Wives Who Outearn Their Husbands:
A Transitory or Persistent Phenomenon for Couples?

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Abstract

In what percent of married couples do wives outearn their husbands, and, moreover, how persistent are these patterns? This study 1) systematically examines variation in point-in-time estimates across alternative measures of earnings, definitions of types of couples, and data sources; and 2) gauges the *persistence* of these patterns for a period of up to three calendar years. Data are from the 2000 CPS and 1996-2000 SIPP. Among the findings are that in 19 to 30 percent of all married couples, wives have higher earnings than their husbands, and in 60 percent of such couples this arrangement persists over a three-year period; for the rest, this arrangement is transitory.

I. Introduction

By the early 2000s, nearly one-fourth of dual-earner wives earned more than their husbands, up from just one-tenth in 1970.[1] While provocative, these figures, calculated at specific points in time, provide no information about how earnings and employment are distributed between spouses living together *dynamically over time.* In other words, of the one-fourth of dual-earner couples identified in the early 2000s, what percentage remained in this status month after month, year after year, indicative of a persistent earnings pattern, and what percentage of couples experienced this earnings situation but for just a short period of time?

Researchers in a number of areas have pointed to the need for a fuller understanding of spousal earnings patterns. For instance, researchers at the Social Security Administration (see Butrica, Iams, and Sandell, 1999) have observed that because workers receive a Social Security benefit based on the higher of their own benefit or their "spousal benefit" (generally 50 percent of the spouse's benefit), meaningful projections of social security benefit payouts require information on *both spouses'* earnings over their worklives. Information about the persistence (or lack thereof) of earnings patterns is an important input into making such projections. In other research, Blumberg and Coleman (1989) have observed that couples' relative earnings patterns over a period of time – whether they are stable or unstable—may affect a range of outcomes, including marital stability and risk of domestic abuse. Their basic argument is that greater earnings stability reduces marital friction, with beneficial effects for families, particularly those with children. Thus, it would be important to know the extent of relative earnings instability among married couples. Also, one would suspect that if a wife outearns her husband for an extended period of time this may increase her bargaining power in the family, with

[1]See U.S. Census Bureau, "Historical Income Series," Table F-22 at www.census.gov. See also Freeman (2000); and Raley et al. (2003).

consequent effects on a range of outcomes including children's well-being and the allocation of nonmarket work.

This study takes an important first step in answering these research questions. First, this study systematically examines the fraction of wives who outearn their husbands across a number of dimensions including: alternative definitions of earnings, different subsets of married couples, and two data sources. Second, and perhaps most valuable, this study gauges the *persistence* of spouses' earnings patterns for a period of up to three calendar years based on monthly and annual earnings comparisons. Estimates of the fraction of couples in which the wife outearns her husband—termed "nontraditional" in this study—are highly sensitive to the earnings threshold chosen, and so results from two alternative measures are compared. In addition, this study briefly looks at why couples are nontraditional. As previously observed by Oppenheimer (1997), this may be a consequence of wives' labor market success but also perhaps due to husbands' employment difficulties.

The persistence analysis is conducted using 1996-2000 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). In addition, point-in-time estimates from the SIPP are benchmarked with estimates from the 2000 Current Population Survey (CPS). Among the findings, in 19 to 30 percent of all married couples, wives have higher earnings than their husbands (by any amount) at a given point in time, and in at least 60 per cent of such couples, this arrangement persists over a three-year period, for the rest it is transitory. Further, a sizeable number of *all* married couples have relative earnings that fluctuate considerably over the three-year observation period. Taken together, the results of this study suggest that spouses' relative earnings patterns are far more varied and complex than has been previously discerned.

