5-1991

A Multivariate Study of Marital Quality

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A MULTIVARIATE STUDY OF MARITAL QUALITY

by

David W. Bradley

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Family and Human Development

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to Dr. Glen O. Jenson and Dr. Tom R. Lee who have given direction and encouragement. They have shown to me the meaning of support and the value of doing your best. Thanks also to Drs. Brent C. Miller, Jay D. Schvaneveldt, and Donald Sisson, who also gave helpful instruction, and encouragement.

Special thanks to James L. and Barbara Bradley for providing an environment of love and concern. Their example has shown to me what a beautiful lasting marital relationship can be like. Special thanks to Scott, Lesa, Layne, Steven, and Kevin for sacrificing their time and limiting their opportunities so that I might pursue this degree. They have helped me to understand the essence of life and the joy of being young. Special gratitude is expressed to Kim. She has taught me what love is and what is involved in a quality relationship.

David W. Bradley

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ABSTRACT

A Multivariate Study of Marital Quality

by

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Utah State University, 1991

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Marital quality has been defined as the subjective feelings of happiness and satisfaction that a spouse experiences when considering all current aspects of his/her marriage. This study examined five dependent variables regressed on ten independent variables. The sample for this study came from the National Survey of Families and Households. Five hypotheses were found to be supported, with at least three of the five dependent variables showing statistical significance. Age at the time of marriage, education, health and well-being, and couples' satisfaction in the parenting role were positively related to marital quality. The length of the marriage was found to be negatively related.

Five additional hypotheses were found to be supported, with at least one of the dependent variables showing statistical significance. The relationship of the respondent with his or her parents, the relationship with his or her in-laws, and the respondent's feelings of self satisfaction were positively related to marital quality.

Church attendance was positively related to marital quality for the husband but negatively related for the wife. It was also found that cohabitation was negatively related to marital quality.

Five hypotheses were not supported. It was found that men's marital quality was no different than women's and that race was not a factor affecting marital quality. Respondents without children did not report having higher marital quality nor did couples whose weddings were performed in a religious setting have higher marital quality than those performed in a nonreligious setting. Additionally, marital quality of couples of the same religious denomination was no different than couples not sharing the same religious denomination.

The design of this study was directed by the use of symbolic interaction theory. Regression analysis was used to test three models. Overall more than half of the predictors were found to be significant.

(115 pages)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Marital quality has been identified as the most widely researched area in the

family field (Adams, 1988). However, despite the popularity of the topic, there are a

number of conflicting findings in the literature. These conflicts arise due to the

variability in samples, measuring only one spouse within the marriage, single variable

measurement, and a lack of theoretical direction. Due to these conflicting results

marital quality may best be studied using a multivariate approach (Crohan & Veroff,

1989), using a large representative sample, obtaining responses from both spouses,

and using scientific theory. This fosters a more accurate assessment and assists in

identifying the most salient variables affecting the level of quality reported by the

couple.

Problem Statement

Much of the research on marital quality has examined just one or two

independent variables, often leaving out variables that are believed to be significant

contributors to a couple's level of satisfaction. Many studies have failed to use a

sample representative of the population. Some studies have only used responses from

one spouse within the marriage relationship, usually assessing the marriage only from

the wives' viewpoint. A measurement of the discrepancy between the husband's

marriage and the wive's marriage has received little attention in the literature.

Additionally, few empirical studies make use of a theoretical framework.

Purpose of the Study

This study was designed as a multivariate approach, using representative national data, to the study of marital quality. It specifically dealt with a wide range of variables that are believed to be important contributors to marital quality. It examined marital quality as perceived by both spouses. This allowed an analysis of the reported marital quality of both the husband and the wife as well as the creation of a discrepancy measure. This study also used a theoretical framework, which provided direction and support. The purpose of this study was threefold: first, to assess the factors influencing the marital quality of both husbands and wives; second, to measure the factors that influence the difference in the reported marital quality expressed by the husband and wife; and third, to determine if the wife's or husband's responses influenced the marital quality of their spouses.

Theoretical Discussion

The theoretical framework most useful to this study was symbolic interaction. Symbolic interaction deals with the processes that take place both internally and externally for the individual and within his or her relationships (Meltzer, Petras & Reynolds, 1975). It is principally based on three premises. First, human beings are actors acting on things that have meaning to them. Second, the meaning that individuals derive from their environment or relationships is a result of the social interactions that they experience. Third, these meanings are dealt with via an interpretive process generated by the individual (Blumer, 1969).

Theoretical rationale

Symbolic interaction is a valuable perspective from which to study marital quality because the quality of the couple's marriage is interpreted by the individuals within the marriage. This interpretive process may be affected by events and interactions central to the marriage or outside of the marital relationship. The use of symbolic interaction theory finds support in four specific ways: First, symbolic interaction theory relies upon the perceptions and sensory experiences of the individual (Burr, Leigh, Day & Constantine, 1979; Stephen, 1984). Obtaining information via a questionnaire provides access to the respondents' perceptions and to their feelings associated with their relationship. Second, symbolic interaction emphasizes what is meaningful to the individual and allows for change over the life cycle (Rank & LeCroy, 1983), suggesting that the interaction important to the relationship can be measured at any given time. Third, symbolic interaction is particularly useful in the study of intimate relationships as well as relationships with others (Rank & LeCroy, 1983). Hence, this theory assists in identifying factors affecting marital intimacy plus factors outside of the marriage relationship that affect marital intimacy. Fourth, symbolic interaction has consistently served as a major school of thought (Broderick, 1970; Holman & Burr, 1980), particularly as it relates to the marital relationship (Burr et al., 1979; Lewis & Spanier, 1979). Using symbolic interaction theory provides a natural framework for studying the marital relationship because it assists in identifying and defining the critical variables associated with the quality of the marital relationship.

Definitions

Using a multi-variable approach to study marital quality requires one to provide a number of definitions. This process is complicated by the number of existing definitions found in the literature and the number of synonymous terms associated with marital quality. However, for this study the definition given by Burr et al. (1979) seems best to describe what marital quality is. They suggested that marital quality is "the subjective feelings of happiness, satisfaction, and pleasure experienced by a spouse when considering all current aspects of his/her marriage" (p. 67). Burr (1973), following the interaction framework, also noted that marital quality "is viewed as a continuous variable varying in degrees from low to high satisfaction" (p.42).

Since there are many synonymous terms, a researcher interested in the marital quality of couples must also examine studies on marital happiness, adjustment, satisfaction, consensus, success, companionship, and integration (Burr, 1973; Finchman & Bradbury, 1987; Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Spanier, 1979). Confusion with the use of different synonymous terms is compounded when one notes that marital quality is often defined differently between spouses (Bernard, 1972; Hicks & Platt, 1970), is culturally specific (Adams, 1988), and is time specific, being subject to change throughout the life cycle (Benin & Nienstedt, 1985). Marital quality was operationally defined in this study by five variables included in the National Survey of Families and Households: feelings of fairness, relationship disagreement, shared time, sexual relations, and happiness.

These five variables are methodologically explained later in the dissertation. However, a brief definition of each is given here.

Feelings of fairness

The feeling of fairness within a marital relationship applies to many dimensions within the marriage; however, of interest here were four specific categories. They are housing chores, working for pay, spending money, and child care. Fairness in these areas was measured on a continuum and may be defined as the expressed feeling of equity as perceived by the individual within the marriage relationship.

Relationship disagreement

Relationship disagreement was defined as the frequency of disagreement within the marital relationship relative to the following areas: household tasks, spending time together, sex, having a child or an additional child, in-laws, and the children.

Shared time

The amount of time shared by a married couple is a valuable measure of marital quality. This is particularly true within the symbolic interaction framework since it centers on the perceptual and interactive processes between individuals. Shared time in this study was defined as the amount of time spent with each other talking or sharing an activity.

Sexual relations

Sexual relations was defined as the frequency of sexual intercourse. This

variable was reported by both the husband and the wife, which allowed for assessment not only of the agreement between spouses but measurement of whether frequency was affected by other variables within the relationship.

Happiness

Burgess and Cottrell (1936) stated that "happiness is a nebulous and elusive affair, especially when one attempts to define it" (p.741). For this study happiness was simply defined as a self-reported feeling of contentment or satisfaction with one's marital relationship as measured on a continuum from very happy to very unhappy.

In addition to the dependent variables, it is important to understand two of the independent variables found in this study. These two variables, and the other independent variables, are also methodologically defined. However, for clarity here it is necessary to define what is meant by (a) cohabitational history and (b) health and well-being.

Cohabitational history

Cohabitational history is defined as the measure of cohabitational background experienced by the individual prior to the marriage relationship. This included cohabitation with individuals other than the current spouse or with one's own spouse before marriage.

Health and well-being

Health and well-being deals with the global satisfaction that the respondent feels he or she possesses. This assessment is affected by the perception that the

respondent has about his or her health and their subjective feelings relative to their general well-being.

The other independent variables in this study--gender, race, age at marriage, length of marriage, education, kin relationships, children, and religion--will be methodologically defined later.

Research Questions

Several questions relevant to this study on marital quality were investigated: (a) How much does each individual variable affect the level of marital quality when holding all other variables constant? (b) Is there a discrepancy between the husband's and wife's scores? (c) How might one spouse's responses affect the other's marital quality? (d) Does marital quality of men differ from women? (e) Does using a national sample render results different from studies that have used nonrepresentative samples or relatively small sample sizes?

These questions helped to lay the groundwork for this study and provided focus for the presentation of the hypotheses. The answer to these questions and support for each hypothesis provides better understanding of marital quality and the factors that influence it.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marriage is almost always begun with the hope of finding fulfillment and

happiness. Indeed, few marriages if any begin with one or both spouses thinking that

their relationship will evolve into misery and distress. Research (Glick, 1984)

focusing on the marital relationship shows, however, that about one in every two

marriages will end in divorce, often bringing distress and misery to the individuals

within that relationship. Perhaps it is the high divorce rate and the desire to know

why some marriages are successful while others are not that explains the great amount

of research. In fact, Adams (1988) reported that marital adjustment, which has often

been equated with marital quality, has probably been the most popular topic in

marriage and family literature for the past fifty years and that research on marital

quality has significantly contributed to all of family research (Finchman & Bradbury,

1987; Spanier & Lewis, 1980). It must be understood however that all of the

research dealing with the marital relationship does not use the phrase marital quality.

Like the work of Lewis and Spanier (1979), which also used a symbolic

interaction framework, this literature review will investigate research dealing with

marital adjustment, cohesion, happiness, stability, success, and satisfaction. The

reason for using varied research to examine the marital relationship was explained by

Lewis and Spanier (1979) when they stated that concepts "are often used

interchangeably and the choice of terms in a given study is usually related to the

particular scale or index being used" (p. 273). Studies using dependent variables other than those dealing with marital quality are discussed in this review because their findings are supportive of each other. It is also important to mention that studies using single variable analysis may fail to identify significant variables affecting the quality of the marriage, and that a multivariate study on marital quality may help explain what factors significantly contribute to the level expressed by the individuals involved in the relationship. Based on a symbolic interactionist perspective, ten variables are of particular interest. They are, (a) gender, (b) race, (c) age at marriage, (d) length of marriage, (e) education, (f) kin relationships, (g) health and well-being, (h) children, (i) religion and (j) cohabitational history. Each of these antecedents are reviewed individually followed by a review of the dependent variables being used as measurements of marital quality. Marital quality in this multidimensional framework was measured using the following variables: feelings of fairness, relationship disagreement, shared time, sexual relations and happiness. These variables have been used as dependent variables in previous research (Benin & Nienstedt, 1985; Burr, 1973; Finchman & Bradbury, 1987; Glenn & Weaver, 1978; Harper & Elliott, 1988; Keithley, 1987; Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Miller, 1976; Pittman, Price-Bonham & McKenry, 1983; Price, 1989) and provide a strong basis for the study of marital quality.

Antecedents of Marital Quality

Demographic variables

Almost all empirical research examining marital quality calls for information relating to the demographic profile of the individuals being sampled. Included in this

category are the variables of gender, race, age at marriage, length of marriage, and education. These objective variables are easily measured but affect the quality of the marriage relationship differently.

Gender. Research using gender as a variable has found differences in factors affecting husbands' and wives' marital quality levels. For example, Bernard (1972) found in her research that wives tend to make more adjustments in a marriage than men. This idea was not supported by Glenn (1975), although it has received more support than not (Hicks & Platt, 1970; Rhyne, 1981; Schumm, Jurich, Bollman, & Burgaighis, 1985). Rhyne (1981) reported that "women tend to focus more on the companionship aspects of marriage than men" (p.953). Additional research has found that men tend to report higher marital quality levels in their marriages than women and that wives tend to conform more to husband's expectations than husbands do to their wive's (Hicks & Platt, 1970).

