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MATE SELECTION IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICA:  
AN EXCHANGE THEORY PERSPECTIVE

by

Margaret H. Young

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of  
MASTER OF SCIENCE  
in  
Family and Human Development

Approved:

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

Logan, Utah

1989

DEDICATION

To

My Children,

Mike, Tammy, Craig, Debby, and Brett

who grew up and became independent  
while their mom went to school.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the spring of 1986, coming back to school to finish a bachelors degree presented an almost insurmountable challenge. Acquiring a masters degree seemed so remote as to be almost impossible. To have reached this point is nothing short of miraculous. I could say that completing the program was exceptionally hard work--and it was. I could also say that completing the program was extremely time consuming--it was that also. However, what I really wish to say is--it has been fun! Having been out of the academic arena for so many years, I had forgotten the excitement of learning.

I am deeply grateful for the support and encouragement extended by faculty members within the Department of Family and Human Development and to those associated with it. To be able to study under such qualified instructors is an opportunity few enjoy. I also wish to express appreciation to Dean Bonita Wyse for the personal interest she extends to me and to the other students in the department. In addition to the faculty and staff of Utah State University, I am indebted to the professors of the participating universities for their help and to their students who were willing to take part in the project.

I would like to offer special thanks to those working in the Family Life computer lab: Maria Norton, Tricia Dyk, Terri Peterson, and Bryan Edwards. Statistics are

certainly not my forte', as they soon found out. Their patience and expertise were most appreciated.

While studying mate selection from a theoretical and statistical standpoint was informative, I found that the most interesting aspect of my thesis project was the opportunity to view the many facets of the mate selection process. Notwithstanding all of the work involved to carry out the project, it was a fascinating study.

The completion of this thesis is due in large part to the support and guidance of my committee members. To Dr. Shelley Lindauer, for your help and encouragement in addition to your preciseness and attention to detail, many thanks. To Dr. Jane McCullough, for your professional insight and thoughtful suggestions, I appreciated your support. I expected committee meetings to be rather tense and critical. I was pleasantly surprised at the friendly exchange of ideas. Many thanks to both of you.

Without the assistance and support of my major professor, completing the masters program would have been difficult indeed. Webster defines "mentor" as: 1. A wise advisor; 2. A counselor or guide; 3. A teacher, tutor, or coach; 4. Friend. To Dr. Jay Schvaneveldt, mentor and friend, my deepest thanks and appreciation for your patience and expertise in guiding me through the program. Your help, encouragement, and extensive knowledge of mate selection and family studies have been invaluable. Working

with you has been such a pleasure.

Finally, thanks to my children who managed to put up with me as I attempted to further my education. While parents of schoolmates were trying to understand their children's addictions to drugs, my children were trying to understand their mother's addiction to learning. Thanks, kids.

Margaret H. Young

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## ABSTRACT

Mate Selection in Contemporary America:  
An Exchange Theory Perspective

by

Margaret H. Young

Utah State University, 1989

Major Professor: Jay D. Schvaneveldt, Ph.D.  
Department: Family and Human Development

The use of exchange theory as it applies to human relations has escalated dramatically in the past 20 years. The present study applies exchange theory as the basis of mate selection in contemporary society. Whereas an actual barter system was used in the past and families played a major role in choosing prospective mates, participants in the mate selection process are now virtually on their own and must rely upon their own bargaining skills to present their assets on the marriage market. A number of characteristics are thought to enhance or detract from a person's "worth" on the marriage market. Over 900 college students from nine universities across the United States were surveyed in order to ascertain what they considered valuable in a potential mate, and important variables in the mate selection process were determined. Comparisons were made among gender, race, marital status, family size

and configuration, socioeconomic status, religious orientation, and geographical region of the United States. The results indicate that important differences exist among the various groups concerning what characteristics enhance or detract from an individual's worth on the marriage market in contemporary America. Finally, it was determined that marital worth of individuals can theoretically be measured.

(131 pages)

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Exchange Theory and Mate Selection

Theories of social exchange are based upon the economic model of exchange and imply that rewards and costs, although perhaps not monetary, are exchanged during interpersonal interaction (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1974; Thibaut & Kelley, 1969). Dyadic interactions during the mate selection process fit well within the social exchange framework, in that individuals possess certain assets that cause members of the opposite sex to attend and notice them (Berscheid & Graziano, 1979; Nye, 1978; 1979). An initial assessment of the benefits and possible costs of the relationship is undertaken, and the decision is made to initiate an interaction. If the "rewards" outweigh the "expenses" for both participants, the relationship may develop to a stage wherein the couple is willing to invest more in order to maintain the association. The possibility then exists for the relationship to progress into courtship and ultimately to marriage (Blau, 1964).

#### Statement of the Problem

Mate selection has been of interest to humans from antiquity to the present. Anciently, mates were chosen by the family, and this practice prevails in some cultures today. However, as societies have become less agrarian and

have moved towards industrialization, mate selection has become that of free choice. Given the option of free choice in selecting a mate, researchers are interested in those particular qualities that will serve to attract a potential partner in contemporary societies. Social scientists have studied mate selection in humans over a long period of time, yet surprisingly little coherent knowledge has resulted regarding the actual process of selecting a particular person to marry. This may be due in part to the fact that as researchers have developed theories about mate selection, actual access to information of what really occurs during the process has been neglected (Huston, Surra, Fitzgerald, & Cate, 1981).

As societal values and attitudes have changed over time, contemporary perspectives are essential in evaluating what issues are currently salient in the mate selection process. In addition to identifying individual characteristics, knowledge of those circumstances or events in the family and society that influence the selection process will be valuable to those people who are seeking companions as well as to scientists and researchers in the field of family studies.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study are: (1) to attempt to identify those qualities and characteristics contributing

to or detracting from an individual's worth on the marriage market, (2) to determine to an extent the impact that gender, family background, social status, and cultural setting have on the mate selection process; and (3) to evaluate the extent to which attitudes and personal behavior influence mate selection.

A brief overview of mate selection is presented first. Then a select group of theories addressing the mate selection process, focusing particularly on the exchange theory perspective, is provided. A substantive summary of the mate selection process within the exchange theory framework is then presented. Topics addressed are initial encounters, attractiveness, and homogeneity. Sexual attitudes and behaviors, marital status, and gender differences are then considered. Finally, worth on the marriage market is presented.

## CHAPTER II

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

## Mate Selection: An Overview

In 1976, K. T. Erickson wrote:

No act in life seems more private, more intimate, than the decision by two people to get married, particularly in this age when we celebrate the distance we have come since the times of arranged marriages. It is true, of course, that people "select" their mates now, whatever that may mean. But there are other ways to arrange marriages than becoming a formal party to the contract; spoken and unspoken encouragements that pass among families and friends beforehand, as well as a million other hints and suggestions that become a part of the marriage scene afterward. (pp. 218)

Halliday (1983) defined mate selection or "mate choice" as any behavior or pattern of behaviors by individuals that enhances their likelihood of being selected by a member of the opposite sex. Historically, mate selection has varied between eras as well as between different societies (Adams, 1979). As society moved from an agrarian orientation towards modernization and an urbanized life style, mate selection changed from that "arranged" by the family to autonomous free choice by individuals (Lee, 1979; Lee & Stone, 1980). More recent trends towards higher education, geographical mobility, and postponement of marriage have had a profound effect on the mate selection process. Families now have less influence, and individuals must rely more upon their own resources and



bargaining skills to acquire a suitable partner (Eckland, 1968). Furthermore, in societies encouraging free choice of mates, romantic love and attraction are considered to be the primary prerequisites for choosing a companion, although there are those who consider the instrumental advantages of the potential partner to be the most important factors (Adams, 1979; Lee & Stone, 1980; Rosenblatt & Cozby, 1972).

An open marriage market accessible to all people for mate selection would be ideal but is unrealistic (Klimek, 1979). While Farber (1964) suggests the availability of all members of one sex to all members of the opposite sex for mating, mate selection cannot be considered completely autonomous and to involve free choice. Given the ratio of men to women and the opportunity or lack of opportunity to be mobile at will, mate selection cannot be completely random (Spuhler, 1972).

Potential mates fall into two categories: those who are available and those who are desirable. These two categories define the pool of eligibles for a given individual (Davis-Brown, Salamon, & Surra, 1987). Family and social constraints further specify who is acceptable and act to limit complete freedom of choice in the mate selection process (Adams, 1979; Eckland, 1968; Jedlicka, 1984; Klimek, 1979; Lee, 1979; Rosenblatt & Cozby, 1972; Vera, Berardo, & Berardo, 1985). Such constraints include

but are not limited to:

1. The pool of eligibles available to an individual from which to select a partner is circumscribed by propinquity. It may be noted that people are not dispersed through space randomly; where people live and work and play determines to a significant degree with whom they will meet and associate. Proximity in time and place is a necessary given. The couple must be in the same place at the same time in order to be attracted to one another.
2. Socioeconomic status (SES) affects mobility and opportunity. Parental place of residence and SES also define those people available for selection.
3. Parents exert a subtle influence throughout the childhood of the individual. The young person's choice to incorporate parental values, or perhaps to reject them completely, unconsciously affects decisions regarding mate selection.
4. Age constraints act to prohibit some couples from marrying. Women marrying older men are not as likely to be ostracized to the degree that men marrying much older women are. If the older man is wealthy, the younger woman may even be envied. However, marrying a much younger (robbing the cradle) or a much older (father or mother complex) person may be cause for social misgivings.

5. Ethnic, religious, educational, and cultural background serve to limit socialization and serious pairing. Those from the same social categories tend to cluster together, further circumscribing the pool of eligibles.
6. The favorable reactions of significant others as well as society in general promote the likelihood of the relationship flourishing.
7. Life cycle issues may impinge upon the mate selection process. For example, advancing age or specific life circumstances may lead a person to feel that a particular relationship is the final opportunity to marry. He or she may decide that a proposal may be the last chance to marry and will then forego opportunities to meet others.

In addition to the above constraints, Jedlicka (1980) lists other barriers interfering with one's ability to find a mate. Perhaps the most significant hinderance in finding a suitable companion is the disparity in comparative numbers of men to women. Women's tendency to marry older men, in addition to their longevity compared to males, is at least partially responsible for the unbalanced ratio of men and women. Finally, although 90% of the population desires to marry, some are simply not chosen as partners (Bell, 1981; Murstein, 1972).

Although patterns of mate selection are not yet clearly understood, they are thought to include elements of biological, social, cultural and demographic elements (Spuhler, 1972). These elements may be considered from a theoretical standpoint.

### Theories of Mate Selection

A number of scientists have attempted to explain the process of mate selection by providing theoretical explanations and frameworks. Although no one theory completely addresses the complex means of choosing a companion, together they provide insight into the process of beginning and continuing a relationship with a member of the opposite sex. The review of literature will focus primarily on the exchange theory perspective. However, knowledge of other theories, as they relate to the mate selection process, provides a glimpse into the many enchanting facets of mate choice. Therefore, brief descriptions of a few select theories are presented, followed by an extensive discussion of exchange theory.

#### Evolutionary Theory

Buss (1987), drawing upon Darwin's 1871 observations of mate selection, explained the preference of males for young and beautiful females from the evolutionary stance of reproductivity. That is, young and physically attractive females are thought to be more healthy and therefore, more

likely to bear more and healthier offspring. Darwin's theory ties mate selection to reproductive capacity. While this may be the basis for mate selection in the animal kingdom (and perhaps for humans in the past), recent trends of delaying childbearing, moving towards smaller families, and opting not to bear children raise serious questions concerning the impact of this theory on contemporary mate selection.

