The Meanings Individuals Attach to Role Identities and Their Implications for Mental Health*

ROBIN W. SIMON

The University of Iowa

Although several theoretical and methodological approaches have been developed for assessing the meaning of roles and role-related stressors, individuals' own understandings of the meaning of their role identities have been ignored in stress research. In this paper, I first examine the ways in which meaning has been conceptualized and assessed. I then explore the meanings individuals themselves attach to role identities and their implications for mental health. Qualitative analyses of in-depth follow-up interviews with 40 people who had participated in a community panel study of mental health reveal considerable variation in the meanings they attach to spouse, parent, and worker identities. I also find that the meanings people assign to role identities are based on their perceptions of the benefits and costs of role involvement. Moreover, while most meanings are shared by men and women, there are gender differences in some meanings which reflect gender differences in the perceived benefits and costs of role involvement. Finally, quantitative analyses show that some meanings of role identities are associated with symptoms and are involved in gender differences in distress. These and other illustrative findings suggest that stress researchers would find it useful to incorporate the meanings individuals themselves attach to their role identities and devote greater attention to men's and women's perceptions of both the positive and negative aspects of their role involvement.

THE PROBLEM OF MEANING IN STRESS RESEARCH

An important issue for social psychological research on mental health is that stressful life circumstances rooted in people's social roles (e.g., undesirable events, chronic difficulties,

and multiple role demands) do not always have adverse emotional consequences. The variable effects of role-related stressors on mental health have been attributed to a variety of factors, but stress researchers seem to agree that the *meaning* of stressors is crucial for explaining differential vulnerability. An attempt to further specify the conditions under which stressors have negative psychological consequences has resulted in a proliferation of research on the meaning of stressors, the meaning of roles, and the problem of meaning more generally. However, despite increased efforts to elucidate how meaning moderates the relationship between stress exposure and mental health, individuals' *own* understandings of the meaning of their role identities have been ignored in stress research. In this paper, I first examine the ways in which meaning has been conceptualized and assessed. I then explore the meanings individuals themselves attach to role identities and their implications for mental health.

Background: Theoretical and Methodological Approaches for Assessing Meaning

A consistent finding of stress research is that individuals and groups differ in their response to certain roles and types of stress. A number of explanations for this phenomenon have been offered in the literature, though stress researchers have increasingly recognized that the meaning a role or stressor has for a person is pivotal for understanding its psychological impact. To date, four theoretical and methodological approaches for assessing meaning have been developed in two traditions in stress research, including life events and role occupancy and role loss. While these approaches differ in the ways in which they conceptualize and assess meaning, they all overlook individuals' own accounts of the meaning of roles, role identities, and role-related stressors.

The Contextual Approach. The first approach for assessing meaning uses information about the individual's social circumstances to specify the meaning of an event or strain in terms of its stressfulness and emotional significance. Brown and Harris (1978, 1989) assessed the meaning and severity of acute and chronic stressors by taking into account the person's biography, his or her plans, and other circumstances surrounding the stressor. To avoid confounding the impact of events with contextual factors that have independent effects on mental health (which Brown and Harris were criticized for), Dohrenwend and colleagues (1993) and Shrout and colleagues (1989) assessed the meaning and stressfulness of an event by examining five separate contextual dimensions such as its desirability and controllability. These studies indicate that distinguishing major events from minor ones strengthens the relationship between stressors and symptoms. Wheaton (1990) also assessed contextual meaning, but here, the important context that alters the meaning and impact of an event is the level of preexisting stress in the role or the individual's role history. Wheaton demonstrated that under circumstances of high prior role stress, an otherwise stressful event such as a divorce has positive (or no) effects on mental health because it constitutes stress relief.

Further specifications of contexts that shape the meaning of events and problematic situations are evident in the work of Turner and Avison (1992) and Thoits (1994). Turner and Avison (1992) suggested that a crucial context for understanding the meaning and impact of an eventful stressor is whether or not it had been resolved (resolved events being those from which individuals derive positive meanings for themselves in terms of providing opportunities for learning and personal growth). Thoits extended this idea of event resolution, but focused on the process and outcome of problem-solving efforts as the context that alters a stressor's meaning and impact. These authors found that when resolved and unresolved events and strains are disaggregated, only unresolved stressors negatively affect mental health.

Finally, some research on the psychological effects of unemployment adopts a contextual approach to the meaning of a job loss. Kessler, House, and Turner (1987) examined the context in which people became unemployed by asking respondents whether their job loss was a result of their own actions or circumstances beyond their control. Jacobson (1987), in contrast, argued that the meaning and impact of unemployment depend on the balance between the person's financial resources and demands. Dooley, Catalano, and Rook (1988) focused on the unemployment rate of a community as the important contextual variable that alters the effects of a job loss. Findings from these studies and those discussed above suggest that contextual factors *as well as* cognitive (e.g., attribution and appraisal) processes are important for understanding the meaning and impact of stressors—a position which is most clearly articulated in the next approach.

Overall, although scholars differ about which aspect of context has the most influence on mental health, those who have adopted this approach agree that the *circumstances* in which events and strains occur shape their meaning by rendering them more or less harmful. Individual differences in response to stressors are viewed as a function of differences in people's social contexts. However, in this approach, meaning is not *examined* per se, but *imposed* by researchers from contextual information. While contexts are crucial for specifying the configuration of circumstances surrounding stressors which make them most damaging, this approach avoids individuals' interpretations of the meaning of stressors.

The Interpretive Approach. In contrast to the contextual approach, which focuses on so-

called objective factors, the second approach focuses on subjective factors and the interpretive process. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) assessed the meaning and significance of stressors by taking into account the cognitive appraisal process whereby individuals first appraise whether a demand is benign or a harm/loss, threat, or challenge and then evaluate their coping options. In numerous studies (e.g., Folkman et al. 1986), they showed that the appraised meaning of a stressor influences the coping process, including the number and types of coping responses individuals use and their emotional reactions. Although this approach has been criticized on the grounds that stress appraisals are confounded with both the stressor and the person's psychological condition, Lazarus contends that some confounding is inevitable because these variables are joined in nature (Lazarus 1985).

Riessman (1989, 1990) also examined interpreted meaning, but used narrative analysis (rather than analyses of standard appraisal scales) to capture the personal meaning of events and how people make cognitive and emotional sense of difficult experiences. By examining people's descriptions of what their divorce meant to them, and the interpretive process through which they made sense of their former marriages and current lives, her study of divorce illustrated that the same event can have contrasting meanings. Her study also showed how a culturally "negative" event can have positive meanings and emotional consequences. The idea that stressors take on their meaning through a cognitive process is also evident in coping research which finds that to reduce threat, people often alter the meaning of a stressor through cognitive coping efforts (Pearlin and Schooler 1978; Silver and Wortman 1980).

