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THE CHOICE OF EMPLOYMENT STATUS AS A FUNCTION  
OF SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS AND MARITAL  
ADJUSTMENT IN WOMEN

A Thesis  
by  
SHEILA RODENHIZER

Submitted to the Graduate School  
Appalachian State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS

August 1982

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ABSTRACT

THE CHOICE OF EMPLOYMENT STATUS AS A FUNCTION OF  
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS AND MARITAL ADJUSTMENT

IN WOMEN. (August 1982)

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Results of previous studies evaluating the effect of a wife's employment on the marital relationship have been inconsistent. One reason for this inconsistency is that the previous studies have neglected to fully explore the variable of the woman's choice in her employment status. Subjects for the current study were 123 married females who were either employees of the State of North Carolina or members of a civic organization. The current study investigated choice in employment status as a function of employment status (full-time, part-time and nonemployed), marital adjustment (high and low), and socioeconomic status (lower and middle). Results indicate that full-time employed women perceive significantly less choice in their employment status than part-time and nonemployed women.

Middle class women report significantly more choice than lower class women. There was no difference in the amount of choice reported between women in high and low marital adjustment categories. Future research could be directed towards further exploring the reasons of different socioeconomic classes' work.

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest changes in the American social structure since the close of World War II has been the increasing number of married women who work outside of the home either full-time or part-time (Nye & Hoffman, 1963). For example, in 1940, 14.7 percent of married women were employed (Hoffman & Nye, 1974). By 1950 this percentage was 23.8 percent and it continued to climb in 1960 (30.5 percent), 1963 (40.8 percent) and 1979 (47.6 percent) (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1979).

Such a rapid change in the social system has undoubtedly affected the members of the society. In particular, it is likely that marital relationships have especially been affected by this significant increase in the employment of married women. A number of studies have investigated the effects of wives' employment on the marital relationship and certain other variables such as socioeconomic status and employment choice have emerged as matters of importance (Locke & Mackeprang, 1949; Burke & Weir, 1976; Booth, 1977).

### Wives' Employment and Marital Relationships

Two early studies which examined the effect of the wife's employment on the marital relationship were

conducted by Locke and Mackeprang (1949). In the first study 525 divorced and 404 married couples were compared on the basis of interviews and the Burgess-Cottrell Adjustment Scale. Results revealed no significant differences on the adjustment scale scores between couples in which the wife was employed and couples in which the wife was not employed. In the second study, questionnaires were completed by 41 employed wives and their husbands. These two groups were matched for education of wife, place of residence, and full-time employment or homemaking. Questionnaire items fell into three categories: 1) social characteristics of the subject, 2) marital predictive factors, and 3) marital adjustment factors. No significant differences were found in the marital adjustment for the employed versus nonemployed wives. Thus, this early study suggests that marital happiness is not affected by the employment status of the wife.

The literature does not reveal a continued interest in the study of the marital adjustment of employed women until much later, with the exception of one study which warrants attention. Gianopulus and Mitchell (1957) studied the effect of the husband's disapproval of wife's employment by comparing couples' scores on a marital adjustment scale. It was found that 'couple' disagreements were in part a function of the husband's

disapproval of the wife's employment status. The magnitude of the discrepancy between spouses' perceptions of the disagreement areas also proved to be in part a function of the husband's attitude towards the wife's employment. Thus, if a husband disapproved of his wife's employment, then the couple was more likely to perceive other relationship problems and to disagree on the issues which affected the marital relationship.

In a much more recent study, Burke and Weir (1976) studied 189 couples who were sent questionnaires including the Locke-Wallace marital satisfaction scale to determine satisfaction with life, job and marriage. Working wives were found to be more satisfied with their lives and expressed more happiness with their marriages than nonworking women. Husbands of working wives, however, reported less happiness with their marriages than husbands of nonworking wives. Husbands of employed women were also less satisfied with their own lives. Thus, this study suggests that employment of the wife has a positive effect on the wife and a negative effect on the husband and his life.

Booth (1977) replicated Burke and Weir's (1976) study using a sample of 856 persons. He found little difference in the levels of stress or marital discord of husbands whose wives had been working full-time a year or more compared to husbands whose wives had never

worked. Booth concluded that there was more stress and marital discord when the woman first entered the job market, but that it decreased after one year.

Glenn and Weaver (1978) correlated degree of marital happiness with many variables, including outside employment of the wife. The data showed no effect on the male's happiness if the wife worked outside of the home. The mean effect of employment on the wives' marital happiness was found to be slightly negative, but not significantly so. Thus Glenn and Weaver's findings that indicate that a wife may be less happy in her marriage if she is employed and that her employment does not affect her husband's marital happiness, directly contradict Burke and Weir's 1976 study.

Staines, Pleck, Shepard and O'Connor (1978) collected data from two national surveys. Working wives displayed significantly lower marital adjustment than housewives on two of four global measures: wishing one had married someone else and having thought about getting a divorce. This study differed from others in that the questions were more specific than in other studies. The results indicated that wives' employment may not be a positive attribute in a marriage.

