

Sexual Dysfunction and Disorder Patterns of Husbands of Working and Nonworking Women

Constance Avery-Clark, PhD

The sexual dysfunction and disorder patterns of 218 husbands of working and nonworking women were compared in a retrospective analysis of couples presenting for sexual and marital therapy at Masters & Johnson Institute. Results indicated that men who were married to women who were pursuing careers or to women who were employed in jobs presented only between one half and two-thirds as often with primary complaints of inhibited sexual excitement and inhibited sexual desire as husbands of unemployed women. The results are compared to findings for women in dual-earner and single-earner relationships. The findings are interpreted in terms of psychological and interpersonal stressors characterizing single-earner, conventional marital arrangements as compared with those typifying dual-earner partnerships.

Information on intimacy patterns of couples when both partners work is limited, especially with regard to patterns of sexual responsivity and interest.^{1,2} Avery-Clark's¹ research is the only empirical investigation that has been published thus far on the sexual response and interest patterns of dual-earner couples. These published data, as with so many on dual-earner relationships, pertain only to the characteristics of the female participants.^{3,4} Nonetheless, they suggest the importance of examining the effects of women's working on the sexual patterns of couples.

The results of Avery-Clark's investigation indicated not only that women's involvement in the work force appeared to have a significant effect on the sexual response and interest patterns of the women in the study, but also that women's status within the work force appeared to be of some consequence. The female subjects who pursued careers (employment of an ongoing, developmental nature) were more likely to suffer from inhibited sexual desire, and were less likely to experience inhibited orgasm than were either the female subjects who were employed

Constance Avery-Clark, PhD, is a Clinical and Research Associate, Masters & Johnson Institute, 24 S. Kingshighway, St. Louis, MO 63108.

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in jobs that emphasized the immediate organization of activities, or the subjects who had never been employed. The findings on inhibited sexual desire were explained in terms of the increased demands on the time of women pursuing careers (the overload dilemma), and the possibility of more competition and power struggles between the career women and their male partners resulting from the shift in the balance of financial resource power in the relationship. The findings on orgasmic dysfunction were interpreted in terms of the hypothesized more effective neutralization on the part of the career subjects of the psychological stress endemic to identification with the traditional female role of passivity and availability during sexual activity that has been identified as central to the development of inhibited female orgasm.⁵

Thus far, no empirical findings have been published on the effect of women's working on the sexual response and interest patterns of the male partners in dual-earner relationships. The only information that has been published on this topic has been generated by case observation studies. The results of these studies suggest that women's working may have primarily a negative effect on the sexual patterns of the men in dual-earner relationships. These reports suggest that dual-earner men may be particularly susceptible to inhibited sexual excitement (having difficulty achieving and maintaining erections).⁶⁻⁸ There is also evidence to suggest that men in dual-earner relationships may experience a higher incidence of inhibited sexual desire, (deficient in the initiation of and/or receptivity to the initiation of sexual activity).⁹

This reported trend of the greater susceptibility of dual-earner men to sexual difficulties is most often attributed to the hypothesized higher level of stress that men in dual-earner relationships experience when compared with men in traditional, single-earner arrangements. It has been suggested that the sources of the dual-earner men's higher level of stress include unique psychological dilemmas and relationship conflicts that they and their female partners experience.

An example of a unique intrapersonal dilemma that has been identified as possibly contributing to higher psychological stress in the dual-earner man is confusion about sex-role identity.^{4,9-22} On the one hand, the dual-earner man espouses and attempts to abide by a more nontraditional, androgynous sex-role value system that defines masculinity in less performance, achievement-oriented, and in more interpersonal, nondemand terms than does the traditional sex-role value system.^{4,23} On the other hand, since the new, more androgynous value system has come into existence only after the birth of most dual-earner men, these men have not yet had the opportunity to internalize it to the extent that they have internalized the traditional beliefs they have been exposed to since childhood, beliefs that define masculinity in performance and achievement terms. For example, inside of the bedroom, the dual-earner man may recognize the benefits to both his and his partner's sexual responsivity if his partner is more active in communicating her needs to him, if he is responsive to her requests, and if each assumes responsibility for his or her own sexual involvement. However, having internalized the more

