Marital satisfaction is a global evaluation of the state of one’s marriage or current long-term romantic relationship. This global evaluation can be a reflection of how happy people are in their marriage in general or a composite of satisfaction with several specific facets of the marital relationship. Likewise, measurement instruments range from one item ratings (e.g., Roehling & Bultman, 2002; Schoen, Astone, Rothert, Standish, & Kim, 2002) to measures that encompass several specific facets of marital functioning (e.g., Barnett, Marshall, Raudenbush, & Brennan, 1993; Locke & Wallace, 1959). Johnson and colleagues used confirmatory factor analysis to support a five-factor model of marital quality: happiness or personal satisfaction with the relationship, frequency of interaction between partners in the activities they share, the extent of disagreements or arguments between spouses, problems which arise from jealousy, substance abuse or personal traits, and instability or indicators of divorce (Johnson, White, Edwards, & Booth, 1986).

Measures of marital quality can also be grouped into two additional categories - affective and behavioral. Affective measures, such as the Marital Disaffection Scale (Kayser, 1996), are concerned with perceptions of the intimacy in the relationship and emotional attachment, and generally how happy or secure one feels in their marriage. Behavioral measures, such as the Companionship subscale of the Marriage Balance Scale (Orden & Bradburn, 1969), assess the frequency of activities that a couple engage in together, or the frequency of negative marital behaviors, such as expressions of anger or withdrawal (Repetti, 1989). The greater the number of positive behaviors or the fewer the number of negative behaviors, the greater the quality of the marriage. For a more thorough review, discussion and critique of the measurement of marital satisfaction, see Bradbury, Fincham and Beach (2000).

While many work-family researchers have focused on couples who are legally married, other researchers have included couples in long-term cohabiting relationships (e.g., Hammer, Neal, Newsom, Brockwood, & Colton, 2005). What is important is that a couple be together for a certain length of time to be able to have developed some sort of shared history.
Countless studies have demonstrated that work and family domains are mutually influential in both beneficial and deleterious ways. Characteristics of one’s employment outside the home have been shown to affect functioning in the home, (e.g., Hughes, Galinsky, & Morris, 1992; Repetti, 1989,). Likewise, research has demonstrated that characteristics of one’s non-work or family domain can influence experiences at work (e.g., Kirchmeyer, 1992; Loerch, Russell, & Rush, 1989). This spillover is sometimes inferred by examining the relationships of certain work or family characteristics on the corollary domain, as well as by explicitly asking people about the perceived spillover and/or conflict experienced between the family and the work roles.

Explication of the term “work-family interface” is necessary with regard to this review in order to provide some context on the author’s perspective. First, “family” is most commonly used in the literature as the counterpart to “work” (e.g., Work and Family Research Network), although researchers often examine relationships between work and other non-work domains that encompass other roles other than family (e.g, leisure, community) and to be more inclusive with regard to marital status (i.e., singles). The focus of this review is on marital satisfaction, so the focus on family is implicit; thus, “family” is used in lieu of "nonwork". Second,"interface" is neutral, emphasizing neither conflict nor facilitation and recognizing that combining work and family responsibilities can have both drawbacks and benefits (i.e., work-family conflict and work-family facilitation). While the majority of research has focused on the former rather than the latter, the pendulum is now swinging toward a more positive and inclusive view of work and family (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Voydanoff, 2004).

Importance of Topic to Work-Family Studies

According to U.S. Census data, the majority of Americans adults have been married at least once and those who divorce are likely to remarry (Kreider & Fields, 2001). Marriages face a great number of obstacles, evidenced by the fact that for every two marriages that occurred in the 1990s, one ended in divorce, although this rate has been decreasing since the 1980s. It is estimated that more than 50% of married couples are in dual-earner relationships, both being employed outside the home (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996). Thus, the issue of marital quality and how it is affected by work is relevant to a great portion of the U.S. population. The perceived quality of one’s marriage is a strong predictor of the stability of the marriage (Matthews, Conger, & Wickrama, 1996).