#### Variables Related to Working and Marital Adjustment

In general, studies looking at marital adjustment between couples with employed and nonemployed wives

have been difficult to interpret because of inconsistent results. Also, these studies have failed to explore other important variables which contribute to marital adjustment in couples, such as socioeconomic status (SES) and whether or not the woman has a choice in her employment. Recognizing the importance of these variables, several studies have not only looked at the effect of the wives' employment on their marital adjustment, but have specifically looked at the effect of wives' employment on marital adjustment among persons who differ in SES. Nye (1961) has argued for the need to study the effect of SES on the relationship between employment and marital satisfaction. First he argued that the employment of a woman in an upper SES category would indicate that the wife would hold a more professional, white collar job which would be more likely to help her achieve professional goals and thus be more personally satisfying. On the other hand, a person from the lower class would be more likely to hold a service type job, such as a maid, waitress, or a factory job which would not be as personally or professionally satisfying. According to Nye, women in the lower classes with less satisfying jobs would be more likely to experience a negative effect on their marital relationships when compared with women in the upper classes.

A second reason Nye (1961) cited for the importance of considering the effect of employment by SES is that if the employment of the wife occurs in a family in which the income of the husband is low, then the wife's income would provide a relatively larger increase in the family income and level of living than in a family in which the husband's income is high. Nye assumed that when the wife earns more than her husband that employment could become a source of conflict. In light of these factors, Nye proposed that the relationship between employment status and marital adjustment would be more favorable to employed women in high rather than low SES categories. Generally the literature has supported Nye's hypotheses. There are a variety of studies in the area, however, which deserve closer attention.

First, Blood and Wolfe (1960), in a study of 909 wives found that there were no significant differences in the marital satisfaction scores of working and non-working wives. They also reported that two contrasting categories of wives turned out to be equally satisfied with their marriages, working wives of low income husbands and nonworking wives of high income husbands. The authors hypothesized that this is because in the lower class families the income is necessary and the husband is more likely to appreciate the wife's

contribution. As income rises however, there is a point of diminishing return, beyond which the contribution of the wife to the family income is offset by the loss of service to the family. In higher SES families the woman may be working to fulfill an otherwise unsatisfied life and marriage. The results of this study conflict with Nye's hypothesis which predicts happier marriages for middle and upper class women.

Nye's 1961 study investigated women who were mothers of children in grades one and ten. Employed and nonemployed women were matched by family size, husband's occupation, presence of preschool children and the educational level of the wife. A nine item marital adjustment scale was used which included items dealing with conflict, satisfaction, happiness and temporary separation, and thoughts of divorce. The purpose of the study was to determine whether any of several related variables modified the low negative association found earlier between employment and marital success. One of the variables studied was SES. As a measure of SES, Nye used the occupational level of the husband and of the employed woman. The educational level of the nonemployed woman was used to infer occupational level.

Three analyses were conducted. The first analysis was of the husband's employment status within four

broad occupational groups. No significant differences were found in marital adjustment scores although sample differences tended to show better marital adjustment in the marriages of the nonemployed women. A second analysis was made relating employment status to marital adjustment within the broad categories of full-time and part-time employed mothers. The marital adjustment of mothers employed on a full-time and part-time basis did not differ significantly. The last analysis used various educational levels of mothers. In each analysis the relationship between employment status and marital adjustment was nonsignificant, however, Nye reported a trend towards better adjustment if the mother was not employed outside of the home. Differences between marital adjustment scores of employed and nonemployed mothers were least in the group of the most educated mothers.

Interpreting the findings, Nye (1961) stated that there is no evidence that full-time employment of mothers improves marital adjustment for any SES category, although he did point to a trend towards good marital adjustment if the mother is not employed outside of the home. In the higher SES categories the differences were slight. Nye suggested that any potential negative effect of employment in this SES category is balanced by the personal satisfaction and material gains

associated with employment. In the lower SES categories, the trends in marital adjustment were different, showing greater adjustment if the woman did not work than if she did. Lower class women who were employed full-time scored proportionately lower on Nye's marital adjustment test than their nonemployed counterparts. Nye assumed that this was because their jobs were less personally satisfying and were more physically tiring. It is worth noting that his interpretations were based on trend findings which were not statistically significant. Further, he provided no evidence to support his assumption that negative feelings associated with their jobs are the reasons employed women in the lower classes are less satisfied with their marriages.

Gover (1963) also studied the effect of employment on the marital relationship. He looked at the differences between SES categories by studying 361 wives. The subjects answered questionnaires which included Bowerman's Seven-Question General Evaluation of Marriage Scale (GEMS). The women were divided into two SES categories according to their husband's occupation and education. The subjects were also divided into high, medium and low marital adjustment groups on the basis of scores obtained on the GEMS. A comparison of average marital adjustment scores revealed that for the entire sample the nonemployed women had a significantly

greater adjustment than the employed women. The data also showed that the difference in favor of the non-employed wives was greater in the lower class than in the middle class. So Gover's study, as does Nye's, indicates that women in the lower SES classes may have a lower marital adjustment score if they are employed than if they are not employed.

