

Two Careers, One Employer: Couples Working for the Same Corporation

Phyllis Moen and Stephen Sweet

Cornell University

Advances in career development research require scholars to move from analysis of the career paths of individuals to a life course approach to the interlocking career paths of couples. Increasingly, not only are U.S. workers married to other workers, but significant numbers of couples work for the same employer. Drawing on a subsample of employees in dual-earner households in five corporations in upstate New York (and their spouses), this study examines both the direct and indirect effects of being a coworker on career development, work circumstances, and spillover. Being part of a coworking couple positively predicts men's job prestige, tenure, and commitment to work (in terms of working long hours, heavy workload, etc.). These effects, as well as spillover, are most pronounced for younger men without children. For wives, coworking corresponds with increased income and increased spillover between work and family, especially for younger coworking women without children. © 2002 Elsevier Science (USA)

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Three key themes characterize a life course perspective on career development (Han & Moen, 1999a, 1999b; Moen & Han, 2001a, 2001b). The first places careers in *context*, considering the ecology of workers' "social address" in terms of their historical cohort, ethnicity, gender, life stage, occupation, and workplace. All of these factors shape opportunities and constraints at work and at home. Second is the notion of *linked lives*, as individuals and couples strategize to synchronize their various goals, expectations, and obligations. The third theme is the dynamic notion of *pathways*, involving transitions, trajectories, and timing (see also Elder, George, & Shanahan, 1996; Giele & Elder, 1998). In this article we focus on the concept of *linked lives* as an important mechanism for advancing the field of career

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Address correspondence and reprint requests to Phyllis Moen, Cornell Careers Institute, Cornell University, BLCC-MVR Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853.

development. This concept highlights the need for scholars to investigate the ways individuals' choices are always embodied in and shaped by the people in their lives. For example, most workers, regardless of gender, have an employed spouse. This fact means that men and women workers increasingly have to integrate the goals and demands related to their families, their careers, and frequently their spouses' careers as well. We illustrate the value of couple, rather than individual, models through an empirical analysis of spouses (or partners) who work for the same company.

Contemporary working couples may work for the same employer in an effort to better coordinate both spouses' obligations and schedules. The decision to cwork may also be a strategy for couples who relocate—a job may be more attractive to one spouse if the other is hired as well. Another possibility is that coworkers may meet on the job, become a couple, and subsequently marry. Drawing on a sample of married and cohabiting couples in which at least one spouse works for one of five manufacturing or utility companies, we examine whether and how spouses who work for the same employer differ from those in which each spouse is employed at a different organization.

Are cworking couples better at facing the challenge of three careers—two at work and one at home—than are couples working at different locations? What workplace and household circumstances and strategies are most typical of cworking couples? Are cworking couples more or less vulnerable to spillover? Is cworking associated with turnover intentions? We anticipate that spouses in cworking arrangements experience both more positive and more negative spillover given that they share such interlocking careers, with the balance sheet slightly more positive in that familiarity with, and similarities in, work culture produce greater strategic coordination and less stress. However, given the life course emphasis on context, our thesis is that the experiences of cworking spouses differ depending on their gender, profession, life stage, and the organization for which they work.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

The life course approach, as applied to vocational development, highlights the need to consider careers as opposed to jobs, as well as how family systems shape opportunities and decision-making processes (Schulenberg, Vondracek, & Crouter, 1984). Organizational researchers describe corporate interlocks, where individuals know each other in more than one context; cworking couples represent precisely this type of interlock, with spouses sharing both domestic and institutional environments. We have virtually no knowledge about this growing subgroup of working couples, but presume that their double overlap (at work as well as at home) can produce both positive and negative outcomes. In her recent study of a Fortune 500 manufacturing firm, Arlie Hochschild (1997) concludes that many employees see work as an escape from the problems they experience in their domestic lives. But couples who work for the same company cannot leave family concerns behind when they go to work, or leave their jobs behind when they go home, suggesting greater spillover—both positive and negative—for cworking couples. By contrast,

other research (e.g., Barnett & Rivers, 1996) shows couples to be better off if both are working, given that they share similar experiences and are similarly engaged. This would be even more the case for couples who work for the same employer, implying primarily positive spillover, leading to greater life quality for coworking couples.

Note that coworking arrangements occur by design, not happenstance, frequently as a strategy for managing dual-careers or as a result of becoming involved with one another on the job. Theories of family process suggest differences in the degree to which families strategize as a unit (Moen & Wethington, 1992). Constantine (1986), for example, describes three family types: *negotiating* (as when both spouses share decision making about both of their careers), *ordered* (for instance, couples who see the husband's career as the more important and always act accordingly), and *individualized* (in which individuals make independent career decisions, regardless of the circumstances of the other spouse). We assume that working for the same company reflects couples' deliberate choices regarding where to work and whether to remain with their current employer. This can result in difficulties related to relocation. One study showed that the proportion of employees who resist relocation increased more than fourfold to 40% from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s, despite a tremendous increase in relocation benefits (Driessnack, 1987). Married couples also face restrictions that can make employment difficult. Specifically, conflict of interest rules may prevent married couples from working for competing employers. In the corporate world, such restrictions can have a significant negative impact on high-level professional couples (Wexler, 1982), disadvantaging the career progression of those in coworking arrangements.