II. Measures of Relative Spousal Earnings

Numerous studies have previously analyzed one or more measures of relative spousal earnings (see, for instance, Brennan, Barnett and Gareis, 2001; Brines, 1994; Choi, 1999: Freeman, 2000; Hayghe, 1993; Nock, 2001; Raley et al. 2003; Sayer and Bianchi, 2000; Sorensen and McLanahan, 1987; Winkler, 1998; and Winkler and Rose, 2000). In this study, married couples are categorized into a specific "couple type" based on their relative earnings using two distinct categorization schemes for purposes of sensitivity testing. In the "standard" categorization scheme, which is built off of a regularly published series by the US Census Bureau, nontraditional couples are defined as those where the wife has higher earnings than her husband, or equivalently, where the wife's share of combined earnings exceeds 50 percent. For clarity of discussion, if wife's earnings = A and husband's earnings = B, then A> B or, equivalently, A/(A+B) > 50. "Traditional," therefore, refers to couples in which the husband has equal or dominant earnings and "other" refers to those in which neither partner has earnings.

The groupings described above raise a natural question. Should a couple be categorized as nontraditional if the wife earns just one dollar more than her husband, or only if she earns quite a bit more? Since the answer is not obvious, the analysis also consider a stricter definition of nontraditional, building on earlier work by Nock (2001) and Raley et al. (2003). In this "alternative" categorization, a couple is defined as nontraditional if the wife earns over 60 percent or more of combined earnings (in the prior measure, the threshold was 50 percent); "egalitarian" if each spouse earns 40 to 59 percent of combined earnings; traditional if the husband earns 60 percent or more of combined earnings; and "other," if neither has earnings.

The analysis has three parts: the first part is the point-in-time analysis, which compares estimates of couple types for 1999 using the CPS and SIPP; the second part is the persistence analysis, which provides estimates of the stability/volatility of these patterns over a three-year

observation period using the SIPP; and the third part compares husbands' and wives' actual and predicted wages in traditional and nontraditional couples using the SIPP.

III. Data

The analysis of spouses' relative earnings patterns is conducted using data from the March 2000 CPS and 1996-2000 SIPP panel. The CPS is a large, nationally-representative survey undertaken by the U.S. Census Bureau. The demographic data are as of March 2000 and the employment and earnings information are as of calendar year 1999. The 1996-2000 SIPP is a nationally representative, multi-panel longitudinal survey, also produced by the U.S. Census Bureau. Variables such as earnings and employment are provided monthly. The SIPP panel provides data that cover three calendar years: 1997, 1998, and 1999.[2] All three years are used in the persistence analysis and data for 1999 are used in the point-in-time analysis.

In addition to being longitudinal, SIPP has several advantages over the CPS. In a number of respects, though not all, it is also superior to well-known longitudinal data sets such as the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) and Panel Survey of Income Dynamics (PSID). Among these, SIPP allows for the calculation of a more precise measure of an individual's average hourly wage over the course of the year than other data sets because it is possible to match up monthly earnings with monthly work information (Lerman, 1997). In addition, since SIPP data are monthly, they permit a comparison of stability/volatility in spouses' relative monthly versus annual earnings. Further, the SIPP provides a much richer source of data on health status (which is an important correlate of earnings and employment), particularly compared to the CPS. Despite these advantages, the SIPP panel is shorter than the NSLY and PSID and so for this reason we use the term persistence rather than permanence in describing

longer-standing patterns. Hence in this paper, we cannot investigate changes in couple's relative earnings patterns over the lifecycle, though we can look at differences in persistence in (non)traditional couple status by age cohort.

Throughout the study, the sample is restricted to married spouses who are both prime age, that is, both partners are ages 25 to 54. The purpose of this restriction is to largely eliminate couples that have not yet finished their schooling or, at the other end of the age spectrum, those who have entered permanent retirement. Also, limiting the analysis to prime age men (and women) is especially informative because prime age men have been expected to hold the "provider" role in our society, that is, they have been regarded as the partner who bears ultimate financial responsibility for family and does not have option to exit the labor force (see Hood, 1996).

The CPS sample was created by matching the records of husbands and wives to create a single couple record. In addition to the age restriction previously mentioned, the couple must be the primary family, and the record was deleted if the husband or wife has an hourly wage calculated in excess of $200. The resulting sample size is 16,781 married couples. A further restriction that both spouses have earnings reduces the sample size to 10,925. Means for the full sample are provided in Appendix Table 1. Weights are used in all CPS analyses.