traditional values that define his bedroom role in goal-oriented terms (the goals being for him to achieve an erection and to stimulate his partner to orgasm), the dual-earner man may be genuinely confused as to how to proceed during sexual encounters.²⁴ The insecurity resulting from this sex-role confusion may render him sufficiently anxious during sexual encounters such that his functioning is disrupted. Masters and Johnson⁵ have described the debilitating effects of anxiety during sex on men's erectile security. Additionally and more recently, Kolodny, Masters and Johnson,²⁵ and Nadelson and Nadelson²⁶ have outlined the relation among anxiety, intrapersonal conflicts, and the development of inhibited sexual desire.

Men's anxiety about masculinity [has increased] when traditional roles are changed, and there are demands to perform roles which had been considered traditionally feminine. This can lead to withdrawal, including loss of . . . potency, compensatory and sometimes rigid assertions of masculinity, or a variety of other responses to restore self-confidence and diminish anxiety. Loss of potency then reinforces the sense of lack of control in a cycle of reverberating helplessness.²⁶ (pp. 99-100)

In addition to sex-role identity confusion, another psychological dilemma that has been identified as a potential source of stress in dual-earner individuals and, associated with this, as a hypothesized factor in the reported greater susceptibility to sexual difficulties, is schedule overload.^{4,10-17} Both men and women in dual-earner relationships have been noted for the hectic pace they maintain. Dual-earner partners frequently report being more physically and mentally exhausted at the end of the day than people in single-earner relationships and, therefore, less interested in initiating sexual activity.^{12,18} Kolodny, Masters and Johnson²⁵ have described the relation between time-demand stress and lowered sexual desire. As noted previously, the findings of higher rates of inhibited sexual desire among the career women may be attributable to stress associated with time demands.¹

Interpersonal conflict may be another source of dual-earner men's hypothesized greater susceptibility to sexual difficulties, particularly to inhibited sexual desire. The dual-earner man, more than his single-earner counterpart, may experience competition and power struggles between himself and his partner because of the shift in the balance of resource power associated with his partner's ability to generate income.^{26,28} These conflicts may generalize to the intimate and sexual areas of the relationship, with his being reluctant to be sufficiently vulnerable to her to meet either his or her emotional and sexual needs.^{7,9-11,13,29-33} Kolodny et al.²⁵ have described the relation between competition and power struggles in marital relationships, and the development of inhibited sexual desire. A higher incidence of interpersonal conflicts in dual-career relationships was hypothesized as one explanation for the findings that career female

subjects were twice as likely to complain of inhibited sexual desire as female subjects in jobs or in single-earner relationships.¹

In summary, published case observations that support the hypothesis that a woman's working might have a positive impact on her male partner's sexual patterns are virtually nonexistent. No empirical investigations have been conducted on the sexual patterns of men involved in dual-earner relationships to support or refute the hypothesis that these men are more susceptible to sexual difficulties than men in single-earner arrangements.

Methodological Problems

Knowledge about the relation between women's working and couple's sexual response patterns is limited not only by a paucity of empirical investigations, but also by methodological problems. Published reports on the sexual patterns of dual-earner couples have been based almost exclusively on a limited number of case studies, rendering the systematic nature of the findings questionable.^{34,35} Most reports are based on very small and nonrepresentative samples, with control groups often absent.^{23, 35-37} Couples in which the wife does not work for economic compensation outside of the home are frequently not included, making useful comparisons impossible between individuals in dual-earner and single-earner couples. The documented importance of distinguishing between women who work in a career involving advancement and intrinsic reward, and women who work at a job primarily for economic compensation and, therefore, the importance of differentiating between the husbands of these two groups of working women, is often not heeded by researchers, even though these appear to be two significantly different groups of women and men.^{4,8,17,20,35,38-41}

Purpose of Investigation

The primary purpose of the present investigation was to assess in a preliminary but nonetheless more systematic manner the sexual response patterns of men in dual-earner relationships, and to compare these response patterns to those of their female partners.¹ It was the aim of this investigation to include a larger sample than has been examined previously in case study investigations.