#### Psychoanalytic Theory

Psychoanalytic theory is based primarily on the work of Sigmund Freud and posits that individuals will choose a mate resembling the parent of the opposite sex. Parental characteristics are thought to provide a subtle influence in the mate selection process (Eckland, 1968; Klimek, 1979). With the number of single-parent families today, researchers may have difficulty applying this theory.

#### Assortive Mating

Assortive mating takes place when couples with similar phenotypes are coupled more frequently by chance than would normally be expected. Observations by investigators have revealed that persons tend to marry those with characteristics and backgrounds similar to their own. Proponents of this theory argue that homogamy is an important variable in the mate selection process. Researchers also note that as high-quality individuals are

attracted to each other, those of lower desirability are left to pair with each other. Their level of desirability exempts them from partnerships with preferred mates (Buss & Barnes, 1986; Eckland, 1968; Kalick & Hamilton, 1986).

#### Complementary Needs

The notion of complementary needs resulted from the work of Robert Winch and his associates (Winch, Ktsanes, & Ktsanes, 1954) and was based on the idea that "opposites attract". They postulated that men and women seek companions who complement their own needs. Research refutes the notion that opposites attract; if anything, people are attracted to those similar to themselves in most respects (Klimek, 1979). Although research does not support Winch's stance, it is still quoted and discussed in lay as well as scientific circles.

#### Normative Theory

Normative theory refers to that behavior tending to conform with society's definition of normative expectations. Normative definitions imply what one "ought" to do. Those relationships and behaviors sanctioned by society serve to constrain groups and individuals to behave within specified cultural and social boundaries. Marriage is provided for in all societies and is considered by most to be the acceptable way to live (Adams, 1979; Davis-Brown et al., 1987; Klimek, 1979; Lee, 1979; Lee & Stone, 1980).

### Stimulus-Value-Role Theory

The stimulus-value-role theory promotes the notion that people first select potential mates who are comparable in physical attractiveness to themselves. In the stimulus stage, similarity in physical attractiveness, especially facial features, is the most potent variable. Other variables (i.e., religion, social status, education, etc.) are present but may be unknown at first and do not affect the initial encounter (Murstein, 1972).

Kerckhoff and Davis (1962) and later Murstein and his associates (Murstein, 1972; Murstein, Cerreto, & MacDonald, 1977) advanced the idea of filters operating in the mate selection process. The first filter consists of factors or stimuli drawing two individuals together, and initially includes physical, emotional, and social components. If the relationship progresses, values become important and provide the second filter of the selection process. Should values be congruent and harmonious, the couple advances to the third filter, which is role examination. If all stages are negotiated successfully, marriage is an acceptable outcome.

### Symbolic Interaction Theory

Symbolic interaction maintains that people are not only reactors but actors and are socialized from infancy to fulfill certain roles, first within the family context, then later in society. Applying interaction theory to mate

selection implies that two persons coming from different families and backgrounds have certain role expectations. Over a period of time, as the couple interacts, role clarity emerges; and the relationship either escalates or deteriorates, depending upon the amount of attraction generated by the interaction process. Symbolic interaction theory is somewhat limited in explaining mate selection, in that the theory primarily considers the interaction process while ignoring other social variables (Adams, 1979).

#### The Ideal Mate Theory

The underlying premise of ideal mate theory suggests that men and women construct a fantasy of what an ideal mate should be. In early studies, idealized personality and actual traits in the selected partner were thought to be similar (Strauss, 1946). However, further research disproved this concept, and ideal physical characteristics were not found to be related to actual physical traits. It was therefore hypothesized that the relationship with a particular individual changes the ideal mate image to more closely resemble that of the real person. In sum, ideal mate theory appears to be immaterial to the mate selection process (Udry, 1965).

A broad perspective of the mate selection process has been presented to this point. The intention now is to focus specifically on exchange theory and, in particular, exchange theory as it pertains to the mate selection



process. Equity theory is addressed to a lesser extent.

### Exchange Theory

Economic exchange theory is strictly involved with absolute profit (i.e., rewards minus costs) and the exchange of resources. The exchange process assumes that the parties attempt to minimize costs while maximizing their rewards (Edwards, 1969). In barter societies, there was a literal exchange of various commodities. The barter system evolved into one where money is exchanged for commodities. Services and information were also exchanged for money, although economists hesitated to consider these particular exchanges in the economic model (Clark & Mills, 1975). Whereas many of the assumptions of the economic model can be applied to social relationships (Chadwick-Jones, 1976), exchange theory as a conceptual framework was, until recently, rarely applied to social research. In the past 20 years, investigators have made concerted use of exchange theory as it applies to social relationships.

The economic terms of cost, profit, and reward suggest the exchange of only tangible assets. Social exchange is not limited to material goods only and is predicated upon the expectation of a reward or some type of reciprocity. The pattern of costs and rewards over time and the benefits of the relationship itself must be considered (Huston & Burgess, 1979; Traupmann, 1976).

From the social exchange perspective, rewards include

enjoyment, satisfaction, and the fulfillment of needs (Thibaut & Kelley, 1969). In social exchanges, a resource may be concrete or symbolic and is any object that is considered worthwhile for exchange. Such items might include love, beauty, status, money, goods, and services. Costs involve embarrassment, conflict, and anxiety and are perceived to be high if a great deal of physical or mental energy must be expended. The outcome of a social transaction consists of the rewards obtained minus the costs incurred (Thibaut & Kelley, 1969).

Personal resources are assessed on the open market through interactions with others. Skill in bargaining and presenting one's resources are critical to receiving the maximum profit for them (Edwards, 1969). However, as people endeavor to maximize rewards, they must also ensure that the costs are not so prohibitive as to destroy the relationship (Traupmann, 1976).

Social exchange transactions can be differentiated from economic transactions because many of the transactions involve non-monetary benefits (Clark & Mills, 1975). Social scientists, drawing upon the economic model, included all personal interactions in their exchange frameworks. Application of the economic model to the sphere of human relationships was due, in part, to the simple elegance of the economic exchange framework along with its predictive success (Foa & Foa, 1980).

The economic model implies a perfect competition concept. This philosophy is unrealistic when considering mate selection, given the myriad and distinctive perceptions of individuals. Many outside factors affect the ultimate outcome of an interaction, and the end result is often not the product of a perfect, equal exchange (Blau, 1964). It may be too, that those people who are highly religious, have strong ethnic ties, have established careers, or who have been previously married perceive and weigh assets differently from others (Davis-Brown et al., 1987).

Social exchange is expected and noticed in the marketplace. What the majority of people do not notice are the social exchanges occurring in most human relationships ranging from families, to acquaintances, to friendships, and finally, to full intimate relationships (Blau, 1964). As friendships develop or as relationships become more intimate, the nature of social exchange differs from that in more casual interactions, in that the amount, quality, and variety of resources exchanged increase (Berg & Clark, 1986).

Social scientists have focused on the attributes and actions utilized by individuals in social exchanges (Blau, 1964; Murstein et al., 1977; Nye, 1978; 1979). Social exchange does not start with reciprocity but with the perceptions of what the conditions of the relationship

might entail. The exact nature of future returns is not specified. In the beginning, people engage in only minor transactions with little actual cost. As the relationship progresses and trust is established, more costly transactions take place (Blau, 1964).

### Equity Theory

Equity theory includes exchange theory, but whereas exchange theory focuses primarily upon costs and rewards, equity theory includes fairness and justice (Hatfield, Utne, & Traupmann, 1979). People are generally more interested in relationships where investments are considered proportional to returns, and are most satisfied when their rewards equal their costs (Cate, Lloyd, Henton, & Larson, 1982; Cate, Lloyd & Long, 1988; Huston & Burgess, 1979).

Equity theory may be seen as an extension or outgrowth of exchange theory, and is a more advanced theory in some respects. Concepts and theoretical statements are more precise, and perceptions of equity and inequity are more specific. Equity may be defined as "just balance;" that is, the relationship is not only equitable but is perceived to be balanced. Finally, while exchange theory is useful in defining beginning relationships, equity theory is more applicable to ongoing relationships (Bell, 1981; Cate et al., 1988; Lloyd, Cate, & Henton, 1982; Traupmann, 1976).

Walster, Walster, and Berscheid (1978) point out that

exchange theory may fall short of providing a clear understanding of human relationships (i.e., it does not account for altruism or changes as the relationship progresses). Yet, when considering initial interpersonal encounters, particularly in the mate selection process, exchange theory provides a plausible explanation of human behavior.

### Exchange Theory and Mate Selection

#### Background and Significance

Historically, courtship involved the exchange of material goods. Bargaining continues today, though it is not necessarily economic and often exists on a level that is not readily observable. The negotiations begin during courtship and become an ongoing process throughout the couple's association (Scanzoni, 1979). In some cultures, betrothal and marriage are marked by ritualized ceremonies and exchanges. Although the exchange process occurs in Western courtship and marriage, it is less formalized and more ambiguous (Edwards, 1969). Huston and Burgess (1979) argue that the beliefs underlying exchange theory do not fit well with Western notions of love and intimacy (although in 1964 Blau wrote that exchange theory is especially suited to Western society).

Economics describe how people do behave, rather than how they ought to behave (Homans, 1974). Exchange and

equity are well accepted in business circles and casual encounters, yet many object when the theories are applied to intimate or familiar relationships. While people are often uncomfortable with the notion that people are "commodities", relationships are "transactions", and human interactions are based primarily on self-interest; the fact must be faced that attitudes toward others are defined by the evaluations of the rewards the relationship is likely to bring (Michaels, Edwards, & Acock, 1984; Walster et al., 1978).

Those who are uncomfortable applying exchange principles to courtship behavior contend that intimate relationships ideally should rise above the simple idea of cost and benefits--true love should be more than costs and rewards. Unconditional love is still an idealistic and longed for status, and people want to believe that no matter what their physical appearance or personal habits, whatever their social status or religious beliefs, they are still lovable (Hatfield et al., 1979). Tying love with the exchange of rewards somehow devalues the romantic ideals of the caring and altruism usually associated with love, especially considering the idea that as the relationship becomes closer, the individual becomes less concerned about gaining rewards and focuses more on giving to the other.

Researchers supporting the exchange theory framework (e.g., Nye, 1978 & 1979; among others) argue that intimate

relationships fit in well with exchange and equity theories. Exchange theory is capable of incorporating social variables including race, religion, and socioeconomic status as well as attitudinal and value factors. Proponents of unconditional love, asserting that more than simple exchange of rewards and costs exist, must acknowledge that all intimate relationships involve a certain amount of give and take (Hatfield et al., 1979). If both parties can create optimum rewards for the other at minimum expense to themselves, each is in an excellent exchange position (Thibaut & Kelley, 1969). In rare instances, couples are so perfectly matched that self-interest and altruistic interest become one and the same. Rather than an association of exchange, it becomes one of communion (Huston & Burgess, 1979).

In contemplating the courtship process it becomes evident that before a relationship can be established, an encounter must take place. Further, if the relationship is to ultimately flourish, a number of other pertinent issues warrant consideration.

#### Initial Encounters

A dyadic relationship cannot begin until an initial contact is made between two people (Thibaut & Kelley, 1969). First encounters often are restrictive in allowing individuals to choose with whom and under what circumstances the interaction will take place (i.e.,

business meetings, classrooms, shopping). However, in less restricted circumstances, such as dating, people have a tendency to seek out those persons who appear to have attributes such that the interaction is anticipated to be rewarding (Huston & Burgess, 1979).

A relationship first begins when one individual attends to another; when one is first "aware" of another. The person initially observes the other's behavior, mannerisms, and characteristics. Attending involves more than just noticing another superficially. Rather, it is more selective and direct (Berscheid & Graziano, 1979). The further development of close relationships is a gradual process, beginning with the unilateral awareness of the other and moving towards mutuality. As the relationship progresses, a continuous process ensues, involving the assessment of present costs and benefits and evaluating future commitments and rewards (Berg & McQuinn, 1986; Folkes, 1982; Lloyd et al., 1982).