The myth that work and family are separate domains has been shattered by the empirical literature in this area. Numerous studies have demonstrated that what happens at work, both positive and negative,
and often does spill over into the family domain and vice versa. In terms of potential economic impact, Forthofer, Markman, Cox, Stanley, and Kessler (1996) estimate that the days of work lost due to marital difficulties equates to a loss of approximately $6.8 billion in the U.S. each year. Both the potential economic and social impacts necessitate greater understanding of this topic.

**State of the Body of Knowledge**

The face of the American family, and marriage in particular, has changed dramatically over the past half-century. Just over half of women of working age were employed full-time in 1998, up 13% from 1978 (Cohen & Bianchi, 1999). Families in which husbands were the sole income provider decreased from 56% to only 25% in 2001 (Raley, Mattingly, & Bianchi, 2006). The median age of first marriage has increased from 23 to 27 for men and from 20 to 25 for women since 1950 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2004). While a discrepancy exists between the amount of domestic labor husbands engage in as compared to wives, husbands are reporting doing more on the domestic front than in years past, while women are doing less (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, & Robinson, 2000). All of these factors have changed the nature of the marital relationship for many couples, in both positive and negative ways. For many couples, there is increased equity in the relationship. The change in the marriage roles, however, may increase the probability for ambiguity with regard to one’s role and increase the likelihood that the demands of one role will interfere or conflict with another role.

Before a review of the literature with regard to the relationship between work and family issues and marital quality is addressed, it is important to highlight some of the trends and issues in the marital research area. This will provide context and also illuminate how methodologies within marital research can possibly be translated into the work-family milieu. This review is by no means exhaustive, but rather points to some of the issues that are pertinent to marital research (see Appendix A for a list of several reviews of marital research that may be of interest to the reader).

Longitudinal studies chronicling the life course of a marriage have consistently found a steady decline in marital satisfaction shortly after the marriage, sharpest for the first 10 years. Interestingly, the arrival of children tends to speed this decline in marital satisfaction rather than enhancing satisfaction (e.g., Bradbury et al., 2000; Gottman & Notarius, 2002).

Just as the demographic characteristics of the modern marriage have changed, so have the foci and methodologies of marital research. Researchers have focused on a wide variety of predictors on marital satisfaction, including personality traits, attributions, affect, gender role attitudes, cultural/racial variation, and power within the marriage, to name a few. Some of the earliest marital research focused on the personality traits of individuals that contributed to having a happy marriage (e.g., Terman, Buttenwieser,
Ferguson, Johnson, & Wilson, 1938, as cited in Gottman & Notarius, 2002). This line of research eventually led to a blind alley, but when researchers began asking spouses about the personality of their partner, many of the spouse-reported characteristics were significant predictors of marital satisfaction. This finding gave rise to a preponderance of attribution studies, where it was found that couples in unhappy marriages attributed negative spousal behaviors to enduring traits in their partner, whereas positive behaviors were attributed to situational factors (Gottman & Notarius, 2002). The opposite was found for members of happy marriages.

A recognition of the shortcomings of self-report measures (e.g., common method variance) eventually led to the popularity of observational methods for studying marriage, and examining behaviors. The popularity of General Systems Theory highlighted the need for examining behavior in the context of the family system and looking for patterns of behaviors rather than isolated incidents. Researchers and clinicians developed elaborate coding schemes which allowed for detailed analysis (Gottman & Notarius, 2002). Researchers have also developed daily diary approaches to uncover interactions that occur on a daily basis (e.g., how often individuals do housework, how often positive behavior is exhibited by one member of the couple; see Huston, 2000 for a review). These daily diaries can be filled out by the individual members of the couples themselves or other researchers have developed an approach whereby the researchers conduct a structured interview via telephone with each member of the couple over several days (Marks, Huston, Johnson & McDermid, 2001). In this way, the researchers can examine patterns of behavior and have detailed, empirical data that can be analyzed via traditional statistical methods, in addition to more qualitative and/or descriptive approaches. Other marital researchers have achieved notoriety by developing a mathematical modeling approach to predict the potential success of a marriage (Gottman, Murray, Swanson, Tyson, & Swanson, 2002).