Axelson (1963) conducted research focusing on the husband's attitudes toward the working wife and investigated the relationship of the husband's marital adjustment to working and nonworking wives. Axelson found that 60 percent of the husbands of nonworking wives and part-time employed wives reported good marital adjustment while only 38 percent of the husbands of wives employed full-time indicated good adjustment. This difference was even greater when husbands of full-time employed wives were compared only with husbands of nonemployed women. It was found that husbands who earned less than \$5,000 annually and whose wives were not employed consistently indicated better marital adjustment than those whose earnings were the same, but whose wives were employed. This finding is consistent with the findings of Nye (1961) and Gover (1963) but inconsistent with Blood and Wolfe's findings. Thus, it appears that if the income of the family is lower, the

negative effect of the wife's employment is greater than if the family income is higher.

All studies have not found results consistent with Nye (1961) and Gover (1963). For example, Ferree (1976) found that there was no difference between the marriage happiness of lower class women who are employed or non-employed. She found that the lower class woman who was a full-time homemaker was less likely to be satisfied in general with her life than those lower class women who held paid jobs. In contradiction, tests of marital satisfaction between two groups, lower class employed women and lower class full-time homemakers, showed no differences. Ferree found that having a job did more to increase the satisfaction of the better educated but it also had a positive effect on the less educated. Housework as a full-time job was not preferred over paid employment by lower class women, even those with less than a high school education. Ferree also found that women with full-time employment were happier and felt that they were better off than the full-time homemaker. The group of women who were found to be most satisfied with their life situations and most interested in the nonfinancial aspects of their jobs were the women who were employed part-time. Ferree cited some reasons that the full-time housewives felt dissatisfied with their status, including low self esteem, social

isolation, and the powerlessness associated with being a full-time housewife.

Wright (1978) used data from six national surveys and made comparisons of lower and middle class white families. He found that working women are not any more satisfied with their lives than housewives, as no significant or even consistent differences were found between working women and housewives on measures of overall happiness or life satisfaction.

The results of previous research on the relationship between marital adjustment and the wife's employment have been inconsistent. Reasons for this inconsistency include a lack of specific criteria in the measurement of marital adjustment and socioeconomic status, and the presence of many related variables which have yet to be explored or evaluated.

Marital adjustment, happiness and satisfaction are terms which have never been defined, much less standardized. Previous studies have used a variety of adjustment, satisfaction and happiness measures which are difficult to compare. Until sufficient criteria are developed, it is unlikely that studies utilizing these various scales will produce consistent results. The scale which was used for the current study is the Dyadic Adjustment Scale which was developed by Spanier in 1976. It includes items from the Locke Wallace

Marital Adjustment Scale (1957), one of the most popular measures of marital adjustment.

Locke and Wallace (1959) define marital adjustment as the "accommodation of a husband and wife to each other at a given time" (p. 251). Their 15 item test requires subjects to rate themselves on amount of agreement with their spouses on issues such as friends, philosophy of life and handling family finances.

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) includes subscales which measure four empirically verified components: dyadic satisfaction, dyadic consensus, dyadic cohesion, and affectional expression. It consists of 32 items including 11 items from the Locke-Wallace scale. The additional items include agreement ratings on issues such as amount of time spent together, household tasks, and career decisions. The DAS also requires subjects to choose between statements which would best describe the future of their relationship. The DAS was selected for the current study because of the ease of administration, the low reading level required for completion of the scale, and because it includes items from and has been correlated with the Locke-Wallace, one of the most popular marital adjustment scales.

The second difficulty of the previous studies which examined the effect of employment on the marital relationship of women among different SES categories is

the definition of SES categories. Blood and Wolfe (1960) used income of the husband as the sole indicator of SES. Nye (1961) used the occupational level of the husbands and the employed women and the educational level of the nonemployed women as his measure of SES. Axelson (1963) used a specific level of income to determine lower and middle classes. These methods were not considered ideal because they failed to take into account all of the aspects of SES. For example, Blood and Wolfe (1960) ignored the wife's contribution to the family, and her contribution could certainly have increased the socioeconomic status of the family if she were employed. Nye failed to consider the income level of the family in determining SES. An SES score using income, education and occupation of both the husband and the wife was considered important in this study. "Occupation, educational attainment and income are all related, though no one of them by itself is an adequate indicator of socioeconomic status" (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1963, p. 1).

For these reasons, a socioeconomic status score was computed for this study using U.S. Census Bureau standards (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1963). These standards took the income, education and occupation of the subject into account in computing an SES score. The income scores were updated to reflect family

income levels of 1978, using U.S. Census Bureau statistics as shown in Table 1 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1979) (see Table 1). The update was done so that a particular score matched the same income percentile in 1978 as it did in 1960.