Formal exchange theory states that in order to receive rewards, one must be able to provide rewards. Therefore, before approaching another, an individual must evaluate his/her own attributes. The decision to initiate a relationship is based on two factors: (1) the degree to which attributes of another are perceived to be rewarding, and (2) the degree to which the person perceives the other to find himself/herself attractive (Huston & Burgess,



1979). Social exchange, then, is not a one-sided process (Berg & Clark, 1986). Accepting the initial overtures of another, and returning the favor, are the beginning points of a promising, and perhaps lasting, exchange relationship (Blau, 1964).

The incentives for initiating a relationship may well be the perceived advantages to be gained from the relationship. As long as the cost appears to be worthwhile, people will be motivated to initiate or continue a relationship. If attributes of the other do not seem worth the price, one is not likely to pursue interaction. In the economic market, commodities are exchanged for a specific price, whereas rewards or benefits in social exchanges cannot be priced exactly. Their value depends upon the perception of the recipient. What seems costly to one may be worthwhile to another. Conversely, what appears to be worthless to one may be attractive to another (Blau, 1964).

An initial encounter may or may not develop into a friendship or intimate relationship. From the exchange theory perspective, initiating a relationship with another may involve cost in that the person may have to forego other relationships (Berscheid & Graziano, 1979). In addition, one must consider the possibility that the going rate may not necessarily be a fair rate, and what appears to be a good bargain initially, may turn out to be a costly venture ultimately (Blau, 1964). Therefore, before

progressing to a romantic state, couples may want to evaluate important dimensions of their partner's character through interaction in everyday situations (Glick, 1985).

### Attractiveness

Attractiveness, in societies supporting the free selection of mates is perhaps the most important variable in eliciting the attention of a member of the opposite sex, and often provides the basis for the first encounter. Whereas internal qualities are not easily evaluated, and are often not apparent in an initial encounter, physical attributes of a person are readily observed (Glick, 1985).

Perceptions of attractiveness and unattractiveness develop gradually. School-age children recognize classmates as attractive or unattractive. During adolescence, young people are able to recognize desirable and undesirable individuals in many different social settings. And though everyone wants to believe that "beauty is only skin deep", people have an inner concept of what is beautiful and what is not, and generally agree in their evaluations (Adams, 1982; Berscheid & Walster, 1974; Klimek, 1979).

While attractiveness may not be a salient issue in societies espousing arranged marriages, it becomes extremely important in those societies advocating freedom of choice (Rosenblatt & Cozby, 1972; White, 1980). An individual's physical characteristics are immediately

apparent to others and provide instant information, accurate or inaccurate, about that particular person. Although contemporary society would like to believe that physical attributes do not necessarily make a person, stereotypical notions tend to persist (Berscheid & Walster, 1974).

Several theories suggest possible reasons underlying the importance of physical attractiveness. From the perspective of the social learning theory, our culture supports the notion of attractiveness as being a prerequisite of mate selection. Attractiveness in a partner is desired by both men and women, especially men. Furthermore, people are most likely to "attend" to an attractive person, providing that person with more opportunities to initiate relationships. The "rating and dating" complex advanced by Waller (1937) asserts that having an attractive person as a companion is associated with prestige, and therefore more rewarding.

The stereotype theory implies that attractive people possess many attributes not shared by those who are less attractive (Berscheid & Walster, 1974). For example, men and women who are physically attractive are perceived to be warmer, more socially desirable, more intelligent, and to lead more exciting lives than those less attractive than they, making them more valuable in the social marketplace (Adams, 1982; Berscheid & Walster, 1974; Green et al.,

1984; Nevid, 1984; White, 1980). Considering the importance of attractiveness in choosing mates, exchange theorists have tried to design research to ascertain in advance the qualities that will enhance a person's attractiveness (Huston & Burgess, 1979).

Researchers are unclear as to what characteristics are appealing to what sorts of people once the relationship is well underway. What is known is that physical attractiveness is an important variable at the beginning of the relationship (Klimek, 1979), while personality and character assume more importance further along in the association (Berscheid & Walster, 1974). Attractiveness is a valuable commodity at first, and may be enough alone to evoke desired rewards. However, if the relationship is to continue, other assets must be utilized. In ongoing relationships, different resources and rewards assume different values, and different quantities of them must be applied (Edwards, 1969).

Berscheid and Graziano (1979) assert that attention and attraction are related and cite studies supporting their views in which college males spent significantly more time watching attractive girls as opposed to unattractive ones. Physical attraction, for college males at least, is an important factor in initiating attention.

Since there are a limited number of attractive people, and considering the desire of the majority of people to

marry, an exchange market phenomenon exists wherein other assets and attributes are offered as enticements and rewards to potential marital partners (Murstein, 1972). In weighing the costs and rewards of a potential relationship, people tend to choose another on the same level of perceived desirability in order to avoid rejection from someone higher or to avoid the costs of choosing someone lower (Berscheid & Walster, 1974; Murstein, 1972; Waller, 1937).

Recent research indicates that although physically attractive men and women are preferred by nearly everyone as dating partners, unfortunately, the pool of attractive people is limited. Therefore, people have a tendency to choose partners similar to themselves in attractiveness, thus moderating the attractiveness influence (Berscheid & Walster, 1974; Folkes, 1982; Murstein, 1972). Both men and women desire a very attractive partner, but in reality, they ultimately choose those similar in attraction to themselves (Kalick & Hamilton, 1986; White, 1980).

### Homogeneity

In applying exchange to homogamous mating, Edwards (1969, pp. 525) lists four theoretical assertions. Although somewhat simplified, the assertions provide an explanation for homogamy in the exchange perspective.

1. Within any collectivity of potential mates, a marriageable person will seek out that individual

- who is perceived as maximizing potential rewards.
2. Individuals with equivalent resources are most likely to maximize each other's rewards.
  3. Pairs with equivalent resources are most likely to possess homogamous characteristics.
  4. Mate selection, therefore, will be homogamous with respect to a given set of characteristics.

Homogeneity is a characteristic of both friendships and courtships. In addition to similar external variables, people seek other people with similar internal characteristics, and those who will enhance self-esteem and contribute to the satisfaction of psychological needs (Bell, 1981).

Research in the 1940s and early 1950s indicated that people tended to select partners similar to themselves in religion, social class, and attitudes. This phenomenon may have been based on the opportunities people had to associate and interact with others similar to themselves in those respects (Eckland, 1968; Murstein et al., 1977). Perhaps more significantly, racial and religious lines are still far from being erased. While intermarriage takes place, and is more acceptable now, race and religion still produce barriers to possible marriages. Nationality does not seem to be as significant a factor as either race or religion when considering potential marital partners (Eckland, 1968).

Eckland (1968) lists five possible reasons why people are more likely to marry those similar to themselves. First, people from the same class often share the same values, thus enhancing compatibility. Second, considering the fact that the majority of young people live with their parents, residential segregation of the parental home reflects socioeconomic status and affects propinquity. Third, class and ethnicity are intertwined. Fourth, ascriptive norms of the family proscribe who is and who is not a suitable partner, and finally, those with educational advantages attend school together and associate with each other, thereby providing opportunities for couples to interact in the academic setting.

Although choosing a mate allows the individual some control of a particular facet of life (whereas in most situations, a person must settle for what he or she can get), people often think they are entitled to "the very best." Unfortunately, people may have to settle for a mate similar to themselves--no better and no worse (Walster et al., 1978). Market principles ensure that in essence, one ends up with what one "deserves" (Blau, 1964). Perhaps most importantly, people are generally more successful in attracting a person possessing similar characteristics and assets (Walster et al, 1978).

#### Sexual Attitudes and Behavior

Considering sexual attitudes and experience as they

modify one's desirability on the marriage market, four variables appear to be significant. Total sexual experience extending throughout the person's lifetime; that is, the degree of sexual intimacy experienced may determine to an extent an individual's desirability as a future partner. Next, the context, rather than the actual content, of sexual experience is considered an important factor when evaluating someone as a prospective mate. A loving relationship as opposed to a casual encounter may be viewed more favorably, as love tends to legitimize sexual relationships outside of marriage. Third, the number of sexual encounters with more than one person is likely to be perceived less favorably than a long term relationship with only one person. And finally, an individual's beliefs and values regarding sexuality, in addition to sexual behavior, are important determinates of the person's likelihood of being chosen as a mate (Jacoby & Williams, 1985; Williams & Jacoby, 1989).

Attitudes concerning sexuality are much more permissive today than they were in the past. Furthermore men and women are now similar in their attitudes regarding premarital sex, a significant change from the past (Jacoby & Williams, 1985). Though attitudes have become more liberal, a rise in concern over health issues related to sexual behavior developed in the 1980s. Venereal diseases, problematic at best, pale in comparison to the



disease, AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). Until recently AIDS was virtually unknown to the population in general. It first appeared in the United States in 1978; public awareness of the disease followed in 1982. The disease is sexually transmitted, is relentless, and is fatal (Bowen, 1988; Curran, Jaffe, Hardy, Morgan, Selik, & Dondero, 1988). Given the gravity of the disease, people have been compelled to at least consider changing sexual attitudes and behavior. Sexual history of those on the marriage market is predicted to be a most salient issue now and in the future.

#### Marital Status

In the past twenty years, the divorce rate in the United States has risen, resulting in an unprecedented number of remarriages (NCHS Monthly Vital Statistics Reports, Dec. 1988). A number of factors influence the divorced or widowed person's chances of remarriage. Length of the prior marriage, age at first marriage, age at the time of divorce or widowhood, number of children, and level of education are important variables to consider (Spanier & Glick, 1980). In an age of serial monogamy, the number of times a person has been divorced is a worthwhile issue to consider in assessing a person's chances of being chosen as a marital partner.

#### Gender Differences

Michaels and associates (1984) found that men and

women differ very little in determining what is a fair exchange, albeit exchange rules may vary as part of gender role orientation. Norms vary across as well as within sex lines. Perceptions of autonomy, assertiveness, prestige, and power differ between men and women and influence their expectations of what is fair exchange. In addition, both men and women have inherent as well as perceived needs and may seek one whom they anticipate will fulfill those needs and supply the valued rewards (Scanzoni, 1979).

Although physical attractiveness is an important consideration for both men and women when choosing dating partners, research indicates that it is more important to young men (Berscheid & Walster, 1974; Nevid, 1984), whereas empathy and predictability are more important to young women (Klimek, 1979). In addition, economic and social attributes are more significant to women than is physical attractiveness (Green, Buchanan, & Heuer, 1984).

Feminists point out that exchanges in the past have generally been exploitive of women. Previously, women have only had sexual resources to bargain with, compared to men who had both sexual resources as well as economic resources. As women have become more assertive and have acquired additional resources, their bargaining power has increased, and exchange rules have been altered (Scanzoni, 1979).

In a general context, it is believed to be more costly for women to refrain from marriage as compared to men. For example, women experience a shorter age range in which they are attractive to men. In addition, their relatively longer life span, compared to that of men, contributes to a greater supply of women, and thus to a lesser demand, on the marriage market (Murstein, 1972).

#### Worth on the Marriage Market

People have a variety of characteristics and attributes that contribute to their relative worth on the marriage market. Everyone has a certain number of assets (those qualities valuable to others and useful in eliciting reciprocation of rewards) and liabilities (those characteristics that are costly to others, and by default, costly to oneself). Included are social skills, intelligence, access to material resources, prestige, and attractiveness. In addition, individuals have a perceived level of their own desirability and in seeking romantic relationships, will evaluate the other's desirability in comparison to their own (Murstein, 1972; Berscheid & Walster, 1974). People may compensate for missing assets or use one asset to "buy up" in another area. For example, beauty can "buy" a higher socioeconomic status (if the wealthy other values attractiveness), and superior intelligence may compensate for the lack of education (Walster et al., 1978).