Although researchers have long recognized that work and family are related, specifying exactly how job-related characteristics translate into marital outcomes has been widely debated. By and large, the general processes by which work spills over into family in general (i.e., family satisfaction) have also been found for marital outcomes as well. Many of the differences in predicting these two outcomes lie in which predictors are most likely to influence the marital relationship specifically, rather than other non-work relationships in general.

For this review, research linking marital satisfaction and quality and the work-family interface will be grouped into three main areas. First, the direct association of work-related characteristics to marital outcomes is discussed. In many of these studies, spillover from work to family is inferred from the presence of a significant relationship and not assessed directly. The next section, however, will focus on studies that directly assess one’s perception of spillover between work and family and how this spillover is related to marital satisfaction. In many of these studies work-family spillover is viewed as a mediator
between work-related characteristics and marital functioning. Many models of the work-family interface have proposed that spillover from work to family will mostly be associated with family outcomes, whereas spillover from family to work will have a higher correlation with work-related outcomes (e.g., Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992). This has been supported by a majority of the research; however, links have also been found between work-to-family spillover and work outcomes and vice versa (e.g., Hill, 2005), highlighting the complexity of the relationships between work and family. Finally, the effect of other characteristics which fit into neither the work or family domains will be reviewed, such as the moderating effect of gender and personality characteristics.

In addition, it is necessary in marital research to consider the level of analysis with regard to the couple. Analysis can occur on three levels: within-individual effects (i.e., how my job is associated with my perceptions of my marriage), cross-over effects between spouses (i.e., how my spouse’s job is associated with my perceptions of my marriage), and finally couple-level effects (i.e., how the joint perspective of the couple is related to perception of the marriage). This last approach is used less frequently than the first two (for exceptions, see Conger, Reuter & Elder, 1999; Hammer et al., 2005), and generally indicates some level of agreement between couples (i.e., responses of a couple are aggregated in some fashion). Where appropriate, research from each of these levels will be highlighted.

**Direct Effect of Job-Related Variables on Marital Satisfaction**

A fairly consistent finding in the literature is that marital satisfaction and satisfaction at work are positively related to one another, both cross-sectionally and over time. For example, twelve years of data examining the relationship between marital satisfaction/discord and job satisfaction revealed that the two were in fact positively related (Rogers & May, 2003). In general, marital quality appeared to be a better predictor of subsequent job satisfaction than the other way around. This positive relationship between marital and job satisfaction was also found by Heller and Watson (2005) using a daily diary approach. Thus, marital and job satisfaction appear to be related both in the long- and short-term. Researchers theorize that the relationship between marital and job satisfaction is driven primarily by spillover of emotional states, so that arguments and stress at work are likely to lead to marital conflict.

Some support has been found for the direct spillover of mood between work and family. After a day at work that resulted in negative arousal, husbands reported being more withdrawn from their partner at home that evening, whereas wives tended to exhibit more angry marital behavior after such day (Schultz, Cowen, Cowen, & Brennan, 2004). In addition, Heller and Watson (2005), also found that positive and negative affect partially mediated the relationship between job and marital satisfaction. In a study of male police officers, job stress was negatively associated with marital interactions with one’s spouse, which was a precursor for marital distress and potential dissolution (Roberts & Levenson, 2001). Interestingly,
on days when the husband reported greater physical exhaustion due to work, wives tended to respond more positively, acting in a supportive role. This suggests that psychological and physical stressors may be differently associated with marital functioning and should be considered separately. The researchers did caution, however, that this supportive function may work in the short-term, but may ultimately have detrimental effects on a marriage if it were an ongoing occurrence.