Race. A great deal of research has found that non-white marriages tend to be less stable than white marriages (Frisbie, 1986; Hicks & Platt, 1970; Maneker & Rankin, 1987; Renne, 1970; Teachman, Polonko & Scanzoni, 1987; Thornton, 1978; Vera, Berardo & Berardo, 1985). When measuring marital quality, however, it is suggested that race has little if any influence (Price, 1989). The reviewer assessing marital quality must carefully differentiate between the quality of the marriage and its stability. Though, theoretically it may be assumed that less stable marriages would tend to report lower levels of marital quality. Trying to account for confounding variables is methodologically important and may best be accomplished by using a multivariate approach.

Age at marriage. Age at the time of marriage has received significant attention. The research generally reports that early marriage, particularly during the teenage years, is positively related to marital instability (Booth & Edwards, 1985; Booth & White, 1985; Bumpass & Sweet, 1972; Lee, 1977; Moore & Waite, 1981; Teachman, 1983; Teachman et al. 1987; Thornton, 1978). However, some research has found that age at marriage seems not to affect marital quality (Glenn & Weaver, 1978; Price, 1989). This may be due to studies failing to measure troubled marriages (e.g., conflicted or separated) when examining marital quality or other methodological constraints. Yet, a greater amount of research suggests that couples who are married at a young age are more likely to experience a lower level of marital quality.

Length of marriage. Associated with age at marriage is research examining the duration of the marriage as it relates to marital quality. Price (1989) found in his doctoral study that the duration of the marriage had no effect on the satisfaction of the couples that he sampled. This would tend to be the exception however since a greater number of studies have found that the duration of the couple's marriage has profound effects on their marital quality. Benin and Nienstedt (1985) suggested that the marriage cycle generally follows a curvilinear relationship with couples expressing higher levels of happiness during the early and later years of the relationship. Thus, measuring younger marriages, it is expected that the reported quality of the married couple will decrease as the length of the marriage increases. This stated level of happiness may be confounded by other variables affecting the marital life cycle. Examining additional variables that influence the level of satisfaction would provide a more accurate picture of the interaction taking place.

Education. There appears to be a strong relationship between education and marital stability (Maneker & Rankin, 1985; Teachman et al. 1987), however, the relationship between education and marital quality is not as firm. Crohan and Veroff's (1989) findings imply that education is positively related to the quality of the marriage, while Glenn and Weaver's (1978) national study shows that education has little effect on marital quality, a finding that is supported by Price (1989). Yet, whether one is measuring education influencing marital quality, happiness or stability, it has been found that education does have an influence on the marital relationship.

Kin relationships

Parental relationships and in-law relationships affect the husband/wife relationship, particularly if these extended relationships have experienced a high level of conflict. Research dealing with extended relationships suggest that an intergenerational transmission of relationship behaviors exists. In a study conducted by Teachman et al. (1987) it was found that a certain amount of marital instability may be transferred from one generation to the next. Individuals who grow up in a troubled environment report their adult home life in more negative terms than those in non-conflicted environments (Amato, 1988; Birtchnell & Kennard, 1984). This seems to follow the theoretical model reported by Catton (1988) wherein it was suggested that children of divorce are more likely to divorce, feel that their marriage is more likely to be unstable, and are less likely to report high marital quality. The literal interpretation of generational dysfunction must be carefully weighed, however, because of the additional factors affecting the relationship. For example, a couple's

marriage may become troubled because of the social characteristics that they brought to the marriage or because they married early as a result of wanting to leave a troubled home environment. This may lead to early pregnancy, less exposure to positive marital models, lower educational attainment, lower occupational and income status, all creating a marital situation prone to marital distress (Kobrin & Waite, 1984).

It is also interesting to note that differences exist when considering race or gender as they relate to kin relationships (Tienda & Angel, 1982). Lee (1980) reported in his review of literature that kin interaction in minority families is more frequent than in white families. This finding was supported by Rogler and Pocidano's (1989) three-generational study of Puerto Rican families. Lee (1980) also reported that kinship ties tend to follow matrilateral lines rather than patrilateral. In fact, Chadwick, Albrecht and Kunz (1976) report that husbands more than wives expected their spouse to maintain contact with relatives, and that husbands and wives tend to have more contact with their own family of origin than with their in-laws.

Fischer (1983) found that when a couple became parents, the new mother more often sought assistance from her own mother rather than from her mother-in-law. However, the negative influence often associated with the husband's mother-in-law is more assumed than real. The research of Kieren, Henton and Marotz (1975) suggests that the husband's family, not the wives', is more likely to negatively affect the marital relationship. The research on in-law relationships is significant since an inequality of interaction may ultimately affect the marital happiness of the couple. The influence of the extended family upon the quality of the marital relationship needs

additional empirical study before one can truly determine its effect.

Health and well-being

When discussing the influence of individual health and well-being related to marital quality, it is not always easy to differentiate between whether an individual's health is an antecedent or a consequence of the marital quality expressed (Spanier & Lewis, 1980). For example, is there a tendency for an individual to express a higher level of marital quality because they and their spouse are both healthy or are they healthier because they are satisfied with their marriage? Overall, the research suggests that marriage in and of itself is beneficial to the health and well-being of a person (Farrell & Markides, 1985; Glenn, 1975; Glenn & Weaver, 1979; Gove, 1972; Gove, Hughes, & Style, 1983; Gove, Style & Hughes, 1990; Williams, 1988). Indeed, many of these studies have found that divorced, separated, never married or widowed individuals tend to have higher levels of mental illness (Gove, 1972; Renne, 1970), suicide (Gove et al. 1983), lower global happiness (Glenn & Weaver, 1981; Thomas, 1990; Zollar & Williams, 1987), participate in more risky behaviors, and have higher mortality rates (Anson, 1989). Additionally, it has been found that an individual's marital quality and health and well-being are affected by the number and age of their children (Glenn & Weaver, 1979; Renne, 1970 & 1976), gender (Bernard, 1972), and race (Thomas, 1990). It is also interesting to note that married men tend to report higher levels of marital quality and lower levels of illness (Bernard, 1972). As with many of the variables associated with marital quality, the confounding interaction between variables often produces more questions than

answers. An analysis of research dealing with the quality of the relationship as influenced by the health and well-being of the individual may prove to be helpful in identifying which factors generate the greater influence on the quality of the marriage.

Children

Research has shown that children influence marriage in a variety of ways (Teachman et al. 1987). For example, the research examining how marital quality is influenced by children measures the effect of race, the timing of children (whether before or after marriage), the number of children, the age of the children, childlessness versus childbearing, and the things given up in order to have children. The research dealing with children and marital quality is quite comprehensive. A summary of the research relative to the timing of children provides four important findings. First, premarital pregnancies tend to have a negative effect on marital quality (Marini, 1980). Second, post-marital births of premarital conceptions seem to negatively influence marital satisfaction (Teachman, 1983). Third, if children are desired, there appears to be a time when the "detrimental" impact on the relationship is less (Wineburg, 1988). Fourth, couples who choose to be childless seem to have better marital adjustment (Hoffman & Levant, 1985). The timing of children, however, is just part of the overall influence that they may have on marital quality.

The presence of children generally seems to have a negative effect on the marital relationship. Many studies have found a negative correlation between the presence of children and the quality of the marriage (Figley, 1973; Miller, 1976; Rollins & Feldman, 1970). Bernard's (1972) work found that couples expressed a

decrease in marital happiness with the presence of children, however, as the children left the home the marital satisfaction experienced prior to the children being present returned. An interesting study by Renne (1976) found that parents who chose to remain childless also experienced a lull in their relationship, but they tended to be less negative about their marriage than those who had children. These two examples suggest that a curvilinear relationship exists where the couple's level of satisfaction and closeness decreases for a time in the relationship then later increases. This is particularly true when measuring the children's influence on the marital quality of the couple.

It is important to note, however, that the presence of children can also stabilize a marriage and positively influence the level of satisfaction. In fact, Rankin and Maneker (1985) have suggested that older children troubled by their parent's negative relationship may exert additional influence to stabilize the parent's marriage. White, Booth and Edwards (1986) state in their study that the presence of children may serve as an agent in preventing divorce since many couples desire to stay together "for the children." However, the consensus seems to be that couples with children tend to have lower levels of marital quality (Broman, 1988; Glenn & McLanahan, 1982; Glenn & Weaver, 1979; Hoffman & Levant, 1985; Luckey & Bain, 1970; Marini, 1980; Miller, 1975 & 1976; Price, 1989; Rankin & Maneker, 1985; Renne, 1970; Renne, 1976; Spanier & Lewis, 1980; White et al. 1986). The influence of children on the marriage relationship may be negative because of the demands placed on the couple that childless couples do not have to deal with.

Religion

Religion and marital quality have been examined in a variety of ways. Thus, as a delimiting measure, the research noted here focuses on the religiosity of the couple (the level of religious participation engaged in), their religious preference, the performance of their wedding, and whether or not they changed religion as part of their marriage.

Research supports the idea that religiosity positively affects the quality of the marriage (Filsinger & Wilson, 1984; Hatch, James & Schumm, 1986; Heaton & Pratt, 1990; Kunz & Albrecht, 1977; Landis & Landis, 1953; Pittman et al. 1983; Price, 1989; Shehan, Bock & Lee, 1990; Wilson & Filsinger, 1986). However, simply to imply a causal relationship with religious participation and marital quality would be a serious error. Glenn and Weaver (1978) found that a certain level of "social desirability" may influence the religiosity of individuals. This suggests that social approval, rather than the level of religious participation is affecting the quality of the marriage. Additionally, it has been found that religious participation increases the amount of time spent together, which positively influences the development of a stronger marital commitment (Hatch et al. 1986). The study by Maneker and Rankin (1987) of California divorce records found that a low level of religious participation existed when assessing those who were granted divorces. This may substantiate, to a degree, the value of religious practice, since those reporting high levels of marital quality would more likely be religiously involved and less likely to divorce.

When dealing with religion and marital relationships, one needs to determine whether it is religious affiliation that influences marital quality, or participation, or

shared doctrinal orientation and belief. Overall, the research seems to indicate that marriages which are religiously homogamous are more successful than those which are heterogamous (Burchinal & Chancellor, 1963; Chi & Houseknecht, 1985; Glenn, 1982; Heaton & Pratt, 1990; Ortega, Whitt & William, 1988). This is true not only between religious denominations (e.g., Catholics, Protestants and Jews) but within religious affiliations (e.g., Baptist, Episcopalians and Presbyterians), (Thornton, 1978). However, Shehan et al. (1990) report that whether the couple is homogamous or not, the important factor seems to be church attendance. It is the church attendance of individuals that seems to influence the quality of the marriage more than denominational differences.

Associated with the discussion on denominational differences it is important to mention that over the past few decades there seems to have been a change in people's attitudes. Historically people have married within their denomination, as evidenced by older couples having more religiously homogamous marriages than younger couples (Chi & Houseknecht, 1985; Shehan et al. 1990; Thornton, 1978). Marriage within ones religion, however, does not suggest that the couple will experience a high level of marital quality. Rather it might be suggested that the actual practice of the couple's religion is more important to marital quality than is their affiliation (Thornton, 1978). Perhaps that is why the changing of one's religious beliefs to coincide with the beliefs of a spouse has received little attention. Of the articles reviewed, only one article directly addressed the change of religious affiliation within marriage. Babchuk, Crockett and Ballweg (1967) have shown that "change to a common religious affiliation is most frequently toward the affiliation of the spouse

having the greater amount of education" (p. 551). This suggests that the power (perceived or real) held by one spouse over another may affect whether the couple becomes religiously homogamous. Other studies have alluded to spouses' changing religious affiliation upon becoming parents; however, it has not been treated as a variable of interest when looking at marital quality. Since a good deal of the research has centered on the issues of interfaith and intrafaith relationships, there appears to be a gap in the research dealing with the changing of an individual's religious affiliation to match that of their spouse.

In summary, the research dealing with the effect of religion on marital quality suggests that: (a) religiosity positively affects marital quality, (b) denominational differences and doctrinal differences may influence the quality of the marriage, and (c) the influence of changing religions at the time of marriage is in need of further study.