Physical attractiveness is surely a most significant factor in assessing an individual's possibilities for being chosen as a mate. The fact that the majority of people will choose beauty over brains adds credence to this concept (Adams, 1982). Physical attractiveness is highly valued in the marriage marketplace for a number of reasons. For example, height and weight are characteristics that are socially regulated and mandated, and both affect the perceived worth of an individual. Height in men is associated with prestige, power and intelligence (Berscheid & Walster, 1974). Societal expectations assume that the man should be taller than the woman, placing tall women and short men at a disadvantage on the marriage market (Adams, 1982; Berscheid & Walster, 1974; Klimek, 1979).

Both men and women prefer partners with a slender build (Nevid, 1984). Furthermore, obesity elicits social derision in all age groups--children through adults, as people with endomorphic body types are viewed as being lazy and passive (Klimek, 1979). Thus, the overweight are at an extreme disadvantage on the marriage market.

Health considerations are also important to consider when selecting a mate, and men and women differ not only in physical respects, but in their perceptions of illness as well. Women are sick more often, but men suffer from more life threatening conditions. In sum, women are sicker for "the short run"; men for the "long run". Women also use

more over-the-counter and prescription medications than men do (Verbrugge, 1985).

With the emphasis on physical fitness over the past decade, unhealthy practices serve to detract from one's desirability. Perhaps the most significant change of attitude has come towards smoking. Surgeon General Koop has been tireless in presenting to the public information regarding the health implications of smoking. Since 1964 (when the first health warnings were sounded), the number of smoking adults in the United States dropped from 40 percent in 1965 to 29 percent in 1987 (Glazer, 1989). At least 38 states have passed clean air acts barring smoking in public places. Smoking is now seen by American society as a deviant behavior (as opposed to the glamorous image a decade ago). Since second-hand smoke has been implicated in health problems for others as well as the smoker, smoking is thought to detract from a person's marital chances (Glazer, 1989; Thompson, 1984).

The Reagan administration's "get tough" law and order stance against those dealing in drugs, as well as Nancy Reagan's "Just say no" program focused public attention on drug abuse. In addition to increased public awareness of drug abuse, alcoholism, a social problem for decades, has become an issue of public concern. However, social drinking still seems to be acceptable among most segments of society. Increases have been noted in alcohol

consumption among the college educated, professionals, Catholics, those living in the Western states, and those with a moderate or above moderate income ("Drinking of Alcoholic Beverages," 1986). Nevertheless, according to a Gallup Poll, the number of drinkers has declined overall from 71 percent in 1971 to 67 percent in 1985. Because of social and health implications, drug abuse and alcoholism also serve as detractants to a person's marital worth, especially that of women. Because of the traditional view of women's nurturant roles, and in order to guard themselves against sexual exploitation, taboos against drunkenness in women are present in most societies (Robbins, 1989).

Social desirability comprises a number of factors including attractiveness, personality, social status, and other resources. Age may contribute or detract from one's perceived desirability, men generally preferring younger, attractive women; women preferring older, attractive, successful men. In sum, men prefer younger attractive women, while women prefer older, attractive, successful men. Thus, older women are at a disadvantage on the marriage market (Green et al., 1984).

Socioeconomic status is important to both men and women, affecting life chances and well-being for both. The ability to provide for a spouse is more sought after by females for the obvious desire to be well disposed

(DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985). A higher socioeconomic level also provides more opportunities for both men and women to be mobile, widening the field of eligible partners.

Education may enhance or impinge upon one's worth on the marriage market. Educated spouses are more likely to have greater earning power, higher prestige, and wider social networks. For women, however, higher education may limit their pool of potential companions, given the tendency for women to "marry up" (DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985). On the positive side, a woman's diploma may bring social prestige to the relationship, perhaps benefiting the future careers of her spouse and children (Eckland, 1968).

As early as the 15th century, Thomas Hobbs wrote that although people may differ somewhat in body or mind, when all was reckoned together, the differences were not so considerable as to place one in a significantly higher position than another. That being so, he reflected that there was hope for all in attaining their ends (Walster et al, 1978). Although Hobbs may have been correct in pointing out the relatively equality of human beings, others liken human attributes to a lottery system wherein assets and liabilities are handed out in a haphazard way (Walster et al., 1978).

## Summary

Exchange theory can be utilized to explain three areas of the mate selection process: (1) selection of eligibles, (2) courtship, and (3) marriage (Edwards, 1969). Since no one prefers all members of the opposite sex to the same degree, researchers are faced with the intriguing task of identifying those characteristics that prospective partners perceive to be important (Buss & Barns, 1986). As early as 1937, Popenoe suggested that scientists approach the mate selection problem in a practical manner by determining how to enhance a person's chances for marriage to a suitable companion. By identifying important issues, and thereby determining those characteristics that are most likely to attract an acceptable partner, researchers, family life educators, and family therapists will be better able to assist those in search of a spouse. Likewise, identifying those variables detracting from marital worth is of interest to professionals as well as to those presenting themselves on the marriage market.

Considering mate selection from the exchange theory perspective, initial hypotheses are formulated and include:

1. Cultural, religious, and family backgrounds of individuals contribute important values and are hypothesized to exert a subtle yet powerful influence on the mate selection process.
2. Socioeconomic status influences perceptions and



values, and therefore is an important variable in the mate selection process. SES also affects opportunities to meet others. Therefore it defines one's eligibility on the marriage market.

3. Gender differences delineate the factors thought to be important to both men and women in the mate selection process. Further, it is hypothesized that males will consider physical attractiveness to be of primary significance, whereas inner qualities will be more important to females.
4. In addition to differences existing between men and women, it is hypothesized that important differences will exist within the respective groups.
5. It is hypothesized that a person who has been divorced a number of times or who has several children from a previous marriage will be less likely to be sought as a marital partner.
6. With recent concern regarding substance abuse, it is hypothesized that the use of alcohol, tobacco, or drugs will lower an individual's worth on the marriage market.
7. Health issues, especially chronic illnesses and those related to sexually transmitted diseases, will have a negative affect on an individual's worth on the marriage market. A catastrophic

illness, such as AIDS, is hypothesized to virtually exclude that person from the marriage market.

8. An extensive sexual history is hypothesized to have a devaluing influence on an individual's worth as a marriage partner. Promiscuity, homosexuality or bisexuality, and having raped someone are variables hypothesized to exert a strong negative influence on a person's perceived worth; whereas a simple premarital sexual encounter or having been raped are not considered to be serious liabilities.
9. Physical characteristics enhance or detract from one's worth on the marriage market. Hence, it is hypothesized that physically attractive individuals will be more successful in attracting a mate.
10. It is hypothesized that exchange principles are inherent in the mate selection process, especially during the initial stages of the relationship. It is further hypothesized that, by utilizing exchange principles, it is possible to predict an individual's marital worth.

## CHAPTER III

## METHOD

## Sample

The sample was comprised of 913 students from nine universities across the United States who were currently enrolled in human development or marriage and family courses. The universities were specifically chosen to represent students from several geographic areas across the United States. Students from the East Coast, West Coast, Rocky Mountain area, Midwest, and the South were included in the study. Universities selected included: University of California at Davis, East Carolina University, Oregon State University, University of Nebraska, University of Delaware, University of Minnesota, Utah State University, Florida State University, and Ohio State University.

## Measures

A three-part questionnaire, based on a similar questionnaire designed by Schvaneveldt in 1984, was utilized for this study (see Appendices A and B). The questionnaire was devised to ascertain the characteristics and attributes perceived to be important when contemplating choosing a marital partner. New variables thought to be salient for the present study, such as health

considerations, sexually transmitted diseases, and sexual orientation were added to the original instrument.

The first portion of the instrument contains demographic information, including gender, age, SES, college, present level of education, family size, and birth order. Attitudinal variables (e.g., willingness to live with someone outside of marriage) thought to be important in predicting mate selection were also included in this section. The second portion contains 49 items thought to affect one's marital worth. The questions were designed to elicit a "yes" or "no" answer. However, enough subjects wrote in "maybe" making it worthwhile to include a separate category. Therefore, responses ranged from 1 to 3; 1 being "yes", 2 "maybe", and 3 "no". The instrument measures attitudes of mate selection and marital worth across the following domains: (1) physical attributes, (2) cultural/social aspects, (3) religious variables, (4) substance use/abuse, (5) personality and emotional factors, (6) health considerations, (7) sexual attitudes and history, and (8) marital status. The scale was a distraction model, in that the questions were negatively loaded. The third segment of the questionnaire was an open-ended portion, wherein the participants listed any other characteristics they felt would increase or decrease opportunities for marriage.

The original instrument was used with over 900 subjects from the United States and Japan. The revised instrument was piloted Fall Quarter, 1988, and included responses from 50 undergraduate students enrolled in family and human development courses at Utah State University. Minor revisions of the instrument were made following the pilot study. The marital worth items in the second portion of the revised instrument demonstrated a high degree of internal consistency (Cronbach alpha = .86).

Socioeconomic status (SES) of the respondents was determined by utilizing the Hollingshead (1975) Four Factor Index of Social Status. The scale is based upon three basic assumptions: that unequal status structure exist in our present society; that occupation, schooling, gender, and marital status are salient factors affecting socioeconomic status; and that by combining the factors, one can meaningfully estimate the status positions of families.

The occupations and educational levels of both parents were rated, weighted, and added together following the guidelines of the instrument. The mean score was calculated for married couples to determine the SES of the respondent's family. If only one parent was employed, or if the family was headed by a single parent, the score of that individual was the SES level for that family. Limitations are present in this instrument (i.e., if the husband is a physician and the wife is a nurse, their

combined SES is less than that of a family comprised of a father who is a physician and a mother who is unemployed). However, the instrument is widely used, and considered to be valid and reliable.

Scores could theoretically range from zero to 66. Scores from this sample ranged from a low of nine to a high of 66, with mean SES being 48.36 and both the median and mode being 49. While Hollingshead divided his scores into five strata to estimate social standing and monetary income, for the purposes and ease of analyses in this study, SES scores were collapsed into three categories: Low SES, ranging from nine through 40; middle SES, ranging from 41 through 53; and high SES, ranging from 53 to 66.

#### Design and Procedure

Before beginning the project, permission was obtained from the Utah State University Institutional Review Board. Participating universities followed their individual guidelines as appropriate before proceeding with data collection.

The study was a survey design utilizing the previously described instrument. Approximately 100 questionnaires were sent to participating universities. Professors were requested to invite their students to participate in the study. The questionnaires were distributed and completed by the participants during class time. Participation was

entirely voluntary, and no compensation was awarded for participating in the study. Individual questionnaires were identified by number only. Names of the participants did not appear on the questionnaires, assuring anonymity. In addition, no information that might identify a particular individual appeared in the study nor will appear in subsequent publications resulting from the research project. No risks or untoward effects are anticipated from participation in the study. The completed questionnaires were then mailed back to the researchers for compilation and analysis.

All nine universities (100%) participated in the study. As participation was voluntary, it is not known for certain how many students declined to participate. However, as the study was anonymous, and the questionnaires were completed during class time, it is expected that a high percentage of the students participated. The number of those participating ranged from 76 students at the University of Nebraska to 214 students at Utah State University.

#### Analyses

Initially, background information was evaluated in an effort to obtain a clear profile of the participants. Descriptive statistical measures, including frequencies, means, medians, and modes were employed. Individual

variables on the second portion of the instrument were rank ordered in an attempt to determine which were most costly in determining worth on the marriage market.