Other research in this tradition has focused on the extent to which individuals search for meaning and try to make sense of negative life experiences. Several authors (Janoff-Bulman 1992; Marris 1986; Silver, Boon, and Stones 1983; Wortman and Silver 1990) have shown that the search for meaning is not only a common process, but a psychologically adaptive strategy for coping with certain undesirable events. Studies of life crises indicate that because traumatic loss events often shatter people's perceptions of themselves and/or the world, the ability to find meaning in the event enables victims to reestablish feelings of mas-

tery and personal control (Marris 1986); restore a view of the world as orderly, coherent, predictable, and meaningful (Silver et al. 1983; Wortman, Silver, and Kessler 1993); and regain mental health (Antonovsky 1987; Bulman and Wortman 1977; Frankl 1959). Some of these scholars (Antonovsky 1987; Frankl 1959; Marris 1986) claim that the search for purpose and meaning in life is a primary human motivation.[1]

Although the methodologies and areas of focus vary, advocates of this approach argue that the meaning and significance of stressors are based on a *cognitive process* in which people actively try to make sense of and cope with difficulties. When viewed from this perspective, individual differences in response to stress are due to differences in the appraised meaning of the stressor to the person. However, this research tends to give analytic attention to the *process* of constructing and reconstituting meaning, rather than the meaning's *content*. While interpretive processes are important for understanding why stressors become stressful and how people come to terms with adversity, this approach also fails to illuminate individuals' own understandings of the meaning of their experiences.

The Self and Identity Approach. The third approach for assessing meaning builds on and helps integrate those previously discussed by identifying a contextual factor that affects *how* events are appraised by individuals. This approach asserts that the appraised meaning and subsequent impact of acute and chronic stressors depend on whether the role identity involved is important for self-conception. Thoits (1991, 1995) proposed that the psychological salience of role identities influences whether people appraise a stressor as a harm/loss, threat, or challenge which, in turn, shapes its meaning and significance. According to Thoits, undesirable events or strains in salient identity domains are more likely than those in nonsalient domains to be appraised as major losses, highly threatening, and psychologically harmful because they disrupt a *valued* aspect of the *self.* Other advocates of this approach include Brown, Bifulco, and Harris (1987), Brown and McGill (1989), Burke (1991), Hammen and colleagues (1985), Oatley and Bolten (1985), and Swindle, Heller, and Lakey (1988). However, while there is some empirical support for the identity-relevance hypothesis (Brown et al.

1987; Brown and McGill 1989; Hammen et al. 1985; Simon 1992), Thoits (1995) found that identity-relevant stressors do *not* have a greater effect on symptoms than identity-*ir*relevant stressors. She attributed her findings to individuals' coping efforts and the complex interplay between stressors and perceptions of identity salience.[2]

Interestingly, although stress researchers have concentrated on coping strategies focusing on problems and emotions (Lazarus and Folkman 1984; Silver and Wortman 1980), self theorists have long recognized that people cope with problematic roles by reducing their importance for self-conception (Burke 1991; Gecas and Seff 1990; McCall and Simmons 1966; Pearlin and Schooler 1978; Thoits 1995). To protect self-esteem, individuals may compensate for a loss or threat to a valued role identity by acquiring a new role or attaching greater importance to an existing identity. Oatley and Bolten (1985) theorized that the lack of alternative roles upon which they can base their self-worth is a vulnerability factor for people who have experienced an identity-threatening stressor. Indeed, the assumption that the possession of multiple identities is psychologically protective because they provide people with several possible sources of gratification and self-esteem underlies the role accumulation hypothesis of multiple role occupancy (Marks 1977; Sieber 1974; Thoits 1983, 1986).[3]

In short, the identity approach contends that self-concept is the key determinant of a stressor's meaning and significance. Scholars advocating this approach attribute individual and group differences in stress responsivity to individual and group differences in the *identity relevance* of stressors. However, here again, meaning itself is not *examined,* but *imputed* from information about the self-concept (e.g., identity rankings or self-schema). While this approach specifies how events are appraised and begins to address the problem of group (e.g., sex) differences in stress reactivity, it also fails to consider the concrete meanings men and women assign to their various role identities.

The Values and Beliefs Approach. While the identity approach underscores the importance of *self*-values, the final approach maintains that people's *general* values and beliefs determine the meaning of stressors, including the meaning of roles, multiple role involvement,

and role loss. Pearlin (1988, 1989) argued that a person's values regulate the meaning of an event or strain in terms of its valence, importance, and potency. According to Pearlin, individuals' values, which are closely associated with their social positions and which vary by social class, race, and gender, influence the extent to which circumstances are perceived as stressful and help explain why equivalent stressors often have *nonequivalent* meanings.

Social psychologists have increasingly recognized the centrality of people's beliefs in the stress process. In addition to religious beliefs (McIntosh, Silver, and Wortman 1993), a number of other beliefs have been examined, including beliefs that the world is controllable versus uncontrollable, predictable versus random, safe versus dangerous, benevolent versus malevolent, and just versus unjust (e.g., Lerner 1980; Wortman et al. 1993). This research indicates that people's beliefs about the world and their place in it moderate the meaning and impact of negative experiences on mental health. It also appears that events and strains that threaten people's most important beliefs are perceived as highly stressful and distressing because they shatter their fundamental assumptions about the world (Janoff-Bulman 1992).

The notion that values and beliefs are pivotal in the stress process is most clearly articulated in research on sex differences in the mental health consequences of role occupancy and role loss, which has focused on broad sociocultural beliefs. Simon (1995) assessed gender variation in the meaning of roles and significance of multiple role involvement by examining men's and women's beliefs about the obligations underlying their work and family identities. Along similar lines, Riessman (1990) assessed gender differences in the meaning and significance of divorce by examining men's and women's beliefs about the importance, permanence, and functions of marriage. And Kessler and McLeod (1984) argued that undesirable network events (i.e., events that occur to people in one's social network) are more distressing to women than to men because women are socialized to value empathy. These and other scholars (Bielby and Bielby 1989; Ensminger and Celentano 1990; Hood 1986) find that sex differences in the meaning and impact of role involvement and role loss can be traced to these deeply ingrained and highly gendered beliefs.