Associated with the couple's religious practice is the question of who performed the wedding and whether or not that influences marital quality. Research dealing with the performance of the marriage has received little attention. This might suggest that the performance of the marriage has little to do with the marital quality reported by the couple. However, a consensus between the couple on the performance of the marriage may have a measured effect on the relationship. Of the literature reviewed, only one study relative to the performance of the marriage can be cited. Landis (1955) suggested that those married in a church or parsonage seemed to have more successful marriages than those who were married elsewhere. Current research dealing with the issue of who performed the marriage as related to marital

quality is lacking. Thus, the findings of this study may increase understanding of how this variable affects the quality of the marital relationship.

Cohabitational history

Cohabitational history focuses on the relationship of the couple prior to the marriage. This includes answering the following two questions: (a) Did they cohabit prior to their marriage? and (b) Did they cohabit with someone else prior to their marriage?

A steady increase in the amount of research dealing with cohabitation has been taking place over the last two decades. This increase is an outgrowth of the rise of cohabitating couples (Stump & Knudsen, 1988; Thornton, 1988). In fact, Watson (1983) reports that over half of the couples entering marriage will have cohabitated before their marriage. The social stigma once associated with premarital living arrangements is less important to today's couples than to their parents (Jackson, 1983). Research indicates that cohabiting couples planning to marry would find that living together prior to marriage seems to have a negative effect on the stability of the relationship and consequently the quality of their marriage (Demaris & Leslie, 1984; Watson, 1983; Yelsma, 1986). For example, Watson and DeMarco (1987) found that non-cohabiters tended to have a longer courtship, faced the newness of living together differently and experienced a honeymoon effect that led them to a more positive evaluation of their marriage when compared to cohabiters. However, other variables may affect the marital quality of couples who have cohabited. For example, Crohan and Veroff's (1989) work found that living together before marriage was negatively

related only for their black sample while their white sample showed no relationship. Bumpass, Martin and Sweet (1989) suggest that individuals who cohabit may have different values and relational styles that later influence marital quality. One might speculate that differences in marital happiness found between cohabiting couples and traditional couples will become less as cohabitation levels increase.

Literature on cohabiting experiences with someone other than the marital partner is very limited, particularly when looking at present levels of marital quality. It might be suggested, however, that gender differences exist since men enter cohabiting relationships for reasons different from women (Jackson, 1983). Previous cohabitating experience with someone other than the person that they marry may have little effect on the quality of a couples' marriage and additional research is needed.

Measurements of Marital Quality

As suggested earlier, a number of variables have been used to measure marital quality. For this study five variables were used. They are, (a) feelings of fairness, (b) relationship disagreement, which examines the frequency of disagreement of critical areas within the marriage, (c) shared time, which deals with the amount of time spent together as a couple, (d) sexual relations, which measures the frequency of intercourse, and (e) marital happiness. These variables have been used as measures of quality in former studies representing the perceptions and feelings associated with the marital relationship (Burr, 1973). Therefore, a brief review of the literature for each of these variables is given.

Feelings of fairness

Bernard's (1972) work examining the difference between "his and her"

marriages suggests that men and women view the participation of various roles

differently, which leads to different interpretations of role performance affecting their

marital quality. Breskin (1986), in her study, found that wives were more affected by

the spouse's role behavior, parenting, and division of labor than were husbands.

These gender differences receive support from other studies (Bahr, Chappell, &

Leigh, 1983; Chadwick et al. 1976; Hicks & Platt, 1970; Kolb & Strauss, 1974; Li &

Caldwell, 1987; Perry-Jenkins & Crouter, 1990; Pittman et al. 1983), and are

apparent when one examines how perceptions affect the couple's feelings of fairness

and ultimately their marital quality. Stuckert (1963) found that an

> . . . accurate perception may detract from marital satisfaction if the two
> marriage partners have widely differing expectations of the roles of husband
> and wife. On the other hand, inaccurate perception may not result in
> dissatisfaction if the person defines his marriage as being typical of marriage
> in general. (p. 418)

Therefore, the perceptions held by the spouse within the marriage relationship

significantly influence their role performance, their feelings of fairness, and the

quality of their marriage (Bowen & Orthner, 1983; Hiller & Phillber, 1986; Yogev &

Brett, 1985).

Relationship disagreement

The stated agreement or disagreement of role performance is an outcome of

the perception held by the individual. However, the frequency of disagreement in

critical areas of the marital relationship directly influences the individual's marital

quality (Birchler & Webb, 1977). Indeed, measures examining the areas of household tasks, money, spending time together, sex, children, and in-laws have found these to be "good" indicators of marital quality (Locke & Wallace, 1959; Spanier, 1976). A high frequency of disagreement in these areas produces increased tension, which negatively affects the satisfaction of the couple.

To summarize, it appears that couples whose role performance is in line with their expectations or perceptions are more likely to be satisfied in their marriage. It is also evident that a high level of disagreement in various areas of the marital relationship will negatively affect the couples' marital quality. The intimate nature of the relationship, however, must also be reviewed.

Research suggests that intimacy can be a social, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, verbal or any number of other interactive processes that build closeness between two individuals. For purposes of this study, two variables associated with intimacy are used as measures of marital quality: (a) shared time and (b) sexual relations.

Shared time

Sharing time together is an important activity that builds relationships and enhances closeness. Studies have found that spending time together aids in cultivating and maintaining relationships (Birchler & Webb, 1977; Keithley, 1987; Rhyne, 1981; Tolstedt & Stokes, 1983). Research dealing with the spending of time together has particularly centered on communication, and it has been found that both the quality and quantity of communication are important to developing high levels of intimacy

(Holman, & Jocquart, 1988; Schumm, Barnes, Bollmen, Jurich, & Burgaighis, 1986).

Bernard (1972) and Rhyne (1981) found gender differences exist relative to intimacy

and the sharing of time together. One would expect, therefore, that when used to

measure marital quality, shared time may best be examined along gender lines.

Sexual relations

The verbal and/or leisure activities shared by a couple have been shown to be

more important to a couple's level of satisfaction than sexual relations (Greenblat,

1983; Hill, 1988; Tolstedt & Stokes, 1983). This does not discount the importance of

sexual gratification as it relates to marital quality for it certainly is a contributing

factor (Broderick, 1988; Greenblat, 1983; Keithley, 1987; Tolstedt & Stokes, 1983).

Marital happiness

The tie between marital happiness and marital quality is such that many studies

have used them interchangeably (White et al. 1986), and it is hard to differentiate

between the two since they both reflect a subjective feeling of contentment. The

literature reveals that marital happiness is affected by gender (males show higher

levels of happiness than females) (Hicks & Platt, 1970), race (Crohan & Veroff,

1989), age at marriage (Lee, 1977), and length of marriage (Benin & Nienstedt,

1985). In addition, marital happiness is affected by education (Glenn & Weaver,

1978), kin relationships (Hicks & Platt, 1970), health and well-being (Thomas, 1990),

children (Price, 1989), religion (Heaton, 1984; Heaton & Pratt, 1990), and

cohabitational experiences (Crohan & Veroff, 1989). Marital happiness as a

measurement of marital quality is empirically and theoretically sound since it fits

within the framework of symbolic interaction (Burr, 1973; Burr et al., 1979; Lewis & Spanier, 1979) and is strongly supported by previous research (Hicks & Platt, 1970; Spanier & Lewis, 1980).

Summary and Hypotheses

Antecedents of marital quality

Previous research has shown that each antecedent listed above is related to marital quality in some manner. A brief summary of each variable may assist in consolidating the findings and explaining how each antecedent contributes to this effect. Each summary statement is followed by a hypothesis as structured within the symbolic interaction framework; some of the hypotheses are directly related to previous studies using symbolic interactionism (Burr, 1973; Lewis & Spanier, 1979).

Gender. Women tend to conform more to their husband's expectations than husbands do to their wive's (Hicks & Platt, 1970). It has also been found that women consistently report lower levels of marital satisfaction then men (Schumm et al. 1985). Therefore,

1. Men report higher marital quality than women.

Race. Research suggests that non-white marriages are at greater risk of dissolution than white marriages (Frisbie, 1986; Hicks & Platt, 1970; Maneker & Rankin, 1987). It is difficult, however, to ferret out the direct impact that race has on marital quality since confounding variables, like age at marriage and education, also influence the couple's marital quality. Holding other variables constant, it is speculated that race influences marital quality. Therefore,

2. Whites report higher marital quality than non-whites.

Age at marriage. It has been found that age at the time of marriage affects the marital quality expressed by a couple. Teachman et al. (1987) have found that marital stability is affected by age at marriage. This seems particularly true with teenage marriages since there generally exists a greater risk of instability. Price (1989) and others suggest that the age at the time of marriage has little if any effect on marital quality, but a greater number of studies found in the literature suggest that there is an effect associated with age at marriage. Indeed couples marrying during their mid twenties generally show higher levels of marital quality than couples marrying earlier or in their thirties (Booth & Edwards, 1985; Moore & Waite, 1981). Thus,

3. Age at marriage is positively related to marital quality.

Length of marriage. Associated with age at marriage is the duration of the marriage. Benin and Nienstedt (1985) suggested that marriages follow a curvilinear pattern where the level of satisfaction tends to decrease for a time then later increases. During the first thirteen years, it is believed that marriages tend to reflect decreasing marital quality. Hence,

4. The length of the marriage is negatively related to marital quality.

Education. A few studies have found that the relationship between education and marital satisfaction may be negligible and of little effect (Price, 1989), but a greater number of studies suggest that a positive relationship exists between these two variables. Thus,

5. The reported level of education is positively related to marital quality.

Kin relationships. The effect of kin relationships on marital quality has received increased attention, but an overall consensus of its influence has not been reached. Research suggests that a certain level of relationship behaviors may be intergenerationally passed on (Teachman et al. 1987) and that conflictual relationships experienced in the family of origin tend to have a negative influence on a person's level of marital satisfaction (Amato, 1988). Thus,

6. The reported relationship between the respondent and his/her parents is positively related to marital quality.

7. The relationship between the respondent and his/her in-laws is positively related to marital quality.

Health and well-being. It is not always easy to differentiate whether a couple's health is an antecedent or a consequence of their marital quality (Spanier & Lewis, 1980). Research has found that a stable and happy marriage is beneficial to the health of the individuals involved since it influences their mental health, their level of social interaction, and their rates of mortality. It is hypothesized that,

8. The reported level of health and well-being of the respondent is positively related to marital quality.

9. The reported feelings of self satisfaction is positively related to marital quality.

Children. The overall influence of children on a couples' marital quality tends to be negative (Miller, 1976; Rollins & Feldman, 1970) meaning that children whether they are born prior to the marriage, early in the marriage or after several years tend to have a negative influence on the marital relationship. The reason for

this negative influence may be attributed to several factors. Children influence, (a) the amount of time that a couple shares together, (b) the amount of resources (economical and emotional) needed, (c) the distribution and expectations associated with the development of new roles, and (d) the amount of family restructuring that needs to take place. Thus,

10. Respondents without children report higher levels of marital quality.

11. For respondents with children, the reported level of satisfaction in the parenting role is positively correlated with marital quality.

Religion. Studies show that religion does affect marital quality, but denominational affiliation is less important than religious participation (Heaton & Pratt, 1990; Price, 1989; Shehan et al. 1990). Further research on the performance of the marriage and its effect on marital quality is needed. Additional research is also needed to assess the effect that changing religion at the time of marriage has on the couples' marital quality. Thus,

12. The reported level of church attendance is positively related to marital quality.

13. Couple's whose weddings were performed in a religious setting have higher levels of marital quality than those performed in a non-religious setting.

14. Couples of the same religious denomination report higher marital quality.

Cohabitational history. Cohabitational history is measured using two questions. First, did the couple cohabit with each other prior to marriage, and second, did they cohabit with someone else prior to their marriage. Research on prior cohabiting experience with someone other than the marital partner has received

little attention. Research on cohabitation, however, continues to receive increasing attention and suggests that couples who cohabit generally experience a negative effect on the stability of their marriage, and lower marital quality. Thus,

15. Couples who have cohabitated before marriage report lower marital quality.

Conclusion. After reviewing the research it is clear that all variables are not equally important; some variables may contribute relatively small amounts to the variance in marital quality. Several studies dealing with similar variables often report conflicting findings. Using a multivariate approach to measure marital quality and testing the above hypotheses via a theoretical framework, may assist in clarifying discrepancies within the literature and identifying which variables have the greatest influence on a couples' marital quality.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Design

Data for this study came from the National Survey of Families and

Households. The NSFH is a cross-sectional survey conducted during 1987 and 1988.