Comparisons were made between genders, across regions, and between the several cultural and social domains including SES, ethnicity and religion. Chi square analyses were performed initially as an exploratory measure and to determine independence of the several groups of demographic variables regarding responses to individual marital worth items. T-tests were utilized to compare the mean scores of men and women as well as married and unmarried individuals on individual items.

Factor analysis utilizing a varimax rotation was performed to ascertain if the individual variables would load into distinguishable factors that would identify those characteristics contributing to marital worth. A parsimonious and conceptually meaningful summary of the data was thus obtained. Regression analysis, using the stepwise method was then employed to determine if a linear relationship existed between selected demographic and attitudinal variables and individual factor scores. The investigator was especially interested in determining whether or not factor scores could be predicted by utilizing demographic characteristics, and regression analysis was employed for this purpose. T-tests were also carried out to compare mean factor scores between groups.



Finally, ANOVAs were performed to compare mean factor scores of men and women from different regions of the United States.

## CHAPTER IV

## RESULTS

## Characteristics of the Sample

The sample included 913 participants enrolled in nine institutions of higher learning. Table 1 depicts the sample as they are dispersed within each college. Approximately 15% of the sample are males and 85% females. Five respondents did not indicate gender, but are included in the study.

The respondents range in age from 18 to 65 years of age, with a mean age of 22.2, the mode being 21 years of age. Age of the participants was collapsed into five categories: nineteen years of age and younger (24%); age 20 to 24 (57%); age 25 to 29 (3%); age 30 to 34 (6%); and age 34 and older (6%). Four percent of the sample did not indicate their age.

The sample consists primarily of Caucasian participants (90.4%). Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians constitute 8.3 percent of the sample for a total of 76 nonwhite subjects. Twelve (1.3%) respondents did not indicate race. For purposes of analyses, race of the subjects was collapsed into two categories--"white" (caucasian) and "non-white" (Black, Hispanic, Asian, and all others). The majority (81.7%) of the participants have never been married.

Table 1  
Distribution of Sample by University

University	Gender		Age					Race		Religion					
	M	F	< 20	20-24	25-29	30-34	>34	W	NW	LDS	Cath	L.Pr.	C.Pr.	Jew.	Oth.
U of Calif. at Davis	8	91	2	83	2	6	2	68	32	1	36	19	23	2	19
E. Carolina State	8	68	21	41	2	6	3	61	13	--	12	30	29	--	4
Oregon State	4	85	15	52	4	6	11	82	5	2	26	18	23	2	13
University of Nebraska	21	55	2	63	3	7	--	74	2	1	25	30	12	--	7
University of Delaware	4	76	12	57	1	1	3	75	3	--	44	20	2	11	3
University of Minnesota	9	78	2	39	9	11	21	81	5	--	28	32	13	1	13
Utah State	38	176	118	57	6	11	7	209	4	182	11	3	5	--	11
Florida State	39	69	57	48	--	1	--	100	9	--	23	34	36	5	11
Ohio State	4	75	13	57	--	3	1	75	3	--	37	22	8	6	5
Totals	135 15%	723 85%	242 24%	497 57%	27 3%	52 6%	48 6%	825 92%	76 8%	186 21%	242 27%	208 23%	151 17%	27 3%	86 10%

Table 1  
Continued

University	Education					SES			Fam Size	
	Fr.	So.	Jr.	Sr.	Gr.	L	M	U	Sm	Lg
U of Calif. at Davis	--	3	19	67	4	18	43	41	62	24
E. Carolina State	5	29	14	18	10	26	28	23	45	9
Orgeon State	4	17	19	34	14	26	35	28	44	25
University of Nebraska	1	6	33	35	1	19	41	16	28	36
University of Delaware	1	13	35	29	--	13	42	25	46	15
University of Minnesota	--	4	25	35	22	29	35	23	30	44
Utah State	123	43	29	10	2	65	68	81	57	134
Fla. State	15	54	23	16	--	21	48	40	71	18
Ohio State	8	17	35	7	1	22	32	25	42	24
Totals	157 18%	186 21%	232 26%	261 29%	54 6%	239 26%	372 41%	302 33%	425 56%	329 44%

Religion of the participants was collapsed into six categories: (1) Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints (LDS), (2) Catholic, (3) liberal Protestants, (4) conservative Protestants, (5) Judaism, and (6) other. Utilizing the descriptions of Rosten (1963) and Greeley and Hout (1988), "liberal Protestants" include those belonging to non-mainline religions such as the Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and Lutheran churches. "Conservative Protestants" include those affiliated with mainline Protestantism including Baptists, Church of Christ, and those churches associated with "born again" Christianity. The "other" category is comprised mostly of those professing to be agnostic or atheist. Catholics comprise 26.5% of the population; liberal Protestants, 22.8%; LDS, 20.4%; conservative Protestants, 16.5%; Jewish, 3%; and other, 9.4%.

Education level of the participants ranges from college freshmen to graduate student status. Eighteen percent of the students are freshmen, 21% are sophomores, 26% are juniors, 29% are seniors, and 6% are on the graduate level of education. Twenty three (2.5%) of the participants did not report their level of education. SES, as described previously, is designated as low, medium, or high.

Participants come from families ranging in size from one to 15 children, with more than half (61.3%) reporting

being either the first- (33.7%) or second-born (27.6%) child. Family size is designated as "small" (one or two children) and "large" (more than two children).

For the purposes of analyses, the nine universities were collapsed into five geographical regions. Oregon State and University of California at Davis are designated as "West Coast." Utah State University is the only state assigned to the "Rocky Mountain" region. Three states are assigned to the "Midwest" region and include the University of Nebraska, Ohio State, and University of Minnesota. Delaware is designated as the "East Coast" region, while the "Southern states" region is comprised of Florida State University, and East Carolina University.

## Findings

### The Marital Worth Scale

As previously described, this scale includes forty-nine items addressing variables affecting an individual's perceived marital worth. As the items in this study were analyzed and ranked in terms of marital worth, variables most detrimental to marital worth were ranked highest, and items found to be least detrimental were ranked lowest. Table 2 depicts the ranking of the items by gender. It can be seen that homosexuality was ranked highest by both males and females (96% and 99% respectively), followed by rapist

Table 2

## Rank Order of Items as They Detract From Marital Worth

Males		Females	
Item	%*	Item	%*
Homosexual	96	Homosexual	99
Cult	96	Rapist	99
Rapist	93	Cult	98
AIDS	90	Bisexual	96
Bisexual	87	AIDS	92
Overweight	87	Bad tempered	92
RX drug abuse	84	Rx drug abuse	91
Herpes	82	Illegal drug use	86
No interest in sex	79	Mental problems	86
Illegal drug use	78	Doesn't want kids	83
Mental problems	77	Herpes	83
Bad tempered	77	No interest in sex	82
Divorced many	70	Lazy	81
Smokes	67	Prison	80
Prison	64	Overweight	77
Acne	63	Divorced many	74
Lazy	63	Nervous	69
Doesn't want kids	63	Younger	68
Promiscuous	61	Promiscuous	64
Nervous	54	You work	63
Health problems	53	Bad reputation	61
Bad personality	51	Shorter	60
Bad reputation	49	Bad personality	59
With kids	44	Acne	57
Old rich	42	Smokes	56

\*Percent stating that they would not  
marry someone with that characteristic

Table 2  
Continued

Males		Females	
Item	%*	Item	%*
Different race	40	Different race	56
Taller	35	Health problems	52
No formal religion	34	Old rich	42
Very thin	34	With kids	40
Sexy/not pretty	33	Can't drive	39
Drinks	32	No formal relig	38
Non-conformist	28	Very thin	35
Can't drive	28	Drinks	29
Different faith	26	Not a college grad	28
Ugly	24	Different faith	27
Younger	23	Non-conformist	26
You work	23	Divorced once	24
Divorced once	21	Married before	23
Can't dance	19	Can't dance	22
Pretty/not sexy	16	Not religious	18
Married before	16	Can't have kids	18
Not religious	15	Different class	18
Can't have kids	13	Had been raped	17
Different class	13	Handsome/not sexy	16
Had been raped	12	Premarital sex	15
Not a college grad	11	Ugly	14
Premarital sex	07	Sexy/not handsome	10
Shorter	03	Taller	06
Foreign	03	Foreign	06

\*Percent stating that they would not  
marry someone with that characteristic



cult, and having the disease AIDS. Conversely, being of a different nationality was not considered by either men (3%) or women (6%) to detract from marital worth and was therefore ranked at the other end of the table.

As a result of factor analysis utilizing the SPSSX computerized varimax rotation, fourteen factors surfaced from the 49 individual marital worth items. All 49 items loaded onto one of the factors with each loading having an absolute value of at least .32 or greater. Tables 3 and 4 delineate the findings from the factor analysis. Table 3 identifies the factors and their loadings. Table 4 depicts the 13 factors and the characteristics of those falling into each of three categories.

The 49 items were clustered under the following labels:

- Factor 1 - Values orientation
- Factor 2 - Health issues
- Factor 3 - Marital status
- Factor 4 - Personality attributes
- Factor 5 - Consequences of life style
- Factor 6 - Cultural norms
- Factor 7 - Masculine expectations
- Factor 8 - Drug use/abuse
- Factor 9 - Feminine expectations
- Factor 10 - Sexual orientation
- Factor 11 - Deviant attitude/behavior

Table 3

## Factor Analysis Loadings of Marital Worth Items\*

Item No.	Item	Factor Labels			
		Factor 1 Values Orient.	Factor 2 Health Issues	Factor 3 Marital Status	Factor 4 Personality Attributes
3	Different faith	.82571			
13	Not religious	.78112			
26	Drinks	.75439			
4	No formal rel.	.73847			
7	Premarital sex	.68957			
25	Smokes	.49699			
44	Promiscuous	.30851			
40	Acne		.70306		
34	Overweight		.63799		
39	Very thin		.61302		
16	Health problem		.52415		
38	Can't drive		.46526		
5	Married before			.88149	
46	Divorced once			.85318	
6	With kids			.79515	
47	Divorced many			.47803	
49	Bad tempered				.74061
48	Lazy				.68322
37	Nervous				.49548
21	Bad reputation				.46052

\*Note: Loadings include factors with an absolute value of .30 or greater.

Table 3  
Continued

Item No.	Item	Factor Labels			
		Factor 5 Conseq. Life Style	Factor 6 Social Norms	Factor 7 Masculine Expect.	Factor 8 Drug Use/ Abuse
17	AIDS	.79030			
18	Herpes	.72286			
43	Mental prob.	.36599			
22	Prison	.31620			
24	Different class		.58531		
12	Foreign		.56536		
29	Raped		.52486		
36	College grad.		.38645		
20	Pretty/not sexy		.37421		
8	Different race			.64099	
9	Younger			.60670	
11	Shorter			.49187	
27	Illegal drugs				.71833
28	Rx drugs				.66052

Item No.	Item	Factor Labels	
		Factor 9 Feminine Expect.	Factor 10 Sexual Orient.
14	Sexy/ugly	.66099	
10	Taller	.66582	
31	You work	-.35774	
41	Bisexual		.81937
42	Homosexual		.79379

\*Note: Loadings include factors with an absolute value of .30 or greater.

Table 3  
Continued

Item No.	Item	Factor Labels		
		Factor 11 Antisocial Charact.	Factor 12 Future Fam Expect.	Factor 13 Bizarre att./ Behavior
32	Ugly	.49740		
30	Rapist	-.47241		
33	Bad personality	.45131		
35	Can't dance	.43225		
45	Radical	.35420		
1	No kids		.76607	
2	Can't have kids		.60021	
15	No sex			.58333
19	Cult			.54508

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\*Note: Loadings include factors with an absolute value of .30 or greater.