Thus, according to the final approach, people's *values* and *beliefs* are the mechanisms that produce variability in a role or stressor's impact. Advocates of this approach attribute individual and group differences in vulnerability to individual and group differences in beliefs. However, with the exception of Riessman's work, meaning is not *directly assessed*, but *inferred* from people's values. While this research begins to elucidate the content of meaning, further specifies the personal factors that affect the stress appraisal process, and helps explain group (especially gender) differences in response to the same roles or stressors, it also fails to consider meaning from the point of view of individuals.

The Meaning of Role Identities. Not surprisingly, all of these approaches that seek to define meaning are rooted in a symbolic interactionist viewpoint whose central concern has been the problem of meaning. Symbolic interactionists have long asserted that social life is meaningful and that through social interaction, situations and people acquire meaning (Blumer 1962; McCall and Simmons 1966; Mead 1934; Stryker 1980). A key interactionist proposition is that individuals derive behavioral guidance and a sense of purpose and meaning in life from the roles they enact with role partners (Sarbin 1968; Thoits 1983, 1986). As noted earlier, several authors have argued that a sense of meaningful existence and purposeful behavior are essential for mental health (Bart 1974; Frankl 1959; Rose 1962; Sarbin 1968; Sieber 1974; Thoits 1983, 1986). To date, however, the meaning, purpose, and guidance that people gain from role identities have only been assessed· indirectly through time and energy spent in roles (Stryker and Serpe 1982), the emotional effects of role occupancy (Thoits 1986), or salience rankings (Thoits 1995). In other words, the meanings individuals themselves attach to their role identities have also been ignored in this research.

Despite the plethora of meaning-centered research, the methodological paradigm upon which most of this work is based (i.e., highly structured quantitative analyses of survey data) makes it inevitable that individuals' own accounts of meaning are bypassed. In a critique of stress research, Riessman (1989) noted that most approaches for assessing meaning have been based on researchers' definitions of meaning, rather than on those of respondents. To address this problem, Riessman examined the meaning and significance of divorce from the point of view of men and women who had experienced this event. In this paper, I also focus on meaning from the perspective of individuals. However, in contrast to Riessman, I examine the meanings men and women assign to their *role identities*, rather than to their *role loss*. An examination of the meanings people attach to role identities is useful for stress research because their understandings of meaning may differ from those of scholars, but may still be important for their mental health. Moreover, since acute and chronic stressors typically occur within role identity domains, the meanings that role identities have for men and women may provide insight into why individuals and groups differ in their response to certain roles and types of stress. In the analyses that follow, I explore the meanings individuals themselves attach to spouse, parent, and worker identities and their implications for mental health.

DATA AND METHODS

This paper presents findings from a project that included quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative portion of the research was based on a two-wave prospective community panel study of stress, identity, and mental health among Indianapolis adults. Structured personal interviews were administered in 1988 to a representative sample of 354 married individuals (originally located through random-digit dialing) and again in 1990 with 289 located persons. Information about sampling procedures, response rates, attrition, and the characteristics of the panel are reported elsewhere (Thoits 1994).

The qualitative portion was based on indepth follow-up interviews that were conducted in 1991 with a subset of 40 full-time employed married parents who had dependent children at home and whose spouses were employed full-time. This subset was selected because one purpose of the follow-up study was to assess *gender variation* in the meaning of role identities among people who have the *same* multiple role configuration and role situation. Because I expected racial variation in the meaning of role identities, I restricted this sample to White respondents, further limiting the generalizability of the follow-up study.

Eligible respondents were identified by computer-generating the case identification numbers of those persons whose characteristics "fit" the sample requirements. Over 90 percent of the eligible contacted persons agreed to be reinterviewed. While my findings may be generalizable to other White parents in dual-income marriages, they are not meant to reflect the meanings all men and women assign to spouse, parent, and worker identities.

Selected sociodemographic characteristics of the follow-up sample are reported in the Appendix. Although this sample includes men and women from a range of social class and educational backgrounds, it contains a relatively large proportion of people with high levels of education and household income (reflecting the panel's middle-class bias and that follow-up respondents are in marriages in which *both* spouses are employed *full-time*). The mean age and family income is 38 years and $50,000, respectively, and 75 percent of the respondents have education or vocational training beyond high school. Males and females differed most in age and family income. The younger ages and lower family incomes of wives relative to husbands may have contributed to some observed gender differences in the meaning of these role identities.

Psychological distress was measured in the survey with subscales from the Brief Form of the SCL-90 (Derogatis and Spencer 1982). The SCL-90 is commonly used in community epidemiological studies and has high construct validity and high internal consistency (alpha = .90 or better). The 23-item distress scale consists of six items for depression, six for anxiety, seven for somatization, and four additional items. Respondents reported how often in the past month they were bothered by each item, with responses ranging from 0 = not at all bothered to 4 = extremely bothered. Quantitative analyses reported throughout the paper are based on variables assessed during the second wave of the survey which was conducted closer in time to the follow-up interviews. Bivariate analyses (not presented) reveal that in the follow-up sample, women are significantly more distressed than men (p = .01). Multivariate analyses (which will be discussed later) further indicate that women's symptoms exceed men's even when sociodemographic variables such as age, education, and family income are held constant.

While the survey data allowed me to assess respondents' symptoms, in-depth interview data were crucial for exploring the meanings they attach to their role identities. The follow-up interview focused on men's and women's beliefs about the obligations underlying spouse, parent, and worker identities and their feelings about combining multiple roles. To capture respondents' own understandings of the meaning of these role identities, they were asked: "Could you describe in your own words what being a spouse (parent and worker) personally means to you?" This question was typically asked toward the end of each role-domain section of the interview. Since the interview was organized around respondents' experiences within role identity domains, they did not have difficulty answering these admittedly general questions (though several people commented that they were "interesting questions" which required "some thought"). Tape recordings of the interviews were transcribed and emergent meanings were content-coded. Although responses to the meaning questions constitute the basis for this paper, the entire interview was content-analyzed in order to capture other meanings that emerged. Computer searches were conducted on the codes in order to identify all references to the meaning of role identities. The quotes selected for presentation illustrate these meanings and are typical of other responses.

In the analyses that follow, I identify the meanings of spouse, parent, and worker identities that emerged in the interview data. I also explore quantitatively the associations between the meanings respondents spontaneously mentioned for each role identity and their mental health with the distress measures in the survey data. For these analyses, dichotomous variables were computed which indicate the presence (1) or absence (0) of each meaning that surfaced.