Other research has focused on the degree to which specific job characteristics can predict marital quality of the individual, as well as of the individual’s spouse. In general, these variables fall into two categories (Piotrkowski, 1979). The first category includes psychosocial characteristics, such as supervisor support or the degree to which the job is enriching to one’s life, which is expected to lead to spillover of affective mood states. The second category includes structural characteristics, such as work hours or location, which are expected to affect the practical aspects of combining work and family (i.e., time-based conflict; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Several psychosocial characteristics have been linked with improved marital quality, including having an enriching job, a supportive supervisor, and a low risk of being laid off (Hughes et al., 1992). Structural characteristics, on the other hand, have had mixed success in predicting marital quality. In general, research has found little support for a direct relationship between the number of hours worked and marital quality (e.g., Hughes et al., 1992; Pittman, 1994). Furthermore, division of labor, both domestic and paid, has been shown to be a weak predictor of marital satisfaction for both husbands and wives (Wilkie, Ferree & Ratcliff, 1998). Researchers found that this relationship was largely mediated by how equitable each partner found the division to be, as well as the amount of empathy each spouse had for the other. Other studies have found that the frequency of work-related travel had a weak direct relationship with marital satisfaction for both husbands and wives (Roehling & Bultman, 2002). This relationship was also moderated by parental status and gender role attitudes. For parents with traditional gender role attitudes, marital satisfaction was stable or enhanced when the husband traveled frequently, but satisfaction was lower when the wife traveled. For parents with nontraditional gender role attitudes, marital satisfaction was lower if either member of the couple traveled frequently. Another study examined how well the work schedule of one’s partner fit with their own in balancing work and family demands. Results indicated that for women, greater work-schedule fit was related to increased marital role quality, although no relationship was found for husbands (Gareis, Barnett, & Brennan, 2003). This would suggest that previous non-significant findings may be partially due to mediating or moderating affects of other variables influencing the direct relationship between structural job characteristics and marital satisfaction, such as gender, parental status, or work-family fit (Pittman, 1994).

The construct of work involvement can tap into both the psychosocial and structural aspects of one’s job, in that one can be both psychologically preoccupied with one’s job while at home and also physically
absent due to increased work hours or travel. Karambayya and Reilly (1992) reported a negative relationship between work involvement and marital satisfaction for both men and women in dual-career relationships, indicating that those individuals who reported being more involved in their career were also less satisfied with their marriage. This finding was even more pronounced in another study examining the extreme form of work involvement, workaholism, in a sample of women in the counseling profession and marital cohesion (Robinson, Flower & Carroll, 2001).

Other studies on the relationship between job characteristics and marital outcomes have examined how the job characteristics of one spouse are associated with the marital outcomes of their partner. Only a handful of studies have relied on data from both members of the couple to examine this relationship. Roberts and Levenson (2001) found that the job stress that male police officers experienced affected their wives' perceptions of the marital interactions in the evening. Similar results were obtained in a study by Schulz, Cowen, Cowen and Brennan (2004). Matthews et al. (1996) found that a spouse's work-family conflict crossed over and had a significant impact on their partner’s psychological distress, which in turn affected marital interactions and stability. Specifically, the greater the work-family conflict the greater the distress, which negatively impacted the interactions and stability of the marriage. Karambayya and Reilly (1992) reported negative correlations between work involvement and marital quality between partners. Other researchers have uncovered relationships between the perceptions of how well each partner’s work schedule fits with family needs and marital quality, particularly for women (Gareis et al., 2003). However, some studies have failed to find a link between the work experiences of one partner and the marital role quality of the other partner (Heller & Watson, 2005; Mauno & Kinnunen, 1999). Additionally, one other mechanism for spousal-level spillover is via spousal support, whereby the support one receives from a spouse may ameliorate some of the work stress experienced that day (Burley, 1995; Repetti, 1989; Roberts & Levenson, 2001).

In one of the few studies to examine a couple-level predictor of marital satisfaction, Conger et al. (1999), found that the joint economic pressures experienced by a couple predicted their individual reports of marital distress three years later. This relationship was strongest for couples with low perceived levels of spousal support.

