

PART SIX

Marriage, Productivity, and Earnings

The theory of marriage presented in Part Two viewed individuals as suppliers of spousal labor, and defined spousal labor as any service benefiting a spouse. Such spousal labor is not simply about washing dishes and taking care of the garden, but also about helping a spouse to earn more at work, encouraging a wife to live a healthier life, or enabling a husband to find more peace of mind. People invest in their spouse's human capital to the extent that spousal labor boosts the spouse's earning capacity or other aspects of the spouse's productive capacity (including the capacity to produce happiness). The chapters in this part of the volume all deal with aspects of spousal help that increase a person's human capital. Chapters 12 to 14 deal with spousal help aimed at increasing a worker's earning capacity, whereas Chapter 15 focusses on the contribution of a spouse to an individual's religious practice.

Of the three chapters which deal with the effect of marriage on worker's productivity, the first two are principally of a theoretical nature, whereas the last one is mostly an empirical contribution. Of the two theoretical chapters, Chapter 12 is a relatively accessible introduction to the analysis of spousal help to workers. Chapter 13 deals with one particular valuable quality which can enhance individual success at work, in politics, or in marriage, namely one's virtue or trustworthiness. This chapter presents a concept of general human capital which goes beyond the usual sense of that expression. In labor economics, general human capital has been defined as skills which can be productive to different employers (Becker 1964). Here the notion is introduced that certain skills can be valuable both to employers and to spouses. Thereby, skills obtained in marriage could benefit success at work, and skills obtained at work could benefit success in marriage. Chapter 13 presents the framework for a market model of virtue or loyalty based on the concept of general human capital.

Chapter 14 is an attempt to test for the determinants of spousal help as reported by the workers, a sample of Israeli managers.

Hypotheses were generated based on two theoretical approaches: a human capital approach and a cultural approach. Results of linear and logit regressions, run separately by gender, with education, earnings, age, children, religiosity, and ethnic origin as independent variables, revealed that spousal support is better explained for women than for men and husbands help more when it is most productive to do so. However, both theories contribute to explaining spousal support.

The final chapter, Chapter 15, focusses on religiosity as a form of human capital, and more specifically, on spouses helping investments in such human capital. The chapter presents an empirical study of the relationship between wives' religiosity on Jewish husbands' time spent on religious observance. By exploring factors affecting the association between spouse's religiosity and individual behavior we find possible evidence of a post-marital learning process. We also find that the men whose religious observance is strongly correlated to wife's religiosity tend to have higher levels of secular education, which possibly reflects the effect of education on the process of in-marriage-learning.

All the hypotheses related to marriage and productivity at work found in Part Six are numbered sequentially. These hypotheses were labeled K_1 through K_{24} in order to separate them from the hypotheses discussed in Parts Two through Five.

Much more research needs to be done in this area, both at a theoretical and an empirical level. A general equilibrium theory of marriage can lead to many further hypotheses regarding the effect of marriage on earnings, consumption, or other aspects of behavior. Theoretical developments may lead to innovative ways of testing for effects of marriage on behavior. Meanwhile, it is also important to have more empirical studies relating marriage and spouses' traits to individual behavior at work or in the home. More tests of the hypotheses we tested in Chapters 14 and 15 would also be useful, especially if they are based on other data sets and statistical techniques.

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Investments in Spouse's Productivity at Work

Introduction

This chapter was written for the first *Handbook of Behavioral Economics*, an attempt to bring economists and other behavioral scientists closer together in a variety of research areas. The subject of the contribution of marriage to workers' productivity is a good example of how research can benefit from communication between economics and sociology. While this chapter deals most with wives' contributions to their husband's career, it is also relevant to the contribution of husbands to their wife's career.

The chapter first reviews both economic and sociological theories that have been used to explain marital status differentials in productivity, a possible source of marital status differentials in earnings. Then, hypotheses are derived regarding the effect of occupational characteristics on expected marital differentials in workers' success, hypotheses that were inspired by some of the sociological literature on the subject. The chapter also mentions hypotheses that fit well within a general equilibrium theory of marriage and labor. Marital differentials in earnings are hypothesized to vary with spouse's characteristics, divorce probability, and divorce laws.