We theorize that working for the same employer may have additive or contextual effects on the career development of members of dual-earner couples. An *additive* effect simply means that being a coworking couple would predict occupational prestige, work circumstances, tenure, and spillover, net of other factors (such as age, education, and number and ages of children). Negotiation about where to work and other adaptive strategies of coworking and non-coworking couples operate under constraints of the structure and culture of both paid work and gender roles, frequently giving priority to the husband's career (Becker & Moen, 1999; Clarkberg & Moen, 2001; Han & Moen, 1999a, 1999b; Hays, 1996; Hochschild, 1989; Moen & Yu, 2000). Our life course *role context* model suggests that the circumstances in which coworking occurs shape its career and life quality impacts. Here we consider four important contextual effects: gender, profession, life stage, and employing organization.

Gender

Men and women in coworking marriages may have different perceptions of their relationship. For example, women's reluctance to move for their own careers or willingness to move for their husbands' careers (Bielby & Bielby, 1992) may mean that women who remain (or become) coworkers may be trailing spouses or reluctant stayers, disadvantaged in ways that their husbands are not. This may operate for

some men as well: those who prioritize their wives' career development over their own. One key area where we would expect members of coworking couples to be more similar is in their consideration of their partners' career. Men whose wives work for their same employer may find it easier to "take the role of the other" (e.g., Mead, 1934) in, for example, understanding the difficulties women face in terms of promotions, wages, and meshing their jobs and their lives. They may also be more aware of the competing pressures their wives are experiencing and, accordingly, work toward a more equitable division of domestic and paid work hours. We would expect that spouses in coworking arrangements would rank both their jobs as important, being less likely to give priority to either their own or their spouses' jobs.

Profession

Jobs offer resources, impose demands, and shape the values of individuals occupying them (e.g., Kohn, 1977). These effects are well documented, but scholars seldom examine the linkages between spouses' jobs and how this interplay may shape career development. For example, in dual-earner couples, particularly those in which both partners occupy highly demanding jobs, the tactics of juggling work and family roles are particularly complex. The degree to which coworking minimizes or exacerbates these dynamics has yet to be studied. We suspect that coworking status will tend to have its strongest effect on those couples in which one or both partners occupy managerial or professional positions. Coworking partners, particularly those where both are professionals or managers, will likely display the greatest amount of spillover from work to family, as well as the highest commitment toward both their careers.

Life Stage

Our life course approach (Giele & Elder, 1998; Elder et al., 1996) to career development raises the issue of continuity and change over time. How do men and women meet the changing challenges of career development at various life stages? How do choices and options early in life shape subsequent career progression? Are new generations of workers rewriting career scripts as they enter the workforce and plan their own futures? Both occupational and family goals and demands can be expected to change over the life course. For example, previous research indicates that family responsibilities rise dramatically with the arrival of children (Ishii-Kuntz & Coltrane, 1992; Shelton, 1992). As family responsibilities increase, the likelihood of a conflict between the paid work and family domains also increases (Hammer, Allen, & Grigsby, 1997), particularly for those highly invested in their jobs, as managers, professionals, and technicians strive to move up firm or occupational ladders (Althausser & Kalleberg, 1990). All these factors may influence whether coworking couples are better or worse off at managing their two occupational careers along with their family "career."

Employing Organization

Employers may also influence the experiences of coworking couples. Recognizing the potential benefits to the company in terms of employee retention and cost savings, some employers may actively support coworking couples in their ranks. For example, Southwest Airlines employs hundreds of married couples, constituting nearly 6% of its workforce. Seven percent of DuPont's 100,000 employees are married to another DuPont employee (Wolkenbreit, 1997), and AT&T employs approximately 7500 married couples nationwide (Rapp, 1992). Support for coworking couples likely correlates with other measures of a family friendly workplace culture, environmental conditions that minimize work-family conflict and increase attachment to organizations (Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999). We would expect that corporations employing a high proportion of coworking couples would also tend to be those companies in which the coworking experience is most positive.

Hypotheses

Because our sample consists of members of dual-earner couples with at least some college education (primarily exempt employees working for one of five large corporations) and their spouses (who may or may not be working for these same organizations) we limit our hypotheses to middle-class couples. Accordingly, in middle-class, dual-earner couples, we propose the following hypotheses.

H1. Spouses who work for the same employer, in comparison to other dual-earner spouses, will tend to report greater equality in gender roles and treat both partners' careers with equal consideration.

H1a. Working for the same employer positively predicts prestige, tenure, and job security for men but not women, since wives tend to be the trailing spouse and shape their career paths around those of their husbands.

H2. Being part of a coworking couple has direct (either positive or negative) effects on work conditions and spillover.

H2a. The relationships associated with coworking status are stronger for positive outcomes than for negative outcomes, since being in a coworking relationship provides an advantage in terms of coordination and communication.

H3. The effects of being a member of a coworking couple are moderated by gender, profession, life stage, and employer.

H3a. The patterns are different for wives and husbands, since the responsibilities for managing the work-family interface typically fall on women's shoulders.

H3b. Coworking spouses who are professionals or managers, particularly those in couples in which both spouses are professionals or managers, will tend to experience the strongest effects from coworking arrangements.

H3c. Coworking couples raising children benefit the most from being in a coworking arrangement.

H3d. Coworking couples will tend to report the most positive experiences if they are working in companies that have large proportions of coworkers.