It was also a goal to evaluate the men's sexual dysfunction and disorder patterns, controlling for the effect of the type of employment in which their wives were engaged. It was not the intention of this investigation to examine the effect of the type of employment of the men themselves. This is the goal of research that is currently being conducted. Finally, it was the intent of this study to compare the patterns of the men in dual-earner relationships with those of men in single-earner arrangements. The data presented in this article were generated during the same investigation that produced the information on sexual dysfunction and

disorder patterns of working and nonworking wives published previously.¹

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects were selected from couples who had presented themselves for sexual dysfunction and disorder therapy at Masters & Johnson Institute in St. Louis, Missouri, between January 1, 1979, and March 1, 1985. The men were defined as presenting with sexual dysfunction or disorder concerns if their distresses met the criteria defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual III⁴² for the following psychosexual difficulties: 1) 302.70, atypical psychosexual dysfunction, sexual aversion; 2) 302.71, inhibited sexual desire; 3) 302.72, inhibited sexual excitement; 4) 302.74, inhibited male orgasm; and 5) 302.75, premature ejaculation. Subjects were eliminated from the investigation if: 1) they presented solely for a complaint that was other than a sexual dysfunction or disorder (e.g., V61.10, marital problem, or 302.00, egodystonic homosexuality not associated with a sexual dysfunction or disorder); 2) they were not married at the time of the couple's treatment at the Institute; 3) either they or their spouses were students at the time of treatment at the Institute; 4) either they or their spouses were retired at the time of their treatment; and 5) either they or their spouses had not been in the same occupational category for a minimum of one year.

Procedure

Each of the couples had a file on record at the Institute which included a Pre-Counseling Information Form, part of the application procedure for all couples. This form provided information about their presenting difficulty, marriage, family, and occupation. In addition to the Information Form, the files also contained daily records of information obtained during treatment that pertained to the couple's history, dysfunction or disorder, and progress in treatment. The Pre-Counseling Information Form and the daily records were examined for each couple in order to identify each male subject's sexual problem. The specific nature of each of the primary presenting male difficulties was determined on the basis of the information contained in the files regarding the psychosexual dysfunction or disorder diagnosis that had been given to each man at the time he had originally presented himself for treatment at the Institute. For the purposes of the present investigation, each subject was then classified according to his primary presenting sexual difficulty at the time he first sought therapy. For example, a man who complained of inhibited male orgasm that had, by history, subsequently resulted in inhibited male sexual desire was classified as presenting primarily with the former distress.

The men were further classified on the basis of their wives' occupational

status. Male subjects were placed in one of three categories associated with their wives' employment. The first category, Career, included men whose wives were engaged in employment for economic compensation outside of the home that: 1) involved a high degree of commitment to work as measured by number of years of preparatory education and training, and/or number of hours devoted per week to meeting employment responsibilities; 2) was of an ongoing, developmental nature that emphasized increasing levels of responsibility rather than the performance of immediate activities; and/or 3) was undertaken not only for economic considerations but primarily for intrinsic rewards that facilitate personal development. In the present investigation, the Career category included husbands whose wives engaged in employment identified by the US Department of Labor¹¹ as managerial or professional specialties.

The second category, Job, included husbands whose wives were active in employment that: 1) did not involve a high degree of commitment as measured by number of years of preparatory education and training, and/or number of hours devoted per week to meeting employment responsibilities; 2) emphasized the organization of immediate activities rather than increasing levels of responsibility; and/or 3) was undertaken primarily for economic reasons rather than for intrinsic rewards associated with personal development. This group included men whose wives were involved in employment identified by the US Department of Labor¹¹ as: technical, sales and administrative support; service occupations; precision production, craft, and repair; operators, fabricators, and laborers; and farming, forestry, and fishing.