Married people experience economic activities differently than do singles. Married men work and earn more than single men, married women work and earn less than unmarried women, and people in married households do not consume the same bundles of goods and services purchased by singles.

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In the United States, married men earn between 8 and 30 percent more than single men, after other factors are accounted for (see Kenny 1983), whereas married women earn some 3 percent less than single women (Becker 1981).

Similarly, in England, married men earned between 10 and 14 percent more than single men, whereas married women earned 3 percent less than single women (Greenhalgh 1980). A positive marital differential was also found in Sweden by Duncan and Holmlund (1983).

The reasons for these differentials have not been studied adequately by members of the various disciplines to whom this issue is of interest. While offering relatively well-developed empirical estimations of these marital differentials, economists explain them using theories of limited scope.

Sociologists and sociopsychologists bring a wider range of explanations, but their approach is generally nonquantitative. The most valuable contributions by noneconomists have been made at the micro level--the study of the organization (family or firm)--namely by microsociologists (a term coined by Turner 1970) and social psychologists. This makes generalization difficult.

The underdeveloped state of this area of study derives from the fragmentation of the behavioral sciences. Academic border treaties have assigned one part of the problem--production and productivity--principally to economics and business and the other--marriage--primarily to other behavioral sciences such as psychology, sociology, and anthropology. Within the present incentive structure, academic border crossing rarely pays off. As a result, the effect of marital status on productivity has received insufficient scholarly attention, and large gains from trade can be reaped through intellectual cross-fertilization (See Chapter 1).

This chapter discusses some of the relevant sociological and sociopsychological literature and compares it to research economists have performed in this area. Its emphasis is on developing testable hypotheses and suggesting directions for further research. The entire discussion focuses on men's benefits from being married, even though it could have been stated in terms of husbands' contribution to the

earnings of working women. It makes the reading somewhat easier to have wives and husbands consistently in one position.

The chapter first reviews economic theories dealing with marital differentials, and then summarizes some of the sociological theories on the same subject. The theoretical section concentrates on one particular theory that has been mentioned in both the economic and the sociological literature, namely, wives' investments in their husbands' careers. This section distinguishes different forms such investments can take. The theory of marital differentials in productivity that is presented focuses on occupational characteristics.

Previous Literature

Economic Theories

Economists have explained the observed marital differentials in earnings on the basis of five different theories. The most commonly referred to is what can be called the specialization theory (see Mincer 1962; Becker 1965). According to this theory, men and women specialize in the production of different goods and services, as a result of differences in endowments, utility, or both. Because of their comparative advantage in household production, married women work less and therefore earn less outside the home than do single women, whereas the opposite is true for married men. For a man, marriage implies engaging in an exchange of earned income for household income. Married men therefore specialize in work outside the home more than single men and earn more, even during the same number of working hours. Married men are more productive because of their richer work experience and their stronger need to maintain their earning power in the future (Kenny 1983; Bartlett and Callahan 1984).

While this first theory relates earnings differentials to productivity differentials, other economists have also presented the "perceived-need" hypothesis, wherein employers pay married workers

more because such workers need to support a family. Pay scales often reflect such policy, especially in Europe (Bartlett and Callahan 1984).

A third theory mentioned in the economic literature is that of statistical discrimination (Siebert and Sloane 1981). According to this theory, employers discriminate against single men and married women because of past statistics relating average productivity and marital status.

Fourth, economists have used the human capital investment theory to provide an alternative explanation for observed marital-status differentials in productivity and earnings. According to this theory, such differentials originate from wives' investments in their husband's human capital (see Benham 1974). In a similar vein, Marxist economists have written about domestic labor (principally the wife's) as "the care, maintenance and continued socialization of human beings" (Himmelweit and Mohun 1977).