Information from the main sample was collected via a personal interview and

questionnaire with the interviewee being identified as the "primary respondent." The

husband/wife or the cohabitating partner also filled out a questionnaire and was

identified as the "secondary respondent." A third questionnaire was completed by the

"tertiary respondent"--either an adult son or daughter or relative of the householder.

Of interest to this study were data from the primary and secondary respondents. The

survey provides demographic information, information about each spouses' family of

origin, their family of procreation, and their marital relationship.

Sample

The National Survey of Families and Households provides information on

13,017 households. The main sample of this national probability survey consists of

9643 adult respondents. Information for this study used data from couples who met

the inclusion criteria. First, respondents have been married for 13 years or less with

the cutoff date being 1975. This narrowed the sample size from 9643 adults to 1780

adults. The selection of 13 years was made since newly married couples were the subjects of greatest interest to the author. Second, both individuals were in their first marriage which limited the sample size to 1616. This number was then narrowed to 1581 because of errors in response. The overall sample contained 788 husbands and 793 wives. The difference in the number of husband and wife respondents is a result of failure to obtain information from the secondary respondent. Limiting the sample to those in their first marriage controls for factors associated with step family relationships and comparison of present marital quality with previous marriage relationships. It is also important to note that this survey double-sampled five groups: minorities, single-parents, persons with stepchildren, cohabiting persons, and persons recently married, but only two of these double-sampled groups are of particular interest to this study--minorities and persons recently married.

Measurement

Marital quality was assessed using five dependent variables: (a) feelings of fairness, (b) relationship disagreement, (c) shared time, (d) sexual relations, and (e) marital happiness. Information for each variable was obtained from both spouses responding to the written questionnaire either as a primary or secondary respondent. The questions associated with each variable were the same for each spouse with only slight differences on a few of the questions (see Appendix). The number used for each question was the number used on the questionnaire for the secondary respondent.

The dependent variables

Feelings of fairness. To assess the feelings of fairness in the marital

relationship, the following question was used:

> 69 - How do you feel about the fairness in your relationship in each of the
> following areas?
> - Housing chores
> - Working for pay
> - Spending money
> - Child care

This continuous variable asked the respondent to state his or her feelings about the

fairness in the marriage relationship. It used a five-point scale for each of the four

areas and was scored in the following manner: 1 = very unfair to me, 2 = unfair to

me, 3 = fair to both, 4 = unfair to him/her, and 5 = very unfair to him/her. The

structure of the response options made it difficult to obtain an accurate assessment of

fairness since it did not follow a standard Likert-type scale. Additionally, it was

believed that a score of 4 or 5 might suggest that the level of fairness was less than

fair for the spouse but that the respondent might be quite satisfied with the

arrangement, which would fail to provide an accurate assessment of the respondents'

level of fairness. To overcome these structural problems response levels four and

five were dropped from the items. This provided a measure of fairness ranging from

"very unfair to me" to "fair to both" on a three-point Likert-type scale and diminished

the number of responses by approximately 13 percent. If the respondent provided

information for three of the four sub-areas, their mean score was included in the

analysis. The overall feeling of fairness score was created by taking the mean score

of the four items.

Relationship disagreement. The question for this variable was,

72   - The following is a list of subjects on which couples often have
disagreements. How often, if at all, in the last year have you had open
disagreements about each of the following:
- Household tasks
- Money
- Spending time together
- Sex
- Having a(nother) child
- In-laws
- The children

Each area in question 72 was based on a six point Likert-type response scale ranging

from never to almost every day. If the respondent provided information for a

minimum of four sub-items, their overall mean score was included in the analysis.

The overall relationship disagreement score was created by taking the mean of the

seven items.

Shared time. To measure this variable the following question was used:

70   - During the past month, about how often did you and your
husband/wife spend time alone with each other, talking or sharing an
activity?

The level of time in question number 70 was measured using a six-point scale from

never to almost every day.

Sexual relations. The question for this variable was,

71   - About how often did you and your husband/wife have sex during the
past month?

Question 71, deals with the frequency of sexual intercourse. A more useful question

would ask for the couple's level of satisfaction in their sexual relationship, however,

such a question was unavailable in this extant data set.

<u>Happiness</u>. The question used to measure marital happiness was,

67   - Taking things all together, how would you describe your marriage?

Response to this question ranged from very unhappy to very happy on a seven-point

scale.

<u>The independent variables</u>

This study examined ten independent variables. Five of these variables

provided demographic information about the respondent.

<u>Gender</u>. The question used for this variable was,

85   - Are you? (male or female)

<u>Race</u>. The question asked here was,

170   - Which of these groups best describes you?
           - white (not of Hispanic origin)
           - black
           - Mexican American
           - Puerto Rican, etc.

Information from this question was combined into two categories making race a

dummy variable. The two categories were (a) white and (b) non-white.

<u>Age at marriage</u>. Information relative to the respondent's age at marriage

involved subtracting their year of birth from the year of their current marriage. The

two questions used to determine this were,

1   - What is your date of birth?

66   - What was the date of your current marriage?

<u>Length of marriage</u>. Information about the respondents' length of marriage

involved subtracting the year of their current marriage from the year the questionnaire

was administered to the respondent. The two questions used were,

SYR   - Year that the questionnaire was returned.

66   - What was the date of your current marriage?

Education. The respondents' education was obtained with the question,

175   - Circle the highest grade or year of school that you have completed.

Kin relationship. Kin relationship was assessed using four different questions.
They were,

11   - How would you describe your relationship with your mother?

20   - How would you describe your relationship with your father?

39   - How would you describe your relationship with your mother-in-law?

41   - How would you describe your relationship with your father-in-law?

Each question was a continuous variable providing an overall view of the individual's

relationship with his/her parents and in-laws. Responses to these questions ranged

from very poor to excellent along a seven-point scale. Each question was analyzed

separately providing four measures of the respondent's extended family relationships.

Health and well-being. The health and well-being of the respondent was

assessed using four questions:

157   - Next are some questions about how you see yourself and your life.
          First, taking all things together, how would you say things are these
          days?

158   - Compared with other people your age, how would you describe your
          health?

220e   - On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

220m   - I am able to do things as well as other people.

Response to question 157 was measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale from very

unhappy to very happy. Question number 158 was measured using a five-point scale ranging from very poor to excellent. The third and fourth questions for this variable were measured using a five point scale with responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Questions 157, 158, and 220m were used to assess whether the respondent's health and well-being were related to his or her marital quality. Each question had a different response set making it necessary to assess them individually. Question 220e was used to assess whether self satisfaction affects the respondents' marital quality.

Children. The effect of children on marital quality was obtained from the following:

96   - Do you have any children age 18 or younger living here with you?

97   - Do you have any stepchildren age 18 or younger living here with you?

98   - During the past 30 days, how often did you have an especially enjoyable time with any of the children?

99   - During the past 30 days, how often did you argue or fight or have a lot of difficulty dealing with any of the children?

Questions 96 and 97 asked whether the respondent has any children or stepchildren age 18 or younger living with them. It was anticipated that no stepchildren would be listed with this sample, however, bringing children to the relationship was a possibility so that a spouse could indicate having a stepchild, thus it was included in the analysis. The presence of younger children was likely since the sample deals with younger married couples. Responding yes to either of these two questions was viewed as a negative factor influencing marital quality. For couples without children,

it was anticipated that they would report a higher level of marital quality. Questions 98 and 99 deal with the interaction taking place between the respondent and his/her child(ren). The frequency of interaction in these two questions was measured on a five-point scale from never to almost every day. A response of "every day" for question 98 and "never" for question 99 acted as positive measures relative to the parent/child relationship and served as the basis for determining the level of satisfaction of the respondent in the parenting role.

Religion. Assessing the effect religion might have on marital quality was done by using three questions. They were,

68 - Were you married by a priest, judge, etc.

168 - What is your religious preference?

169 - How often do you attend religious services?

Question number 68, dealt with the performance of the wedding ceremony, whether civil or religious. Question 168 simply asked for the respondent to declare his/her religious preference. The data for this question allowed the respondent to declare his/her specific religious affiliation to one of sixty-four categories. This amount of detail lead to problems in assessment. For example, if the main respondent answered "Protestant," he/she was directed to state which denomination they were affiliated with, but the spouse responding to the questionnaire might simply list "Protestant." This canceled each other out as belonging to the same religion. To limit the possibility of measurement error, the range of responses was combined into six categories. The combining of the religious denominations was done following procedures used by Heaton and Pratt (1990) and Roof and McKinney (1987). The

categories were defined as none, Catholic, non-Christian, liberal, moderate, conservative, and other. These six categories were then dummy coded to assess whether or not the couple shared the same religion. Couples having the same religion were coded as 1 and couples not sharing the same religion were coded 0. An analysis of this variable revealed that 60.7% of the respondents shared the same religion and 39.3% did not. Question 169, provided information about the respondents' religious participation. Since the question for the main respondent was structured differently from that given to the respondent of the secondary questionnaire (see Appendix), a recoding of the question provided a consistent measurement ranging from none to more than once a week on a five-point scale.

Cohabitational history. The final independent variable to be discussed is cohabitational history. This measurement was obtained from two categorical questions:

60   - Did you ever live with someone of the opposite sex to whom you were not married?

61   - Did you live with your first husband/wife before you got married?

Question 60 and 61 were answered with a yes/no response. To answer the hypothesis relative to cohabitation and marital quality the two questions were assessed together. However, each question was also examined separately to see if differences in cohabitational experience had distinct effects on marital quality.

Research dealing with each antecedent suggests that a correlation between them and marital quality exists. The questions that comprise each variable provided the best information for measuring this relationship.

<u>Analyses</u>

Kurdek (1990), in his study dealing with relationship quality, suggested that

multivariate studies could use either factor analytic methods of analysis or regression

analysis. However, if one was "interested in fine-grained analysis" it would be best

to "obtain separate assessments of each construct" (p. 99). Therefore, with the alpha

level set at .05, the analysis for this study was conducted using regression analysis

within the framework of three different models. An examination of Figure 1 provides

a visual outline of these different models of analysis.

<u>Model one</u>

Data for this model were obtained using the following procedures: First, each

male respondent was selected. Second, each of the husband's marital quality

variables was regressed against each of his independent variables. Third, the

husband's dependent variables were then regressed on the wives antecedents. A

forced entry regression procedure was used in both steps 2 and 3 to assess what

variables explained the greatest amount of variance. The order of entry of each

variable was unimportant since each question was force entered, allowing the main

effects of the equation to be assessed.

<u>Model two</u>

This model followed the same procedures as model one but using the female

respondents. It involved regressing the dependent variables of the wife against the

wifes' predictors and the husband's predictors. Using gender as the dividing measure

between the two models permitted separate analysis setting up the data for model three.

Model three

With the husband/wife respondents separated, a discrepancy measure between their stated level of marital quality was generated. This discrepancy measure was obtained by putting the husband's response first and then subtracting from it the wives' response. A positive result indicated a "higher" response by the husband; a negative result indicated a "higher" response given by the wife. This direction was determined by using the absolute value of the husband and wife scores. The discrepancy score was then regressed against the independent variables of the husband and the wife.

Using regression analysis allowed each independent variable to be assessed with each dependent variable. It also permitted continuous and categorical variables to be assessed.