METHODS

Data

To study the effects of coworking on couples' work and family experiences, and to compare coworking couples with other dual-earner couples, we analyze quantitative data from the Cornell Couples and Careers Study (1998–1999, $N = 2216$) and the Cornell Midcareers Paths and Passages Study (1999–2000, $N = 887$). These two studies share common methodologies in the study of the work and family experiences of predominantly middle-class couples. Each study involved hour-long telephone interviews, during which both spouses were asked (separately) to report their life histories, as well as current work and family relationships. Variables used in this analysis rely only on measures identical between studies. As a supplement to these data, we also analyze qualitative data generated through in-depth interviews from coworking couples in the Cornell Couples and Careers Study.

The study of coworking couples is well suited to the organization-based sampling strategy used in the Couples and Careers Study and Midcareer Paths and Passages Study. These studies sampled employees from a combined total of 11 organizations in upstate New York. Because of the likely relationship between the nature of occupational endeavors and the experiences of the coworking, we restrict our analysis to five manufacturing and utility companies. In order to minimize spurious effects that could emanate from different work environments, comparisons with non-coworking men and women are limited to the referent spouse, the partner(s) working for one of the five focal companies. Also, to create a reasonably homogeneous sample of middle-class couples, we limit our analysis to the study of dual-earner, opposite sex couples in which at least one partner has some college education ($N = 877$ individuals, 752 couples). Table 1 shows the characteristics of the sample. Additionally, multivariate models include controls for husbands' and wives' salaries, health, and education.

We investigate the degree to which coworking status directly predicts various measures of career development, as well as its potential interaction with couples' occupational level, life stage, and organizational environment. We use 1990 Standardized Occupation Classifications to code occupational level, classifying couples as both professional/manager, husband professional/manager wife not, wife professional/manager husband not, and neither professional nor manager. We operationalize life stage (see also Moen & Yu, 2000) according to the age of the youngest child and the age of the wife, indicating whether couples are young nonparents (wife younger than 50 and no children), at a "launching stage" (has a preschool child), establishment stage (school-age child), or are "shifting gears," (nonparents older than 50 or parents whose youngest child is 18+ years of age). As discussed above, organizational affiliation locates coworking partners in particular employment milieux, a context that may facilitate the creation of positive experiences.

Because of our focus on the gendered nature of career development, we estimate multivariate OLS regressions separately for men and women, examining the effects of coworking on job prestige and tenure, employment circumstances,

TABLE 1

Coworking Status of Dual-Earner Middle-Class Couples in Five Corporations in Upstate New York

Company pseudonym	Total number of Employees ^a	Sample (individuals)		
		Coworking	Noncoworking	%Coworking
Vantech (Manufacturer of durable goods)	24600	168	291	57.7
Transco (Manufacturer of durable goods)	3500	28	56	50.0
Utilco (Heat and electrical utility)	9000	18	64	28.1
New Wave (Communications utility)	7800	26	155	16.7
Gatcon (Heat and electrical utility)	2000	10	61	16.3
Total		250	627	39.8

Source. Cornell Couples and Careers Study (1998–1999), Cornell Midcareer Paths and Passages Study (1999–2000).

^a Employees at location. Vantech and Transco are multinational corporations with other employment locales. All names are pseudonyms.

and spillover from work to family. (A summary of measures is available from the authors.)

The reporting of findings is punctuated with the analysis of supplemental qualitative data, from the Cornell Couples and Careers Study. These 16 hour-long telephone interviews represent 10 coworking couples (six couples had both partners participating, four couples had only one partner represented). Respondents were asked a series of open-ended questions concerning their family and work experiences, as well as situations that may be of particular importance to coworking couples. Questions specific to coworking include the degree to which family and work experiences spill over into other domains as a result of working in the same company, the degree to which partners communicate during the workday, ways in which benefit packages are influenced by coworking status, concerns coworkers may have about definitions of family roles, and the overall appraisal of how coworking contributes to or detracts from marital quality.

FINDINGS

One of the most surprising findings is the degree to which coworking couples are present in the sample. As shown in Table 1, approximately four in 10 middle-class couples in these five private-sector companies are coworking couples. The high prevalence, in part, likely reflects some sample biases that inflate the number of coworking partners represented in this study and possibly the realities of constrained employment options and opportunities in upstate New York. However, even with this being the case, the commonality of coworking situations is striking.

Locating Coworking within the Life Course

Life history questions (included in the surveys and in-depth interviews) offer informed portrayals of how coworking fits within career and family development. Consider, for example, the degree to which coworking is associated with couples' life stage. Coworkers are more apt to be in the early child-rearing years; three in 10 (30.4%) have preschoolers at home (typically launching their careers along with their families), compared to only one in four (25.2%) non-coworking couples. Coworkers are also disproportionately represented among young nonparents (15.8 vs. 9.5%). The fact that coworkers are on average located in the early stages of family and career development may reflect the utility of coworking early in the life course or the fact that younger cohorts are more apt to pursue a coworking strategy. This finding highlights the need to examine the interplay of career development of couples over the life course. It also suggests the possibility that coworking serves as a strategy that some couples use during their early dual-career development and that this strategy hinges on life circumstances, a point we will return to.