This last theory is closely related to the first one, for the same activities-- such as cooking or nurturing--in which women specialize often lead to improvements in human capital; for instance, through better nutrition and physical or mental health. Indirect evidence for such an investment process has been found in the effect of wife's schooling on husband's earnings (Benham 1974), health (Grossman 1976), and religious practice (Grossbard-Shechtman and Neuman 1986). Interestingly, the wife's investment theory has not been mentioned in much of the economic literature on this subject.

Finally, economists have theorized that causality does not necessarily proceed from marital status to earnings, but rather from earnings to marital status. Men earning higher wages are more likely to get married either because higher income encourages people to marry (see Becker 1981, Grossbard-Shechtman 1984) or because the same desirable and unmeasured characteristics that lead to higher earnings also increase the probability of a worker being married (Kenny 1983).

Theories by Other Behavioral Scientists

Specialization theory also takes a major place among the explanations sociologists and psychologists have offered for the observed marital status differentials. Sociologists generally call it role specialization (e.g., Parsons 1942).

Social scientists attempting to explain the origin of such specialization are divided regarding the relative influence of nature and nurture. Psychologists who specialize in the study of gender differences can be found on both sides of the controversy (e.g., Maccoby and Jacklyn 1974). Anthropologists and sociologists tend to be particularly interested in demonstrating the dominance of cultural influences (e.g., Mead 1949), although a few have recently come to emphasize biological factors, basing themselves on the work of biologists. According to the so-called sociobiologists (e.g., Wilson 1975), biological differences in reproduction technology and in the ability to provide for dependents determine gender role specialization observed among all species, including the human race.¹ Most researchers view existing human role specialization as the result of both biologically and culturally determined gender differences.

Sociologists were writing on the wife's contribution to her husband's success at work before economists got interested in the subject (e.g., Whyte 1956, Moore 1962). Sociologists differentiate between the wife's *indirect* contribution--her specialization in household tasks, which freed her husband from such responsibilities--and her *direct* contribution.

To designate the wife's direct assistance to her husband's success at work, sociologist Papanek (1973) coined the term *two-person career*. The term implies that both members of a married couple are actually working, although only one of them is officially employed.

Sociologists and social psychologists studying wives' contributions to their husbands' success at work generally take a micro perspective in the sense that they focus on one occupation or one organization, mostly the corporation. Their insights often originate from careful observation of workers on the job. In contrast, economists writing on this subject have not paid attention to occupational differences in wives' contributions to husbands' success.

Similarly, economists do not study the effect of husbands' occupation on wives' labor supply outside the home, a related subject of research.²

The following theoretical section starts with an inventory of possible investments wives make in their husbands' careers, derived from both the economic and the sociological literature. The focus is on direct contributions as defined above.

Theory

Types of Wives' Contributions to their Husbands' Work Performance

The following discussion distinguishes between wives' direct contribution to their husbands' work performance by means of (1) assistance in central tasks, (2) investment in husbands' human capital, and (3) contributions to husbands' peripheral tasks and to the communication of information.

According to Weinstock (1963), a job often includes central and peripheral task specifications. Central tasks are technical requirements of the occupation directly related to performance. Peripheral tasks refer to the "nontechnical, institutionally required social aspects of the job." This distinction is helpful when discussing the two-person career (see Mortimer, Hall, and Hill 1978), as are the concepts of human capital (Becker 1964) and organizational capital (Tomer 1986).

Contributions to Husbands' Central Tasks. Wives sometimes help their husbands by doing the work that could be done by a paid employee. For instance, a salesman's wife may promote sales, or a writer's wife may type his manuscript. According to Kanter (1977a), the winners of one company's award for exceptional salesmanship all had wives without outside jobs who reported spending a considerable amount of time helping their husbands with sales work. Wives may also aid their husbands' success by acting as "sounding boards," thus helping their husbands think through technical work problems, or by giving concrete advice that will enhance productivity. The latter form of direct help may be more relevant to more complex, generally

professional, white-collar occupations.

Investment in Human Capital. This is the only direct contribution economists have related to (e.g., Benham 1974). The sociological literature mentions wives' contributions to workers' good nutrition and good physical and mental health. Parsons' (1942) mention of wives' expressive role relates to their help as a sounding board and mental health counselor. Likewise, Lasch's (1977) view of the family as a "haven in a heartless world" centers on the stress-relieving functions of the wife.