The SIPP sample was constructed to as closely match the CPS sample as possible, though there are some differences since these data are longitudinal. As was the case for the CPS sample, records of husbands and wives were matched together. The following sample restrictions were made: the spouses had to be married to each other over the entire three-year period and each spouse had to be interviewed all months during the period of study. For the 1999 point-in-time analysis, the spouses must be between ages 25 and 54 years of age (as in the CPS), while in the

[2] For calendar year 1999 (only), the sample excludes SIPP rotation group 1 since they did not have complete information for that year. Notably, means for 1999, reported in Appendix Table

persistence analysis the spouses must between the ages of 25-54 at any point during the three years. In addition, only primary families are included, and the record was deleted if the husband or wife has an hourly wage calculated in excess of $200. These sample selections result in a point-in-time sample of 3,880 married couples (Table 1 and Appendix Table 1) and 2,418 dual-earner married couples (Tables 1 and 4).[3] The sample size for the married couple sample used in the persistence analysis is 3,962 (Tables 2 and 3). To make the sample nationally representative, the SIPP family reference person was used to weight the point-in-time analysis and the panel weight was used for the persistence analysis. The regression results reported in Table 4 are unweighted.

Construction of Earnings Measures

For comparison purposes, spouses' relative earnings are calculated for both the CPS and SIPP samples using three earnings measures: annual earnings, wage and salary earnings, and the average hourly wage.[4] Hourly earnings differ for women and men, on average, due to differences in human capital, gender discrimination, and differences in the demands of home responsibilities.[5] Annual earnings further differ due to differences in women's and men's work hours. Since wives, on average, are employed for fewer hours than husbands, this latter measure produces a smaller estimate of the percentage of nontraditional couples, as will be seen shortly. Hourly wages are arguably a better measure of "potential" labor market return and hence

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1, are very similar to those for 1997 and 1998 (the latter are not reported here).

[3] The initial SIPP sample collected—all married couples with both spouses ages 21 to 58—was 5,736 couples. The sample selections discussed in the text reduced the sample size to 3,880. More detailed information on the cumulative effect of the sample selections on sample size is available from the authors upon request.

[4] As noted earlier, the Census Bureau provides estimates based on annual earnings (for dual-earners only). Freeman (2000) and Winkler (1998) examine annual as well as hourly wages. Raley et al. (2003) analyze personal income, but this is somewhat more problematic in making meaningful comparisons because some sources of unearned income such as dividends and interest are likely "couple-based."

bargaining power in the family than annual earnings because the latter are more subject to transitory shocks in employment. Nonetheless, while hours worked is a "choice" variable, earnings confer useful information about each spouses' total earned contribution to the household. In looking at the merits of alternative earnings measures, it is worth noting that even actual hourly earnings may be an imperfect proxy of potential labor market return. For instance, spouses' hourly wages may simply reflect the fact that they are at different stages of their careers in the current period (for instance, one partner may be a low-paid surgical intern on the path to being a highly-paid surgeon; see Winkler and Rose, 2000).

The CPS directly provides data on total annual earnings and wage and salary earnings (the latter excludes self-employment income). Another earnings measure, the average hourly wage measure, is constructed as follows: hourly wage = [annual wage and salary earnings/(weeks worked per year*usual hours per week)]. As noted earlier, the SIPP differs in that it provides data on total earnings and wage and salary earnings on a *monthly* basis. For comparison with the CPS and prior work, annual earnings are computed by summing up these monthly earnings data for each of calendar years 1997, 1998, and 1999 (the 1999 SIPP data directly matches the CPS data). An hourly wage measure is calculated by matching *monthly* wage and salary earnings with *monthly* employment information. Specifically, SIPP average annual hourly wage = average of [monthly wage and salary earnings/(weeks worked in the month * usual hours in month)] for each month in which wage and salary earnings are reported. The calculation takes account of earnings on up to two jobs. In both the CPS and SIPP, in the few cases in which the calculated wage was less than $2, the wage was coded as zero.