Three limitations of this study should be noted from the outset: First, because data were only collected on the meaning of spouse, parent, and worker identities, I cannot assess the meaning of other culturally important role identities such as son, daughter, group member, or friend. Second, since individuals' understandings of the meaning of their role identities were only assessed at a single point in time, I cannot examine the structures and processes through which these meanings emerged, were modified, and subsequently

changed. Similarly, although I explore associations between the meanings role identities have for men and women and their emotional well-being, the data prevent me from determining the causal direction of these relationships. Finally, because the sample consists of individuals who hold the roles of spouse, parent, and worker, I cannot examine the meaning of work and family identities to men and women with other configurations of social statuses. However, because the meanings individuals attach to their work and family roles are likely to vary over the life course (Rosenfeld and Spenner 1988), and may depend on their particular role configuration (Simon 1995), future research should examine them from the point of view of men and women at different stages in the life course and with different role configurations.

FINDINGS

The Meanings Individuals Attach to Role Identities and Their Associations with Distress

Although stress researchers have conceptualized meaning in terms of contexts, appraisals, identities, and beliefs, *all* of the respondents answered the open-ended meaning questions by describing the advantages as well as the disadvantages of their role identities:

> Being employed means that I'll have social security to draw on, a retirement fund if I'm lucky. It's also part of who I am. (36-year-old female, information systems analyst)

> Being a husband means having a best friend who's there all the time. (31-year-old payroll accountant)

> Being a mother means, I find it real satisfying, probably the most satisfying thing I've ever done. But it's also the most exhausting and frightening thing I've done because I worry about whether I'm doing it right and whether this person will turn out all right. (42-year-old teacher)

Overall, content analyses of men's and women's responses revealed four main themes. First, there is considerable variation in the meanings people attach to their role identities. Second, individuals appear to make sense of their role involvement, and assign meaning

to their role identities, in terms of their perceived *benefits* and *costs*. Although distinct meanings emerged for each role identity, most reflect the *rewards* people obtain from role involvement (including rewards derived from identity validation, from upholding cultural values, from fulfilling social expectations, and from satisfying personal goals and needs) *or* the *difficulties* they experience within identity domains. I refer to the perceived benefits and costs of role identities as positive and negative meanings. Third, while most meanings are shared by men and women, there are gender differences in some meanings which reflect gender differences in the perceived benefits and costs of role involvement. Finally, some meanings of role identities are associated with psychological symptoms and appear to be involved in gender differences in distress.

The meanings given for each role identity are summarized in Table 1, and correlations of these meanings with distress appear in Table 2. The reader should keep in mind that because findings are based on *spontaneous* responses to open-ended questions, the percentages for each meaning shown in Table 1 probably underestimate its prevalence among these respondents.[4] Moreover, while all correlations are shown in Table 2, only statistically significant associations are referred to in the text.

The Meaning of the Work Identity: The Perceived Benefits and Costs of Employment

Individuals attach a number of different meanings to the work identity. For this role identity, seven distinct meanings emerged. While employment has mostly positive meanings for men and women, one negative meaning was also evident among women.

Earning a Living and Financial Security. The most frequently mentioned meaning of the work identity involves the extrinsic benefits of holding a job. According to 55 percent of the respondents, employment means earning a living and financial security.

> Being employed means you can bring income in for your family and fulfill your responsibility as a provider. (31-year-old male, accountant)

Independence and Self-Sufficiency. The work identity also has numerous intrinsic rewards. For example, 18 percent of the sample mentioned that being employed means

TABLE 1. The Meanings Individuals Attach to Their Role Identities

	Percent		
	Total (N = 40)	Males (N = 20)	Females (N = 20)
Work Identity			
1. Earning a living and financial security	55	60	50
2. Independence and self-sufficiency	18	25	10
3. Meeting challenges and attaining goals	20	25	15
4. Responsibility and stability	28	40	15
5. Helping others, making a contribution, and belonging	38	35	40
6. Identity, self-worth, and self-esteem	23	15	30
7. Lack of time and energy for children and spouse	38	0	75
Spouse Identity			
1. Fulfilling personal goals and meeting social expectations	10	5	15
2. Responsibility and commitment	15	15	15
3. Companionship and intimacy	53	40	65
4. Giving and/or receiving love and support	60	65	55
Parent Identity			
1. Fulfilling personal goals and meeting social expectations	18	5	30
2. Giving love, support, and nurturance	40	40	40
3. Teaching, guiding, and being a role model	30	50	10
4. Creation, continuity, and immortality	10	10	10
5. Involvement in the developmental process	20	25	15
6. Responsibility and commitment	38	30	45
7. Negative meanings and emotions (e.g., sacrifice, pain, frustration)	28	20	35

independence and self-sufficiency. This meaning was often accompanied by positive emotions because it enables respondents to fulfill cultural values of self-reliance (Williams 1970).

> It means independence. It gives me an emotional boost knowing that I'm earning money and not dependent on anyone. (27-year-old female, account clerk)

Meeting Challenges and Attaining Goals. Another meaning of the work identity that was mentioned by one fifth of the sample involves meeting challenges and attaining goals.

> In being a psychiatrist, I'm doing what I want to do. I had the good fortune to choose to become a doctor and to specialize in psychiatry. That was something I was able to do. Looking back, I don't think I could have made a better choice for myself. It's nice that it worked out because I like doing this. (48-year-old male, psychiatrist)

Responsibility and Stability. For 28 percent of the respondents, employment means responsibility and stability. However, in contrast to stress researchers who conceptualize role obligations as burdensome (e.g., Pearlin 1989), these respondents perceive them as enabling. Consistent with the ideas of some symbolic interactionists (Sarbin 1968; Thoits 1983), the work identity provides these people with direction and behavioral guidance. As

with the three previous meanings, men were more likely than women to mention this benefit of being employed.

> In my case, it means having responsibilities. I've had responsibilities since I was a kid and don't know what I would do without them. (45-year-old male, controller)

Helping Others, Making a Contribution, Being Productive, and Belonging. According to 30 percent of the respondents, the work identity also means helping others, making a contribution, being a productive member of society, and belonging to a larger group or cause—all of which provide them with a sense of purpose in life and meaningful existence. This meaning of work is also consistent with some interactionist arguments (Sarbin 1968; Thoits 1983, 1986).