In addition, wives can help develop their husbands' motivation to work and organizational capital. The motivation argument restates in part the "marriage-as-need-for-income" argument also mentioned in the economic literature. Using the sociologists' distinction between instrumental (or extrinsic) and intrinsic rewards of work, we see that marriage tends to increase the need for work as an instrument (means) to acquire goods. This is what economists generally mean when presenting this argument.

Sociologists also write of marriage as a means of promoting the intrinsic motivation to work--what economists call the nonpecuniary benefits of work. Turner (1970), for instance, mentions people's need to identify with their job as a major intrinsic, nonpecuniary reward of work. If a husband can get his wife to identify with his work, his own commitment to the job will rise; so will his motivation to work and, consequently, actual productivity.

Whereas workers have intrinsic needs for identity and commitment, organizations also have an interest in promoting such commitment. If the commitment is specific to a firm, it is often called *loyalty*. Such loyalty can be viewed as organizational human capital, a type of human capital that should be distinguished from technical human capital in that it enhances productivity through better work relations within the organization (see Tomer 1986). Loyalty contributes to productivity in two possible ways: by decreasing the likelihood that a worker will quit and by increasing his or her work effort.

The value of loyalty as insurance against a worker quitting

follows from conditions of uncertainty and from the relative importance of specific on-the-job training (see Becker, 1964). The value of loyalty as motivation to work hard derives in part from the absence of well-defined property rights. Once a worker has been hired in a team situation, his or her individual extra work effort is a public good. Therefore, individual workers may have an incentive to be free-riders (Leibenstein 1982) with respect to their team or to the firm as a whole. Loyalty reduces free-riding tendencies by fellow workers or employees and therefore increases workers' productivity³.

Wives can contribute to their husbands' loyalty in marriage. I am assuming here that the propensity for loyalty is an acquired trait, which needs to be learned within an organization. Since it is a general skill, individual firms have limited incentive to teach their workers how to be loyal (See Chapter 13). The family being such a pervasive organization, it can serve as a teaching ground for loyalty. In turn, the institution of marriage reinforces the loyalty elements in family relations, and women do so more actively than men (see Grossbard-Shechtman 1982 and Chapter 9). In other words, marriage can produce loyalty. A similar argument has been stated by Marxist economists Himmelweit and Mohun (1977) when they consider the family as a producer of a disciplined working class.

In principle, corporate loyalty and family loyalty can compete with each other. One reason corporations frequently move their employees may be to subordinate family loyalty to corporate loyalty. Moreover, firms may engage in activities aimed at reducing the possible competition between loyalty to the firm and loyalty to the family. For instance, Pahl and Pahl (1971) hypothesize that the company's sponsorship of social events for their employees increases wives' willingness to support their husbands' commitment.

Contributions to Husbands' Peripheral Tasks and to the Communication of Information. Workers get involved in activities that do not seem central to their job and are often unrelated at first sight. Examples of such activities are entertaining and participation at public events. A closer look may reveal, however, that such activities often promote a worker's success on the job. Such peripheral tasks often serve to communicate valuable information, and here a spouse

can play an important role.

Parties, which can serve as an efficient means of promoting the circulation of information within the organization, are often catered by wives. Other peripheral activities enable the employee to communicate personal information of value to the firm that otherwise is hard to gather.

As mentioned earlier, the firm is interested in workers' loyalty in the hope that this will increase the worker's motivation to contribute to joint work efforts, but information on the basic character of a worker is hard to obtain. The wife's behavior often serves as a testimony and a clue to the character of her husband.

First, a wife makes it possible for her husband to advertise his propensity for loyalty by simply remaining married. Men often tend to advertise their family loyalty at the workplace. Kanter (1977a) reports that in the large corporation she studied, pictures of wives and children adorned men's offices so commonly that they seemed almost mandatory. Such photographs may play the role of advertising loyalty to the family, possibly implying a willingness to be loyal to the firm as well.