In virtually all of the empirical work, the analysis is based on a comparison of spouses' *annual* earnings (or a wage measure constructed using annual data), as described above. The one

[5] Due to greater home responsibilities, it is possible that women may have less time or effort available for market work (e.g., see Stratton, 2001) or they may tradeoff wages for greater job

exception, clearly noted, is where the analysis is replicated using monthly earnings, for purposes of sensitivity testing.

IV. Empirical Analysis

Point-in-Time Estimates: Replications and Extensions

Table 1 provides detailed point-in-time comparisons of spouses' earnings using SIPP and CPS data for 1999, for the "standard" and "alternative" categorizations of couple type, various earnings/wage measures, and for different groupings of married couples (all; dual-earner couples; and couples in which the wife has earnings). Estimates of nontraditional couple status vary considerably, from a low of 10.4 percent to a high of 40.1 percent. Interestingly, the basic pattern and level of results are very similar across the two data sets, though in all cases the SIPP estimates of nontraditional status are somewhat higher.[6] For instance, the percent of all married couples that are nontraditional ("standard" definition) is 19 percent in the CPS and 21.2 percent in the SIPP.

Differences in point-in-time estimates are far more pronounced across other dimensions. For instance, under the stricter (alternative) definition of nontraditional couple, the SIPP estimate cited above falls from 21.2 percent to 11.3 (and the CPS estimate falls from 19 to 10.4 percent). This substantial decline, around 50 percent, is not unexpected given results of Raley et al. (2003), corroborated in this study, is that in a sizeable fraction of couples in which the wife outearns her husband, it is only by a small amount. Estimates of nontraditional couples (either definition) are also considerably lower when comparisons are based on annual earnings rather

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flexibility.

[6] SIPP estimates of nontraditional status are higher because, relative to the CPS, the SIPP "understates" husbands' earnings more than wives' earnings. A comparison of means and further discussion is provided in the Appendix.

than the hourly wage, principally because some of the couples in which the wife has a higher hourly wage nonetheless have a more traditional ("gendered") pattern of work hours.

Dynamic Estimates: Measures of Persistence

Table 2 provides information on the persistence of spouses' earnings patterns using data from the SIPP. Column 1 of Panel A replicates the point-in-time estimates of nontraditional couples, based on a comparison of annual earnings, reported in Table 1; the figures are 21.5 percent using the "standard" measure and 11.8 percent using the "alternative" (stricter measure).[7] Next, columns 2 and 3 of Panel A provide information on the extent to which these patterns persist year after year, for up to three years. For instance, a couple is defined as being persistently nontraditional using a three-year annual earnings measure (Column 3) if they have nontraditional status for each of the three years. The findings indicate that 5.8 to 13 percent of all couples (or 50 to 60 percent of all nontraditional couples) were persistently nontraditional over a three-year period. Also, 51.4 to 67.8 percent of all married couples were persistently traditional. In a sizeable fraction of married couples, 19.2 to 29.7 percent, the relative earnings position of the spouses fluctuated across the various statuses over the three-year observation period, an indicator of relative earnings instability.

Panel B of Table 2 reproduces this analysis using an hourly wage measure. As seen earlier in Table 1, estimates of nontraditional status are higher (and estimates of traditional couple status are lower) when the measure is calculated using hourly wages rather than annual earnings. Between 10.4 to 19 percent of all couples (or 60 percent of all nontraditional couples) were persistently nontraditional over a three-year period and 36 to 53.1 percent of all married couples were persistently traditional. Again, a sizeable fraction of married couples, 27.8 to 38 percent, had relative earnings that fluctuated over the three-year observation period.

The estimates discussed thus far in Tables 1 and 2 are based on comparisons of husbands and wives annual earnings (or wages). For purposes of sensitivity testing, monthly SIPP earnings data were used to ascertain the degree of intrayear stability/volatility, that is how spouses' relative earnings compare month after month for a specified period of time. The findings indicate that just 3.7 percent of wives had higher monthly earnings than their husbands (standard measure of nontraditional) for 36 *consecutive* months. Part of the reason this figure is so low is that in some occupations, principally teaching, these positions are often part-year. In contrast, the percentage of wives' who outearned their husband for (any) 25 months or more out of a 36 month-period was substantially higher, 14.3 of all married couples (or 67 percent of all nontraditional couples). Given the sensitivity of this measure to part-year employment, it is arguably less preferred than those presented earlier, which were based on a comparison of annual earnings.