Theoretical influence

Using symbolic interaction theory does not limit the analyses of the data nor encourage the use of one statistical technique over another. It does provide direction in other ways and affects the interpretation of the data. The theoretical influence of symbolic interaction encourages one to, (a) obtain discrepancy measures between husband and wife since individual perceptions are particularly important to the couple's level of satisfaction, (b) assess the level of fairness and disagreement relative to role performance, and (c) assess other forms of couple interaction as in the amount
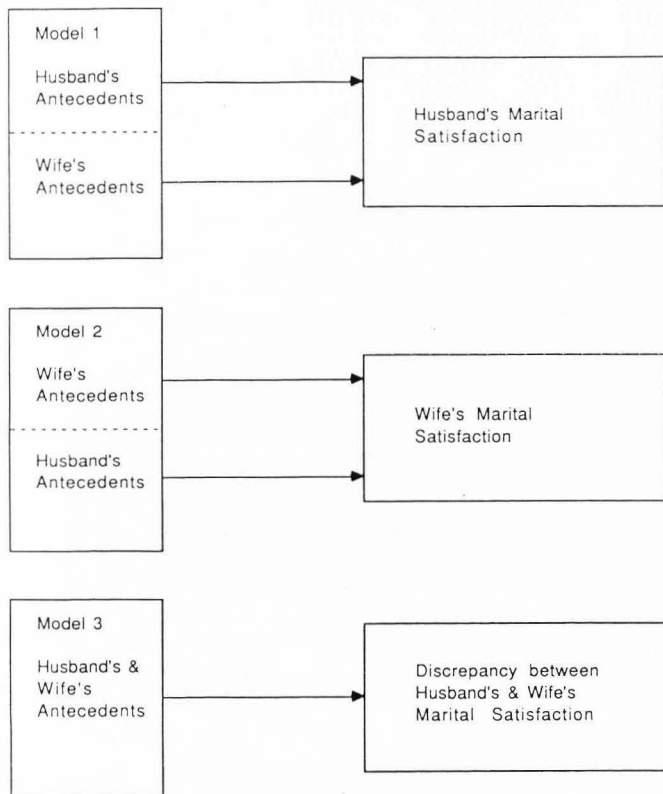
Figure 1. Models of analysis.

of time shared together and the influence of their sexual relations upon their marital

quality.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This multivariate study was designed to identify variables affecting couple's

marital quality. Previous research has revealed that the variables of gender, race,

education, age at marriage, length of marriage, kin relationships, children, religion,

and cohabitational history influence marital quality. These variables also were

included in this study. The measurement of marital quality was accomplished using

five dependent variables. They were shared time, feelings of fairness, relationship

disagreement, sexual relations, and happiness. These dependent variables were

analyzed separately as if they were of equal importance as measures of marital

quality.

Study sample

The data for this study came from the National Survey of Families and

Households. The sample consisted of husbands and wives who were both in their

first marriage, who were presently married, and who were married sometime between

1975 and 1988. Responses from both husbands and wives were obtained. The

sample included 788 husbands representing 49.8% of the sample, and 793 wives

which represented 50.2% of the sample. This gave a total sample size of 1581

respondents. The difference in the number of husband and wife respondents was a

result of incomplete information associated with the secondary respondent.

Descriptive statistics associated with this sample are found in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Table 1 lists the percentages associated with the categorical variables found in this

study. Each variable has been presented separately by gender except for the variable

assessing whether spouses share the same religion or not. For this variable it was

found that 60.7% of the sample shared the same religion while 39.3% had different

religious affiliations. Table 2 lists the sample size (N), the mean of each continuous

independent variables or predictors, the t statistic that tests significant differences

between husbands and wives, and the p statistic or the probability value. Table 3 lists

like statistics for the dependent variables.

The findings for this study are discussed using the three models previously

identified (Figure 1). Each dependent variable is discussed within the framework of

each model followed by a summary statement of how the variables affect marital

quality.

Model one

Shared time. Previous research suggests that marital quality increases as

couples' spend more time together in shared activities (Tolstedt & Stokes, 1983). In

this study using regression analysis, it was found that the longer a couple had been

married the less time they spent in shared activities. It was also found that for the

husband, enjoyment of the children and positive feelings about how things were going

in his life, affected the amount of shared time with his spouse (see Table 4). Each of

the variables listed throughout this study were significant at the must.05 level. Only

the variables found to be statistically significant were listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for the Categorical Variables Used in this Analysis

Variables	% of Husbands	% of Wives
Race		
White	89.1	89.4
Non-white	10.9	10.6
Cohabitation		
Before - yes	20.0	16.7
- no	80.0	83.3
With - yes	29.2	29.0
- no	35.8	35.4
- missing	35.0	35.5
Marriage	83.3	
Religious	16.7	83.8
Civil		16.2
Change Religion at Marriage		
Yes	13.8	13.3
No	86.2	86.7

Note. Cohabitation Before = respondents who cohabitated before meeting their spouse; Cohabitation With = respondents who cohabitated with their spouse prior to marriage.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for the Continuous Independent Variables Used in this Analysis

Variables	$\underline{n}$	Husbands' Means	Wifes' Means	$\underline{t}$	$\underline{p}$
Education	1560	13.43	13.33	1.68	.093
Age at Marr.	1525	24.36	22.56	-21.70	.000
Marr. Length	1551	5.55	5.53	.17	.864
Kin Relations					
Mother	1331	5.94	6.07	-2.85	.004
Father	1049	5.59	5.41	2.73	.006
M-in-law	1191	5.42	5.31	1.92	.055
F-in-law	904	5.42	5.15	3.86	.000
Health & Well-being					
Well	1478	1.84	1.87	-1.15	.249
Self	1379	5.60	5.66	-1.71	.088
Health	1514	4.24	4.21	1.28	.202
Satis.	1485	2.04	2.00	2.14	.033
Children					
Enjoy	949	4.35	4.59	-6.51	.000
Difficult	942	1.95	2.50	-8.33	.000

Note. Well = able to do things as well as other people; Self = how he/she sees himself/herself and life; Health = description of his/her health; Satis. = level of personal satisfaction; Enjoy = enjoyable time with children; Difficulty = difficult time with children.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for the Dependent Variables Used in this Analysis

Variables	$\underline{n}$	Husbands' Means	Wifes' Means	$\underline{t}$	$\underline{p}$
Shared Time	1533	4.71	4.78	-1.72	.085
Fairness	1581	2.76	2.65	3.06	.002
Disagree	1472	2.00	1.94	2.74	.007
Sex Relations	1190	8.94	8.68	1.46	.144
Happiness	1028	6.21	6.23	-0.43	.668

Note. Fairness = feelings of fairness perceived in the relationship; Disagree = level

of disagreement in the relationship; Sex Rel. = frequency of sexual intercourse.

the tables due to the number of variables found not to be significant. A caution be

made, however, relative to the variables that appear. Significance for these variables

may in part be due to the size of the sample, but the findings were consistent with

previous research.

The influence of the wives independent variables on the husband's shared time,

found in Table 5, show that only two variables were significant. It was found that the

number of years married as indicated by the wife, negatively influenced the amount of

shared time. Having good feelings about herself positively influenced the reported

amount of shared time.

Table 4

The Husband's Shared Time Regressed on Husband's Predictors

Variables	Standardized Beta	t	p
Length of Marriage	-.202	-4.04	.000
Enjoy Children	.146	2.97	.003
Feelings of Self	.125	2.31	.022

Note. Enjoy Children = if the father enjoys his children; Feelings of Self = the husband's feelings about himself.

R^2 = .134 with all variables in the equation.

Feelings of fairness. Only one of the husband's predictors significantly relates to the husband's feelings of fairness. It was found that the husband's church attendance was positively related to his feelings of fairness. Statistics associated with this variable show a standardized Beta value of .172, a t value of 3.19, and a p value of .002. The R-square value was .080.

When examining the husband's fairness as influenced by the wife's independent variables, it was found that two variables significantly influence the husband's feelings of fairness. Table 6 lists the Beta, T, P, and R-square values associated with these variables.

Table 5

The Husbands' Shared Time Regressed on the Wife's Predictors

Variables	Standardized Beta	t	p
W Length of Marriage	-.182	-3.43	.001
W Feelings of Self	.142	2.52	.012

Note. W Length of Marriage = the number of years that the wife has been married; W Feelings of Self = how the wife feels about herself.

R^2 = .122 with all variables in the equation.

Relationship disagreement. Birchler and Webb (1977) found that the amount of relationship disagreement influenced the couples' marital quality. For this study it has been found that the husband having a positive feeling about himself and a "good" relationship with his mother-in-law lessened the amount of relationship disagreement. It was also found that the older the husband was at marriage lessened the disagreement in his relationship. Caution must be used when interpreting the mother-in-law variable since part of the dependent variable incorporates an element dealing with in-law relations. However, the correlation coefficient between relationship disagreement and the husband's relationship with his mother-in-law is only -.221. This suggests that the covariational effect the element of mother-in-law relations may have on the dependent variable is not large. The other

Table 6

The Husband's Feelings of Fairness Regressed on the Wife's Predictors

Variables	Standardized Beta	t	p
W Church Attendance	-.209	-3.79	.001
W Cohabitation Before	-.142	-1.99	.048

Note. W Church Attendance = the wife's church attendance; W Cohabitation Before = the wife's cohabitational experience before meeting her husband. R^2 = .091 with all variables in the equation.

two variables found to be significant were the husband's difficulty with the children and his personal feelings of satisfaction (Table 7).

Only one of the wives independent variables was significant as it relates to the husband's relationship disagreement. The t value was -2.55, the p value was .011, and the standardized Beta was -.145, showing that the wives feelings of self negatively influenced the amount of relationship disagreement reported by the husband. The R-square value was .108. This suggests that if the wife has a positive feeling about herself and the events of her life, the husband was likely to report less disagreement in their marriage relationship.

Table 7

The Husband's Relationship Disagreement Regressed on Husband's Predictors

Variables	Standardized Beta	t	p
Age at Marriage	-.100	-2.05	.041
Feelings of Self	-.200	-3.78	.000
Mother-in-law	-.127	-2.25	.025
Feeling Satisfied	.111	2.11	.036
Difficult Children	.178	3.62	.000

Note. Age at Marriage = the age of the husband at the time of marriage; Difficult Children = amount of difficulty with the children; Feelings of Self = the husband's feelings about himself; Feeling Satisfied = feelings of satisfaction with himself; Mother-in-law = feelings toward husband's mother-in-law.

R^2 = .188 with all variables in the equation.

Sexual relations. This dependent variable measured the respondent's frequency of sexual intercourse. Table 8 shows three variables influencing the husband's frequency of sexual relations. They were the length of the marriage, his education level, and his age at marriage. Each variable indicated a negative relationship. This suggests that as the length of the marriage increased, the level of education increased, and the age at marriage increased, sexual relations were less frequent.

Table 8

The Husband's Sexual Relations Regressed on Husband's Predictors

Variables	Standardized Beta	t	p
Age at Marriage	-.135	-2.63	.009
Length of Marriage	-.174	-3.40	.001
Education	-.136	-2.57	.011

Note. Age at Marriage = the husband's age at the time of marriage; Length of Marriage = the number of years married; Education = level of education. R^2 = .094 with all variables in the equation.

An examination of the husband's sexual relations regressed on the wife's independent variables is found in Table 9. The length of the marriage, the level of education, and age at marriage as indicated by the wife negatively affected the husband's sexual relations.

Happiness. Three independent variables were statistically significant as relating to the husband's level of marital happiness. The most significant variable dealt with personal feelings of self. The other variables, listed in Table 10, show that feeling satisfied and the relationship with the husband's mother-in-law also affected the husband's feeling of happiness.

Table 9

The Husband's Sexual Relations Regressed on the Wife's Predictors

Variables	Standardized Beta	t	p
W Education	-.121	-2.19	.029
W Length of Marriage	-.189	-3.52	.000
W Age at Marriage	-.156	-2.84	.005

Note. W Education = level of education obtained by the wife; W Years Married = the wife's number of years married; W Age at Marriage = the wife's age at the time of marriage.

R^2 = .101 with all variables in the equation.

When examining the wife's independent variables it was found that one variable, her feelings of self, positively influenced the husband's level of marital happiness. The standardized Beta value of this variable was .227, with a t value of 4.08, and a p value of .000. The R-square value was .143.

Summary. Table 11 lists the variables found to be significant in model one. It shows that the husband's reported personal feelings of satisfaction had the largest effect on his reported marital quality. This predictor appeared as a significant variable in three of the five dependent measures. Four variables, age at marriage, length of marriage, the husband's relationship with his mother-in-law, and feelings of

self satisfaction, were significant variables in two of the five dependent measures.
Age at the time of marriage and the length of the marriage had a negative effect on
marital quality, while feelings of satisfaction and a good mother-in-law relationship
had a positive effect on the husbands' marital quality. Of the wives' predictors, the
length of marriage and feelings of herself had the greatest influence on the husband's
reported marital quality. Other variables affecting the husband's marital quality
included his relationship with his children, his church attendance, the wives' reported
age at marriage, her education, her feelings of satisfaction, her church attendance,

Table 10

The Husband's Level of Marital Happiness Regressed on Husband's Predictors

Variables	Standardized Beta	$\underline{t}$	$\underline{p}$
Feelings of Self	.400	8.27	.000
Feeling Satisfied	.105	2.16	.032
Mother-in-law	.152	2.90	.004

Note. Feelings of Self = the husband's feelings about himself; Feeling Satisfied =
feelings of satisfaction with himself; Mother-in-law = feelings the husband has
toward his mother-in-law.