The final category of male subjects, Unemployed, referred to men whose wives pursued homemaking and community volunteer activities for which there was no direct economic compensation to the wives.

RESULTS

Two hundred and eighteen men met the criteria for inclusion in the present investigation. All subjects were Caucasian. They ranged in age from 21 to 60 years, with a mean age of 41.8. The procedure for classifying the men according to their primary presenting sexual concern at the time they initiated treatment at the Institute resulted in two subjects with a primary complaint of aversion, 16 with a primary complaint of inhibited sexual desire, 57 with a primary complaint of inhibited sexual excitement, 22 with a primary complaint of inhibited male orgasm, 60 with a primary complaint of premature ejaculation, and 61 diagnosed as having no sexual dysfunction or disorder.

The procedure for classifying men on the basis of their wives' occupation resulted in the identification of 65 husbands of Career women, 62 husbands of Job women, and 91 husbands of Unemployed women. The husbands of Career women ranged in age from 24 to 61 years, with a mean age of 39.7; the husbands of Job women ranged in age from 21 to 56 years, with a mean age of 38.5; and the husbands of Unemployed women ranged in age from 28 to 64 years, and had a mean age of 47.3.

Since the men in the Unemployed category averaged more than 7 years older than the subjects in the other two occupational groups, it was necessary to control for age. A subsample was identified from the original population of 218 men, including those who were 54 years or younger and whose wives were not older than 54. This age was selected as the criterion for inclusion in the subsample because it represented the lowest maximum age of the age ranges for each of the three groups of men and of the three groups of their spouses. One hundred and eighty-seven men met the criterion for inclusion in the subsample, 62 being married to Career women, 59 to Job women, and 66 to Unemployed spouses. The mean ages for the subsample Career, Job and Unemployed women's husbands were 38.8, 37.6, and 42.3 years, respectively. Comparisons of sexual response patterns between the three groups of men were performed both for the original sample and for the subsample of men 54 years or younger.

Table 1 is a presentation of the percent of husbands in each of the three wives' occupational groups for both the original sample and the subsample that presented with each of the sexual difficulties as their primary complaint. For both the original sample and the subsample, the results indicate a pattern of men married to Career and Job women presenting less than between one-half and two-thirds as often with the primary complaint of inhibited sexual excitement as the husbands of Unemployed women. Men married to Career and Job women also tended to present approximately only about half as often with the primary complaint of inhibited desire as husbands of Unemployed women. Men married to Unemployed women were likely to present only between one half and two-thirds as often with no primary sexual complaint as husbands of Career and Job women.

Table 1

Percent of Husbands within Each Wife Occupational Category
Presenting with Each Sexual Dysfunction/Disorder for Both Original
and Subsamples

Dysfunction/Disorder	Wife's Occupation		
	Career	Job	Unemployed
Aversion	0 (0)*	3 (3)	0 (0)
Inhibited Desire	5 (5)	6 (7)	10 (12)
Inhibited Excitement	22 (19)	16 (15)	36 (29)
Inhibited Orgasm	11 (11)	11 (12)	9 (8)
Premature Ejaculation	32 (32)	26 (24)	25 (30)
None	31 (32)	37 (39)	20 (21)
Total	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)

* () Refers to percent figures from the subsample of subjects 54 years or younger