Correlates with Persistent (Non) Traditional Status

In Table 3 we briefly examine factors that are likely to be associated with couples who are persistently traditional, persistently nontraditional, and neither, using the "standard" definitions. The correlates are measured as of 1999, unless otherwise noted. A number of expected patterns emerge consistent with extensive earlier work by Raley et al. (2003) for 2000: in persistently nontraditional couples (as compared with traditional couples), a much larger percentage of wives have higher levels of educational attainment than their husbands (49.4 vs. 26.9 percent), more couples are African-American (13.2 versus 4.4 percent), and they are less likely to have children under age 5 (22.9 vs. 32.5 percent) in their home. Also, perhaps surprising but consistent with Raley et al. (2003), younger cohorts are no more likely to be nontraditional than older cohorts.

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[7] The comparable figures in Table 1 are 21.2 and 11.3. The difference arises because the age range of the point-in-time and persistence analysis samples differ slightly, as do the weights

A particularly valuable aspect of Table 3, calculated using SIPP data, is that it also provides information on health status, a factor which is strongly linked to male nonemployment (see Weisemantle, 2001; and Juhn, Murphy and Topel, 2002) and is likely to be similarly associated with husband's relative low-earner status in the family. In 12.4 percent of persistently nontraditional couples, the husband reports poor/fair health (alone or jointly with his wife) as compared with just 3.7 percent of persistently traditional couples. The relationship between husband's reported poor health and persistent nontraditional status is most striking for couples with relatively low educational attainment. The figures indicate that in 24.7 percent of persistently nontraditional low-education couples, the husband reports fair/poor health (alone or jointly with his wife), as compared with only 5.4 percent of persistently traditional low-education couples and only 1.3 percent of persistently nontraditional high-education couples.

Comparison of Predicted and Actual Wages for (Non)Traditional Couples

Why are couples observed to be traditional or nontraditional at a given point in time (1999)? This section provides some insight into this question by comparing husbands' and wives' actual wages with their predicted wages—what would be expected based on their human capital and potential labor market experience. Using the notation introduced earlier, the actual wage for the wife and husband are denoted A and B, respectively. Predicted values are denoted as A' and B'.

A predicted wage is obtained by regressing the natural log of the wage for husbands and wives (separately) as a function of educational dummies (less than high school, some college, four years of college, more than four years of college, with high school only omitted), age and age squared, race (black, Asian, American Indian, with white omitted), Hispanic ethnicity dummy, and region (east, midwest, south, with west omitted). Actual labor market experience is not included (nor is presence of children) because these variables are endogeneous with labor

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used.

supply (see T.P. Schultz, 1997). This analysis is limited to *dual-earner couples*, thereby sidestepping the issue of imputing wages for nonworkers.

The first column of Table 4 provides descriptive statistics for the full samples used to estimate the male and female wage regressions and then, in the remainder of the table, the results are stratified by traditional and nontraditional couple status. As column 2 shows, in nontraditional couples, wives' have much better than predicted labor market success while husbands' outcomes are lower than would be predicted based on their human capital: 79.3 percent of wives in nontraditional couples have actual wages that exceed their predicted wage (on average, 34.7 percent higher) while 72.7 percent of husbands in such couples have actual wages that fall short of their predicted wage (on average, 29.5 percent lower). The pattern is reversed for traditional couples, though not nearly as pronounced.

Columns 4 to 7 further stratify the results by couples' joint educational attainment. Indeed, as shown in Column 5, the gap between husbands' actual and predicted wage is largest for less-educated nontraditional couples. For this group, 80.7 percent of husbands have actual wages that are below their predicted wage (35.3 percent lower, on average). Recent work by Juhn, Murphy and Topel (2002) on male nonemployment sheds some light on the findings obtained here regarding nontraditional couples. It is possible that men's outcomes reflect a joint household decision in which the wife's career is given precedence. However, an alternative explanation, supported by their analysis of male nonemployment, is that men's outcomes may be a result of reduced labor market opportunities, especially for less-skilled men. In addition, their findings as well as those of Table 3, suggest that men's health difficulties may also be a factor.

V. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive look at relative spousal earnings patterns, in addition to a study of the *persistence* of these patterns. Estimates of the percentage of

nontraditional married couples—those in which the wife earns more than her husband—vary considerably across a number of dimensions. These include the earnings "threshold" chosen, whether earnings or wages are compared, whether the measure is calculated for all married couples or a subset of them, and to a much lesser extent, the data set analyzed. If nontraditional couples are defined as those in which the wife earns over 50 percent of combined earnings, 19 to 30 percent of married couples are in this category. However, if a stricter definition is used, where the threshold is set at 60 percent, these figures fall by about one-half, to 10.4 to 17.7 percent. Interestingly, for both definitions of nontraditional, the findings indicate that 50 to 60 percent of couples identified as nontraditional at a point in time are persistently in this status over a three-year observation period. This figure suggests much greater stability, than might have been thought. On the flip side, this means that for 40 to 50 percent of couples who have a *nontraditional* earnings arrangement at a point in time, this status is transitory. In fact, for 19.2 to 38 percent of *all* married couples, spouses' relative earnings fluctuate over the three-year observation period, suggesting that in a sizeable fraction of households the economic "balance of power" shifts from year to year, at least to some extent.

The results obtained here point to the fact that couples' earnings vary, not only in terms of the level of their combined earnings, or how these earnings are distributed among the spouses, but also in terms of *how stable these relative earnings patterns are over time*. In light of earlier work by Blumberg and Coleman (1989) cited earlier, one would suspect that there may important differences in outcomes for children and families, depending on the degree of persistence in the arrangement, as well as whether the arrangement is traditional, nontraditional, or more egalitarian. This would seem to be a fruitful direction for future research. Another direction is to use a longer panel data set to explore persistence and reversals in spouses' relative earnings patterns over the lifecycle and specific factors associated with these patterns. Finally, these results have important implications for those making projections of future social security

payouts for married spouses: the complex patterns identified here for just a three-year period underscore the necessity of using longitudinal data that includes both spouses' earnings, and furthermore, data that covers as long a time period as is available.

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Table 1
Estimates of Types of Married Couples, CPS and SIPP, 1999, in percent

	CPS			SIPP		
	Total Earn.	W&S Earn.	Hourly Wage	Total Earn.	W&S Earn.	Hourly Wage
ALL MARRIED COUPLES						
Standard ("Census Bureau") Categorization						
Traditional	79.6	74.7	69.4	77.7	68.2	64.6
Nontraditional	19.0	21.1	26.1	21.2	26.0	29.5
Neither with Earnings	1.4	4.2	4.5	1.2	5.8	5.9
Alternative ("Nock/Raley et al.") Categorization						
Traditional	63.6	59.9	51.3	62.1	54.4	47.5
Egalitarian	24.6	22.7	29.3	25.4	22.1	28.8
Nontraditional	10.4	13.2	14.8	11.3	17.7	17.7
Neither with Earnings	1.4	4.2	4.5	1.2	5.8	5.9
DUAL-EARNER MARRIED COUPLES						
Standard ("Census Bureau") Categorization						
Traditional	79.1	79.1	71.5	75.9	76.3	70.6
Nontraditional	20.9	20.9	28.5	24.1	23.7	29.4
Alternative ("Nock/Raley et al.") Categorization						
Traditional	57.6	56.9	43.9	55.6	54.1	43.4
Egalitarian	33.0	34.1	44.8	33.1	35.5	46.2
Nontraditional	9.4	9.0	11.3	11.3	10.4	10.4
MARRIED COUPLES, WHERE WIFE HAS EARN.						
Standard ("Census Bureau") Categorization						
Traditional	75.7	71.3	64.2	72.7	64.7	59.9
Nontraditional	24.3	28.6	35.8	27.3	35.3	40.1
Alternative ("Nock/Raley et al.") Categorization						
Traditional	55.1	51.3	39.4	52.3	45.8	36.8
Egalitarian	31.6	30.8	40.3	33.4	30.2	39.2
Nontraditional	13.3	17.9	20.4	14.3	24.0	24.1