> When my students come back with success stories, I attribute their success to the fact that I helped them. Being a teacher gives me more than financial rewards. It gives me a personal uplifting knowing that I've touched another person's life and that I've helped another person. That's important to me. (35-year-old female, vocational school teacher)

Identity, Self-Worth, and Self-Esteem. An additional meaning of the work identity involves the rewards of employment for identity validation. Identity theorists (McCall and

Simmons 1966; Stryker 1980) have long claimed that roles are important sources of self-conception. Although this is not a predominant meaning of employment, it was mentioned by 23 percent of the sample. As with the meaning discussed above, women were more likely than men to mention this benefit of being employed.

> Being a teacher means . . . well, for so many years, that was my profession and you tend to identify yourself with your profession when you've done it this long. If somebody asked me who I am, I would probably say a teacher first because that's what I think of myself as being. (42-year-old female, grade school teacher)

Lack of Time and Energy for Spouse and Children. While the work identity has mainly positive meanings for women and men, one negative meaning that was evident only among women is that it prevents them from being available to their families. Although *all* of the women were able to find at least one positive meaning of employment, 75 percent also mentioned (here or elsewhere in the interview) that a cost of the role identity is that they are unable to "be there" for their spouse and/or children.

> It's hard to know what it means because there's also a part of me that would just like to shove all of that and just stay home. I would like to spend more time taking care of the kids and Rob. I especially feel this way now because the children are getting older. Pam will be fifteen and I know she's only going to be around here for a couple more years. If they were younger, I'd think that I still have plenty of time with them. They grow so fast and a part of me feels like I'm missing that. (40-year-old female, accounting clerk)

Not surprisingly, this meaning of the work identity for women was accompanied by feelings of inadequacy (as wives and mothers) and guilt and is associated with significantly higher levels of distress.

The Meaning of the Spouse Identity: The Perceived Benefits of Marriage

As with the work identity, individuals attach several different meanings to the spouse identity. For this role identity, four different meanings emerged. Unlike the work identity, *all* meanings associated with the spouse identity are positive and reflect men's and women's perceptions of the social, psychological, and emotional benefits of marriage.

Fulfilling Personal Goals and Meeting Social Expectations. For a handful (10%) of respondents, being a spouse means fulfilling personal goals and meeting social expectations.

> It's something that I always wanted to be. That's what I had envisioned for myself when I was growing up. (36-year-old female, child care provider)

> Being a husband is something I was expected to do. (49-year-old grade school teacher)

Responsibility and Commitment. Like the work identity, the spouse identity also means responsibility and commitment for 15 percent of the sample. Although responsibility is not a predominant meaning of marriage, it was equally evident among wives and husbands.

> When I said my vows, I said I was committed to this person until I died and that I was going to take the good with the bad. (35-year-old female, teacher)

Companionship and Intimacy. Being a spouse also means companionship and intimacy. Given the norms underlying contemporary marriage and the companion ideal which now exists in all social classes (e.g., Hochschild 1989; Rubin 1976), it is not surprising that the spouse identity has this meaning for 53 percent of the sample. Wives were, however, more likely than husbands to refer to this benefit of marriage (Cancian 1987; Riessman 1990).

It is noteworthy that the husbands and wives who mentioned that they were having marital problems commented on how their marriages *fall short of* this particular meaning. Although the next unhappily married wife said that the spouse identity currently has *no* meaning for her, she described what the role identity *should* mean:

> I feel like it should mean companionship, a partnership, sharing your life. It should be a joint coming together of two friends that are making a special bond. (27-year-old clerk)

In fact, Table 2 indicates that this meaning of the spouse identity is associated with significantly higher levels of distress symptoms.

Giving and/or Receiving Love and Support. Finally, for 60 percent of the respondents, the spouse identity means giving and/or receiving love and support.

> It's important. I don't know what I would do if I

TABLE 2. Correlations of the Meanings Individuals Attach to Role Identities with Psychological Distress[a,b]

	Work Identity	Spouse Identity	Parent Identity
Meaning 1	.232	.190	.490**
Meaning 2	.098	.064	−.005
Meaning 3	.152	.375*	−.385**
Meaning 4	−.160	.092	.113
Meaning 5	−.153	—	−.081
Meaning 6	.001	—	−.131
Meaning 7	.382*	—	.211

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.
[a] P values are based on two-tailed tests.
[b] A description of each meaning is provided in Table 1.

wasn't a husband. It gives me comfort knowing that when I come home, she's going to be there, the kids will be there, they'll be taken care of, and the house will be spotless. (30-year-old car salesman)

However, although this meaning of marriage was usually accompanied by positive emotions, it results in negative feelings for those respondents whose love and support are not appreciated:

Being a wife means doing things for him. Once in a while I'll stop by work with a milk shake and say, "Here, I figured you needed this." Sometimes he'll be so busy he'll say, "Well I didn't need that." That just crushes me. I'm like, "Why can't you just take the damn milk shake and just say thank you instead of saying you don't want it." It makes me mad that I did a nice deed and got yelled at. (40-year-old school teacher)

While *all* of the meanings attached to the spouse identity are *positive*, several respondents mentioned that their marriages do not live up to *their* meanings. *T*-tests (not shown) reveal that these persons are significantly more distressed than men and women whose marriages are consistent with the meanings they assign to the spouse identity.

The Meaning of the Parent Identity: The Perceived Benefits and Costs of Parenthood

Similar to work and spouse identities, individuals attach a number of different meanings to the parent identity. For this role identity, seven different meanings emerged. While most meanings of parenthood are positive, negative meanings were also evident for women *and* men.

Fulfilling Personal Goals and Meeting

Social Expectations. Like the spouse identity, the parent identity means fulfilling personal goals and meeting social expectations for 18 percent of the sample. This meaning of parenthood was mentioned primarily by women and is associated with significantly higher levels of distress:

It means lots of things. I was raised from the perspective that you grew up, you got married, and you had kids. So for me, it fulfills a part of what I feel like I have to do in order to be a whole person. (27-year-old female, account clerk)

Giving Love, Support, and Nurturance. Being a parent also means giving love, support, and nurturance to children. In light of the cultural emphasis on the emotional aspects of parenthood (Zelizer 1985), it is understandable that the parent identity had this meaning for 40 percent of the respondents, was equally evident among men and women, and was accompanied by positive emotions.

It means providing them with the fertilizer to grow. You get a sense of pride when you see your kids feeling good about themselves. (48-year-old male, psychiatrist)

Teaching, Guiding, and Being a Role Model. Moreover, 30 percent of the sample mentioned that the parent identity means teaching and guiding children. While parenthood had this benefit for men and women, it was more evident among fathers. Men also talked about being a role model—a meaning of parenthood that is associated with significantly lower levels of distress symptoms.