The sequencing of marriage and career progression is also different for coworking couples. One indication is that almost two in five coworking men (but only one in seven non-coworking men) worked for their current employer prior to marriage (or the development of long-term cohabiting relationships), suggesting that many met their wives on the job. A similar, but somewhat weaker relationship holds for coworking (21.3%) and non-coworking (11.8%) women in the sequencing of their marriage and employment. These findings indicate that a considerable proportion of coworking spouses meet each other on the job and that the workplace provides a venue for partnerships to form. Our in-depth interviews underscore this: approximately half the couples report meeting on the job and then establishing a relationship. But this dynamic produces its own unique concerns. For example, one coworking engineer at Transco reports that, during their courtship, he and his wife made a concerted effort to keep other employees from knowing that they were dating. These findings highlight the need for employers to consider the dynamics of office romance. Such relationships are likely to continue to increase, given the changing gender composition of the workforce along with the long hours workers are putting in on their jobs, both enhancing opportunities for forging relationships on the job and reducing opportunities for doing so off the job.

Other coworking couples report one partner following the other to a new or existing place of employment. In the in-depth interviews, couples in which the husband followed the wife and couples in which the wife followed the husband are both represented, but the latter is the more common experience. These decisions are made in consideration of whose career is deemed more important or lucrative, as well as in consideration of the likelihood of the trailing partner finding meaningful work.

Although some spouses end up as coworkers because they follow their partners' careers, our quantitative data indicate that members of coworking couples are more apt to report treating each partner's careers with equal consideration. As Table 2 shows, one in two coworking men and four in 10 coworking women report that

TABLE 2

Characteristics of Coworking and Noncoworking Husbands and Wives in Five Corporations
in Upstate New York

	Husbands		Wives	
	Coworking	Noncoworking	Coworking	Noncoworking
Age	42.3	43.2	39.4***	41.8***
Standard deviation	[6.4]	[7.8]	[5.4]	[7.5]
Salary	80422	81136	71969**	59683***
Standard deviation	[34045]	[31795]	[38915]	[42094]
Marriage length	11.0***	16.4***	10.9***	16.3***
Standard deviation	[7.1]	[9.2]	[7.0]	[9.2]
% Working with employer before start of marriage	38.2%***	14.3%***	21.3%**	11.8%***
% Plan to leave employer within 2 years	13.6%	9.3%	13.6%	11.5%
Career priority				
Husband's career priority	31.2%***	64.8%***	40.2%***	63.9%***
Wife's career priority	17.0%	13.9%	17.0%	16.1%
Neither a priority or take turns	50.9%***	21.2%***	42.8%***	20.0%***
Life stage				
Non-parents < 50	15.8%***	9.5%***	15.8%***	9.5%***
Preschool age (<6) child	30.4%*	25.2%*	30.4%*	25.2%*
School age (6–18) child	36.4%	40.1%	36.4%	40.1%
Adult child or non-parent > 50	17.4%**	24.1%**	17.4%**	24.1%**
N	125	616	125	616

Source. Cornell Couples and Careers Study (1998–1999), Cornell Midcareer Paths and Passages Study (1999–2000).

* $p < .10$ ** $p < .05$ *** $p < .01$.

neither partner's career takes priority, whereas only one in five non-coworking men and women say this is the case. Thus, the coworking strategy appears especially considerate of women's careers. Although there is almost no difference in the salaries of coworking and non-coworking men, on average coworking women in this manufacturing and utility sample earn considerably more than their non-coworking counterparts.

In sum, coworking status is strongly linked with occupational career and family development over the life course. Coworking women tend to be younger, and coworking couples are more likely to be young nonparents or else to have preschool children. Considerable proportions of coworkers first formed their relationships on the job, others use coworking as a strategy for developing their dual careers. In comparison to non-coworkers, coworking partners are less likely to favor the husband's career over the wife's career. Coworking wives may experience some benefits from this practice, earning considerably more than their non-coworking counterparts. However, it is also possible that the causality is the reverse, that coworking women tend also to be women who earn higher incomes and

therefore are women whose career development is viewed more favorably by their husbands.

The Experiences of Coworking Husbands

Coworking can potentially offer unique opportunities for the mobilization of resources, but it may also exacerbate the challenges of managing work and family roles, thereby increasing both positive and negative spillover from one domain to the other. These relationships are likely to operate both as main effects as well as contingent effects moderated by occupational level, life stage circumstances, and organizational environment. We estimate these relationships separately for men and women, controlling for both spouses' salaries, health, and education. Results are shown in Table 3. In our discussion we consider and sum both direct and indirect (interactions) effects.

Career development. Men in coworking couples are more likely to work in positions that have higher job prestige than are men in non-coworking arrangements, even after controlling for income, education, and health. However, in couples in which the wife is a professional while the husband is not, men who work for the same corporations as their wives tend to have significantly lower levels of job prestige than do non-coworkers. This finding could reflect the primacy of the wife's career in the family or the fact that professional women may have less power within corporations to influence the employment circumstances of their husbands.