Next, husbands working for corporations benefit from their wives' involvement in charitable and community service. Similarly, wives of independent businessmen can help generate business by promoting a favorable public image via their volunteer work. In this case the wives' activities serve the same function as does the funding of a National Geographic TV special by an oil company. Companies and managers benefit from advertising goodwill and concern for the community, which can generate direct income for the independent businessman and promotion for the executive contributing to his corporation's sales.

Hypotheses Relating Marital Differentials to Occupational

Characteristics

Given the types of contributions wives can make to their husbands' success at work, it follows that occupations differ in the degree to which they allow for potential contributions by wives. The following hypotheses were derived from the theoretical considerations discussed in the previous section.

Hypothesis K₁

Marital differentials will be larger in occupations with potentially steeper earnings profiles.

The more a man can possibly earn on his job, the larger the potential differences in earnings, and therefore the larger the potential contribution a wife can make by whatever means are available: indirect assistance by allowing the husband to specialize at work, as well as direct assistance applicable to the work situation. If the husband is an employee, there probably will be more pressure on the wife to contribute to her husband's career the higher the career "ceiling" and the more steps in the ladder (Tausky and Dubin 1965, Hall 1975, Mortimer, Hall, and Hill 1978).

The steepness of earnings profiles is partially a function of educational level. Educated workers typically experience steeper increases in earnings over the life-cycle than uneducated workers. It is therefore a corollary of Hypothesis K₁ that *marital differentials in earnings will be larger the more educated the workers.*

This is one reason executives tend to benefit more from being married than do workers in general, and therefore why executives are more often married than other workers (Whyte 1956). For instance, in 1969, 93.19 percent of the male managers earning 15,000 a year or more were married, 72.25 percent to women not in the paid labor force. As income and status go up, even fewer of the wives hold paid jobs, and even more of the men are married (Kanter 1977a).

Self-employed men with large potential earnings are also likely to gain large benefits from being married. Independent businessmen or farmers with large growth potential, for example, may experience higher marital differentials in earnings than do people of similar background in career tracks without growth potential. Evidence for this hypothesis can be found in a study of resettled farm

families given land with growth potential in the Columbia Basin project. The farmers who were most successful were more likely to have wives who conceived of their roles in traditional terms (Strauss 1958).

Although these occupational differences in marital differentials have not been tested rigorously, their frequent appearance should lead us to consider this hypothesis seriously. However, the same findings could possibly be explained with the help of additional hypotheses.

When careers have a large growth potential, generally only a small proportion of aspiring ladder climbers ever achieve the highest echelons. This often creates fierce competition and therefore stress, resulting from intensive efforts to move up the ladder. Kanter (1977b) calls such careers "absorptive," in the sense that they absorb a large fraction of a person's time and energy. The career-minded husband and his family experience stress in two ways: pressure on the husband's health and pressure on the wife and children, who must put up with many irregular and unpredictable demands of the husbands' job (Turner 1970). This leads us to another hypothesis.

Hypothesis K₂

The more stressful an occupation, the larger the potential marital differentials in earnings.

The wife of a husband whose occupation generates a high level of stress has more potential to contribute to her husband in the sense that there is more need for her to accommodate her husband's work demands: this constitutes an indirect contribution. There also is more room for direct contributions, such as direct assistance in central tasks and assistance in maintaining husband's physical and mental health. Although careers with high growth potential often tend to be stressful, the two hypotheses are separable to the extent that job stress and absorptiveness are measurable. Tests can be designed to ascertain how stress level influences marital differentials, given a certain pattern of potential growth in earnings. Moreover, in performing such tests one should control for additional aspects of a job that are also likely to affect marital differentials.

Hypothesis K₃

Marital differentials are likely to be higher in occupations involving more peripheral tasks.

As was shown in the previous section, one means by which a wife can promote her husband's career is by helping in peripheral tasks such as entertainment and community service. The more such tasks are potentially relevant to an occupation, the more a wife can contribute. Such tasks are more commonly found in high-prestige occupations (Mortimer, Hall, and Hill 1978), in occupations involving extensive personal contacts (Weinstock 1963), or in occupations highly dependent on the maintenance of a stable clientele (Moore 1962). Therefore, we expect higher marital differentials among managers than among engineers of similar ability, and among owners or managers of firms that depend more on their public image because of the type of product they sell.