$\underline{R}^2$ = .305 with all variables in the equation.

and her cohabitational experience. Only one predictor failed to be significant as it relates to the husband's marital quality and that was the variable of race. The R-square values for the husband's dependent variables ranged from .305 for happiness to .094 for sexual relations. The R-square value was .134 for shared time, .080 for feelings of fairness, and .188 for relationship disagreement. It was anticipated that sexual relations would produce the lowest value since it dealt with a measure of frequency rather than the couple's attitude toward their sexual relationship. However, the overall low values were not anticipated and suggest that some methodological problems may exist. These concerns are addressed in Chapter V.

Model two

Model two describes the relationship between the wive's independent and dependent variables. Additionally this model regressed the wive's dependent variables against the husbands' independent variables. The effect of these predictors on each dependent variable is discussed below.

Shared time. The three variables showing significance relative to shared time were feelings of self, education, and the length of the marriage. Table 12 shows that two of the variables had a positive effect on the wife's amount of shared time, while the number of years married had a negative effect.

The regression of wife's shared time on the husband's predictors showed two variables to be significant: first, the length of marriage variable showed a negative relationship; second, the level of education showed a positive relationship. Table 13 shows the T, P, and Beta values for each of these variables, along with the R-square value.

Feelings of fairness. The wife's feeling of fairness was influenced only by church attendance. This variable showed a positive effect with a standardized Beta value of .176, a t value of 3.05, and a p value of .003. The R-square value was .063.

One independent variable stated by the husband related to the wives' feelings of fairness. The husband's church attendance showed to have a negative effect on the wife's feelings of fairness. This suggests that as the husband's church attendance increases the wives' feelings of fairness in her relationship decreased. Statistics for this variable show a standardized Beta value of -.176, a t value of -3.33, and a p value of .001. The R-square value was .078.

Relationship disagreement. Two variables were negatively related to the amount of disagreement expressed by the wife. Having a positive feeling about herself and having a "good" relationship with her mother-in-law, negatively affected her relationship disagreement. A covariational effect may have influenced the in-law relationship as it related to disagreement since one of the elements of disagreement dealt with in-law relationships. However, the correlation between these two variables was -.221, suggesting that the relationship was small. The same was true for the third significant variable. In the analysis it was found that having difficulty with the children positively influenced the amount of disagreement in the marital relationship. Since disagreement over children was an element associated with this dependent variable one might suspect covariation taking place. However, the correlational value

Table 11

Predictors Found to be Statistically Significant for the Five Dependent Variables as

Tested in Model One

		Dependent Variables			
Predictors	Shared Time	Feelings of Fairness	Relationship Disagreement	Sexual Frequency	Happiness
Age at Marriage					
Husband			-	-	
Wife			-		
Length of Marriage					
Husband	-			-	
Wife	-			-	
Education					
Husband				-	
Wife					
Kin Relationships M-in-law					
Husband			-	-	+
Health, Well being & View of Self					
Husband			-		+
Wife			-		+
Personal Satisfaction					
Husband	+		+		
Wife	+				
Children: Enjoyment					
Husband	+				
Children: Difficulty					
Husband			+		
Religious Attendance					
Husband		+			
Wife		-			
Cohabitational History/Experience Before					
Wife		-			

Note. - = a negative relationship exists; + = a positive relationship exists.

Table 12

The Wife's Shared Time Regressed on Wife's Predictors

Variables	Standardized Beta	t	p
Feelings of Self	.249	4.63	.000
Education	.130	2.50	.005
Length of Marriage	-.144	-2.86	.013

Note. Feelings of Self = the wife's feelings about herself; Education = the wife's level of education; Length of Marriage = the number of years married.
R^2 = .194 with all variables in the equation.

Table 13

The Wife's Shared Time Regressed on the Husband's Predictors

Variables	Standardized Beta	t	p
H Length of Marriage	-.184	-3.62	.000
H Education	.139	2.63	.009

Note. H Length of Marriage = the husband's number of years married; H Education = the husband's level of education.
R^2 = .107 with all variables in the equation.

between these two variables was .217, which suggest a minor relationship (Table 14).

Table 14

The Wife's Relationship Disagreement Regressed on Wife's Predictors

Variables	Standardized Beta	t	p
Feelings of Self	-.213	-4.02	.000
Mother-in-law	-.172	-3.13	.002
Difficult Children	.213	4.40	.000

Note. Feelings of Self = the wife's feelings about herself; Mother-in-law = the feeling that the wife has for her mother-in-law; Difficult Children = the amount of difficulty that the wife experiences with her children.

R^2 = .217 with all variables in the equation.

Five of the husband's independent variables were significantly related to the wife's relationship disagreement. Table 15 shows that the husband's level of education, the age at marriage, and his feelings of self were negatively related and that cohabitation prior to marriage and difficulty with the children were positively related to the amount of relationship disagreement expressed by the wife.

Sexual relations. This dependent variable measured the frequency of sexual

intercourse as stated by the wife. The number of years married and the age at

marriage had a negative effect on sexual frequency. The personal feelings that the

wife had for herself had a positive effect. Table 16 shows the Beta values, t values,

p, values and the R-square value.

Table 15

The Wife's Relationship Disagreement Regressed on Husband's Predictors

Variables	Standardized Beta	t	p
H Age at Marriage	-.101	-1.98	.048
H Education	-.121	-2.29	.023
H Feelings of Self	-.107	-1.96	.050
H Difficult Children	.152	2.97	.003
H Cohabitation With	.140	2.35	.019

Note. H Age at Marriage = the husband's age at the time of marriage; H Education

= husband's level of education; H Feelings of Self = the husband's feelings about

himself; H Difficult Children = the difficulty the husband reported having with the

children; H Cohabitation With = husband's cohabitation with his spouse prior to

marriage.

R^2 = .117 with all variables in the equation.

Three of the husband's independent variables were significant predictors of wife's sexual relations. The R-square value, the Beta values, the t values, and the p values are given in Table 17. The analysis shows that the husbands age at marriage and the length of marriage negatively influences the wives reported sexual frequency and that cohabitational experience prior to meeting his spouse had a positive effect.

Table 16

The Wife's Sexual Relations Regressed on Wife's Predictors

Variables	Standardized Beta	t	p
Feelings of Self	.148	2.61	.010
Length of Marriage	-.183	-3.43	.001
Age Married	-.160	-3.93	.004

Note. Feelings of Self = the wife's feelings about herself; Length of Marriage = number of years married; Age married = the wifes' age at the time of marriage. R^2 = .103 with all variables in the equation.

Happiness. The wife's level of happiness was influenced by only two variables (Table 18). Having positive feelings about herself positively influenced her reported level of happiness, but feeling satisfied with herself was negatively related to her reported level of happiness.

The wife's happiness regressed on the husband's predictors revealed that feeling good about himself was positively related to his wife's level of happiness and that the length of marriage was negatively related. The Beta values, the t values, p values and R-square value for these variables are given in Table 19.

Summary. As seen in Table 20, having a positive feeling about herself was the strongest variable affecting the wife's marital quality. It was found to affect four of the five dependent variables. The husband's length of marriage negatively

Table 17

The Wife's Sexual Relations Regressed on the Husband's Predictors

Variables	Standardized Beta	t	p
H Age at Marriage	-.173	-3.34	.001
H Length of Marriage	-.198	-3.86	.000
H Cohabitation Before	.114	2.00	.046

Note. H Age at Marriage = the husband's age at the time of marriage; H Length of Marriage = the husband's number of years married; H Cohabitation Before = the cohabitational experience of the husband prior to meeting his spouse.

$R^2 = .090$ with all varibles in the equation.

Table 18

The Wife's Level of Happiness Regressed on Wife's Predictors

Variables	Standardized Beta	t	p
Feelings of Self	.460	9.71	.000
Feeling Satisfied	-.155	-3.21	.001

Note. Feelings of Self = the wife's feelings about herself; Feeling Satisfied = the wife's level of personal satisfaction.

R^2 = .376 with all variables in the equation.

Table 19

The Wife's Level of Happiness Regressed on the Husband's Predictors

Variables	Standardized Beta	t	p
H Feelings of Self	.278	5.20	.000
H Length of Marriage	-.198	-3.86	.000

Note. H Feelings of Self = the husband's feelings about himself; H Length of Marriage = the husband's number of years married.

R^2 = .152 with all variables in the equation.

influenced the wife's marital quality, appearing as a significant variable for three of the five dependent variables. Having less influence on the wife's marital quality were the wifes' age at marriage, length of marriage, education, kin relationships, personal satisfaction her relationship with the children, and church attendance. Additionally, the husband's age at the time of marriage, his education, his feelings about himself, his relationship with the children, his church attendance, and his cohabitational history also affected the wives' marital quality. Interestingly, as in model one, race failed to be a significant variable in this model. The low R-square values were similar to those found in model one. The R-square values for each of the dependent variables are listed in descending order, happiness at .376, relationship disagreement at .217, shared time at .194, sexual relations at .103, and feelings of fairness at .063.

Model Three

Model three examined the discrepancy between the husbands' and the wives' marital quality. This was accomplished by subtracting the wife's dependent variable scores from the husband's. Table 19 shows the percentage of couples reporting the same or different scores on the dependent variables. The discrepancy of marital quality reported by the husbands and wives were regressed on their predictors. For two of the five dependent variables, shared time and sexual relations, no significant predictors were noted. An examination of the three dependent variables found to have significant predictors are given.

Table 20

Predictors Found to be Statistically Significant for the Five Dependent Variables as

Tested in Model Two

		Dependent Variables			
Predictors	Shared Time	Feelings of Fairness	Relationship Disagreement	Sexual Frequency	Happiness
Age at Marriage					
Husband			-	-	
Wife				-	
Length of Marriage					
Husband	-			-	-
Wife	-			-	
Education					
Husband	+		-	-	
Wife		+			
Kin Relationships					
M-in-law					
Wife			-	-	
Health, Well-being & View of Self					
Husband			-		+
Wife	+		-	+	+
Personal Satisfaction					
Wife					-
Children: Difficulty					
Husband			+		
Wife			+		
Religious Attendance					
Husband		-			
Wife		+			
Cohabitational History					
Experience Before:					
Husband				+	
Experience With:					
Husband			+		

Note. - = a negative relationship exists; + = a positive relationship exists

Table 21

Percent of Couples Reporting the Same or Different Scores on Each Dependent
Variable

Variables	H > W	W > H	H = W
Shared Time	26.5	30.0	43.5
Feelings of Fairness	42.8	29.5	27.7
Relationship Disagreement	48.2	39.3	12.3
Sexual Relations	36.4	37.9	25.7
Happiness	23.2	26.5	50.4

Couple's relationship disagreement discrepancy. The discrepancy analysis
revealed that only one variable proved to be significant as it relates to relationship
disagreement. The wifes' reported difficulty with the children was found to be
negatively related to the discrepancy score. This suggests that as the wives difficulty
with the children increased, the difference between the husbands and wives
relationships disagreement decreased. This appears to be a spurious finding since one
would assume that an increase in the level of parent/child difficulty would increase
the difference between the husband and wife discrepancy score. On the other hand,
difficulty with the children may cause the couple to see the need to agree more in
order to handle the difficulty, thus creating less difference in the discrepancy score.
It is not surprising however, that the wife's difficulty with the children is significant

since generally the mother, as the primary caretaker in the home, is more likely to indicate having a higher level of difficulty with the children. The statistics for this discrepancy score are as follows: the standardized Beta value was -.123, the t value was -2.05, the p value was .042, and the R-square value was .090.

Couple's feelings of fairness discrepancy. An examination of Table 22 shows that the wife's church attendance is negatively related to the couple's fairness discrepancy score. This suggests that as the wife's attendance at church increased the fairness discrepancy decreased. Associated with this finding, the Table shows the husband's church attendance to be positively related to the discrepancy fairness score. This suggests that as the husband's church attendance increased the feeling of fairness discrepancy increased. The other variable influencing the fairness discrepancy score was the husband's cohabitational experience with someone prior to his relationship with his spouse. This too is a positive relationship, which suggests that if the husband cohabitated with someone other than his spouse the amount of discrepancy in the couple's feelings of fairness increased.

