

Passing in the night: Examining work schedules, gender and marital quality

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Taking care of business is becoming an ever-growing, 24/7 challenge for the American worker. A new study out of the University of Cincinnati is examining the effect this is having on marriages. The research by David Maume, a University of Cincinnati professor of sociology and director of the Kunz Center for Research in Work, Family and Gender, was presented Aug. 16 at the 105th annual meeting of the American Sociological Association in Atlanta.

"Although much research has examined the marital effects of women's work, relatively few studies have focused on the effects of working late shifts on marital dynamics," writes Maume. "This study updates and extends the rather limited and dated research on the link between schedule diversity and marital quality."

Overall, the study found that men felt that working the late shift negatively affected the quality of their marriages. However, the majority of [women](#) felt that rotating work schedules strained their marriages.

"When women work rotating schedules, they find it more difficult to get everything done at home and engage with [family members](#), and it is this disruptive effect on family life which strains women's marriages rather than the times they work," explains Maume. He adds that in that regard, the new study backs previous research that demonstrates that "to a greater degree than men, women's work schedules disrupt their ability to care for and nurture other family members, and women's marriages suffer as a result."

"As the inter-relationship between work and family life becomes more complex in the face of changing expectations for gender roles, it is increasingly important that researchers understand how emergent 24/7 work schedules affect the well-being of workers and their families," concludes Maume.

The study focused on just over 370 Midwest grocery and drug store union workers (65 percent women and 35 percent men) - a population that regularly works nonstandard schedules. All of the people who took part in the survey were married. The average age of the men was 50 and the mean age for the women was 48. The average length of the marriages of those who took part in the survey was 19 years. An overwhelming majority of those surveyed were white. African Americans and Hispanics in the study were represented by nine percent [men](#) and five percent women.

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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