Being a father means being a role model for my kids. I'm proud to be a father. I'm proud of what my kids are doing which I guess fulfills some of my own needs. (46-year-old hair stylist)

Creation, Continuity, and Immortality. To a

few (10%) of the respondents, being a parent also means creation, continuity, and immortality.

> Being a parent means that you had a part in creating this person biologically and emotionally. I think parenting is one of the most important roles a person could have because they're involved in the creation process. (30-year-old female, accounting clerk)

Involvement in the Developmental Process. For one fifth of the sample, the parent identity means involvement in children's development. Men were more likely than women to mention the rewards obtained from witnessing the developmental process.

> Being a father means bringing your kids up from birth and watching them grow and go through all of the different stages. Everything they do is a success for you. Watching them grow up to be young men makes me feel successful. (46-year-old hair stylist)

Responsibility and Commitment. Given the numerous obligations placed on contemporary parents and the multitude of functions they fulfill (Rossi 1968), it is reasonable that the parent identity means responsibility and commitment for 38 percent of the respondents. However, while men were more likely than women to mention that *employment* means responsibility, this meaning of *parenthood* was more frequently mentioned by women.

> It means that I'm responsible for the growth of my children and the guidance and direction they get. It also means that I'm responsible for all the physical aspects of caring for them such as feeding and clothing them. (36-year-old female, information systems analyst)

Negative Meanings and Emotions. While the parent identity has numerous positive meanings, it also has negative meanings such as worry, self-doubt, fear, frustration, exhaustion, sacrifice, and/or pain. In fact, 28 percent of the sample described *both* the advantages and disadvantages of this identity. For these people, parenthood *simultaneously* involves benefits *and* costs and is a source of positive *and* negative emotions. However, given the gendered organization of parenthood in dual-income marriages today (Hochschild 1989), it is not surprising that the emotional and physical costs of the identity were more evident among mothers. The following responses capture the mixed meanings and feelings surrounding parenthood:

> It makes me feel good to be a mom and to know that I created this little person. But there are also a lot of emotions I sometimes feel like wondering if I've done the right things. And there's always a little fear involved in the unknown. You know, what's going to happen if I do this or do that. (27-year-old bookkeeper)

> I am very proud to be a father because I know that deep down they're good kids. It's also frustrating sometimes because they're lazy. If you don't tell them to breathe in and breathe out, they'd die. (38-year-old store manager)

> I think having a child is a very large commitment. It's not a marriage, but it is a union between two people. It's loving to your full potential in a nurturing way. But it also means sacrificing until it hurts. It means giving up things that you would like to have for yourself so your children can have things emotionally and financially. (35-year-old female, teacher)

In fact, Table 2 indicates that people who attach positive *and* negative meanings to the parent identity are more (though not significantly more) distressed than those for whom the identity has only positive meanings. A possible explanation for the lack of a significant association between this meaning of parenthood and distress lies in the qualitative data. While parenthood has negative meanings for one fourth of the sample, most of these respondents also mentioned that the benefits of the identity are *worth* the emotional and physical costs.

> Being a mother means having the biggest project in the whole wide world and watching it progress. There's setbacks and advances. There's negative and positive. There's rewards and tearful, fitful, rages. It's a heavy responsibility, but it's a good feeling. It's a positive thing and it's worth the exhaustion and the frustration and the thinking that you're not going to make it through the next day. (33-year-old team leader)

The Implications of Role Identity Meanings for Gender Differences in Mental Health

Having identified the meanings men and women attach to spouse, parent, and worker identities and having examined their associations with distress, I return to the quantitative data in order to explore whether these spontaneously mentioned meanings are implicated in gender differences in mental health. For these analyses, the dichotomous meaning variables were added, using a stepwise procedure, to

regression equations which included gender and sociodemographic variables (i.e., age, education, and family income). Due to the limited number of cases and degrees of freedom, equations which include only the meanings that emerged for *each* role identity are shown in Table 3. While only suggestive, these results indicate that gender differences in distress are reduced to nonsignificance with the inclusion of the meaning variables, particularly with those associated with the parental iden-

tity. In other words, the meanings men and women *themselves* attach to their role identities appear to be involved in, and may therefore help explain, gender differences in mental health.[5]

DISCUSSION

Although several theoretical and methodological approaches have been developed for

TABLE 3. Unstandardized Regression Coefficients: Psychological Distress on Gender and the Spontaneously Mentioned Meanings for Each Role Identity[a,b]

	Equation 1	Equation 2	Equation 3	Equation 4
Gender (Female = 1)	8.978* (3.546)	8.889 (6.187)	6.957† (3.631)	2.199 (4.144)
Work Identity				
Meaning 1	—	7.032 (4.199)	—	—
Meaning 2	—	5.457 (5.007)	—	—
Meaning 3	—	6.997 (5.629)	—	—
Meaning 4	—	.356 (4.364)	—	—
Meaning 5	—	.160 (4.516)	—	—
Meaning 6	—	.355 (4.900)	—	—
Meaning 7	—	4.450 (6.248)	—	—
Spouse Identity				
Meaning 1	—	—	4.910 (5.714)	—
Meaning 2	—	—	2.535 (4.845)	—
Meaning 3	—	—	8.630* (4.048)	—
Meaning 4	—	—	5.669 (3.572)	—
Parent Identity				
Meaning 1	—	—	—	16.227** (5.463)
Meaning 2	—	—	—	4.456 (3.828)
Meaning 3	—	—	—	−4.307 (4.420)
Meaning 4	—	—	—	10.246 (6.514)
Meaning 5	—	—	—	−2.256 (4.364)
Meaning 6	—	—	—	−2.381 (3.739)
Meaning 7	—	—	—	4.747 (4.282)
R^2 (adjusted)	.067	.097	.133	.248

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; † $p < .10$.
[a] Each equation controls for respondent's age, education, and family income. Standard errors are in parentheses. Adjusted R^2 is for the total equation.
[b] A description of each meaning is provided in Table 1.

assessing the meaning of roles and role-related stressors, individuals' own understandings of the meaning of their role identities have been ignored in stress research. I argued that an examination of the meanings people assign to role identities is useful for stress research because their understandings may differ from those of scholars, but may still be important for their emotional well-being. Overall, qualitative and quantitative analyses of data based on in-depth follow-up interviews with people who had participated in a community panel study of mental health revealed four themes.