A third contributor to the lack of consistent results in studies exploring the relationship between marital adjustment of employed women in differing SES categories is that many variables which would affect this relationship have not been evaluated. One of these variables is the reason women of varying socioeconomic status categories work. For example, Nye (1961) has made the assumption that women in the lower class work merely for the money because their jobs are physically tiring and the women are unlikely to derive personal or professional satisfaction from those jobs. This is an assumption which remains largely untested. If a woman works for personal or professional fulfillment, it will likely have a different effect on her marital relationship than the woman who works to provide food and clothing for her family in a job she would rather not have. Another important variable which has not been fully researched is the employment status of the husband. If the husband is an alcoholic and that renders him unable to work, then the wife's employment, especially if she does not wish to be employed, will

certainly effect the marital relationship differently than the employed woman whose husband is disabled due to an accident. A third variable which has been overlooked in studies reported thus far is choice. Whether or not a woman feels she has a choice in her employment status (whether she is employed or not) is likely to affect both her life and marital happiness.

#### Choice of Employment

One study took the variable of choice into account. Orden and Bradburn (1969) studied 781 husbands and 957 wives who were not couples. They distinguished between women who were in the labor market out of economic necessity and those who made a choice to be there. It was found that both partners are lower in marriage happiness when the wife is denied a choice and is in the labor market out of economic necessity than when the wife participates in the labor market by choice. When the woman was free to choose between the labor market and homemaking there was no evidence that the labor market created a strain in the marriage for the husband or wife. It was also found that as family income increases, a greater percentage of women chose to be in the labor market. In marriages where the wife was in the labor market out of economic necessity there was also some tendency for adjustment to be more favorable if the wife was employed part-time rather than full-time.

In summary, participation in the labor market without choice, whether it be part-time or full-time, creates a strain in the marriage for both the husband and the wife.

Orden and Bradburn (1969) found not only that both partners are lower in marriage happiness if the wife has no choice in her employment status, but also that as income increases more women choose to work. If in the lower classes more women work out of perceived economic necessity, then Orden and Bradburn's findings would partially account for their lower marital happiness if they are employed outside of the home, when compared to lower class women who do not work outside of the home.

One problem in Orden and Bradburn's study (1969) is that the authors determined choice in employment by simply asking the employed women if they had a choice or not. This was a simple method, but there are two difficulties. First, it overlooked women who could not say absolutely yes, if they had a choice or, no, if they did not have a choice in being employed. The woman who works to provide "extras" for her family such as a night out each week for her family or ballet lessons for her children may feel that in order to maintain her living standard she "must" work and does not have a choice, but also may feel that her family could survive

if she did not work. Thus, a more accurate response may lie in between a "yes" or "no" response.

In order to address this problem a Likert type scale was developed for this study which allows choice in employment status to be rated from one to seven. A rating of one indicates that the woman feels free to be employed (full-time or part-time) or not employed. A seven rating indicates that the woman feels as if she does not have any choice in her employment status, that she must be employed (if she works) or must remain unemployed (if she does not work outside of the home).

Another difficulty with Orden and Bradburn's (1969) method of determining choice is that the authors assumed that women who were not employed chose their employment status. It is not valid to assume that a woman who does not work outside of the home has a choice in her employment status. For example, the woman who stays at home to take care of a handicapped child may not feel that she has made a choice not to work outside of the home. To address this problem, both employed and nonemployed women were administered the scale which asked them to rate the amount of choice they have in their employment status.

#### Statement of the Problem

The current study addressed some of the problems of previous studies. A measure of marital adjustment

was used which has substantial supportive data. Women were differentiated according to levels of socio-economic status and employment status. The variable of choice in employment status was explored, as it has emerged as an important variable in a previous study.

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the women's choice of employment status as a function of SES, employment status and marital adjustment. Based on marital adjustment, the study made a comparison of amount of choice in employment status among full-time employed, part-time employed and non-employed women.

#### Hypotheses

The following three hypotheses were tested in this study:

1. There will be a significant difference in the choice in employment status scores between women in the lower and middle classes. The lower class women will report significantly less choice in their employment status than middle class women.

2. There will be a significant difference in the choice in employment status scores between women employed full-time, those employed part-time and non-employed women. Full-time employed women will report the least amount of choice in their employment status.

3. There will be a significant amount of difference in the choice in employment status scores of women in high and low marital adjustment categories. Women with low marital adjustment will report significantly less choice in their employment status than women with high marital adjustment.

## METHOD

### Subjects

The subject pool for this study was 250 married female lower and middle class residents of the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill area of North Carolina. The women were either members of civic organizations or employees of the State of North Carolina. Sixty-two of the subjects were employed full-time, 19 part-time, and 42 of the subjects were not employed. The subjects ranged in age from 19 to 68 years. The mean age for all subjects was 38 years.

### Instruments

Instruments for this study included the Dyadic Adjustment Scale; a form requesting demographic data and information regarding amount of choice in employment status; instructions in completing the forms; a consent form; and a pre-addressed stamped envelope. A copy of these instruments may be found in Appendix A.