Notes:
In the standard categorization, traditional is where husband has 50 percent or more of combined earnings; nontraditional is where wife has more than 50 percent of combined earnings.
In the alternative categorization, traditional is where husband earns greater than 60 percent of combined earnings; nontraditional is where the wife earns greater than 60 percent of combined earnings; and egalitarian is where husbands and wives each earn between 40 and 60 percent of combined earnings.
Total married couple sample size in CPS: 16,781; in SIPP: 3,880.

Table 2
Types of Married Couples, by Persistence, in percent

Panel A: Persistence Measured by Comparing Spouses' Annual Earnings

	Annual Earnings Comparisons		
	Point-in-Time, 1999	Over two Years, 98-99	Over three Years 97-99
Standard ("Census Bureau") Categorization			
Persistent Traditional	77.0	71.2	67.8
Persistent Nontraditional	21.5	16.4	13.0
Other	1.5	12.4	19.2
Alternative ("Nock/Raley et al.") Categorization			
Persistent Traditional	61.4	55.0	51.4
Persistent Egalitarian	25.3	17.2	13.1
Persistent Nontraditional	11.8	7.7	5.8
Other	1.5	20.1	29.7

Panel B: Persistence Measured by Comparing Spouses' Hourly Wages

	Average Annual Hourly Wage Comparisons		
	Point-in-Time, 1999	Over two Years, 98-99	Over three Years 97-99
Standard ("Census Bureau") Categorization			
Persistent Traditional	63.9	58.0	53.1
Persistent Nontraditional	29.7	22.8	19.0
Other	6.4	19.2	27.8
Alternative ("Nock/Raley et al.") Categorization			
Persistent Traditional	47.3	40.5	36.0
Persistent Egalitarian	28.7	20.6	15.6
Persistent Nontraditional	17.7	12.8	10.4
Other	6.4	26.1	38.0

Notes:
Estimates are from SIPP.
For definitions of types of couples, see Table 1.
Persistent means that the couple was in this status over the specified period.

Table 3
Correlates with Persistently (Non)Traditional Status

	Persistently traditional	Persistently nontrad.	Other
Full Sample	*Percent of couples*		
Race of couple			
both white	89.9	79.1	80.8
both black	4.4	13.2	11.8
other	5.7	7.7	7.4
Age of couple			
both age 25-34	13.3	8.6	8.7
both age 35-44	30.9	25.7	28.5
both age 45-54	24.4	27.4	28.3
other	31.4	38.3	34.5
Relative Educational Attainment			
Wife has more education than husband	26.9	49.4	37.1
Husband has more education than wife	36.7	20.4	27.5
Both have same level of education	36.4	30.2	35.5
Presence of child < 5	32.5	22.9	21.5
No children under 5	67.5	77.1	78.5
Joint Health Status			
Husband or both in fair/poor health	3.7	12.4	12.5
Wife in fair/poor health only	5.3	3.3	4.2
Neither in fair/poor health	91.0	84.3	83.4
Low-Education Sample (both have HS or less)			
Husband or both have fair/poor health	5.4	24.7	21.0
Wife has fair/poor health only	8.5	2.8	5.6
Neither in fair/poor health	86.2	72.5	73.5
High-Education Sample (both have 4 years college or more)			
Joint Health Status			
Husband or both have fair/poor health	2.1	1.3	6.3
Wife has fair/poor health only	2.4	3.0	2.0
Neither in fair/poor health	95.6	95.6	91.7

Notes:
Estimates are from SIPP.
Persistence measure is based on annual earnings comparison over three-year period.
Correlates are as of 1999.
"Standard" categorization used to define couple types.
Sample size for full sample is 3,962 (all married couples). Sample size for high-education group is 726 and for low-education group is 1,086.