First, there is considerable variation in the meanings people attach to their role identities. Second, the various meanings individuals assign to role identities are based on their perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of role involvement. Although stress researchers have conceptualized meaning in terms of the social context surrounding stressors, individuals' interpretations of situations, the identity-relevance of problems, and people's values and beliefs, *all* of the respondents in the present study made sense of their role involvement and assigned meaning to their role identities in terms of their perceived *benefits* and *costs*. These include rewards derived from identity validation, from upholding cultural values, from fulfilling social expectations, and from satisfying personal needs *as well as* difficulties experienced within role identity domains. For example, according to several respondents, spouse, parent, and worker roles provide them with an identity and allow them to achieve culturally valued goals. Thus, stress researchers are correct to assume that identities, values, and beliefs are important aspects of meaning; however, these meanings are perceived by individuals as benefits (or costs) of role involvement and are *not* the *only* meanings that emerged. Consistent with interactionist claims, all of these role identities are perceived as a source of existential meaning and provide people with a sense of purpose and behavioral guidance. Third, although most meanings are shared by men and women, there are gender differences in some meanings which reflect gender differences in the perceived benefits and costs of role involvement. Fourth, exploratory quantitative analyses suggest that the meanings men and women themselves attach to their role identities are associated with psychological symptoms and are involved in gender differences in distress.

For instance, recall that seven meanings emerged for the work identity. While most of these meanings are positive and reflect individuals' perceptions of the extrinsic and intrinsic rewards of employment (e.g., financial security and making a contribution), one cost of the identity for *women* is that it prevents them from being available to their families. This finding provides insight into why the mental health benefits of employment are *fewer* for married mothers than for married fathers (Menaghan 1989; Thoits 1986). Bivariate analyses indicated that women for whom the work identity has positive *and* negative meanings are significantly more distressed than men and women who attach only positive meanings to this identity.

Four meanings were evident for the spouse identity. Unlike work and parent identities, *all* meanings attached to this identity are *positive*, reflecting people's perceptions that marriage *is*, or *should be*, beneficial. These findings shed additional light on why the spouse identity is protective of men's *and* women's mental health (Menaghan 1989; Thoits 1986). The data also suggest that marriage is dissatisfying, stressful, and distressing to people when the meanings *they* assign to the spouse identity (e.g., companionship) are *not* actualized. Bivariate analyses revealed that respondents whose marriages *fall short of* the meanings they attach to the spouse identity are significantly more distressed than those whose marriages are *consistent* with their meanings.

With respect to the parent identity, seven meanings emerged. While most of these meanings are positive (e.g., immortality), a few are negative (e.g., self-doubt). Moreover, although the parent identity has positive *and* negative meanings for women and men, negative meanings were more evident among mothers, reflecting the greater costs of parenthood for them. These findings help us understand more fully why parenthood has *no* effect on mental health, particularly on women's mental health (Umberson and Gove 1989). Again, bivariate analyses showed that respondents who attach positive and negative meanings to the parent identity are more (though not significantly more) distressed than those for whom parenthood has only positive meanings.

Finally, the meanings men and women attach to their role identities appear to be involved in gender differences in mental health. Even preliminary multivariate analyses on this

small follow-up sample revealed that the gender coefficient for distress becomes nonsignificant when the spontaneously mentioned meanings for each identity are held constant.

One reason why these individuals' definitions of meaning differ from those of stress researchers is that they were asked to describe the meaning of role identities, rather than the meaning of stressors. Other meanings (particularly those pertaining to the context and interpretation of stressors) might have emerged had the study focused on respondents' accounts of the meaning of the events and/or strains they experience. Unfortunately, this issue cannot be resolved with the current data, though it is an important question for research. However, it is noteworthy that similar themes for spouse (and worker) identities were evident in Riessman's (1990) respondents' descriptions of the *meaning* of their *divorce*. Despite differences between the focus of the present study and most other meaning-centered stress research, these findings supplement those generated by the four existing approaches and are useful for future social psychological research on mental health.

While these data suggest that there is a direct relationship between some meanings men and women attach to role identities and their mental health, the concrete meanings that role identities have for people are likely to be even more important as *moderators* of role-related stress. Although I cannot assess this possibility with my data, the meanings that emerged in the in-depth interviews provide insight into a condition under which role occupancy and role loss may have positive or negative psychological outcomes. For example, because people assign meaning to role identities in terms of their advantages and disadvantages, the *balance* between the perceived benefits and costs of role involvement may be as accurate a predictor of the meaning and impact of role occupancy and role loss as contexts, appraisals, identities, or beliefs.

There is some evidence in the literature which suggests that a balance between the perceived benefits and costs of role identities could help explain differential response to role occupancy and role loss. Recall that Wheaton (1990) found that stressful life events such as a divorce have positive (or no) mental health effects when prior stress in the role is high. Similarly, Thoits (1992) showed that identities that are difficult to exit, such as the parent identity, reduce psychological symptoms

when stress experienced in the role domain is low. Rook (1984), Baruch and Barnett (1986), and Umberson and Gove (1989) also found that the balance between the perceived benefits and costs of roles influences well-being. Finally, Riessman's (1990) study suggests that divorce is less distressing to those people for whom the perceived benefits of marriage are less than the perceived costs. Consistent with these studies, my findings suggest that role occupancy has positive (and role losses have negative) effects on mental health when the perceived benefits of the identity *exceed* the perceived costs. My study also suggests that gender differences in the impact of role occupancy and role loss may be a function of gender differences in the *balance* between the perceived benefits and costs of roles. Recall that the negative meanings associated with work *and* parent identities were more frequently mentioned by women who also exhibited higher symptom levels. While the younger ages and lower family incomes of the female respondents may have contributed to some gender differences in the meaning of role identities, my findings are consistent with research which documents that the mental health advantages of multiple role occupancy are greater for men than for women (Menaghan 1989; Thoits 1986).

Moreover, because acute and chronic stressors typically occur within identity domains, the concrete meanings role identities have for men and women may provide insight into why individuals and groups differ in response to certain roles and types of stress. To the extent that *equivalent* role identities have *nonequivalent* meanings, it is reasonable to expect that events and strains in role domains are stressful and distressing only when they challenge, threaten, or harm an important meaning of the identity for the person. For example, it is plausible that individuals for whom the spouse identity means fulfilling social expectations are less distressed by an emotionally distant marriage than those for whom the same role identity means intimacy. Along these same lines, people for whom the work identity means unavailability to family (i.e., women) may be more distressed by long work hours and perhaps benefit from a reduction in work hours or even a job loss.