Overall, these results suggest that job characteristics that have a greater likelihood of impacting one’s spouse, such as work involvement or scheduling issues, are more likely to be associated with marital outcomes directly, than job characteristics that have to do with the quality of one’s work life, such as supervisor support. In the next section, the literature examining the mediating role of the work-family interface will be discussed.
The relationship between the Work-Family Interface and Marital Outcomes

Researchers have theorized that the means by which work-related variables impact nonwork outcomes is via work-family interface, whether that be work-family conflict or facilitation. As stated previously, this interface, also known as spillover effects, is often implicit, as in the section prior, or explicit, where spillover is tested directly, generally through a self-report measure. The majority of research has focused on the conflict experienced between work and family, although recently the potential benefits of combining work and family are gaining notice.

In 2000, Allen, Herst, Bruck, and Sutton conducted a review of the work-family literature and found fourteen studies examining the relationship between work-to-family conflict and marital satisfaction in the 1980’s and 1990’s. The researchers found a weak negative relationship (r = -.23) across all studies, such that increased conflict from work to family was related to lower marital functioning. Interestingly, the relationship between work-to-family conflict and marital satisfaction was slightly stronger than the relationship between work-to-family conflict and overall family satisfaction (r = -.17), although this difference between the two coefficients was not tested for statistical significance. One caveat to note is that only published studies were included in this study, which may overstate the degree of relationship. Subsequent research has also supported Allen et al.’s meta-analysis (e.g., Brotheridge & Lee, 2005), although other studies have failed to find a significant relationship between work-to-family conflict and marital satisfaction (e.g., Perrone & Worthington, 2001; Voydanoff, 2004).

One study specifically studied the mediating effects of both family-to-work and work-to-family conflict on the relationship between job characteristics and the outcomes of marital tension and companionship (Hughes et al., 1992). Both forms of conflict were related to marital outcomes and were partial mediators of the job characteristics/work-family conflict relationships in most instances. Work-to-family conflict fully mediated the relationship between having a high pressure job with little supervisor support and marital tension.

Work-family facilitation/fit. Little research to date has examined the relationship between work-family facilitation and marital satisfaction. In a 1994 study of military families, Pittman found that work-family fit mediated the relationship between work characteristics (i.e., satisfaction with the job and with the hours worked) and marital tension; results were similar when wives were asked about the husband’s work. Job factors per se did not have a direct influence on marital outcomes. In two separate studies, family-to-work facilitation, but not work-to-family facilitation, was a significant positive predictor of marital satisfaction (Hill, 2005; Voydanoff, 2004), contrary to most theoretical models and empirical findings in the work-family literature. Interestingly, both studies found that both directions of work-family conflict negatively predicted marital satisfaction. This indicates that different mechanisms may be responsible for predicting marital
outcomes for work-family facilitation and conflict. The measure of work-family fit in the Pittman study did not specify a direction, but was more global in nature.

Other research has investigated the relationship between work-family balance, which includes both the positive and negative aspects of combining work and family, and marital satisfaction. Using a sample of Mexican-Americans, Barnett and colleagues found a positive relationship between work-family balance and marital quality (Barnett, Del Campo, Del Campo, & Steiner, 2003).

Marital quality as a predictor. Rather than being considered as an outcome, marital quality has also been viewed as a predictor in several studies. Forthofer et al. (1996), found a significant relationship between marital distress and days of worked loss, particularly among recently married men. In a longitudinal study of Finnish workers, Kinnunen, Geurts, and Mauno (2004) tested and found support for a reverse causal model where marital satisfaction acted as a predictor of work-family conflict rather than an outcome. An initially low level of marital satisfaction significantly predicted work-to-family conflict one year later, after controlling for the effects of conflict at the onset of the study. Conflict from family to work was not included in their study. Other studies have found that a strong marriage was a significant predictor of successful balance between the work and family roles (Marks et al., 2001; Milkie & Petola, 1999). However, in some research, marital role quality was not a significant predictor of family-to-work spillover, after controlling for role quality in other familial roles (i.e., child and caregiver to parent; Brockwood, Hammer & Neal, 2003).