Table 2 is a presentation of the percent of husbands with each category of primary sexual complaint who were in each of the three wives' occupational categories for both the original sample of 218, and the subsample of 187 subjects 54 years or less. Unequal expected frequencies Chi-squared analyses of the results for both samples indicate that men who presented with the primary complaint of inhibited sexual excitement were significantly more likely to be husbands of Unemployed women than they were to be husbands of Career or Job women ($\chi^2 = 27.11$, $p < .0001$ for the original sample; $\chi^2 = 9.88$, $p < .007$ for the subsample). Additionally, men who presented with the primary complaint of inhibited sexual desire were significantly more likely to be categorized as husbands of Unemployed women than as husbands of Career or Job women ($\chi^2 = 23.66$, $p < .0001$ for the original sample, $\chi^2 = 18.14$, $p < .0001$ for the subsample). There were no statistically significant differences for the other categories of primary sexual complaint among the three groups of husbands. Statistical analyses were not performed on the data for sexual aversion problems since the number of subjects in this groups was so few ($N = 2$).

DISCUSSION

The results of this retrospective analysis of 218 married couples who presented for the treatment of sexual dysfunction or disorder complaints at Masters & Johnson Institute during a 5-year period suggest that the male subjects involved in dual-earner relationships were not more susceptible to sexual difficulties. The findings indicate that male subjects

Table 2
Percent of Husbands Presenting with Each Sexual
Dysfunction/Disorder within each Wife Occupational Category for
Both Original and Subsamples

Dysfunction/ Disorder	Wife's Occupation			
	Career	Job	Unemployed	Total
Aversion	0 (0)*	100 (100)	0 (0)	100 (100)
Inhibited Desire	19 (20)	25 (27)	56 (53)	100 (100)
Inhibited Excitement	25 (30)	18 (23)	58 (48)	100 (100)
Inhibited Orgasm	32 (37)	32 (37)	36 (26)	100 (100)
Premature Ejaculation	35 (37)	27 (26)	38 (37)	100 (100)
None	33 (35)	38 (40)	30 (25)	100 (100)

*() Refers to percent figures from the subsample of subjects 54 years or younger

married to working women were, in fact, less likely to suffer from desire disorders and inhibited sexual excitement difficulties than single-earner men. This is contrary to the trends that have been reported in the published case studies. These findings are also different than those previously reported for female subjects.¹ While the critical factor for identifying difference patterns of sexual responsivity and desire among the groups of men was their wives' work force participation, different response and desire patterns among the categories of wives were associated not only with work force participation but also with status of the women within the labor force.

The results of significantly lower rates of inhibited sexual excitement and inhibited sexual desire in both groups of dual-earner male subjects may be explained similarly to the results of a lower rate of inhibited sexual excitement in the female subjects who pursued careers, namely, the more effective neutralization of the psychological stress resulting from identification with traditional sex-role values which negatively affects sexual functioning. Effective management of the psychological tension associated with traditional male role identification has been identified by Masters and Johnson⁵ and others^{24,25} as the critical factor in preventing the development of male sexual difficulties, and in resolving such difficulties should they occur. This is because the traditional sex-role value system places the man in the untenable position of having to accomplish that which he does not have the direct ability to accomplish, namely, achievement and maintenance of an erection and stimulation of his partner to orgasm. Such unrealistic expectations may result in concerns for performance and associated spectating sexual responsivity that distract the man from his sensual involvement and exacerbates the sexual difficulties.

The fact that a man's wife works appears to have some effect on neutralizing the unrealistic expectations of traditional sex roles, relieving the man from the associated pressure to perform, and, therefore, facilitating his sexual functioning and desire. It may be that the working woman's husband perceives his wife as more competent to manage her own feelings responsibly and independently of him. This perception may result in his altering his general definition of the female role from passive and dependent to more active and self-responsible. This might facilitate his changing his view of the male's role as well, moving away from a view associated with goal-orientation, and toward one including characteristics of responsiveness and availability. As he perceives that his wife is able to manage independently from him, he may feel relieved of the responsibility for "orchestrating" their activities, including activities in the bedroom. His definition of sex roles both inside and outside of the bedroom might then become less rigid, and more compatible with a nonperformance-oriented attitude toward sexual activity. This androgynous attitude might help the dual-earner man neutralize some of the fears of sexual performance, thus facilitating sexual functioning, and promoting sexual desire that might have been otherwise inhibited by fears of performance. Neutralization of the stress associated with traditional sex-role identi-

cation appears more to have a facilitating effect on the dual-earner men's sexual functioning than the presence of any sex-role confusion creates a negative effect.