Couple's happiness discrepancy. An examination of Table 23 shows that three significant variables affected the discrepancy between the husband's and the wife's level of happiness. Two of the variables, feelings about herself and feelings toward her father, negatively affected the discrepancy. This suggests that as her feelings about herself increased, the discrepancy in the level of happiness between her and her husband decreased. The same was true for her feelings about her father. If she stated that she had a good relationship with her father, the discrepancy level between

Table 22

The Husband/Wife Discrepancy Measure of Their Feelings of Fairness Regressed on
the Husband/Wife Predictors

Variables	Standardized Beta	t	p
H Church Attendance	.159	2.44	.015
H Cohabitation	.129	2.25	.025
W Church Attendance	-.135	-2.09	.037

Note. H Church Attendance = attendance indicated by the husband; H Cohabitation
Before = the husband's cohabitational experience with someone prior to meeting his
spouse; W Church Attendance = church attendance indicated by the wife.
R^2 = .140 with all variables in the equation.

her and her husband's marital happiness decreased. Additionally, the husband's
feelings about himself were related to the discrepancy measure. A high score relative
to the husband's feeling about himself resulted in an increased discrepancy score
between his level of happiness and his wife's level of happiness. Meaning that as the
husband's feelings about himself increased the difference between their stated level of
happiness increased.

Table 23

The Husband/Wife Discrepancy Measure of Their Level of Happiness Regressed on

the Husband/Wife Predictors

Variables	Standardized Beta	t	p
W Feelings of Self	-.266	-4.37	.000
W Feelings of Father	-.154	-2.33	.021
H Feelings of Self	.147	2.43	.016

Note. W Feelings of Self = the wife's feelings about herself; W Feelings for Father = the wife's feeling for her father; H Feelings of Self = the husband's feelings about himself.

R^2 = .200 with all variables in the equation.

Summary. As can be seen in Table 24, five variables were found to affect the husband and wife discrepancy score. It is interesting to note that no predictors affect the discrepancy values more than once and no variables affect the discrepancy scores dealing with shared time and sexual relations. The discrepancy score for fairness is affected by the husband's church attendance, the wife's church attendance is affected by the husband's cohabitational history. The wife's feelings of self, the husband's feelings of self, and the wife's relationship with her father affect the happiness discrepancy. This is interesting since the highest level of agreement between

husbands and wives was their level of happiness (see Table 21). This was not surprising, however, since the variance in respondent's level of happiness is small. In fact, the mean happiness level for this sample was 6.2 on a seven-point scale. This tends to support Paris and Luckey's (1966) hypothesis that couples are not likely to admit that their marriage is less than happy due to the cultural value placed on having a "happy" marriage.

The discrepancy score for relationship disagreement was effected by only one variable. The wife's relationship with her children, particularly the amount of difficulty that she has with her children, negatively affected the discrepancy score.

It is interesting to note that race, age at marriage, and education failed to be significantly related to the discrepancy score. As expected, the length of marriage was also found not be to significant since it would be the same for both husband and wife.

Table 24

Predictors Found to be Statistically Significant for the Five Dependent Variables as

Tested in Model Three

		Dependent Variables			
Predictors	Shared Time	Feelings of Fairness	Relationship Disagreement	Sexual Frequency	Happiness
Kin Relationships					
With Father					
Wife					-
Health, Well-being &					
View of Self					
Husband					+
Wife					-
Children: Difficulty					
Wife			-		
Religious Attendance					
Husband		+			
Wife		-			
Cohabitational					
History/Experience					
Before					
Husband		+			

Note. - = a negative relationship exists; + = a positive relationship exists.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Five dependent variables of marital quality were regressed on ten independent

variables. The five dependent variables serving as measures of marital quality were

(a) shared time, (b) feelings of fairness, (c) relationship disagreement, (d) sexual

relations, and (e) marital happiness. The independent variables were (a) gender, (b)

race, (c) age at marriage, (d) length of marriage, (e) education, (f) kin relationships,

(g) health and well-being, (h) children, (i) religion, and (j) cohabitational history.

The sample for this study came from the National Survey of Families and Households

(NSFH). This survey was conducted during 1987 and 1988 and represents the non-

institutional population of the United States age 19 and older. The respondents of

interest to this study were individuals married once, presently married, and married

for thirteen years or less. A review of the literature revealed that several variables

dealing with marital quality had been tested. Further explanation of the effect that

these variables have on marital quality prompted the development of fifteen

hypotheses. Of the fifteen hypotheses, five were found to be supported with at least

three of the five dependent variables showing statistical significance. These were the

following:

3. Age at the time of marriage was positively related to marital quality.

4. Length of marriage was negatively related to marital quality.

5. Education was positively related to marital quality.

8. Health and well-being were positively related to marital quality. particularly as they relate to the respondents' personal feelings of self.

11. For couples with children, the reported level of satisfaction in the parenting role was positively related to their marital quality.

Five additional hypotheses were supported with at least one of the dependent variables showing statisitcal significance. These were,

6. The reported relationship between the respondent and his or her parents was positively related to marital quality.

7. The relationship between the respondent and his/her in-laws was positively related to marital quality.

9. The reported feelings of self satisfaction was positively related to marital quality.

12. The reported level of church attendance was related to the couples' marital quality along gender lines with wives showing a negative relationship and husband's a positive relationship.

15. Couples who have cohabitated before marriage reported lower marital quality.

Five of the hypotheses were not supported. These were,

1. Men did not report having higher marital quality than women.

2. White respondents did not report having higher marital quality than non-whites.

10. Respondents without children did not report higher levels of marital quality.

13. Couple's whose weddings were performed in a religious setting did not have higher levels of marital quality than couples whose weddings were performed in a non-religious setting.

14. Couples of the same religious denomination did not report having higher marital quality.

The basis for the hypotheses and the design of this study was directed by the use of symbolic interaction theory. Analysis of the data was assessed within the framework of three models (see Figure 1). Model one regressed the husbands' dependent variables against the husbands' and the wifes' predictors. Model two regressed the wife's dependent variables against the wifes' and the husbands' predictors. Model three regressed the difference between the husband and wife dependent variables against the predictors of both the husband and the wife. Each model revealed different effects on marital quality. A review of each independent variable and its effect on marital quality is given. This is followed by a discussion of the limitations found within this study and suggestions for future research.

Review of the Independent Variables

Studying marital quality from a multivariate approach requires the examination of several variables. For this study ten independent variables were regressed against five dependent variables. A brief review of each independent variable reveals that each variable affected marital quality differently.

Race. Findings from this study indicated that white respondents did not report having higher marital quality than non-white respondents. In the regression analysis, race failed to appear as a significant variable. T test scores also revealed no significance in four of the five dependent variables, as indicated by the wife, and three of the five reported by the husband. For those variables found to be significant, the mean difference was so small as to suggest that marital quality was not influenced by race. Previous studies have found race to be a significant factor influencing marital satisfaction, however, this study failed to show any significance, which may be due to combining the categories into two groups, ignoring the differences that might exist between various races and ethnic backgrounds (Johnson, White, Booth & Edwards, 1986).

Age at marriage. Age at the time of marriage was positively related to marital quality. This suggests that as the age at the time of marriage increased the quality of the marriage increased. This supports the work of Booth and Edwards (1985) and Teachman et al. (1987), whose research showed early age at marriage, particularly during the teenage years was negatively related to marital stability. In this analysis it was found that age at marriage was negatively related to the amount of relationship disagreement. Which means that as the respondent married earlier the amount of disagreement increased. This may in part be explained by the lack of interaction with "good" role models or by terminating what Booth and Edwards (1985) called the "marriage apprenticeship" to early. Age was also found to be negatively related to the frequency of sexual relations.

Length of marriage. The length of marriage had an inverse relationship to marital quality. This supports the work of Benin and Neinstedt (1985), where they found that a curvilinear relationship exists. In this study, dealing with couples in the first thirteen years of marriage, it was found that as the number of years increased, the amount of shared time, the frequency of sexual relations, and the level of happiness, particularly for the wife, decreased. This may be explained by the couples' increased role demands relative to their work, child responsibilities, and community obligations. It was also found, however, that as the number of years married increased, the couples' feelings of fairness increased, which may suggest that even though the role demands increase, their feelings of fairness associated with their roles, is not perceived as having a negative influence on their relationship.

Education. Education was positively related to marital quality. It was found that education positively influenced the amount of shared time that the couple had and negatively influenced their level of disagreement. This suggests that as the respondents' reported education level increased they were more likely to increase the amount of shared time together and decrease their level of disagreement. One would assume sharing time with each other would help decrease disagreements unless the marriage is experiencing difficulty then shared time may be expected to negatively influence disagreements. Education also negatively affected their reported frequency of sexual relations. The work of Crohan and Veroff (1989) seems to support these findings on education. They found that education was positively associated with marital happiness.

Kin relationships. It was found that kin relationships with in-laws and parents affected marital quality differently. For example, results indicated that husbands who felt good about their mothers-in-law expressed more positive levels of happiness. It was also found that a "good" mother-in-law relationship negatively affected the level of disagreement that the husband reported having with his wife. For the wife, a positive feeling toward the mother-in-law also negatively influenced the disagreement that she reported having with her husband. This suggests that how the respondent feels about his or her mother-in-law may effect marital quality. Indeed, it appears that mothers-in-law are more significant to the respondent than the father-in-law since the father-in-law relationships failed to show any significant influence on the couple's marital quality. This supports Lee's (1980) study wherein he found that kinship ties tended to follow matrilateral lines. The quality of the relationship between the respondent and his or her parents revealed that parental influence was evident only as it related to the happiness discrepancy score. For example, it was found that as the wives' had a positive feeling for their father the difference between her and her husband's level of happiness decreased. Interestingly, the relationship with the mother failed to be a significant variable in this analysis. This suggests that parental influence is relatively small as it relates to martial quality. Additional research in this area is needed.

Health and well-being. The health and well-being of the couple was positively related to marital quality. This was particularly true since well-being was defined in terms of feeling "good" about themselves. Indeed, the husbands' and the wives' personal feelings appeared as a significant variable more frequently than any other

variable. The health of the husband and wife, however, did not appear at all as a variable of significance suggesting that separating health from well-being might assist in identifying important differences relative to marital quality. Associated with the health and well-being of the respondent was their feeling of self satisfaction. This study showed that the husband's personal satisfaction seemed to negatively affect his relationship disagreement and positively affect his level of happiness. The wife's feelings of personal satisfaction also positively affected her level of happiness. This suggests that as the husbands' feelings of personal satisfaction increased the amount of relationship disagreement decreased, and as the respondents' feelings of satisfaction increased their levels of happiness increased. This finding seemed to support the work done by Glenn and Weaver (1981) in which they found that poor marriages were often accompanied by personal unhappiness.

Children. The analysis found that parents who had a satisfactory relationship with their children tended to have higher marital quality. This was an important finding since few studies address the satisfaction or dissatisfaction that parents have in the parenting role as a factor influencing marital quality. Many studies have found a negative correlation between the presence of children and the quality of the marriage (Figley, 1973; Miller, 1976; Rollins & Feldman, 1970). However, when the respondent was satisfied in the parenting role the negative influence of children upon marital quality seems to be nullified. In addition to the variable dealing with children it was found that childless respondents failed to report having higher levels of marital quality than those who did have children. Within the analysis, childlessness failed to appear as a variable of significance. T test scores supported the regression analysis

since none of the dependent variables for the husband were significantly affected by the absence of children and only two of the five dependent variables for the wife were found to be significant. The mean differences however, were so small as to render the significance of these variables less important.

Religion. Overall, religion was found to be significantly related to marital quality. When the individual questions associated with religion were assessed separately, however, it was found that only the question dealing with church attendance was significant. It is interesting to note that it was only significant as it related to feelings of fairness. It should also be noted that a distinct difference between its effect on the husband and wife existed. For example, church attendance had a positive influence on feelings of fairness when it was regressed on the husbands' or wives' predictors. However, when feelings of fairness was regressed on the spouses' predictors it had a negative influence. This suggests that either the disparity between the church attendance of the husband and wife was affecting their marital quality or that the perception that they had of their church attendance affected the marital quality. Perhaps additional research would be helpful in assessing the effect church attendance may have on marital quality.

This study also found that couples whose weddings were performed in a religious setting did not have higher marital quality than those whose weddings were performed in a non-religious setting. This is contrary to Landis' (1955) work, yet additional research relative to this variable is limited, and this finding may serve to aid future researchers interested in how this variable may affect the quality of the marriage relationship.