Life stage also moderates the effects of husbands' coworking status, with young nonparent coworking husbands having considerably higher prestige than both their non-coworking counterparts and men at later life stages. As we discuss below, this outcome may be reflective of a general pattern for young coworking nonparents to display a higher commitment to their occupational career development. We anticipated that coworking couples in companies that had the highest representation of coworkers (Vantech and Transco) would report the strongest positive effects. Conversely coworking couples in companies with the lowest representations of coworkers (New Wave and Gatcon) would have the lowest scores for life quality indicators and the highest strains and stresses. Consistent with our hypothesis, coworking men in Vantech and Transco, the companies with the highest concentration of coworking couples, display the highest levels of job prestige.

Work conditions. The regression analyses (in Table 3) reveal that coworking men, as a group, report working about one hour less (1.2) than their non-coworking counterparts. However, when examining the interplay of life stage and coworking status, younger men with no children report working one and a half hours (1.6) more than their non-coworking counterparts. This finding fits with our thesis regarding the spillover of work among coworking couples without children. However, this finding is true only for childless coworkers in the early years of development; older coworking men in the shifting gears stage (composed of older nonparents and those with adult children in the home) put in far fewer hours than non-coworking men at this stage of life (an average of 43.5 hours per week, compared to 50.9 hours per week).

TABLE 3
 OLS Regressions: Coworking and Contextual Factors (Occupational Level, Life Stage, and Employing Organization) on Referent Men's and Women's Career Circumstances

	Job prestige		Tenure at current company		Work hours		Workload		Control of work sched.		Neg. W-F spillover		Pos. W-F spillover	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Coworking	5.019*	0.493	8.914***	-2.293	5.981*	6.372	0.052	0.055	-0.211	-0.408	0.213	-0.132	0.223	-0.570
Professional status	11.714***	11.782***	-0.738	-2.400**	1.070	1.082	0.054	0.269*	0.022	0.129	0.150	0.174	0.170	-0.163
Both professional	0.029	0.602	-4.468*	1.081	-3.127	-5.272	0.358	0.139	0.694***	0.358	0.060	0.302	-0.355	0.571*
Interaction	11.240***	-0.262	-0.216	-1.200	0.990	1.431	0.097	0.189	0.025	0.086	0.212**	-0.050	0.212*	-0.385*
Husband prof./wife nonprof.	2.003	-1.805	-3.968	1.186	-4.471	-6.096	0.299	0.333	0.795***	-0.212	-0.073	0.481	-0.274	0.657*
Interaction	1.174	1.181***	0.801	-2.335**	0.382	0.847	0.119	0.051	0.169	0.229	0.104	0.034	0.055	-0.130
nonprof.	-5.144*	2.227	-2.544	3.114	-2.812	-5.245	0.133	0.275	0.399	0.444	-0.053	0.545**	-0.324	0.703**
Interaction	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Both nonprof-stational	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Life stages	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nonparent <50	1.111	0.750	-0.533	-1.346	1.491	-2.849	0.267**	0.106	0.248**	-0.089	0.113	-0.053	-0.056	0.227
Preschool child	-2.661	1.195	-2.967	1.043	-3.473	-3.092	-0.387**	-0.225	-0.314	0.204	-0.456**	-0.116	0.257	0.017
Interaction	-0.257	-0.033	0.637**	-0.053	2.637**	1.667	0.224**	0.198	0.346***	-0.198	0.049	-0.075	0.133	0.067
School-age child	-3.851*	-0.682	-4.063**	2.422	-2.955	0.402	-0.444**	-0.329	-0.444**	0.089	-0.357*	-0.220	0.128	-0.096
Interaction	-0.429	0.589	1.636	1.435	1.356	5.307**	0.259**	0.208	0.402***	0.062	-0.124	0.112	0.070	0.344
Adult child or n.p. >50	-1.367	-6.157*	5.630**	0.197	-7.720**	-6.539	-0.769***	-0.411	-0.499*	0.067	-0.342	-0.257	0.619*	-0.307
Interaction	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Organization	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Vantech	-1.254	-1.915	1.222	0.490	0.208	2.123	0.005	-0.079	0.104	0.067	-0.141	-0.085	-0.245*	0.046
Transco	0.597	0.725	-3.871*	-2.747	-2.652	0.344	0.087	0.122	-0.115	0.277	-0.002	0.131	-0.581**	0.030
Interaction	-2.573***	-4.204**	1.011	-1.811	1.939*	-1.445	0.045	-0.087	-0.538***	-0.122	-0.063	-0.452***	-0.027	-0.006
Utelco	0.328	1.968	1.314	0.354	-1.785	2.176	0.028	-0.007	0.709***	-0.208	0.188	0.467*	-0.254	0.096
Interaction	-2.080**	-3.791***	-3.512***	-3.972***	-1.901*	-2.319	-0.054	-0.156	0.116	0.116	-0.188**	-0.066	-0.077	-0.214
NewWave	-1.965	-0.022	-4.786**	0.846	-3.447	-2.292	0.271	-0.406*	-0.406*	0.383	0.025	-0.004	-0.046	-0.137
Interaction	-0.517	1.846	-0.962	-0.615	-1.965	-4.789*	-0.228**	-0.041	-0.442**	-0.223	-0.166	-0.308*	-0.170	-0.478**
Gaicon	-8.361**	-4.262	-0.090	1.190	-3.777	5.404	-0.046	-0.113	-0.037	0.147	0.052	-0.048	0.524	0.920*
Controls	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Husband's salary (log)	5.560**	-4.589*	-1.446	-1.467	15.842***	-15.968***	0.164	-0.486**	0.595***	0.550**	-0.161	-0.629**	0.602**	0.342
Write's salary (log)	-2.047**	6.110**	-1.847**	-2.447	-0.188	31.310***	0.139*	0.642***	0.008	-0.441	0.012	0.723***	-0.043	-0.037
Husband's health	-0.036	-0.396	0.152	0.248	-0.445**	0.006	-0.025	0.032	-0.025	0.037	-0.088***	-0.042	0.060***	0.063*
Write's health	0.069	0.188	0.033	-0.132	0.022	-0.072	-0.017	-0.060*	0.033	0.080**	0.000	-0.095***	0.054**	0.010
Husband's years of educ.	0.476***	0.553***	-0.101	0.201	0.114	-0.140	0.010	-0.012	0.009	-0.024	0.022*	0.003	-0.008	-0.009
Write's years of educ.	0.112	0.061	0.136	-0.185	-0.273*	0.481*	-0.001	0.007	-0.016	-0.020	-0.005	0.019	-0.006	0.014
Constant	25.921**	37.245**	20.566**	26.075**	-24.465*	-28.560*	1.519	2.250*	0.203	2.374*	4.079***	3.432**	-1.356	0.763
R ²	0.502***	0.550***	0.158***	0.146**	0.097***	0.282***	0.019	0.032	0.146***	0.105***	0.065***	0.112***	0.055**	0.010
N	545	272	569	300	571	304	495	246	545	281	571	301	571	301