General support for the hypothesis that dual-earner men may have more effectively managed the intrapersonal tension associated with traditional sex-role identification by adopting more androgynous sex-role values, and general support for the hypothesis that any sex-role confusion that is experienced by dual-earner men is outweighed by the positive effects of neutralizing stress associated with traditional sex-role identification, has been generated by a number of researchers.^{8,9,27,43} These reports suggest that espousing less traditional and less rigid sex-role values has a beneficial effect on the functioning of dual-earner men not only in the area of sexuality, but also in general personal adjustment. Dual-earner men are noted for being personally and professionally more secure individuals than men who identify with traditional male-role standards.

More effective neutralization of traditional sex-role identification may be one explanation for the lower incidence of sexual dysfunction among the men in the present investigation who were married to working women. This neutralization process was also suggested as an explanation for the lower incidence of dysfunction problems among the Career wives in the formerly published investigation already cited.¹ If this neutralization is associated with lower sexual dysfunction, then it is interesting to note that it occurred in the husbands when their wives participated in the work force, regardless of whether their wives were in careers or in jobs. However, it only occurred in the female subjects if they both worked *and* were pursuing careers. Subject wives who were employed in jobs had a rate of orgasmic dysfunction that not only equalled but exceeded that of women who did not work outside of the home. For the wives, the hypothesized minimization of the intrapersonal stress associated with traditional sex-role identification appeared to require more than their simply working; neutralization of the tension from identifying with passivity, the occurrence of which is critical to promoting orgasmic responsivity, appeared to occur only when the women pursued work of an ongoing, developmental nature. The wives' adaptation of less rigid, more androgynous sex-role values that facilitate genital responsivity may be associated more with the type of communication and problem-solving skills that are developed in the pursuit of a career rather than with those that are useful for employment that emphasizes the immediate organization of activities.

The results of the present investigation on the sexual patterns of husbands may be explained not only in terms of the dual-earner husbands' more successful neutralization of traditional sex-role values, but also in association with these men's having fewer, rather than more, time demands than their single-earner counterparts. The original literature on the overload dilemma suggested that dual-earner husbands confront more demands on their time than single-earner husbands and that these overload demands leave them little time to cultivate sexual interest. However, more recent reports suggest that the dual-earner men may, in fact,

confront less overload and may, therefore, have more time available for stimulating sexual desire and facilitating sexual functioning.⁴⁴⁻⁴⁸ While it does appear that the women involved in pursuing a career experience the dilemma of schedule overload, thus explaining the higher incidence of inhibited sexual desire in these women, the husbands of both Career and Job women have not been reported to experience an increase in demands to perform domestic or other nonoccupational services regardless of their wives' educational or occupational level, or the presence, number, or age of children in the home. Career, Job, and Unemployed women perform significantly more of the domestic chores than their spouses; among themselves, they devoted essentially the same number of hours meeting these responsibilities. In addition to the fact that a wife's working does not appear to place additional time demands on her husband, her income may permit the couple to purchase services that alleviate the dual-earner husband from some of the demands placed on his single-earner counterpart or some of the demands placed on him prior to his wife's working. The purchase of these services would further reduce any time-related stresses that might interfere with the dual-earner man's interest in and initiation of sexual activity as compared with the time-demand pressures experienced by the single-earner husband that might interfere with nurturing his sexual interest.