Indirect Factors Influencing the Relationship between the Work-Family Interface and Marital Quality

In the work-family literature regarding marital satisfaction, several other factors have been identified as moderating the work-family interface/marital satisfaction relationship. This review is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of possible influential variables, but will instead highlight several variables of note.

Gender. By and large, gender has received the most attention as a potential moderator in the relationship between work-family spillover and marital satisfaction. One reason for this is the traditional gender roles associated with the domains of work and family, with women viewed as bearing primary responsibility for home and family and men as the breadwinners in the work role (Parsons, 1955). Despite these predictions, research findings with regard to gender have been inconsistent with regard to many work-family relationships, and marital quality is no exception. In their review of studies examining the relationship between work-to-family conflict and marital satisfaction, Allen et al. (2000) uncovered no consistent findings for gender, with many studies reporting no differences by gender, a result echoed by other studies as well (e.g., Barnett et al., 2003; Brotheridge & Lee, 2005; Burley, 1995; Hughes et al.,
1992). Schulz et al. (2004), however, found that negative mood spillover resulted in more angry marital behavior (e.g., yelling at or being critical of one’s partner) for women and more physical and psychological withdrawal for men. The authors suggested that gender differences may be enhanced under stress. Kinnenunen et al. (2004) reported that women with family and a demanding job had a more difficult time with work-family balance than men in similar circumstances. Other studies have found that gender role attitudes, rather than gender per se, may be more of a predictor of work-family outcomes. In a study of work-related travel, marital satisfaction was either enhanced or stable when a couple held traditional gender role attitudes and the husband traveled, but lower when wife traveled (Roehling & Bultman, 2002). Thus, traditional couples viewed work travel as congruent with the traditional male role of breadwinner, but incongruent with the female role of family caregiver, in that when a wife is absent she obviously cannot provide that care.

**Parental status.** Married couples with children, particularly young children, often face a different set of obstacles to work-family balance than couples without children. In general, couples with children tend to experience lower marital satisfaction than couples without children (Twenge, Campbell & Foster, 2003). Hughes et al. (1992) found that the relationship between work schedule flexibility and marital quality was strongly for parents than nonparents. Roehling and Bultman (2002) found a negative relationship between work-related travel and marital satisfaction if either member of the couple travels when couple holds nontraditional gender role beliefs, but not among nonparents. This study highlights the complexity of the research in the work-family milieu, where not only parental status, but also gender role beliefs, impacted the work-family conflict and marital quality relationship.

**Resources.** Other variables focus on emolliating the negative effect of work-family conflict on marital satisfaction. For instance, coping style was found to mediate the relationship between work-family interference and marital quality (Perrone & Worthington, 2001). In addition, spousal support has been found to be both a mediator (Burley, 1995) and a moderator (Conger et al., 1999) in the relationship between work-family issues and marital quality.

**Implications for Practice and Research**

Given the systemic and reciprocal effects of work and family, the research findings described in this review have important implications not only for individuals and couples, but for organizations as well. Counselors and other mental health professionals need to be aware of how work-related issues may be associated with the marital relationship of a client, an aspect often overlooked in marital counseling. For instance, family systems theory focuses on looking at the individual within the context of the family system, which provides invaluable information on how behavior can be shaped by the family dynamic, but the person’s work role in often overlooked in such situations.
Likewise, improved and increased collaboration between practitioners and researchers whose primary focus is on marital role quality and researchers in the work-family milieu is sorely needed. Work-related issues may often be overlooked by the former, and insight from previous experience may be gained by the latter.

Work-related characteristics, both in terms of the quality of a position, as well as the structure of that position, can potentially influence the quality of an employee’s marriage and can ultimately contribute to his or her decision to remain in that partnership. Such family disruptions can lead to absenteeism and decreases in productivity, particularly if work is seen as being at least partially responsible for the dissolution of the marriage. Organizations would be best served to review any potential changes that could be made in a job to emolliate the stressful effects of balancing work and family, including changes to when and where work could be completed, allowing increased discretion over certain work-related decisions, and/or ensuring that supervisors provide support for their subordinates. If such changes were not possible, providing employees with services and supports (e.g., Employee Assistance Programs) to develop effective coping mechanisms, particularly when their work is stressful.