Source: Cornell Couples and Careers Study (1998-1999), Cornell Midcareer Paths and Passages Study (1999-2000).
 * $p < .10$ ** $p < .05$ *** $p < .01$.

As a group, younger coworking men who do not have children also report the highest workload and the highest control over their work schedules, as shown in Table 3. These men also report the highest negative work to family spillover. Taken together, these data provide strong evidence that young nonparent coworking men are more highly invested in their careers than are their non-coworking counterparts. However, coworkers at later life stages are quite similar to non-coworkers.

Because the data are cross-sectional, we cannot fully document the effect of the transition from nonparental to parental status on the links between men's coworking status and their career investment. We suspect that these findings reflect a general tendency for coworking couples to become more consumed in their work roles, but that other life experiences, such as the birth of a child, can create situations that force them to "disengage" from work to fulfill other role obligations.

Turnover. We hypothesize that being part of a coworking couple could influence turnover, making it more difficult for employees to switch jobs (in that they have to consider both spouses' jobs), and indeed that is the case. Specifically, men in coworking couples have been with their current employer on average over 2 more years (2.2) than those in non-coworking arrangements (See Fig. 1). This is especially the case for coworking men in couples without children, more strikingly, for men in older couples, especially those over 50.

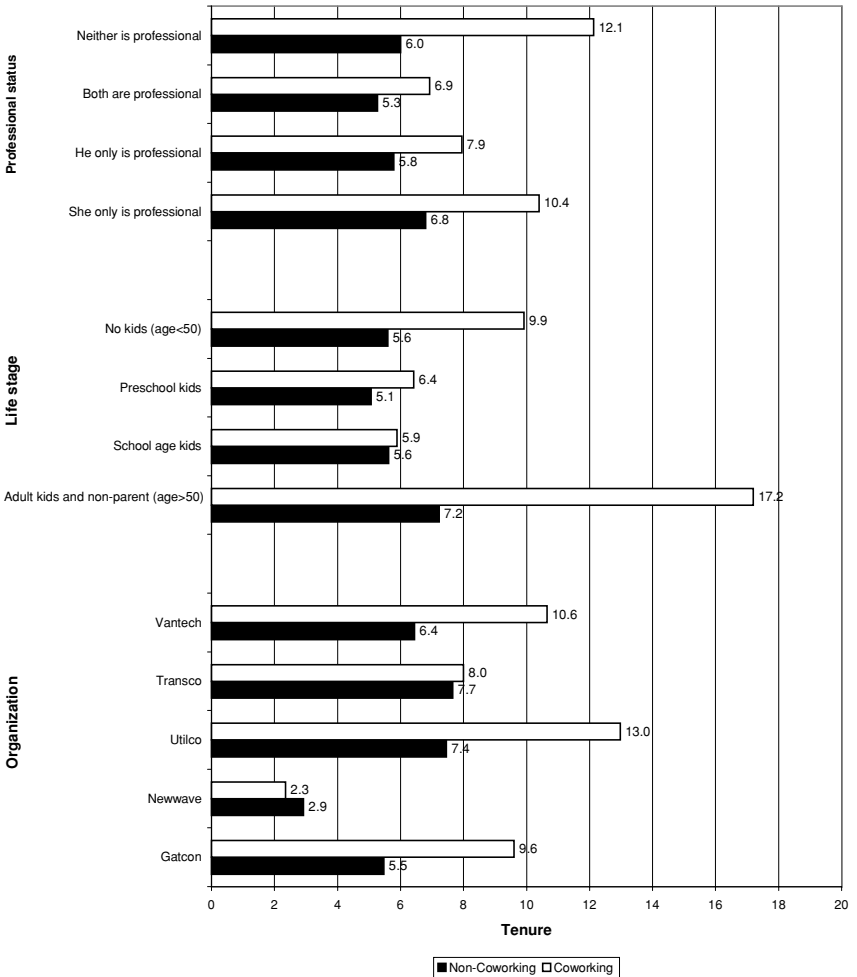
Work-to-family spillover. In keeping with our hypothesis about spillover, Fig. 2 shows the greatest negative spillover from work to family for childless men in coworking arrangements in the earlier stages of career development (under age 50). By contrast, coworkers with preschool and school age children tend to experience less negative spillover. This finding points to the potential moderating effect of family circumstances. Without children, young coworking couples can focus almost entirely on their careers, experiencing consequential negative spillover.