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) consists of 32 items including 11 items from the Locke-Wallace (1957) Marital Adjustment Scale. Items include agreement ratings on issues such as amount of time spent together, household tasks, and career decisions. The DAS also

requires subjects to rate the overall happiness of their marital relationship and to choose from a list of statements which best describes the future of their relationship. Validity studies on the DAS have indicated that there was a significant difference in the scores of divorced and married samples, ( $p < .001$ ) using a t-test. The mean total scale scores for the married and divorced samples were 114.8 and 70.7 respectively, ( $p < .001$ ) (Spanier, 1976).

A Likert type scale was developed for this study to measure choice in employment status. Subjects rated choice from one to seven, with a one indicating that the woman feels free to choose to be employed (full-time or part-time) or not employed. A seven rating indicates that the woman feels as if she does not have any choice in her employment status, that she must be employed (if she works) or must remain unemployed (if she does not work outside of the home).

A socioeconomic status score was computed for each subject of this study by using U.S. Census Bureau standards (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1963). These standards took the income, education and occupation of the subject into account in computing an SES score. The income scores were updated to reflect family income levels of 1978, using U.S. Census Bureau statistics as shown in Table I (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1979) (see

Table I). The update was done so that a particular score matched the same income percentile in 1978 as it did in 1960.

#### Procedures

Questionnaires were distributed to 250 women. One hundred questionnaires were individually given out to female employees of several departments of the State of North Carolina. One hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed in meetings of various church and civic organizations.

The subjects were approached and asked to fill out questionnaires which would provide data for a study about married women and their employment. They were told that it would take about 15 minutes to complete the forms. If the subject agreed to participate she was asked to fill out a consent form which had a space for her name and address and give it back to the researcher at that time. Complete confidentiality and anonymity were assured as the subjects returned the questionnaire in a pre-addressed stamped envelope. A summary of the results was mailed to each person who consented to participate and filled out the consent form with her name and address.

Of the 250 questionnaires, 133 were returned. Ten of those were eliminated from the sample, leaving 123 subjects. Of the ten eliminated, two were separated

TABLE 1  
SES SCORES FOR UPDATED INCOME LEVELS

Score	Income	Score	Income
100	\$60,000 and above	57	\$17,000 to 18,999
98	50,000 to 59,999	49	15,000 to 16,999
94	40,000 to 49,999	41	13,500 to 14,999
89	35,000 to 39,999	34	13,000 to 13,499
87	29,000 to 34,999	27	12,000 to 12,999
84	26,000 to 28,999	21	11,000 to 11,999
81	24,000 to 25,999	17	7,000 to 10,999
78	23,000 to 23,999	12	4,000 to 6,999
74	22,000 to 22,999	08	3,000 to 3,999
69	21,000 to 21,999	05	2,500 to 2,999
63	19,000 to 20,999	03	2,000 to 2,499
		01	Less than 2,000

from their spouses, two were widowed and six failed to complete parts of the questionnaire.

Each subject was given an SES score based on subject's SES score averaged with her husband's SES score. These scores, which were computed using U.S. Census Bureau standards with updated income scores (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1963) (see Table 1), were supposed to consider income, education and occupation. Once the questionnaires were returned in the mail, however, it was noted that many subjects listed their employer instead of their occupation in the occupation space. For example, one woman wrote "State of North Carolina" for her occupation. For that reason, U.S. Census Bureau standards were used, but only income and education were considered in computing an SES score for each subject.

The subjects were divided into two SES categories, lower and middle. Subjects whose average SES score was below the median were labeled lower class and those whose SES scores were above the median were labeled middle class. The subjects were also divided into groups according to their marital adjustment scores. Those who scored above the median on the DAS were labeled "high" in marital adjustment and those women who scored below the median were labeled "low" in marital adjustment.

Design

A 3x2x2 mixed effects factorial design was employed. The independent variables were employment status (full-time, part-time and nonemployed), SES (lower and middle) and marital adjustment (high and low). The dependent variable was choice in employment status.

## RESULTS

### Effect of Socioeconomic Status

Analysis of variance of the amount of choice in employment status reported by subjects indicates that there are significant differences. Women in the lower class reported less choice in employment status than women in the middle class,  $F(1,120) = 5.026$ ,  $p < .05$  (see Table 2).

### Effect of Employment Status

There was a significant difference in the choice in employment status scores between women employed full-time, part-time and nonemployed,  $F(2,120) = 10.273$ ,  $p < .001$  (see Figure 1). Scheffe's method was employed to determine the direction of the difference for each group (full-time, part-time, nonemployed). Women employed full-time reported having significantly less choice in their employment status than women employed either part-time,  $F(2,120) = 10.54$ ,  $p < .01$ , or non-employed,  $F(2,120) = 22.17$ ,  $p < .01$ . The difference between part-time employed and nonemployed women was slight and nonsignificant, (see Table 3).