While these findings begin to illuminate the meanings individuals themselves attach to role identities and their implications for mental

health, they should be interpreted as sugges-
tive rather than conclusive. Because analyses
were based on *spontaneous* responses to open-
ended questions, the percentages given for
each meaning may *under*estimate its preva-
lence among employed married parents. On
the other hand, it is possible that the character-
istics of my respondents influenced the preva-
lence of certain meanings or even the mean-
ings which emerged. Recall that the sample
consisted of White parents in dual-earner mar-
riages. Different frequencies (and perhaps dif-
ferent meanings) may have surfaced among
individuals with other social characteristics.
For instance, given the backdrop of high
unemployment among racial minorities, mean-
ings of the work identity that emphasize finan-
cial security, independence, and self-
sufficiency may be more prevalent among
Black parents than among Whites. The find-
ings reported in this paper should, therefore,
be interpreted in their context (Mishler 1979).
It is important for future research to examine
the meaning of role identities in more repre-
sentative samples of adults. Research should
also assess whether the concrete meanings
men and women assign to work and family
identities vary by race and change over the life
course as they move in and out of different
configurations of social statuses.

The qualitative component of my study sug-
gests some ways in which the meanings indi-
viduals attach to their role involvement (and
role loss) could be captured in larger and more
diverse samples. For example, one strategy for
incorporating individuals' own understandings
of meaning into standard surveys is to develop
meaning checklists (or other closed-ended
meaning questions) from detailed narratives of
people with various social backgrounds and
role configurations. Quantitative measures of
meaning generated from narrative analysis
would facilitate a descriptive epidemiology of
the meanings role identities have for different
groups in the population. These measures
would also allow stress researchers to deter-
mine, with greater certainty than was possible
in this paper, whether the meanings individu-
als assign to role identities help explain group
(e.g., sex) differences in response to certain
roles and role-related stress. The inclusion of
such measures in longitudinal surveys would
be particularly useful for teasing out the *social*
conditions which affect the *personal* meanings
people attach to their role identities.

Finally, while this paper uncovers another
meaning of meaning that should be incorpor-
ated into future research, it is likely that *other*
meanings of meaning will appear in the litera-
ture since there is agreement among mental
health scholars that meaning is crucial for
explaining differential vulnerability to role-
related stress. For example, Wortman and col-
leagues (1993) recently suggested that the
meaning and impact of a role loss can be
understood by dissecting the event into the
particular stressors it evokes for the person.
Like the meanings discussed in this paper,
these other meanings of meaning may help
stress researchers understand why stressful life
circumstances rooted in people's roles do not
always have adverse psychological effects.

NOTES

1. While the search for meaning following a life
crisis appears to be a common process, research
suggests that the ability to *find* meaning in mis-
fortune, particularly in socially unacceptable
traumatic events, is infrequent (Silver et al.
1983; Wortman et al. 1993). Moreover, some
research indicates that there are gender differ-
ences in the importance of finding purpose and
meaning in life among adolescents and adults.
For example, in a recent national study of ado-
lescents, females were more likely than males to
say that finding purpose and meaning in life is
extremely important to them (Beutel and Marini
1995).
2. Although Linville (1987) does not explicitly dis-
cuss the "meaning" of stressors, she does empha-
size the importance of the self-concept for mod-
erating the adverse mental health effects of
stressful events. However, in contrast to the iden-
tity *salience* perspective, she argues (and shows)
that individual differences in response to nega-
tive life events are due to differences in the *com-
plexity* of self-representation (see also Swann and
Brown [1990] for an investigation of the moder-
ating influence of self-*consistency* on health).
3. While studies have elucidated identity compen-
sation processes in a variety of contexts such as
juvenile delinquency (Kaplan 1975; Rosenberg,
Schooler, and Schoenbach 1989), work (Bielby
and Bielby 1989; Kantor 1977; Walsh and
Taylor 1982), and the family (Gove 1972), a few
scholars suggest that people react to adversity in
valued life domains by *increasing* their commit-
ment to the threatened identity despite the cost
to mental health (Lydon and Zanna 1990; Turner
1978). Also, see Kiecolt (1994) for a related the-
oretical discussion of stress, identity, and the
decision to change oneself.

4. A respondent's failure to mention a particular meaning should *not* be interpreted to mean that the identity does not have that meaning for the person, although it is likely that the meaning in question is not the most *salient*. Due to space limitations, it is not possible to examine the extent to which the meanings associated with a given identity are related to one another or the *co*-occurrence of particular meanings. However, many respondents attached more than one meaning to each role identity. The mean number of meanings for work, spouse, and parent identities was 2.18, 1.38, and 1.83, respectively.

5. Although the seventh meaning of the work iden-

tity (i.e., a lack of time and energy for spouse and children) is not significant in Equation 2 of Table 3, supplemental analyses were conducted in which each meaning was entered stepwise into equations for each role identity. These analyses (not shown) indicate that the gender coefficient for distress becomes nonsignificant when *this* meaning of the work identity is included in the equation. Additional analyses were also conducted in which all of the dichotomous meaning variables for *all* three role identities were included in one equation. Results of these auxiliary analyses are similar to those shown.

APPENDIX
Selected Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Follow-Up Sample by Gender

| | Percentage of Follow-Up Sample | | |
Characteristics	Total (N = 40)	Male (N = 20)	Female (N = 20)
Age, Mean Years	38.0	40.0	36.0
25–34	35.0	25.0	45.0
35–44	42.5	45.0	40.0
45–54	20.0	25.0	15.0
55–64	2.5	5.0	0
Race			
White	100	100	100
Black	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0
Education			
Less than high school	0	0	0
High school graduate	25.0	25.0	25.0
Some college	45.0	45.0	45.0
College graduate	15.0	15.0	15.0
Graduate degree	15.0	15.0	15.0
Household Income			
Under $12,000	0	0	0
$12,000–$19,999	0	0	0
$20,000–$31,999	7.5	5.0	10.0
$32,000–$51,999	40.0	40.0	40.0
$52,000–$59,999	15.0	10.0	20.0
$60,000–$71,999	10.0	10.0	10.0
$72,000 or more	12.5	20.0	5.0
Children <18 Years Old Residing in the Household, Mean	2.0	2.1	1.9
Employment			
Employed 35 hours per week	100	100	100
Spouse employed 35+ hours per week	100	100	100

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Robin W. Simon is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Iowa. Her research focuses on the relationships among gender, role identities, meaning, and mental health. She is currently investigating the importance of marital status for sex differences in vulnerability to work and family stress. In another project, she is examining the role of marital beliefs in the impact of marital transitions (including marital losses and gains) on depression and substance abuse.