We also hypothesized positive work-to-family spillover. Although this is typically the case for men who are coworkers, it is not true for the same group of coworking men who experience the most negative spillover: those under 50 without children. And while those at one company with many coworking couples—Vantech—experience more positive work-to-family spillover, those at another company with many coworking couples—Transco—do not.

The Experiences of Coworking Women

On the whole, coworking appears to have a greater impact on husbands' career development than it does on wives'; still, coworking does predict women's career experiences in that women in coworking relationships tend to earn more. However, as hypothesized, the most compelling findings for the effects of coworking on women's career development occur in the realm of family relationships.

Women coworkers, especially those who are in asymmetric professional relationships (where she is a professional or manager and her husband is not), report significantly higher levels of both negative and positive work-to-family spillover. The fact that women in coworking relationships experience positive and negative spillover suggests that the boundaries between the workplace and the home are



Significance: Coworking $p < .01$; Coworking and Professional Status Interaction $p < .10$;

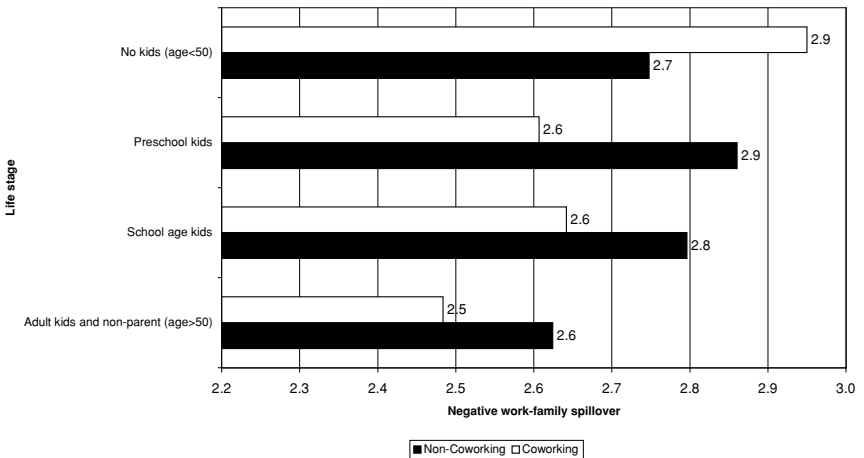
Coworking and Life Stage Interaction $p < .05$; Organization $p < .01$; Coworking and Organization Interaction $p < .05$; (N=569).

Source: Cornell Couples and Careers Study (1998-1999), Midcareer Path and Passages Study (1999-2000)

FIG. 1. Men in coworking couples have longer tenure with their employer.

less rigid for coworkers than for other two-earner couples. For women professionals coworking with nonprofessional husbands, these boundaries are especially permeable.

Our qualitative data confirm the blurred boundaries between coworkers' work life and family–personal life, and point to the strategies coworkers develop to manage this complex interface. For example, one coworking wife, a chemical technician with no children, reports that she and her husband consciously try to minimize the spillover of work into their home life:



Significance: Coworking and Life Stage Interaction $p < .05$; (N=571).

Source: Cornell Couples and Careers Study (1998-1999), Midcareer Path and Passages Study (1999-2000)

FIG. 2. Men in coworking couples under 50 without children report more negative work to family spillover.

Most of the time we are fairly careful to leave work at work because otherwise it could become an all-consuming passion. When you're excited about what you're doing or when you're depressed about what you're doing and if you don't leave it there, it follows you home.

Our qualitative data show the greater spillover experienced by professional women working with their nonprofessional husbands; such status dissonance can also produce role conflict. One woman, a mother of a 13-year-old child, a manager at Vantech, and married to a nonprofessional husband, reports:

Now that I am in a management-type position, there are certain things I know at work that I can't discuss with him.

The experiences of coworking women (and men) are also influenced by the degree to which their partners' work roles intersect with their own. Our quantitative data cannot offer indications of this dynamic, but in-depth interviews reveal its importance. Some couples who work for the same organization may be coworking only in the most marginal sense, only being employed by the same company, but not working together. Such is the case of a 52-year-old manager, married to a librarian, who says of coworking:

I'm not sure that there are a lot of advantages. We're in different parts of the organization so we don't really run into each other that often.

In contrast, a 29-year-old engineer at Transco, who works very closely with her husband (another engineer), reports:

I guess one of the biggest advantages was being able to see each other a lot during the day and also we would be there for each other for emotional support. Our offices were only one door

apart from each other, so a lot of times if things were difficult, like I had a difficult meeting, I would immediately go back to his office and talk to him about it.