Table 4

Characteristics of Individuals Loading Negatively,  
Positively, and Neutrally on Each Factor

Factor	-	+	0
1 Values Orientation	Different faith No formal relig Premarital sex Smokes Drinks	Same faith Formal relig No premar. sex Doesn't smoke Doesn't drink	Same faith No formal relig Premarital sex Smokes Drinks
2 Health Issues	Health problems Overweight Can't drive Very thin Acne	Healthy Normal weight Drives Not too thin No acne	Healthy Overweight Drives Not too thin Acne
3 Marital Status	Married before With children Divorced once Divorced many	Never married No children Never divorced Never divorced	Married before No children Divorced once Not div. many
4 Personality Attributes	Bad reputation Nervous Lazy Bad tempered	Good reputation Not nervous Not lazy Even tempered	Bad reputation Not nervous Not lazy Even tempered
5 Conseq. of Life Style	Herpes AIDS Prison Mentally ill	No herpes No AIDS No prison Not ment.ill	No herpes No AIDS No prison Not ment.ill
6 Social Norms	Foreign Sexy/pretty Different class Raped Not coll.grad	Not foreign Sexy/ugly Same class Not raped Not coll.grad	Foreign Sexy/ugly Different class Raped Not coll.grad

Table 4  
Continued

Factor	-	+	0
7 Masculine Expectations	Different race Older Taller	Same race Younger Shorter	Dif. race Older Taller
8 Drug Use/ Abuse	Illeg.drug use Rx drug abuse	No drugs No Rx drugs	No drugs No Rx drugs
9 Femine Expectations	Short Handsome/ not sexy She works	Tall Handsome/sexy He works	Tall Handsome/ not sexy She works
10 Sexual Orientation	Bisexual Homosexual	Heterosexual	Heterosexual
11 Antisocial Characteris- tics	Not rapist Ugly Bad person- ality	Not rapist Good looking Good person- ality	Not rapist Good looking Good person ality
12 Future fam. Expectations	No kids Can't have kids	Wants kids Can have kids	Wants kids Can have kids
13 Bizarre Attitude/ Behavior	No sex Cult	Interested in sex No cult	Interested in sex No cult

Factor 12 - Future family expectations

Factor 13 - Bizarre attitude/behavior

Factor 14 - Old and wealthy

For the purposes of this study, the fourteenth factor was dropped as it consisted of only one item that was not critical to the analysis. Further analysis of the factor scores indicated that individuals whose scores loaded negatively on the individual factors were more liberal regarding those items detracting from marital worth, scores loading positively were more conservative, and scores loading in a neutral range showed aspects of both.

#### Hypotheses Testing

With these various factor loadings and profiles in perspective, the investigator now moves to the formal hypotheses that guided the study. The findings related to the first hypothesis are presented first followed by the findings as they relate to the remaining stated hypotheses.

#### Hypothesis #1

The first hypothesis asserts that cultural, religious, and family backgrounds contribute to attitudes and values affecting an individual's marital worth. Several categories were included for this hypothesis and the findings are presented for each.

Age

Age was considered to be an important cultural aspect of the mate selection process. Crosstabulations with Chi square analyses across the five age categories were done to determine if responses to the individual items were independent of age. Differences were apparent in several domains. Referring to Table 5, it can be seen that the respondents varied in 19 of the 49 categories. Overall, younger respondents were more conservative in their responses. More specifically, on many of the items there appeared to be a positive correlation between age and degree of tolerance for the individual items. A curvilinear relationship appeared to be present on a select few of the items with answers of the older respondents more closely resembling those of the youngest group. This relationship was noted in responses regarding the items of drug use, being the primary breadwinner (you work), sexual orientation, and promiscuity. Regarding the item, "Would you marry someone who was pretty but not sexy?", a negative relationship was observed, with 85% of the youngest group replying "Yes" compared with 32.6 % of the oldest group. The item referring to "nervousness" was also negatively correlated with age. Whereas slightly over 67% of the younger students said "No" to this item over 84% of the older group stated that they would not marry someone who was extremely nervous.



Table 5  
 Comparison of Age With Marital Worth Items Demonstrating  
 Statistically Significant Differences Between Groups\*

Item	Age					Statistics		
	< 20	20-24	25-29	30-34	> 35	$\chi^2$	df	p
Different faith	43	20	22	19	21	48.55	8	.000
No formal relig	49	32	39	22	38	25.59	8	.002
Married before	30	21	12	7	02	29.15	8	.000
With kids	48	41	37	19	6	38.66	8	.000
Premarital sex	27	09	6	7	10	89.60	8	.000
Younger	74	62	45	41	33	55.69	8	.000
Not religious	30	12	16	22	13	46.69	8	.000
Sexy/ugly	19	12	18	4	6	89.60	8	.011
Pretty/not sexy	13	13	28	22	33	65.20	8	.007
Smokes	69	51	61	56	56	43.80	8	.001
Drinks	45	20	35	37	31	66.70	8	.000
Illegal drugs	88	83	92	82	90	17.01	8	.030
You work	64	53	47	48	70	28.30	8	.032
Nervous	68	64	69	74	84	15.90	8	.016
Acne	61	60	55	37	36	18.71	8	.016
Bisexual	97	96	90	82	88	10.40	8	.000
Promiscuous	75	57	60	52	72	28.51	8	.000
Divorced once	69	76	83	96	95	25.53	8	.001
Divorced many	80	74	75	52	44	37.55	8	.000

\*Percent answering "No" to the items reflected  
 in this table.

### Race

Comparisons between whites and non-whites on their responses to the individual items were made using Chi square analyses. The two groups varied on only two items: willingness to marry someone who had been raped ( $\chi^2 (2) = 9.0, p < .05$ ), and willingness to marry someone who was significantly overweight ( $\chi^2 (2) = 7.12, p < .05$ ). Non-whites indicated that they were less likely to marry someone in either category.

### Region of the Nation

The investigator was interested in whether or not differences in perceptions of mate selection existed in different regions of the United States. Chi square analyses were performed to determine if responses were independent of area of the country. Referring to Table 6, it can be seen that statistically significant differences existed for 20 of the 49 items. No statistical differences were observed in the remaining 29 items. Overall, it appears that participants in the Rocky Mountain and Southern regions are most conservative in their responses, and those from both of the costal regions are most liberal. That is, participants from the East Coast and West Coast regions indicated more tolerance for items on the marital worth scale, than those from Utah and the Southern states. Participants from the Midwest region fell between the two extremes on their responses.

Table 6

Comparison of Region With Marital Worth Items  
Demonstrating Statistically Significant Differences  
 Between Groups\*

Item	Region					Statistics		
	West	Mtn.	Mid	East	So.	$\chi^2$	df	p
No kids	78	86	82	85	73	27.15	8	.007
Different faith	17	71	16	4	9	285.06	8	.000
No formal relig	22	72	31	19	30	162.33	8	.000
Premarital sex	8	41	7	3	6	174.19	8	.000
Different race	23	52	61	66	71	103.96	8	.000
Not religious	8	48	8	1	11	192.87	8	.000
Sexy/ugly	6	22	12	5	17	31.19	8	.000
Herpes	75	89	84	79	87	19.82	8	.011
Smokes	57	84	50	26	50	107.25	8	.000
Drinks	17	70	17	11	19	228.92	8	.000
Illegal drugs	80	93	88	70	84	31.13	8	.000
You work	54	68	56	53	53	20.97	8	.007
Nervous	63	61	68	67	75	16.82	8	.032
Can't drive	30	40	38	29	45	15.50	8	.050
Very thin	28	28	39	33	46	23.43	8	.003
Acne	49	49	60	64	71	29.66	8	.000
Promiscuous	48	81	64	48	64	61.46	8	.000
Very liberal	25	39	21	21	23	25.28	8	.001
Divorced many	70	78	78	56	72	21.02	8	.007
Lazy	73	87	79	71	73	27.56	8	.001

\*Percent answering "No" to the items reflected  
 in this table.

### Religion

The 49 items were compared across the six religious categories, and Chi Square analyses were undertaken to identify differences between the groups. Statistically significant differences were noted in 21 categories. Referring to Table 7, it can be noted that those participants belonging to the LDS faith were most conservative in their responses in 12 of the categories. More specifically, the statistically significant differences were primarily due to the broad differences between those of the LDS faith and those in the Jewish and "other" categories. Although significant differences were apparent on the items dealing with herpes, prison, rapist, bisexuality, homosexuality, and someone who had been divorced many times; it can be seen that the majority of those in all religious categories indicated reluctance to marry someone with those characteristics.

### Family Configuration

Tables 8, 9, and 10, delineate family size and birth-order between males and females, and across the six religious categories. It is not surprising to note that more LDS and Catholic participants came from larger families. A rather unexpected finding was that conservative Protestants came from smaller families than did liberal Protestants. It can also be seen that the majority of participants were first- or second-born.

Table 7  
 Comparison of Religious Preference With Marital Worth  
 Items Demonstrating Statistically Significant Differences  
 Between Groups\*

Item	Religious Preference						Statistics		
	LDS	Cath	L Pr	C Pr	Jew	Oth	$\chi^2$	df	p
No kids	89	84	75	77	85	68	21.91	10	.007
Different faith	78	10	6	32	.2	5	362.96	10	.000
No formal relig	80	23	25	46	23	7	232.20	10	.000
Married before	24	21	16	31	19	20	23.22	10	.010
Premarital sex	44	6	5	9	0	4	185.47	10	.000
Different race	54	57	62	47	63	31	36.42	10	.000
Not religious	55	3	5	25	0	4	272.16	10	.000
Sexy/ugly	22	9	12	17	4	7	27.53	10	.003
Herpes	89	87	79	84	74	72	23.54	10	.009
Prison	82	82	77	69	63	73	25.77	10	.004
Smokes	89	39	48	65	22	62	138.20	10	.000
Drinks	79	11	15	29	15	15	289.62	10	.000
Illegal drugs	95	82	83	89	78	74	33.05	10	.000
Rapist	97	100	99	97	100	93	19.34	10	.036
Bad personality	51	62	63	62	37	55	24.57	10	.006
Bisexual	96	97	93	97	93	86	22.42	10	.013
Homosexual	100	99	99	98	96	93	16.88	5	.005
Promiscuous	83	59	58	68	37	43	68.75	10	.000
Non-conformist	39	19	23	30	15	21	31.89	10	.000
Divorced once	24	19	19	37	19	18	37.72	10	.000
Divorced many	77	72	72	77	67	62	20.70	10	.023

\*Percent answering "No" to the items reflected on this table.

Table 8

Distribution of Sample by Gender and Family Size

		Family Size	
		Large	Small
Gender	Male	62.1%	37.9%
	Female	55.3%	44.7%

$\chi^2 (1) = 1.67 \quad p = .196$

Table 9

Distribution of Sample by Gender and Birth Order

		Birth Order				
		1	2	3	4	5
Gender	Male	36.8%	25.6%	16.0%	9.6%	12.0%
	Female	34.8%	29.4%	14.7%	10.6%	10.5%

$\chi^2 (4) = 1.33 \quad p = .889$

Table 10

Distribution of Sample by Family Size and Religious Preference \*

		<u>Religious Preference</u>					
		LDS	Catholic	L. Prot.	C. Prot	Jewish	Other
Family Size	Small	24.9%	54.0%	72.5%	74.2%	85.0%	62.7%
	Large	75.1%	46.0%	27.5%	25.8%	15.0%	37.3%

$\chi^2 (5) = 109.51 \quad df = .000$

\*Percent of those responding to this item

The findings indicate that family size and, to a certain extent, birth order are related to perceptions individuals have regarding marital worth. To compare answers on individual items, family size in this instance was collapsed into five categories with the fifth category containing those families with five or more children. Results of the comparisons are shown on Table 11. The groups differed in only nine of 49 responses. No statistically significant differences were noted on the remaining items. A positive relationship was observed between family size and variables related to religious values; responses by those coming from larger families tending to be more conservative. Family size was further collapsed into two groups. Those with two children or less were considered small, while those with three or more children were assigned to the large category. T-tests comparing the two groups on mean factor scores revealed differences on only two factors: Factor 1, Values Orientation and Factor 2, Social Norms. Those coming from large families appeared to be more conservative on items dealing with values.