TABLE 2  
 CHOICE IN EMPLOYMENT STATUS AS A FUNCTION OF EMPLOYMENT STATUS,  
 MARITAL ADJUSTMENT, AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Signif of F
Main Effects	152.343	4	38.086	7.773	0.000***
Employment Status	100.668	2	50.334	10.273	0.000***
Marital Adjustment	3.214	1	3.214	0.656	0.420
Socioeconomic Status	24.628	1	24.628	5.026	0.027**
Two-Way Interactions	34.479	5	6.896	1.407	0.227
Empl St/Mar Adj	11.730	2	5.865	1.197	0.306
Empl St/SES	24.190	2	12.095	2.468	0.089
Mar Adj/SES	7.274	1	7.274	1.485	0.226
Three-Way Interactions	0.029	2	0.015	0.003	0.997
Empl St/Mar Adj/SES	0.029	2	0.015	0.003	0.997
Explained	186.851	11	16.986		
Residual	538.973	110	4.900		
Total	725.824	121	5.999		

\*\*\*p < .001

\*\*p < .05

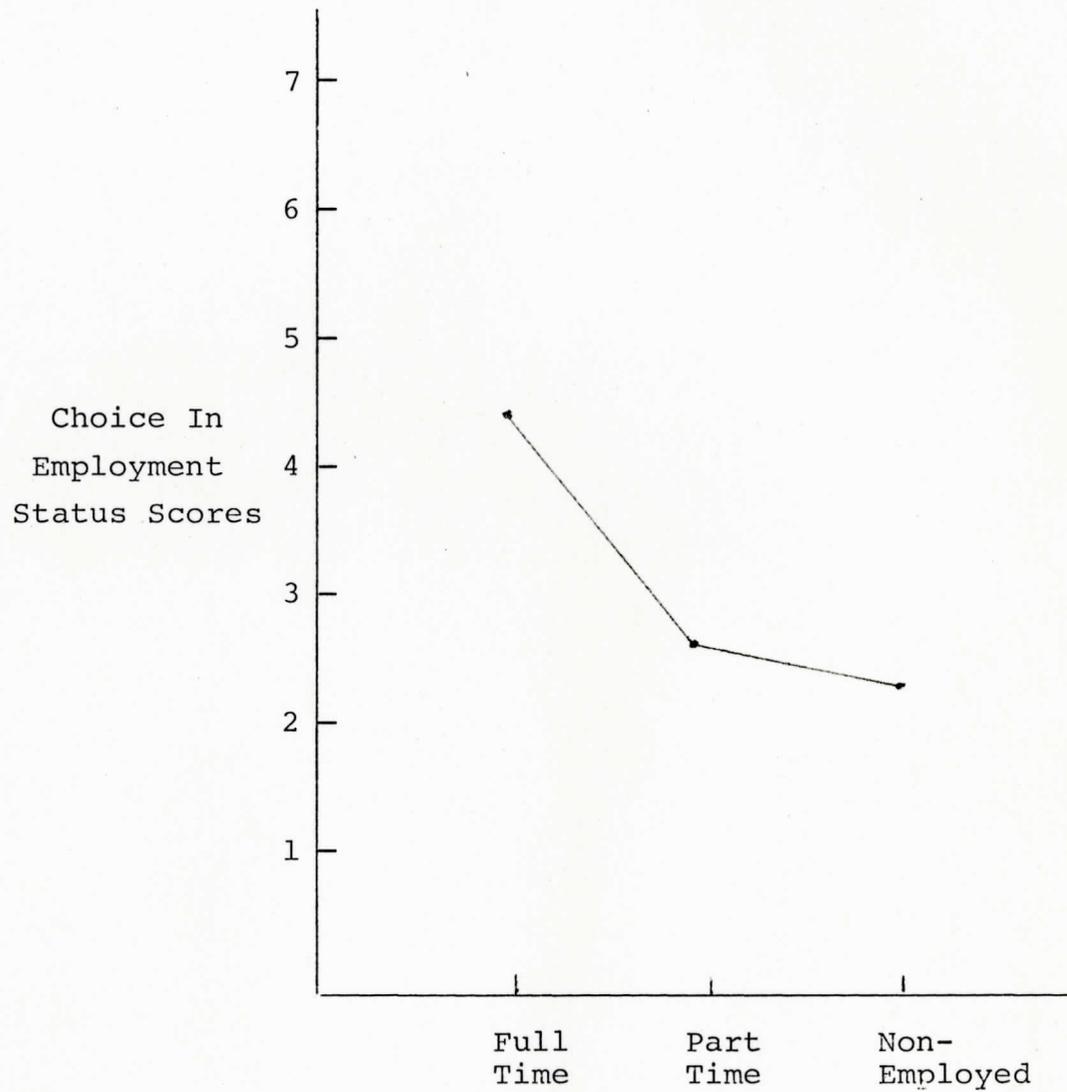


Figure 1. Mean choice in employment status scores by full-time, part-time and nonemployed women.