Table 4: Comparison of Actual and Predicted Wages from ln Hourly Wage Equations for Husbands and Wives
(1999 SIPP data, Dual-Earner Sample)

	All Couples	Nontrad. (A > B)	Traditional (A ≤ B)	Nontraditional Couples (A>B)		Traditional Couples (A ≤ B)	
				High-Ed	Low-Ed	High-Ed	Low-Ed
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
ln female wage equation results:							
mean ln actual hourly wage	$2.46	$2.87	$2.29	$3.23	$2.53	$2.64	$2.07
mean ln predicted hourly wage	$2.46	$2.52	$2.43	$2.83	$2.21	$2.82	$2.18
avg. % difference between A and A' *	0.0%	34.7%	-14.2%	39.3%	32.7%	-18.0%	-11.6%
% cases where A > A' (residual > 0)	51.1%	79.3%	39.6%	81.5%	79.3%	42.5%	40.4%
ln male hourly wage equation results:							
mean ln actual hourly wage ($)	$2.80	$2.49	$2.93	$2.90	$2.19	$3.34	2.65
mean ln predicted hourly wage ($)	$2.80	$2.79	$2.81	$3.14	$2.55	$3.15	2.56
avg. % difference between B and B' *	0.0%	-29.5%	12.1%	-24.0%	-35.3%	18.9%	9.4%
% cases where B < B' (residual < 0)	47.4%	72.7%	36.9%	72.0%	80.7%	31.7%	37.2%
sample size	2,418	704	1,714	157	135	315	460

Notes:
ln wage models reported in Column (1) are estimated as a function of age, age squared, race/ethnicity dummies, educational attainment, and region. Estimated models were not weighted.
Figures in Columns (2) - (7) were calculated by stratifying (predicted and actual) results in Column (1) by couple type.
A is the actual wage and A' is the predicted wage for wives. B is the actual wage and B' is the predicted wage for husbands.
High-Ed refers to couples where both spouses have completed four years of college or more; Low-Ed refers to couples where both have completed HS or less. The "other" education group is not reported here.

*ln actual wage - ln predicted wage = residual. This row shows the mean residual multiplied by 100, which provides an approximation of the average percentage difference between the mean actual and mean predicted wage.

Appendix: Comparison of CPS and SIPP Samples

Appendix Table 1 provides means and medians for the underlying earnings and wage measures for wives and husbands for the SIPP and CPS samples used in the point-in-time analysis. As found in earlier work by Roemer (2000, 2002), the CPS figures are higher. He suggests that the differences may arise because the CPS has an annual survey design, while the SIPP has a monthly survey design. Specifically, he found that the CPS figures are 10 percent higher, in aggregate (for women and men, regardless of marital status). In the samples analyzed here, mean wage and salary earnings (used to compute the hourly wage) are 5 percent higher in the CPS (than in the SIPP) for wives, and 22 percent higher for husbands. (Notably, the average of these two figures is of the same magnitude as Roemer's finding.) There is a smaller difference in average total annual earnings in the SIPP and CPS, but direct comparison is problematic because self-employment is measured differently in the two surveys. Despite these differences, the CPS and SIPP estimates presented in Table 1 are reasonably close.

Appendix Table 1:
Means for Married Couple Sample, 1999

	SIPP	CPS
Wife		
Mean		
All Earnings	$19,920	$20,362
Wage & Salary Earnings	$18,561	$19,462
Hourly Wage	$10.40	$11.13
Age	40.4	39.0
Median		
All Earnings	$16,100	$15,680
Wage & Salary Earnings	$14,580	$15,000
Hourly Wage	$8.89	$9.23
Husband		
Mean		
All Earnings	$44,003	$47,812
Wage & Salary Earnings	$35,934	$44,072
Hourly Wage	$16.26	$19.22
Age	42.4	41.0
Median		
All Earnings		
Wage & Salary Earnings	$35,900	$39,200
Hourly Wage	$32,048	$36,066
Hourly Wage	$14.58	$16.34
Sample size	3,880	16,781

Notes:
This is the sample of all married couples; see Table 1.
Results are very similar for samples for 1997 and 1998.