Birth order was also collapsed into five categories for purposes of analyses. In referring to Table 12, it can be noted that differences existed in nine of the 49 categories. A positive linear relationship exists between birth order and the variables related to values, with



Table 11

Comparison of Family Size With Marital Worth Items  
 Demonstrating Statistically Significant Differences  
 Between Groups \*

Items	Family Size					Statistics		
	1	2	3	4	5+	$\chi^2$	df	p
Different faith	15	14	23	25	49	73.93	8	.000
No formal relig	21	30	31	36	57	53.25	8	.000
Premarital sex	5	8	7	17	30	61.61	8	.000
Not religious	18	10	13	18	33	47.63	8	.000
Smokes	44	57	57	57	69	18.85	8	.000
Drinks	23	21	27	27	50	49.79	8	.000
Not coll. grad	23	32	25	25	19	15.55	8	.049
Promiscuous	41	61	65	64	77	37.23	8	.000
Bad Temper	92	90	94	94	91	27.54	8	.001

Table 12

Comparison of Birth Order With Marital Worth Items  
 Demonstrating Statistically Significant Differences  
 Between Groups\*

Items	Birth Order					Statistics		
	1	2	3	4	5	$\chi^2$	df	p
Different faith	23	25	25	34	42	29.02	8	.000
No formal relig	34	37	34	45	53	15.64	8	.047
Foreign	6	7	3	8	6	19.71	8	.011
Sexy/ugly	11	15	14	16	13	30.76	8	.000
Pretty/not sexy	14	17	14	17	14	17.85	8	.022
Prison	78	.8	71	77	77	16.35	8	.038
Different class	18	20	18	12	13	20.64	8	.008
Drinks	26	27	28	37	45	20.86	8	.008
Bad personality	61	59	51	53	55	15.86	8	.044

\*Percent answering "No" to the items reflected on these tables.

responses by first- and second-born children being more liberal. However, first-born children were least likely to marry someone with a bad personality ( $X^2(8) = 15.86, p < .05$ ). Third born children were most moderate in their views over all.

#### Attitudes and Values

Participants were asked six questions relating to values and attitudes regarding living with someone prior to marriage and their major motivation for eventually marrying someone. The first question addressed the age that the participants first "fell in love" or entered a serious relationship. Ages at "first love" ranged from 10 to 30 with the mean age being 16.6, and the majority (40%) reporting age 18. When asked if they would be willing to live with someone outside of marriage, 54% reported yes; 46% no. More than two thirds (68.9%) reported that their parents would not approve of them cohabiting with someone of the opposite sex before marriage. A relatively small percentage (14.9%) indicated that they had previously lived with or were presently living with someone to whom they were not married. The length of time they had lived with someone ranged from six months to four and one half years with the mean length of time being 1.77 years. Table 13 shows the results of the Chi square analyses when comparisons were made between those who indicated willingness or unwillingness to cohabit and their

Table 13

Comparison of Attitudes Towards Cohabitation With Marital Worth Items Demonstrating Statistically Significant Differences Between Groups\*

No.	Items	Willingness		Statistics		
		Yes	No	$\chi^2$	df	p
1	No kids	74	88	26.72	2	.000
3	Different faith	6	51	245.89	2	.000
4	No formal relig	16	63	220.39	2	.000
5	Married before	14	31	39.94	2	.000
6	With kids	33	50	26.03	2	.000
7	Premarital sex	2	28	137.68	2	.000
8	Different race	50	59	6.64	2	.036
13	Not religious	2	36	187.81	2	.000
14	Sexy/ugly	9	18	21.33	2	.000
18	Herpes	78	89	17.43	2	.000
19	Cult	96	99	8.18	2	.017
21	Bad reputation	53	67	21.12	2	.000
22	Prison	75	81	6.34	2	.042
23	Old rich	37	48	15.44	2	.000
25	Smokes	45	71	63.23	2	.000
26	Drinks	12	50	159.96	2	.000
27	Illegal drugs	77	95	55.31	2	.000
31	You work	50	66	22.62	2	.000
41	Bisexual	92	98	16.13	2	.000
42	Homosexual	97	100	6.52	2	.011
44	Promiscuous	48	81	106.38	2	.000
45	Non-conformist.	18	37	42.94	2	.000
46	Divorced once	15	33	45.37	2	.000
47	Divorced many	65	82	40.02	2	.000
48	Lazy	73	85	23.39	2	.000

\*Percent answering "No" to the items reflected in this table

respective responses to the individual items on the questionnaire. The answers of the two groups varied significantly on 27 of the 49 items. In all instances, those who were willing to cohabit were more liberal in their responses.

#### Hypothesis #2

The second hypothesis posits that socioeconomic status is an important variable in the mate selection process. Chi square analyses were performed to determine if differences in responses to the items were apparent among the three SES groups. Variations existed on only four of the 49 items. Responses by those in the upper SES category indicated less likelihood of marrying someone in a different class ( $\chi^2 (4) = 10.26, p < .05$ ) or someone who was not a college graduate ( $\chi^2 (4) = 18.39, p < .001$ ). Replies by those in the middle SES group indicated more willingness to marry someone who drank alcohol ( $\chi^2 (4) = 10.66, p < .05$ ). Those in the lowest SES level were least likely to marry someone who was promiscuous as indicated by their responses to that item ( $\chi^2 (4) = 10.98, p < .05$ ).

#### Hypotheses #3 and #4

The third hypothesis states that men and women vary in their perceptions and attitudes regarding the mate

selection process. Hypothesis four indicates that differences exist both within as well as between the respective groups. Men and women were first compared on their responses to the items of the scale by utilizing t-test analyses. The differences are listed in Table 14. Statistically significant differences between males and females were noted on 24 of the 49 items. Women's replies were more conservative than those of men in most areas where differences occurred. However, in noting the male responses, men appeared to be less likely to marry women who were taller than themselves ( $\chi^2$  (905) = 18.69,  $p < .001$ ), who were not "good looking" ( $\chi^2$  (900) = 3.55,  $p < .001$ ), who smoked ( $\chi^2$  (903) = 2.60,  $p < .01$ ), and who were overweight ( $\chi^2$  (898) = 2.56,  $p < .05$ ).

T-tests were also employed to compare mean factor scores between males and females. In referring to Table 15, it can be noted that statistically significant differences were present on four of the thirteen factors. As expected men and women differed on Factor 7, Masculine Expectations ( $t$  (784) = -10.31,  $p < .001$ ) and Factor 9, Feminine Expectations ( $t$  (784) = 16.68,  $p < .001$ ). The two groups also differed on Factor 4, personality attributes ( $t$  (784) = -5.14,  $p < .001$ ) with men's responses being more liberal. Finally, differences were noted in mean scores on Factor 12, Future Family Expectations ( $t$  (784) = -4.19,  $p < .001$ ), with women being more conservative, men more

Table 14  
 Comparison of Mean Scores of Men and Women on Marital  
 Worth Items Demonstrating Statistically Significant  
 Differences Between Groups\*

No.	Item	Gender		Statistics		
		Males	Females	t	df	p
1	No kids	2.29 **	2.68 **	-5.26	900	.001
7	Premarital sex	1.14	1.30	-2.54	903	.011
8	Different race	1.83	2.13	-3.25	899	.001
9	Younger	1.46	2.36	-10.55	900	.000
10	Taller	1.70	1.01	18.69	905	.000
11	Shorter	1.06	2.20	-13.42	899	.000
14	Sexy/ugly	1.67	1.21	7.46	899	.000
21	Bad reputation	2.00	2.23	-2.57	897	.010
22	Prison	2.31	2.62	-4.06	902	.000
25	Smokes	2.36	2.17	2.60	903	.009
27	Illegal drugs	2.59	2.72	-2.11	903	.035
28	Rx drug abuse	2.70	2.82	-2.34	903	.019
29	Rapist	2.87	2.98	-4.34	901	.000
30	You work	1.47	2.28	-9.24	895	.000
31	Ugly	1.52	1.28	3.55	900	.000
33	Overweight	2.75	2.55	2.56	898	.011
35	Not coll. grad	1.24	1.57	-4.12	900	.000
36	Nervous	2.10	2.38	-3.20	894	.001
37	Can't drive	1.58	1.78	-2.21	894	.027
40	Bisexual	2.81	2.91	-2.63	903	.009
41	Homosexual	2.91	2.97	-2.57	904	.010
42	Mentally ill	2.57	2.73	-2.51	898	.012
48	Lazy	2.27	2.62	-4.60	900	.000
49	Bad temper	2.56	2.84	-5.09	904	.000

\*Scores: 1 = Yes 2 = Maybe 3 = No

\*\*Mean score on each item

Table 15

Comparison of Mean Factor Scores of Men and Women\*

No.	Factor	Gender		Statistics		
		M	F	t	df	p
1	Values Orientation	-.0335	.0077	-.41	784	.680
2	Health Issues	.0824	-.0178	1.01	784	.315
3	Marital Status	.0341	-.0045	.39	784	.698
4	Personality Attributes	-.4244	.0781	-5.14	784	.000
5	Consequenses	.0586	-.0125	.71	784	.476
6	Social Norms	-.0190	.0009	-.20	784	.842
7	Masculine Expectations	-.8153	.1484	-10.31	784	.000
8	Drug Use/Abuse	-.0761	.0165	-.93	784	.353
9	Feminine Expectations	1.2158	-.2129	16.68	784	.000
10	Sexual Orientation	-.1222	.0205	-1.43	784	.153
11	Anti-social Character.	.1072	.0192	1.27	784	.205
12	Future Family Expect.	-.3505	.0601	-4.19	784	.000
13	Bizarre attitude/behav.	.0071	.0029	.10	784	.921

\*See Table 4 for Interpretation of Factor Scores

liberal, in their answers regarding that factor.

Participants were asked to indicate what their major motivation would be for marriage. The number of responses ranged from zero to six. Because of the wide variation of responses, only the first response was considered for analysis. Ninety percent of the participants responded with at least one answer. Love was the number one reason listed by both men and women (males, 43%; females, 54%). Companionship was the number two answer given by both men and women (9.6% and 8.9% respectively). Men (5.3%) listed security third, while the number three response for women (6.2%) was having children. On the final portion of the questionnaire, women (15.6%) listed a caring personality as the most important quality in a potential mate, while men (13.3%) listed physical attractiveness first.