TABLE 3  
MEAN CHOICE IN EMPLOYMENT STATUS SCORES BY  
FULL-TIME, PART-TIME AND NONEMPLOYED  
WOMEN

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Full-Time	4.41	2.49
Part-Time	2.52	1.77
Nonemployed	2.38	2.02

### Effect of Marital Adjustment

While women with low marital adjustment reported having less choice in their employment status ( $X=3.8$ ) than women with high marital adjustment ( $X=3.0$ ), the differences were not significant.

### SES and Employment Status

There were no significant differences in choice in employment status scores of women in lower and middle classes by employment status (full-time, part-time and nonemployed). The effect of SES and employment status on choice in employment status showed that in the lower class, women employed full-time reported less choice ( $X=5.1$ ) than women employed part-time ( $X=2.5$ ), or nonemployed ( $X=2.4$ ). In the middle class, however, such marked differences were not present. There was a difference in choice reported by middle class full-time employees ( $X=3.5$ ) and lower class full-time employees ( $X=5.1$ ). These differences were not statistically significant,  $F(2,120) = 2.468, p < .089$ .

## DISCUSSION

Results of this study indicate that women in the middle class report having more choice in their employment status than those in the lower class. The results are consistent with the findings that as income increases more women choose to work even when the dimension of education has been added. The distinguishing factors between lower and middle classes are increased income and education. Thus, it is realistic that women with increased family income and education do indeed have more choice in their employment status. This finding does not contradict Nye's hypothesis that employed women in high SES categories would have better marital adjustment than employed women in low SES categories.

Women employed full-time report less choice in their employment status than women employed part-time and nonemployed women. Part-time employed women report having as much choice in their employment status as women who are not employed. Perhaps the part-time employed women view themselves as having a greater amount of choice when they look at their options, to be employed full-time or not at all. The woman who prefers

not to work, but who needs the money employment would provide, perceives a greater amount of choice when she opts for part-time rather than full-time employment. Likewise, the woman who desires a full-time job, for whatever reason, may feel that she has a great deal of choice because she has chosen to work part-time rather than not at all.

The difference in choice in employment status between women with high and low marital adjustment was not significant. This is in contrast to Orden and Bradburn's (1969) study which found that both the husband and the wife are lower in marriage happiness if the wife has no choice in her employment status. One possible reason for the different results is that two different measures of marital adjustment were used, and the relationship between those two measures is unknown. Another possible reason for the difference is that Orden and Bradburn (1969) only had two levels of choice in employment status, either "yes" or "no" and the current study used a seven point scale. A third possible reason for the difference is that Orden and Bradburn (1969) used a much larger (n=1651) and perhaps more representative sample. Additional research would be necessary to clarify the differences.

This study has yielded another finding which may provide an area for meaningful future research.

Although not significant, there were some differences in the reported amount of choice by women of differing SES categories and employment statuses. Lower class women employed full-time reported less choice than lower class women employed part-time or not employed outside of the home. Also, lower class full-time employed women reported less choice in their employment status than middle class full-time employees. Although no conclusions can be drawn from these data, there may be a relationship between SES and employment status which deserves closer attention.

There appears to be a relationship between socioeconomic status and choice in employment status. It would be interesting to look at the reported amount of choice in employment status and compare it to the woman's expectations about employment. If a woman's expectation at the time of marriage that her husband will provide financial support for the family, and then she must work, her perception of the amount of choice she has in her status will likely be less than the woman who did not have the expectation of not working, even though their financial situations may be similar. It is possible that women in the lower class have different expectations or attitudes about employment than those in higher SES categories. If so, these

expectations may account for some of the difference in the amount of choice reported.

Another possibility for future research concerning the relationship between SES and choice is to look at the reasons that women of the different SES categories work. It is possible that as income rises, women work more for personal or professional satisfaction rather than to contribute to family income. If this is indeed the case, then those reasons may be responsible for reported amount of choice.

Although there are a variety of possible research topics, there are still some basic shortcomings in all studies looking at the relationship between marital adjustment and the employment status of the wife. There are no clear cut criteria for the measurement of marital adjustment or socioeconomic status. The populations studied thus far have been so heterogeneous with respect to age, presence of children in the home, and first or second marriage, that the results have been difficult to interpret. Until these basic shortcomings are addressed, it will be difficult to obtain meaningful and conclusive data.

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## REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A

Instruments

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Circle one: Male Female

DYADIC ADJUSTMENT SCALE

Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list. (Place a check mark to indicate your answer.)

Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Disagree	Frequently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
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1. Handling family finances \_\_\_\_\_
2. Matters of recreation \_\_\_\_\_
3. Religious matters \_\_\_\_\_
4. Demonstrations of affection \_\_\_\_\_
5. Friends \_\_\_\_\_
6. Sex relations \_\_\_\_\_
7. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior) \_\_\_\_\_
8. Philosophy of life \_\_\_\_\_
9. Ways of dealing with parents or in-laws \_\_\_\_\_

	<u>Always Agree</u>	<u>Almost Always Agree</u>	<u>Occa- sionally Disagree</u>	<u>Fre- quently Disagree</u>	<u>Almost Always Disagree</u>	<u>Always Disagree</u>
10. Aims, goals, and things believed important	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. Amount of time spent together	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. Making major decisions	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
13. Household tasks	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
14. Leisure time interests and activities	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
15. Career decisions	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
	<u>All the time</u>	<u>Most of the time</u>	<u>More often than not</u>	<u>Occa- sionally</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Never</u>

16. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?
- \_\_\_\_\_







\_\_\_\_\_ It would be nice if it succeeded, but I refuse to do any more than I am doing now to keep the relationship going.