Other in-depth interviews support the conclusions that these two women report that the closer coworkers work with one another, the more dramatic the effects are on their work and family lives. Comparisons of the responses of men and women in the in-depth interviews suggest that close working arrangements have a more dramatic effect on women's lives than on men's. Given that the definition of coworking used in this study is very generous, in that coworkers only have to work in the same corporation, not necessarily with one another, we expect that our findings underreport the influence that stronger coworking situations can have on couples' experiences inside and outside of the workplace.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The field of career development research has typically followed what Kanter (1977, p. 8) calls the "myth" of separate worlds, focusing exclusively on the occupational career development of individuals. But most workers are married to other workers, and most confront the reality of three careers: his, hers, and their family career (see also Christensen & Gomory, 1999; Hertz, 1986; Moen, 2003), all of which shape individual career development. What is required to advance the field is recognition of the considerable heterogeneity in the circumstances and experiences of contemporary career development of each spouse in two-earner couples. Moving from an "individual path" to an "interlocked paths" model of career development advances the paradigm by placing individual choice in the context of couple constraints and decision making.

We began this study of couples who work at the same company because this group poses the greatest challenge to this myth of separate worlds. For these couples, work life and family life constitute extremely overlapping domains, with no clear demarcation between men's and women's spheres. They also best represent the life course themes of "linked lives" (Elder et al., 1995; Moen & Yu, 2000) and "coupled careers" (Han & Moen, 1999a, 1999b; Moen & Han, 2001a, 2001b), with both spouses' careers interconnected in ways that shape both spouses' career development. Drawing on data from members of working couples who are exempt employees at five manufacturing and utility companies, as well as from their spouses, we find, as hypothesized, that coworking status does shape workers' career paths and experiences, but in ways that are conditioned by gender, occupational level, life stage, and organizational environment.

Coworking in Context

We hypothesized that women's lives would be more shaped by their coworking status, given the asymmetry between husbands and wives in their work-family interface over the life course (Moen & Han, 2001a, 2001b), and we find this to be true only in respect to the bridge between work and family. In fact, coworking seems to have a stronger relationship with men's career development. For women,

coworking matters most in work–family spillover of those who are professionals or managers with nonprofessional husbands.

We also hypothesized that coworking would be most consequential for parents. However, we find that the most dramatic effects of being a coworker, for men and women, occur for those who are childless in younger families. Moreover, younger men without children in coworking arrangements report higher levels of job prestige, longer work hours, higher workloads, greater control over work schedules, and more negative work-to-family spillover.

We also hypothesized that coworking would be more consequential and positive for those working for a corporation with a high prevalence of other coworkers. This is only modestly supported in the case of coworking men’s job prestige and control over work schedules. Moreover, those coworking women and men in corporations with many coworkers report more negative work-to-family spillover.

The findings, taken together, underscore the interlocking nature of spouses’ work and family career development and strategies, and how they vary by both gender and life stage. Why is coworking status more consequential to childless coworking couples than for those in other life stages? In the context of the strong demands workplaces place on individuals’ time and energy, disengaging from the workplace poses a considerable challenge, particularly for coworking couples without children. On the other hand, when coworking couples have children, family demands limit the degree to which work can be all consuming, and as a consequence, influence the degree to which the perspectives and strategies of dual-earner couples are influenced by coworking.

Policy Implications

This study examined the experiences of opposite sex, coworking couples working for large corporations in upstate New York, comparing them to other dual-earners who are not coworking. Given the characteristics of this sample, care should be taken in generalizing findings to other populations, such as coworking couples employed in the secondary labor market or in small businesses. However, some broad policy implications can be drawn from our analyses.

The reality of the changing workforce requires employers to confront the fact that most of their workers are now part of couples confronting three jobs—two at work and one at home—whether or not spouses are working for the same company. Policies and practices established for coworking couples can serve as benchmarks for work–life initiatives for all workers in a number of ways. First, the fact that the career paths of coworking spouses are so interconnected points to the need for career–life planning programs for workers in a range of circumstances. Married employees seek to make “tied” moves, or else one partner (typically the wife) adjusts her career plans to favor that of her spouse. Policies related to geographical reassignments can no longer ignore the constraints of spouses and children, regardless of whether couples are working for the same company.

Second, both scholars and human resource professionals tend to define career development as an individual process and work–family issues also as an individual

concern of (primarily women) employees with children. Our evidence suggests the value of considering both in tandem. Moreover, career development itself is a function of interlocked paths. As a case in point, childless couples in the early years experience more negative spillover, with both spouses investing heavily in their jobs.

Finally, specific policies need to be developed regarding coworking couples. A number of suggestions are provided by Werbel and Hames (1992), from recruitment to performance appraisal. The bottom line is to consider equity and conflict of interest, as well as the needs of the employing organization and both spouses.

We assumed that the fact that coworking couples have fewer boundaries to be negotiated would mean less of a sense of “divided lives” (especially on the part of women, see Walsh 1995, pp. 24–25). Our analysis reveals that the experience of couples sharing a common work environment is not necessarily a positive one, especially for those without children in the earlier years of career development. As a case in point, a senior research and development engineer in manufacturing who is without kids and whose wife is also an engineer in the same department points out some coordination problems:

The disadvantage is that you don't want to take the same time off because then you knock down a group that is maybe eight people down to six. You just have to be cognizant of how it affects the group.

What this special—and growing—subset of coworking couples underscores is the importance and complexity of interlocking paths for the majority of contemporary workers' career development—whether or not spouses work for the same employer.

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