact, this study failed to establish a correlation among educated, employed mothers between androgyne and marital satisfaction as hypothesized. Although androgynous working wives as a group reported a lower mean score (46.00) indicating less marital distress, than did the Feminine Working Wives (51.00), this difference was not found to be statistically significant. Additionally, significance was not found when contrasting marital satisfaction scores of feminine homemakers and androgynous homemakers, although the androgynous homemakers reported somewhat less marital distress.

Further examination of the data revealed an interesting trend when contrasting androgynous wives and feminine wives. It appears that there is a tendency for androgynous wives to experience less marital distress than feminine wives regardless of their employment status. In fact, the mean score for Androgynous Women fell below the total mean, while the mean for feminine wives fell above the total mean. It may be that the more a woman is able to behave in a necessary manner, regardless of how sex appropriate that behavior may be, the happier she is in her marital relationship. Both of the androgynous groups reported higher
incomes than did the feminine samples, an indication that the decision to work outside the home or within was made by choice. As revealed by previous researchers, choice in employment can nullify any adverse effects created by a wife's employment. An increased income level would also tend to help smooth those areas of a marital relationship where money is an issue, such as in financial management.

As noted previously, the data also failed to support the hypothesis that working mothers are more satisfied with their marital relationships than are homemaking mothers. In fact, the difference between the groups is so small as to be insignificant. This last finding supports earlier research that found employment had little or no effect on the marital satisfaction of wives.

Clearly, as proposed by earlier writers, the issue of marital satisfaction as it is affected by employment is no simple issue. To simply examine employment and marital satisfaction with the added variable of sex-role orientation while controlling for educational level and age of children does not adequately address the issue. Other variables must play a part.

Further scrutiny of the data collected reveals several interesting trends. The subjects who participated in this study were basically from the upper middle class with 47% reporting incomes above $35,000.00 annually. This income level as well as the educational level of these participants
could partially explain the general low level of marital distress reported by this group. In fact, the mean score of the group \( (X = 47.49) \) on the Marital Satisfaction Inventory would coincide with a non-clinical population who demonstrate a perceived closeness to their spouses, a commitment to their current relationships and a general absence of pervasive difficulties. This supports previous research that found more educated people and people who have higher incomes tend to experience greater satisfaction in their marital relationships. In fact, what we may have been attempting to measure were subtle differences in degrees of marital satisfaction.

Previous researchers have cited the importance of the effect that children in the family have on the marital satisfaction reported by their mothers. As confirmed by this study, feminine women, who as a group indicated greater marital distress than did androgynous wives, also had more children. The increased parenting responsibilities associated with increased numbers of children would certainly increase the pull on a wife to attend to her various roles and thus could logically decrease the amount of enjoyment she may get from these roles.

There may be many reasons why the findings in this research did not prove to be significant. One possible way to magnify the differences between groups previously noted would be to increase the size of the sample. An
increase, perhaps doubling the sample size, would probably work to increase the variability in test scores and perhaps permit the Two-Way Analysis of Variance to reveal these differences. Another way to further this examination would be to substitute a measure of marital satisfaction with greater range. The scores for this sample fell between 40 and 77 with the majority clustered between 40 and 50. This narrow range, while reflecting general marital happiness for this group, failed to identify more subtle indications of marital stress and distress and to pinpoint areas of satisfaction. The result of this was that there appears to be little difference in the scores of these groups. It may be that differences do lie in areas not tapped by this instrument such as areas of strength and satisfaction within the relationship. In fact, the Marital Satisfaction Inventory may have limited applicability to a non-clinical population as it tends to be more sensitive to issues of distress than to issues of satisfaction. A more appropriate instrument for the purposes of this study would be one that disclosed strengths as well as weaknesses. Perhaps this could best be achieved through the use of an instrument that required the subject to rate items that are considered to be positive aspects of marital relationships as well as those that are considered to be negative aspects, as to their applicability to the subject's relationship.

Another reason the findings in this study did not
prove to be significant may be related to the surveys that were not completed. As stated previously, 31 women failed to complete and return their surveys. Three of the packets were returned with notes explaining that after reviewing the required materials, they were unwilling to participate. Another woman indicated that she was uncomfortable with the level of self-disclosure required by the Marital Satisfaction Inventory and therefore unwilling to participate. It may be that the subjects who were unwilling to participate after reviewing the materials were actually those women whose scores may have provided the variability required to attain significance. It is entirely possible that these were people who were experiencing greater distress in their relationships than were those who participated, and that their failure to provide data for this study skewed the results in a positive direction. The extremely personal nature of the questions in the MSI may have inhibited participation, therefore a less threatening survey such as the type mentioned previously may yield a greater return as well as provide greater variability.