\_\_\_\_\_ My relationship can never succeed, and there is no more that I can do to keep the relationship going.

33. When disagreements arise, they usually result in:

Husband giving in      Wife giving in      Agreement by mutual give and take

34. In leisure time do you generally prefer: To be "on the go?" To stay at home?

Does your mate generally prefer: To be "on the go?" To stay at home?

35. Do you ever wish you had not married?

Frequently      Occasionally      Rarely      Never

36. If you had your life to live over, do you think you would:

Marry the same person      Marry a different person      Not marry at all

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM

1. Employment Status: (check one)

- Employed Part-time \_\_\_\_\_  
(less than 30 hours per week)
- Employed Full-time \_\_\_\_\_  
(30 hours or more per week)
- Not Employed Outside of the Home \_\_\_\_\_

2. For Employed Women: Please mark an X at the point on the scale which indicates how much choice you feel you have in your employment status.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I freely choose to work outside of the home.			I have some choice in my employment status.			I do not have a choice in my employment status. I must work outside of the home.

3. For Nonemployed Women: Please mark an X at the point on the scale which indicates how much choice you feel you have in your employment status.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I freely choose not to work outside of the home.			I have some choice in my employment status.			I do not have a choice in my employment status. I must remain unemployed.

4. For Employed and Nonemployed Women: Please mark an X at the point on the scale which indicates how well satisfied you are with the amount of choice you have in your employment status.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am completely satisfied with the choice I have. If I had more freedom of choice, I would not change my employment status.			I am moderately satisfied with the amount of choice I have in my employment status.			I am not at all satisfied with the amount of choice I have in my employment status. If I had more freedom of choice, I would change my employment status.

5. Your Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Husband's Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

6. What is your level of education?      7. What is your husband's level of education?
- |                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| _____ Grade School         | _____ Grade School         |
| _____ Some High School     | _____ Some High School     |
| _____ High School Graduate | _____ High School Graduate |
| _____ Some College         | _____ Some College         |
| _____ College Graduate     | _____ College Graduate     |
| _____ Advanced Degree      | _____ Advanced Degree      |

8. What is your approximate annual income?  
\_\_\_\_ less than \$5,000  
\_\_\_\_ from \$5,000 to \$10,000  
\_\_\_\_ from \$10,000 to \$15,000  
\_\_\_\_ from \$15,000 to \$20,000  
\_\_\_\_ from \$20,000 to \$25,000  
\_\_\_\_ from \$25,000 to \$50,000  
\_\_\_\_ more than \$50,000

9. What is your husband's approximate annual income?  
\_\_\_\_ less than \$5,000  
\_\_\_\_ from \$5,000 to \$10,000  
\_\_\_\_ from \$10,000 to \$15,000  
\_\_\_\_ from \$15,000 to \$20,000  
\_\_\_\_ from \$20,000 to \$25,000  
\_\_\_\_ from \$25,000 to \$50,000  
\_\_\_\_ more than \$50,000

10. Marital Status:  
\_\_\_\_ married  
\_\_\_\_ single  
\_\_\_\_ divorced

11. Age \_\_\_\_\_

## SAMPLE INSTRUCTION FORM

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your help. Included here are two questionnaires. Instructions for filling them out are included at the top of each one. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me collect at (919) 688-2045.

Please be sure and answer every question as openly as you can. Complete confidentiality is assured.

Please mail these forms back to me in the stamped, addressed envelope within 24 hours if possible. I will mail you a summary of the results of the study when it is completed.

Again, thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Sheila Rodenhizer

## SAMPLE CONSENT FORM

I, \_\_\_\_\_ agree to participate in this study by completing the forms which are included with this sheet. I understand that I am under no obligation to participate and may decide to terminate my participation at any time, for any reason.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Please sign your name)

Address to which results should be mailed:

## VITA

Sheila Rodenhizer was born in Durham, North Carolina on May 13, 1957. She was graduated from Durham High School in June 1975. The following August she entered Appalachian State University and in May 1979 received a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology. In the fall of 1979 she accepted a teaching assistantship at Appalachian State University and began study towards a master of arts degree. This degree was completed in 1982 in clinical psychology.

Ms. Rodenhizer is currently working for the North Carolina Department of Corrections in a residential mental health facility.

Her address is 604 Watts Street, Durham, North Carolina. Her parents are Mr. and Mrs. Harry Edwin Rodenhizer, Jr. of Durham.

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