This hypothesis helps explain the apparently high marital differentials among corporate managers and independent businessmen. It also explains why wives of university presidents (Clodius and Magrath 1984), politicians (MacPherson 1975), officers in the military (Goldman 1973), and ministers (Taylor and Hartley 1975) can make important contributions to their husbands' careers.

Hypothesis K₄

The more complex and potentially substitutable the central tasks of a husband's occupation, the larger the potential marital differentials in productivity and earnings.

Blue collar workers rarely are in a position to delegate any of their central tasks to their wives. In contrast, business managers and writers can have their wives do secretarial work, clergymen's wives can run the Sunday school, and wives of storekeepers can tend the store. Wives assisting in central tasks are not necessarily unpaid. Epstein (1971) found in her study of married lawyer teams that the wives did much of the paper work contributing to the husband's success in court or with clients.

Hypothesis K₅

The more loyalty contributes to workers' productivity--for example, because of the profitability of investments in human capital--the larger marital differentials in earnings.

As mentioned in the previous section, one of the ways in which wives can potentially contribute to their husbands' careers is by increasing the husbands' propensity to be loyal to the firm. Moreover, the fact that a man is married signals his potential for loyalty.

The potential need for workers' loyalty varies by occupation and by industrial system. Firms need loyal workers more if they consider investing in the workers' firm-specific skills. An industrial system such as Japan sets a particularly high value on loyalty to the firm (Clark 1975). It is therefore not surprising that employers' discrimination in terms of slower advancement of unmarried workers is more common in Japan than in the United States. In Japan, marriage also serves as a declaration of the willingness to curb individualistic aspirations and to contribute to organizations and to society at large (Hendry 1986).

Other Hypotheses about Marital Differentials in Earnings

The degree to which husbands benefit from their wives' contributions is expected to vary not only with occupational characteristics, but also with wives' personal traits and the terms of marriage. Similarly, husbands' personal traits are expected to influence wives' earnings.

Spouse's Characteristics. The larger the potential for marital differentials, the more men are likely to marry women who are particularly adept at contributing in the areas of most importance to their job. Women can possibly invest in their capacity to boost their husband's earnings.

Wives' characteristics that are most likely to contribute effectively to the tasks discussed earlier are a higher education and time spent in the home. As hypothesized by Benham (1975)

Hypothesis K₆

The more educated the wife, the higher the husband's earnings.

Benham's finding that the husband's income increases with the wife's schooling, even when the husband's own education and years of work are controlled, supports this hypothesis. Interestingly, he found that the positive contribution of the wife's schooling stops at the point of graduate education, possibly because of the substantially higher percentage of women with graduate degrees who work outside the home.

Similarly, one expects more educated husbands to contribute more to the earnings of their wife than uneducated husbands.

Time spent in the home could be related to the wife's labor force status. As a result, it is possible that

Hypothesis K₇

Husband's earnings are positively related to wife's time spent at home.

Evidence of the advantage of a nonworking wife from the husband's point of view has been offered in a study of male engineers and accountants (Burke and Weir 1976). Husbands of working wives reported more job pressures, expressed more dissatisfaction with their jobs, marriages, and other aspects of their lives, and manifested more symptoms of stress than the husbands of homemakers.

Terms of Marriage. The same husband--with a given occupation employing him--and wife--with a given occupation, education, etc.--are likely to have different relationships depending on the terms of their marriage. In part, these terms depend on the legal environment. Under laws making divorce easy, most women do not want to invest in their husbands' careers as much as they would have invested if there is good protection against divorce. When divorce is easy, it may be necessary for husbands to give their wives more direct incentives to help them professionally than at times

when divorce is difficult. Unilateral divorce may be a particularly strong factor discouraging investments by wives in their husbands' careers, as wives faced with husbands asking for a divorce have very few bargaining tools helping them in retrieving their investments in their husbands' careers. It follows that

Hypothesis K₈

When divorce laws are unilateral, wives will invest less in their husbands' careers than when divorce laws are not unilateral (for instance when they are based on mutual agreement.)