The findings that dual-earner male subjects were less likely to present with sexual difficulties may also be explained by the fact that the husbands in dual-earner relationships may perceive less interpersonal stress, rather than the greater amount of conflict that has been reported to characterize dual-earner relationships.^{26,28} The results of a number of recent studies indicate that dual-earner relationships are not necessarily more highly stressful partnerships. The partnerships may not be fraught with competition and power struggles that are fueled by insecure and conflicted male partners who are more likely to experience sexual anxieties and identity concerns. In fact, Epstein⁴⁹ has observed that dual-earner relationships more often involve decision-making patterns that are based on better communication, more support, and greater mutuality of purpose than is the case in single-earner partnerships. More cooperative and equitable problem-resolution patterns have been observed in dual-earner couples by other investigators as well.^{9,29,50,51}

The very shift in the balance of power associated with working women's increased financial resources that previously has been regarded as the cause of the tension-ridden power struggles between dual-earner partners, may, in fact, produce less stress and competition, at least as perceived by the husbands in the dual-earner relationship.^{52,53} Recent research findings suggest that the greater the similarity of resource power between men and women, as is the case in dual-earner relationships, the greater the probability that problems that do arise in the context of the relationship will be addressed cooperatively, supportively and satisfactorily, rather than unilaterally, stressfully and unsuccessfully. Experiencing the shift in the balance of resource power as a relief rather than as a threat, the dual-earner husband may also experience relief from having to be

the unilateral decision-maker, and, in addition, may experience a greater opportunity for intimacy by being able to engage in conflict resolution together with his wife. Such findings may help to explain the reason that a man in a dual-earner relationship might be less likely to develop a sexual problem in the first place. Additionally, these findings suggest that were a dual-earner man to develop a sexual problem, he might be able to resolve it more efficiently and effectively with his partner because of the more mutually supportive, cooperative nature of the relationship.

However, when the lesser amount of interpersonal tension as defined by competition and power struggles is considered as an explanation for the sexual response patterns of dual-earner husbands, it is important to note that the most critical factor may not be the actual amount of tension that exists but rather each spouse's perception of the amount of conflict that is present. This is because one of the explanations for the findings of a *higher* rate of inhibited sexual desire among Career wives may be the existence of more interpersonal conflict in their dual-earner relationships.¹ Since both a higher and a lower level of interpersonal conflict in the same dual-earner relationships cannot be used to explain both the dual-earner husbands' lower rate of inhibited sexual desire and their wives' higher incidence of this disorder, it must be hypothesized that it may be each spouse's *perception* of the amount of existing conflict that may be most significant. It may very well be that dual-earner men perceive less competition and power-related tension and greater relief from unilateral decision-making pressure in their relationships than do their single-earner counterparts, and that these perceptions facilitate the expression of their sexuality. Their wives, on the other hand, (at least the wives who are pursuing careers) might very well perceive more interpersonal tension as a result of the shift in the balance of resource power in these very same relationships, and these perceptions might inhibit the Career women's ability or willingness to cultivate their own sexual interest.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the present investigation suggest that wives' working may have a positive effect on the sexual functioning and the sexual interest of their husbands. In this investigation, it was the husbands of the unemployed women rather than the husbands of the working women, who presented with a higher incidence of sexual dysfunction and sexual desire difficulties.

Although the results of this investigation represent the most systematic research that has been conducted to date on the sexual response and interest patterns of men in dual-earner and single-earner relationships, it is a preliminary study. Future research must include prospective analyses of subjects at the time they present for treatment, rather than their retrospective examination, as was conducted in this investigation. This more systematic approach would facilitate the more accurate collection of data. It would also permit the inclusion of a wider variety of and more sophisticated assessment techniques. This would permit the measurement

not only of the presence of the hypothesized psychological and interpersonal stressors associated with the different sexual response and interest patterns among the groups of husbands, but also of the significance of each of the stressors in the development of these patterns.

This field obviously requires investigations that include nonclinical, control populations. The results of this study are limited by the fact that they can only be generalized to men presenting themselves for sex and marital therapy. Hopefully, the results of this investigation will stimulate awareness of the need for further research in the area of sexual patterns in dual-earner couples.

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