Future Research Directions

Although research has demonstrated a clear link between work issues and marital satisfaction, either directly or through some work-family interface, more work needs to be done to tease out the exact nature and direction of that relationship. Potential moderators, such as occupational status, family type, and gender role beliefs need to be further explored. While the negative aspects of work-family interaction have been more thoroughly examined, little work has been done examining how work-family facilitation impacts marital satisfaction.

In reviewing the literature on work and family issues relating to marital quality, the typical study involves cross-sectional data taken from self-report surveys. This has limited the causal inferences we can make regarding these important domains. Clearly, there is a great demand for studies that are longitudinal, rely on data other than self-report (e.g., observational, biodata), and are more experimental in nature. We need to better understand how work and family demands change over time for couples, how couples respond to such changes, and how both the change in demands, as well as the response to those demands, can affect the marital relationship. Marital researchers have long acknowledged that observational studies can reveal much more relevant data regarding the state of a couple’s relationship than can self-report measures (e.g., Huston, 2000). Studies which utilized a daily diary approach have facilitated understanding of everyday interactions of spouses (e.g., Marks et al., 2001) and how people allocate the limited resource of time. Finally, setting up experimental studies where interventions are
introduced and tested using a classic pre- and post-measurement/control group approach would aid the field greatly in being able to make causal inferences (Bradbury, 2002).

An additional area of focus for researchers has to do with the types of samples used for work-family studies. Most of the studies included in this review, with a few exceptions, have utilized married, Caucasian, middle-class, white-collar, heterosexual samples. Not only does this limit the generalizability of the information gathered, but does a great disservice to those individuals who do not fit into this narrow description of marriage. The majority of the research has examined the ‘traditional’ couple, that is, married and usually with children. Little research to date has examined work-family issues and their relationship to marital quality among same-sex couples. Given the current legal definition of ‘marriage’ in the United States, these couples are also excluded from national data on marriage and divorce statistics. A common limitation of work-family research is the lack of racial representation among its samples. One study reviewed here focused exclusively on Mexican-Americans (Barnett et al., 2003) but did not include any comparison groups, thus none could be made. Previous research indicates that marital quality may be defined quite differently among various ethnicities (Broman, 2002).

Innovative research designs, such as daily diaries (e.g., Heller & Watson, 2005) are providing information on the dynamic interplay between work and family; this, and other longitudinal models are essential to gain a better understanding of the mutual influence of work and family roles. A common refrain among researchers is the need for more longitudinal studies to better delineate the temporal linkages among work and family roles, which has important implications in terms of where to best plan interventions and to predict their effects.

Similarly, another ripe research area for marital quality comes from adopting a lifespan perspective. A potential moderator of the work-family and marital quality relationship is the life stage of the individual and, more importantly, the couple. By considering the stage at which a couple finds itself, including newlyweds, young parents, empty nesters, etc. important information could be gained. Furthermore, researchers should be effort into recruiting couples or individuals who are about to make a transition to a new life stage, such as women who are pregnant or individuals expecting to retire within a few years, and gather data before and after this transition (Costigan, Cox & Cauce, 2003).

Conclusion

Although research on the work-family interface and marital satisfaction has shown that the two are related, much more work needs to be done in determining the nature of the linkages between the two (e.g., direct versus mediator models), identification of potential influential moderators, and determining causal paths between the two domains through more controlled experimental design and establishing
temporal precedence. This review highlights the importance of work-related variables, both from the individual and from the partner, in predicting marital quality. Researchers, practitioners, and policy makers alike would be well-served to examine not only predictors from the family but from the work domain as well, when attempting to understand those factors which contribute to a healthy marriage or preclude dissolution.

**References**


**Recommended Reading**

*Marital Research Resources*