This hypothesis could be tested by following marital differentials in husbands' earnings over time across states and comparing these trends with the adoption of no-fault divorce laws. More generally, predicted divorce is expected to have a negative effect on spousal investments in workers' productivity, and therefore to reduce marital differentials in earnings.

Similarly, expectations about traditional roles of men and women in marriage will affect the amount of investment by the wife in her husband's career. The more women accept traditional marital roles, implying few personal returns for their investments, the more they are likely to support their husbands' careers. Lopata (1971) found that wives of successful men were more likely to accept traditional marital roles. The more prestigious the husband's occupation, the more likely the wife was to turn the enjoyment of her husband's success into part of her reward (Mortimer, Hall, and Hill 1978). Some women may, in fact, be caught in a bind, not happy about the compensation they receive for their contribution and unable to find better opportunities through divorce and remarriage. Many corporate wives suffer from marital problems, according to Kanter (1977a). It is not clear, however, if women investing more in their husband's work have worse marriages than women who invest less in their husband's work.

The presence of marital status differentials in earnings may affect the likelihood of divorce.

Hypothesis K₉

Divorce may be less common and remarriage more rapid when men engage in occupations with high marital-status differentials.

Divorce may be less common and remarriage more rapid when men engage in occupations with high marital differentials. The decisions to marry and divorce are likely to affect earnings. Bartlett and Callahan (1984) found that men who were divorced or widowed and who had remarried experienced particularly rapid growth in wages.⁴ If marriage really contributes to earnings as is claimed here, the upward trend in divorce that has characterized recent decades may be one explanation for the downward trend in productivity left unexplained by conventional methods of study. In turn, the upward trend in divorce may be caused in part by legal changes which have lowered the protection wives receive if they invest in their husbands' careers.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter looked at possible effects of spouses on the other spouse's career. For simplicity, the entire discussion was stated in terms of wife's effect on husband's career. In theory, the arguments presented here could also be applied to the effect of husbands on their wives' career. As shown in Chapter 14, there seems to be evidence that husbands help their wives at work.⁵ It has been argued here that marital differentials in earnings are expected to vary with occupational characteristics (including growth potential, stress and adsorptiveness, amount of peripheral and central tasks involved, and need for loyalty), with characteristics of the spouse, and with institutional factors such as type of divorce laws. Preliminary evidence based on the sociological literature was offered in partial support of these hypotheses.

The above-mentioned hypotheses all have corollaries, which are derived from the process by which people select marital status, spouses, occupations, and employers. Positions with larger marital differentials are more likely to be filled by married men, the result of voluntary selection and possibly encouragement by the employer.

This theory also has implications for employers' policies. First, they may discriminate against unmarried workers. Second, they may select two persons to fill a position that tends to be a two-person career. Employers in fact often interview wives of prospective employees as well as the applicants themselves (Kanter 1977a). Employers may also organize activities that encourage wives to contribute to their husbands' careers, such as family recreation.

It is hoped that further research will do more to establish the direction of causality so that we get a better understanding of the relationship between marriage and productivity at work.

Notes

1. Economists writing on gender differentiation as it affects labor supply have either ignored the nature-nurture controversy or emphasized biological influences (for instance Becker 1981). Becker's position on this issue is consistent with his general view of social, legal, and political institutions as promoting long-run individual well-being. According to this view, commonly espoused by economists, social behavior (such as nurturing methods) which is not based on real factor prices and endowments, is not socially optimal and would therefore disappear over time. This assumes competition in the broadest sense and the absence of exploitation of one group by another.

2. A critique of the economic literature on female labor supply along these lines can be found in Mortimer, Hall, and Hill (1978).

3. A related discussion of loyalty can be found in Akerlof (1983).

4. This could also possibly reflect a causality whereby higher income facilitates remarriage.

5. The fact that there are no regular marital differentials in earnings for women does not mean that husbands do not help working wives.