The intent of this study was to examine the effect sex-role orientation may have on the marital satisfaction of employed and homemaking mothers of pre-schoolers. Overall, this upper middle class group revealed a relatively high level of marital satisfaction. Although not statistically significant, the results suggest that sex-role orientation
may have an effect on the marital satisfaction of these groups in that women who were classified as androgynous reported less marital distress as a group than did the feminine women. However, when contrasting working and homemaking wives little difference was noted.
Appendix A

October 12, 1981

1207 Briercliff Drive
Orlando, Fla. 32806

Dear Participant:

I want to thank you in advance for taking time out of your busy day to help me in my research. I have enclosed four different forms as follows:

A. Consent to Participate: please read carefully and sign.

B. Personal Data Form: please fill out all items that apply to you.

C. Bem: see instructions on the sheet.

D. Marital Satisfaction Inventory: read each statement and decide whether it is TRUE or MOSTLY TRUE as applied to you, or FALSE or MOSTLY FALSE as applied to you. Mark your answers on the answer sheet provided. Answer each item to the best of your ability. Make sure the item you are answering and the answer sheet numbers agree.

As we discussed, these four items should take no longer than an hour and a half for you to complete. It is not necessary that all forms be completed at once, but they may be completed over two to three days at your convenience. If you have any questions, please call me. If you would like access to the results of my study, please indicate this on the consent form.

Thank you again for your time and interest.

Sincerely,

Leslie Bennett

896-2456 - home
425-0929 - office answering machine
Appendix B

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY

I, ________________________, agree to participate in a research study to be conducted by Leslie Bennett. I understand that:

1. I am under no obligation to participate if I wish not to do so. If at any time prior to the completion of this research I desire not to participate, my data will be destroyed.

2. My identity, and identifying characteristics will be kept confidential.

3. Upon request, I will be given access to the results of this study.

4. I am being asked to complete a Personal Data Form, a self-description form and a Marital Satisfaction Inventory.

Thank you for your interest and help.

________________________________________
Signature

________________________________________
Researcher's Signature

________________________________________
Date
Appendix C

PERSONAL DATA FORM

AGE_________ RACE________________________
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL: B.A.____ M.A./M.S.____ ABOVE____
OCCUPATION______________________________________
RELIGION_____________________________________
NUMBER OF PREVIOUS MARRIAGES: YOURSELF___ SPOUSE___
NUMBER OF YEARS THIS MARRIAGE____
NUMBER OF CHILDREN___ AGES__________________________
FAMILY INCOME LEVEL: 0-$15,000 ANNUALLY____
                        $15,000-$25,000____
                        $25,000-$35,000____
                        ABOVE $35,000____

IF YOU ARE EMPLOYED FULL-TIME, HAVE YOU BEEN EMPLOYED FOR
LAST TWO YEARS? YES____ NO___*
IF YOU ARE A HOMEMAKER, HAVE YOU BEEN AT HOME FOR THE LAST
TWO YEARS? YES____ NO___

*IF YOU COULD ANSWER YES TO THIS QUESTION EXCEPT FOR A
MATERNITY LEAVE OF SIX MONTHS OR LESS, ANSWER YES.
Appendix D

BEM

Below you will be shown a large number of personality characteristics. We would like you to use those characteristics in order to describe yourself. That is, we would like you to indicate on a scale from 1 to 7, how true of you these various characteristics are. PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE ANY CHARACTERISTICS UNMARKED.

Example: sly
Mark a 1 if it is NEVER OR ALMOST NEVER TRUE that you are sly.
Mark a 2 if it is USUALLY NOT TRUE that you are sly.
Mark a 3 if it is SOMETIMES BUT INFREQUENTLY TRUE that you are sly.
Mark a 4 if it is OCCASIONALLY TRUE that you are sly.
Mark a 5 if it is OFTEN TRUE that you are sly.
Mark a 6 if it is USUALLY TRUE that you are sly.
Mark a 7 if it is ALWAYS OR ALMOST ALWAYS TRUE that you are sly.

Thus, if you feel it is sometimes but infrequently true that you are sly, never or almost never true that you are malicious, always or almost always true that you are irresponsible and often true that you are carefree, then you would rate these characteristics as follows: sly 3, malicious 1, irresponsible 7 and carefree 5

| self reliant__ | happy___ | willing to take risks___ |
| yielding___ | strong personality___ | understanding___ |
| helpful___ | loyal___ | secretive___ |
| defends own___ | unpredictable___ | makes decisions___ |
| beliefs___ | forceful___ | easily___ |
| cheerful___ | feminine___ | compassionate___ |
| moody___ | reliable___ | sincere___ |
| independent___ | analytical___ | self-sufficient___ |
| shy___ | sympathetic___ | eager to sooth |
| conscientious___ | jealous___ | hurt feelings___ |
| athletic___ | has leadership___ | conceived___ |
| affectionate___ | abilities___ | dominant___ |
| theatrical___ | sensitive to the needs of others___ | softspoked___ |
| assertive___ | truthful___ | likeable___ |

(please continue to next page)
masculine__
willing to take a stand__
aggressive__
gullible__
does not use harsh language__
ambitious__

warm__
friendly__
tender__
inefficient__
acts as a leader__
unsystematic__
competitive__
gentle__

solemn__
childlike__
adaptable__
individualistic__
unsystematic__
loves children__
tactful__
conventional__
### Appendix E

**MSI Raw Scores By Group**

#### Working Wives

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#### Homemaking Wives

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