Couples of the same religious denomination did not report having higher marital quality. The use of regression analysis failed to show this variable to be significant relative to the marital quality of husbands and wives. T test scores show that some significant difference existed between couples being religiously homogamous and those who were heterogamous. As found in other t test analyses, the mean differences were relatively small suggesting that religious denominational differences were relatively unimportant in affecting the marital quality of the respondents. This seems contrary to previous studies (Heaton & Pratt, 1990; Ortega et al. 1988), and may be explained due to recategorizing the religious variables into religious denominations rather than measuring direct religious affiliation.

Cohabitational history. An examination of the respondent's cohabitational history showed that couples who cohabited prior to marriage had lower levels of marital quality than couples who had not. When the cohabitation questions were separated, an interesting finding was revealed. If the husband cohabitated with someone else prior to meeting his wife it positively related to the wife's reported relationship disagreement, negatively affecting her marital quality. Yet, if the husband cohabited with his wife prior to marriage it was found to have a positive effect on her reported frequency of sexual relations.

When the wife cohabitated with someone prior to meeting her spouse it had a negative effect on the husbands' feelings of fairness. This suggests that cohabitation with someone other than the spouse may negatively influence a couples' marital quality. When individuals cohabitate with their spouse it may have little or no influence on their marital quality. It is also interesting to note that cohabitation may

have a different meaning for husbands and wives. This finding might support the work of Jackson (1983), who also found that male/female differences exist relative to cohabitation.

Gender. In addition to the independent variables above, it was found that men did not report having higher marital quality than women. An examination of Table 21 shows that the percentage value of the husbands' and wives' marital quality was not radically different from each other. Additionally, t tests comparing husbands and wives also found that of the five dependent variables only feelings of fairness proved to be significant. The mean value for husbands at 2.76, and the mean for the wives at 2.65, however, shows that little difference exists. This suggests that the overall marital quality is not higher for men than women.

Discrepancy measure

Developing a discrepancy measure between the husbands and wives' marital quality was of interest since it was believed that differences might influence the stability as well as the overall quality of the marriage. The analysis showed that three of the five dependent variables had predictors found to be significant. These were feelings of fairness, relationship disagreement, and happiness. The dependent variables of shared time and sexual relations failed to show any predictors as being significant. Table 22 shows the wife's church attendance was negatively related to the couples' fairness discrepancy. This suggests that as the wife's church attendance decreased the difference between her and her husbands feelings of fairness increased. The opposite was found for the husband, wherein his church attendance positively

related to the couple's fairness discrepancy. This is an interesting finding in need of further study. One would assume that the difference in church attendance between spouses would not be particularly great, yet the analysis suggests that the difference significantly affects their discrepancy score for fairness. Additionally, it was found that the husband's cohabitational experience also positively influenced the couple's fairness discrepancy score. This suggests that if the husband indicated cohabitational experience with his wife the discrepancy score for the couple's fairness increased. An indication by the wife of previous cohabitational experience with her husband, interestingly failed to effect the discrepancy score.

The discrepancy between the husband's and wife's relationship disagreement shows that only one predictor was found to be significant. The analysis revealed that the wife's difficulty with her children was negatively related to the couple's relationship disagreement discrepancy. This suggests that as the wives' difficulty with their children increases, the difference in the couple's relationship disagreement decreases. This appears to be a spurious finding since one would think that if the mother/child relationship is becoming increasingly difficult, that this would lead to an increase in the couples' discrepancy score. However, since the relationship disagreement does not increase this may imply a certain level of comfort in the parental roles defined by the couple.

As seen in Table 23, the wives' feelings of self and the relationship with her father were negatively related to the couple's happiness discrepancy. This means that if the wife felt good about herself and had a "good" relationship with her father the happiness discrepancy score decreased. This suggests that a mutual level of happiness

between husband and wife exists. It was also found that the husband's feelings of self score was positively related to the couples discrepancy. This suggests that as the husband's feelings about himself increased, the happiness discrepancy score also increased. This is contrary to the wives' feelings of self and appears to be a spurious finding.

Future studies interested in measuring the discrepancy between husbands and wives may find separating the husband/wife predictors to be of value. Also it may be found that some exploratory analysis designed to identify the variables of greatest significance may be helpful. The discrepancy could then be regressed on these selected variables to ascertain whether they are significant in relationship to the couple's marital quality.

Husband/wife differences

Measuring the difference between husbands and wives was designed to assess the marital quality level of both spouses since it was found in the research that differences exist (Bernard, 1972; Hicks & Platt, 1970). Findings from this study showed that kin relationships, particularly relationships with the wife's father and mother-in-law, affected her level of marital quality. The husband's kin relationship only appeared to be affected by his feeling for his mother-in-law. Noticeably absent was the lack of significance relative to the respondents' fathers-in-law and their own mothers on their marital quality. Another example of gender differences dealt with the couples' cohabitational history. Only the variable showing the wife cohabitating with someone other than her husband prior to marriage was found to be significant.

However, the husband's cohabitation with someone other than his spouse as well as with his spouse influenced the wife's marital quality. For example, it was found that the husband's cohabitational experience with someone other than his spouse positively influenced the wifes' relationship disagreement. It was also found that cohabitation with his eventual spouse positively influenced her reported sexual frequency. This suggests that cohabitation may have a different meaning for wives than it does for the husbands, which corresponds with previous research (Jackson, 1983). In his study on living together Jackson (1983) found that men tended to cohabit more often for the sexual relationship where women participated more for companionship, viewing the relationship as a step toward marriage. It also supports the work of Bumpass et al. (1989) by implying that the values associated with cohabitation may be different from those who do not cohabitate, ultimately influencing marital quality. Further research on the relationship styles and values of cohabitating couples is needed.

Finally, differences between husband and wife exist relative to the child(ren) in the home. In this study two questions relative to children were asked. The first one ascertained the degree of difficulty that the parent experienced with the child(ren) and the second question asked about the level of enjoyment that the parent had with the children. Responses from the wife indicated that difficulty with the children affected her marital quality, particularly as it related to the amount of relationship disagreement. For the husband, the level of enjoyment with the children affected his feelings of fairness and the amount of shared time that he reported having with his wife.

Theoretical influence

The use of symbolic interactionism encouraged the analysis of the individual's subjective feelings and perceptions. Particularly as it related to the amount of consensus or agreement within the couple and the perceived presence or absence of role agreement. The discrepancy between husband and wife served to assess the couples consensus relative to marital quality. The feelings of fairness variable and the relationship disagreement variable served as measures of role agreement. Also important within symbolic interactionism is the measure of intimacy within the relationship, which was assessed in this study using the dependent variables of shared time and sexual relations. Additionally, symbolic interactionism in this study gave direction by (a) relying on the perceptions and sensory experiences of the individual, (b) allowing for change over the life cycle and (c) encouraging the measurement of not only intimate relationships but relationships with others.

Limitations

In the analysis for this study it became apparent that certain methodological problems may exist. Below the following limitations are noted.

The first limitation deals with the size of the sample. Nye (1988) suggested that having a large sample size tends to affect the significance of certain variables and may "produce relatively meaningless information" (p. 314); therefore, one should use caution when interpreting information that has been obtained from research using large samples. With a sample size of 1581 respondents, some of the variables found to be statistically significant may not be theoretically significant.

The second limitation concerns the low R-square values. Most of the R-square values range between .03 and .19. The highest value in this analysis was .38. These low R-square values suggest that little linear association exists between the variables (Kleinbaum, Kupper, & Muller, 1988).

The third limitation deals with the type of questions asked in the survey. Questions directly asking about marital quality were not available or asked in such a way as to maximize the goal of this study. For example, in studying marital quality it was believed that a measure dealing with physical intimacy was important. The amount of satisfaction that the couple had with their sexual relationship, however, was not asked in the data collection. This made it necessary to measure intimacy using sexual frequency, which failed to serve as a completely accurate measure of the couples' marital quality.

Recommendations

The desire to find what enhances the marital quality of couples will continue well into the future. Research studies measuring marital quality must use caution in the development of their design and their form of analysis. The design of this study has shown that combining categories hinders the effect that certain variables may have on the respondents' marital quality. For example combining the categories of race did not allow for differences that might be found within individual racial groups.

Future studies might be benefitted by strictly limiting the use of secondary data to questions providing the "best fit." This would aid in identifying the variables most significant to marital quality and assist in lessening measurement errors. Measuring

marital quality with more than one dependent variable is also important. This becomes evident when one assesses the conventionality frequently associated with marital happiness. Limiting the accurate assessment to one variable may be detrimental in accurately identifying the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Future marital quality research would be enhanced by measuring the effect father-in-law relations and parental relations may have on a couple's marital relationship. This study revealed that little relationship exists between kin relations and marital quality.

Research interested in the health and well-being of married couples would be well served by separating these two categories. As used in this study it was found that the respondent's health had little to do with their marital quality, yet logically one might assume otherwise.

Finally, future studies on marital quality would be improved by using longitudinal, rather than cross-sectional methods. Since marriage is an active process with changing roles and changing structural patterns a longitudinal study could account for these changes with greater accuracy than a cross-sectional study.

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APPENDIX

Appendix
Questions used from the National Survey of Families and Households

Below is a listing of each variable and the questions associated with it as found in the National Survey of Families and Households. The questions used in this study come from three sources: 1) the main interview, 2) the questionnaire given to the primary respondent and 3) the questionnaire given to the secondary respondent. The questions listed are essentially the same for each source with just a few differences. Questions that are different are marked with an asterisk (*) and the difference explained.

Gender

- Are you? (male or female)

Race

- Which of these groups best describe you? (race)

Age at marriage

- What is your date of birth?

- What was the date of your current marriage?

To obtain the necessary information for this variable the first question was subtracted from the second giving the age that the respondent was at the time of marriage.

Length of Marriage

- Year that the questionnaire was returned

- What was the date of your current marriage?

To obtain the necessary information for this variable the second question was subtracted from the first giving the length of the marriage.

Education

- Circle the highest grade or year of school that you have completed.

Kin relationships

- How would you describe your relationship with your mother?

- How would you describe your relationship with your father?

- How would you describe your relationship with your mother-in-law?

- How would you describe your relationship with your father-in-law?

Health and well-being

- Next are some questions about how you see yourself and your life. First, taking all things together, how would you say things are these days?

- Compared with other people your age, how would you describe your health?

- On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

- I am able to do things as well as other people.

Children

- Do you have any children age 18 or younger living here with you? *

- Do you have any step-children age 18 or younger living here with you? *

- During the past 30 days, how often did you have an especially enjoyable time with any of the children?

- During the past 30 days, how often did you argue or fight or have a lot of difficulty dealing with any of the children?

* These questions are only asked of the secondary respondent. Corresponding questions were not asked of the primary respondent.

Religion

- Were you married by a: priest, judge, etc.

- What is your religious preference?

- How often do you attend religious services? *

* The measurement of this question for the secondary respondent is different from the

one given to the primary respondent. However, it involves simply changing the number of times per/year into categories so that the measurement is the same.

Cohabitational history

- Did you ever live with someone of the opposite sex to whom you were not married?

- Did you live with your first husband/wife before you got married?

Feelings of fairness

- How do you feel about the fairness in your relationship in each of the following areas?
    - Housing chores
    - Working for pay
    - Spending money
    - Child care

Relationship disagreement

- The following is a list of subjects on which couples often have disagreements. How often, if at all, in the last year have you had open disagreements about each of the following:
    - Household tasks
    - Money
    - Spending time together
    - Sex
    - Having a(nother) child
    - In-laws
    - The children

Shared time

- During the past month, about how often did you and your husband/wife spend time alone with each other, talking or sharing an activity?

Sexual relations

- About how often did you and your husband/wife have sex during the past month?

Happiness

- Taking things all together, how would you describe your marriage?

VITA

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Professional Presentations:

"Antecedents and Consequences of Family Size," at the Utah Council on Family Relations annual meeting, May 12, 1989 in Salt Lake City, Utah.

"A Multivariate Analysis of Marital Satisfaction," at the Utah Council on Family Relations annual meeting, March 1, 1991 in Logan, Utah.

Publications:

"Becoming a Two-paycheck Family" Salt Lake Tribune, March 26, 1989.

"Suggestions for Successful Marriage" Salt Lake Tribune, April 9, 1989.

"Resiliency can be key to Strong Families" Salt Lake Tribune, August 6, 1989.

"How Utah Stacks Up" The Utah Farmer Stockman, April 1990.

Service and Civic Involvement:

Rendered public service as a Marriage and Family Professional for KALL radio in Salt Lake City, Utah March 1989. The topic of discussion centered around "Women in the Work Force."

Served as a tour director for Heritage Tours between 1984-1988. This involved taking graduating High School students on tour of Church and U.S. History sites.

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