Analysis of variance, utilizing mean factor scores, was then undertaken comparing men with men and women with women across the five geographical regions. In referring to Table 16, it can be noted that men differed from each other on three of the thirteen factors considered. Differences were apparent on Factor 1, Values Orientation, ( $F(4) = 6.092, < .001$ ), with responses by East Coast men being most liberal, those from the Rocky Mountain region most conservative. Mean scores varied significantly on Factor 3, Marital Status ( $F(4) = 2.836, p < .05$ ). The results indicated that West Coast men were most liberal,



Table 16

Comparison of Mean Factor Scores of Men Within Different Regions  
of the United States\*

Region		Factors												
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
West		.15	-.08	-.33	.15	-.61	-.19	-1.59	-.61	.66	-.42	-.08	-.99	-.30
Mountain		.45	-.23	-.31	-.58	.08	-.04	-.94	-.07	1.14	-.05	.03	-.39	.16
Midwest		-.42	.21	.04	-.57	.13	-.04	-.78	.12	1.36	-.13	.15	-.24	.16
East		-.60	-.13	.15	-.82	.76	.59	-.94	-.49	.41	.53	-.26	.25	.42
South		-.15	.29	.36	-.29	.07	-.01	-.57	-.06	1.37	-.17	.21	-.31	-.18
Statistics	F	6.10	1.69	2.84	.83	1.52	.59	2.78	1.10	1.81	.398	.297	1.11	1.06
	df	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
	P	.000	.158	.028	.833	.231	.670	.03	.767	.410	.810	.879	.353	.386

\*See Table 4 for Interpretation of Factor Scores.

with Southern men being most conservative on this factor. Finally, differences were noted on Factor 7, Masculine Expectations, ( $F(4) = 2.783, p < .05$ ). Men from the West Coast were most liberal; those from the South most conservative.

Women differed on four of the factors (see Table 17). On Factor 1, Values Orientation, the mean scores of women from the Rocky Mountain region were significantly more conservative than the rest of the groups ( $F(4) = 84.013, p < .05$ ),. Differences were noted on Factor 2, Health Issues, ( $F(4) = 2.647, p < .05$ ). Southern women were most conservative in their responses to the individual items loading on this factor. Surprisingly, women differed on Factor 7, Masculine Expectations, ( $F(4) = 13.514, p < .001$ ) with mean factor scores of women on the West Coast being more liberal, and those for women from the Rocky Mountain region most conservative. Finally, women varied significantly on Factor 8, Drug Use/Abuse, ( $F(4) = 2.889, p < .05$ ), with the most conservative scores attributed to Midwestern women, the most liberal to Eastern women.

#### Hypothesis #5

Hypothesis 5 states that marital status influences perceptions regarding marital worth as well as enhances or detracts from an individual's perceived worth on the marriage market. T- tests were performed on the individual

Table 17

Comparison of Mean Factor Scores of Women Within Different Regions  
of the United States \*

Region		Factors												
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
West		-.35	-.14	-.03	.04	-.13	.09	-.34	.06	-.28	-.18	.00	.11	.01
Mountain		1.32	-.01	-.04	.07	.02	-.11	.22	.02	-.22	.04	-.14	.09	.05
Midwest		-.32	-.10	.04	.15	.00	-.12	.25	.15	-.14	.07	.07	.15	.05
East		-.54	-.03	-.23	-.01	.04	-.03	.32	-.29	-.18	.13	-.06	.08	-.21
South		-.39	.22	.12	.08	.04	.08	.37	-.06	-.25	.09	.00	-.16	.10
Statistics	F	84.01	2.65	1.52	.484	.612	.966	13.51	2.89	.846	2.12	.957	2.29	1.27
	df	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
	p	.000	.033	.195	.748	.654	.425	.000	.022	.496	.077	.436	.059	.296

\*See Table 4 for Interpretation of Factor Scores.

items of the scale comparing responses between never-married and ever-married participants (see Table 18). The two groups differed on 18 of the 49 items. Those who were married, or who had experienced marriage were less tolerant of drinking ( $t(879) = -3.70, p < .001$ ), drug use ( $t(879) = -2.16, p < .05$ ), promiscuity ( $t(871) = -2.43, p < .05$ ), and laziness ( $t(876) = -2.86, p < .05$ ). In analyzing their responses, marrieds also appeared less likely to marry someone of a different religious faith ( $t(880) = -2.09, p < .05$ ) or who did not belong to an organized religion ( $t(877) = -2.59, p < .05$ ). Interestingly, marrieds demonstrated that they were less likely to marry someone who was pretty but not sexy ( $t(872) = -3.30, p < .01$ ). Responses by singles were more conservative in the remaining areas of differences. It should be noted that age may be an intervening variable in this analysis, as older respondents were more likely to have been married.

The findings indicate that being divorced once does not appear to be as detrimental as being divorced several times. More than three fourths of both men and women stated that they would marry someone who had been divorced once (see table 2), whereas approximately that same number stated that they would not marry someone who had been divorced more than once. Slightly over 68% of younger people stated that they would marry someone who had been divorced once compared to 96% of these in their thirties.

Table 18  
 Comparisons of Marital Status on Marital Worth Items  
 Demonstrating Statistically Significant Differences  
 Between Groups\*

Items	Marital Status		Statistics		
	Single	Married	t	df	p
Different faith	1.51**	1.68 **	-2.09	880	.037
No formal relig	1.72	1.96	-2.59	877	.010
Married before	1.50	1.14	4.68	877	.000
With kids	1.91	1.45	5.04	876	.000
Different race	2.15	1.82	3.51	876	.000
Younger	2.29	1.94	3.92	877	.000
Health problem	2.07	1.87	2.18	864	.030
AIDS	2.85	2.75	2.09	874	.037
Pretty/not sexy	1.28	1.51	-3.30	872	.001
Drinks	1.56	1.86	-3.70	879	.000
Illegal drugs	2.69	2.83	-2.16	879	.031
Can't dance	1.47	1.21	3.44	878	.001
Not coll. grad	1.55	1.33	2.73	876	.006
Acne	2.22	1.87	3.87	868	.000
Promiscuous	2.24	2.46	-2.43	871	.015
Divorced once	1.52	1.21	4.01	877	.000
Divorced many	2.53	2.18	4.41	876	.000
Lazy	2.53	2.75	-2.86	876	.004

\*1 = Yes    2 = Maybe    3 = No

\*\*Mean score on each item

Almost 80% of the youngest age cohort expressed that they would be unwilling to marry someone who had been divorced several times (see Table 5). No significant differences appeared when comparing region of the country and perceptions of those being divorced once. Responses from those from the Rocky Mountain region showed that they were least likely (20.2%) to marry someone who had been divorced more than once. Responses by those from the East Coast were most liberal in that respect, with slightly over 41% indicating that they would marry that type of person (see Table 6).

When comparing responses regarding those two items across religious orientations, it can be seen on Table 7 that conservative Protestants seemed least likely to marry someone who had been divorced once (36.9% would not) and LDS students least likely to marry someone who had been divorced more than once (77.3% would not).

Persons indicating that they would be willing to live with someone outside of marriage also expressed more willingness to marry someone who had been divorced (see Table 13). Differences were also noted between singles and marrieds. In reviewing their answers, it appears that singles were less likely than marrieds to marry someone who had been divorced once or a number of times (see Table 19)

No significant differences were noted between those coming from different sized families or from different

birth-order positions. In addition, meaningful differences were not apparent between men and women on these two items.

#### Hypothesis #6

It was hypothesized that the use or abuse of chemical substances substantially lowers one's worth on the marriage market. Interestingly, alcohol and tobacco use loaded on Factor 1, Values Orientation (see Table 3), when it had been predicted that these items would load on Factor 8, Drug Use/Abuse. It is assumed that this occurred because of the relatively large LDS portion of the sample who are directed to abstain from these substances as part of their religious beliefs.

Misuse of prescription drugs ranked seventh for both men and women as detracting from marital worth (see Table 2). Use of illegal drugs ranked eighth for men and tenth for women. In referring to Table 5, it can be noted that responses by those aged 25 to 29 were most conservative regarding of drug use, and the most liberal responses came from those aged 30 to 34, although the majority in all age groups viewed the use of illegal drugs negatively. Those living on the East Coast were most liberal in their responses regarding drug use (see Table 6), those in the Rocky Mountain region most conservative. The overwhelming majority of responses indicated that participants in all of

the religious domains found drug use to be unacceptable (see Table 7).

Smoking was found to be a significant detractant for both men and women, but especially for women (see Table 2). Sixty-seven percent of men stated that they would not marry a woman who smoked. In comparison, 56% of women indicated that they would not marry a smoker. Although the majority in all age groups indicated that smoking is a detractant, responses of those age 20-24 were most liberal, while responses of those younger than 20 years of age were least tolerant towards smoking (refer to Table 5). More than 73% of those living on the East Coast stated that they would marry someone who smoked (see Table 6), compared to just over 16% of those in the Rocky Mountain region. Those in the other three regions were almost evenly divided in their responses. Jewish respondents were most liberal in regards to smoking, LDS participants most conservative (refer to Table 7). More than 68% of those in large families, compared to approximately 44% of those in small families, replied that they would not marry someone who smoked (refer to Table 11).

Social drinking was not found to detract significantly from overall marital worth, although many indicated that they would not marry an alcoholic. Slightly more than two thirds of both male and female respondents stated that they would marry a person who drank alcohol (see Table 2). In



regards to drinking, respondents in the youngest age group were most conservative (see Table 5) although slightly more than half stated that they would marry someone who drank. The majority of respondents in all regions indicated that they would marry someone who drank alcohol with those on the East Coast being most liberal in their responses, and those in the Rocky Mountain region most conservative in that respect (see Table 6). In referring to Table 7, it can be seen by their answers that Jewish participants were most willing to marry someone who drinks (85% said yes), LDS students least willing (78.5% said no). Slightly under one half of those living in families with five or more children indicated that they would not marry someone who drinks (see Table 11). In comparison, less than one fourth of those who identified themselves as only children said no. A negative linear relationship was apparent in birth order and willingness to marry someone who drank with first-borns indicating the most tolerance by their responses (see Table 12).

#### Hypothesis #7

It was hypothesized that chronic health problems and catastrophic illnesses have a strong negative influence on marital worth. Although approximately one half of the sample stated that they would not marry someone with any type of chronic health problem (see Table 2), more than 90

percent of the respondents stated that they would not marry someone with AIDS. Slightly over 80 percent of both males and females indicated unwillingness to marry someone with herpes. Age was not a significant factor on these items. Responses by those living on the West coast indicated that they were slightly more willing to marry someone with herpes (23.5%). Responses by those in the "Other" category of religion also indicated that those individuals were somewhat more willing to marry someone with herpes when compared to those of other faiths. Those choosing to live with someone outside of marriage indicated that they were more willing to marry someone with herpes than those who would not cohabit (see Table 13). No other significant differences were noted across the various groups. All three variables (chronic health problems, herpes, and AIDS) were seen as being detrimental to being chosen as a marital partner.

#### Hypothesis #8

It was hypothesized that sexual history influences the mate selection process. The findings indicated that premarital sexual intercourse does not lower a person's perceived marital worth in any important way. It was ranked 46th of 49 items for women and 44th for men. Those under age 20 were more critical of someone who had engaged in premarital sexual relations. However nearly three

fourths of that age group indicated that they would marry someone who had experienced premarital sex (see Table 5).

As expected, (see Table 6) those on the East coast (97.5%) were most tolerant in their responses, those in the Rocky Mountain area least tolerant (58.9%) in this respect. One hundred percent of Jewish participants indicated by their responses that premarital sex was not a problem when considering a future marital partner (see Table 7). Although more than one half of LDS students answered that they would marry someone who had participated in premarital sex, they were still more conservative compared to the other groups.

Tolerance of premarital sex and the size of the family of orientation was found to be negatively related; smaller families being most liberal, larger families more conservative in their responses (see Table 11). As expected, those who were willing to cohabit were also more likely to consider marrying someone who had engaged in premarital sexual relations (see Table 13).

Promiscuity, homosexuality, bisexuality, no interest in sex, and being a rapist were extremely detrimental to marital worth. Refer to Table 2 for the rankings of these items. On those items where differences occurred, younger people (Table 5), those from the Rocky Mountain Area (Table 6), those of the LDS faith (Table 7), and those coming from large families (Table 11) offered the most conservative

responses. Those willing to cohabit (Table 13) along with those attending school on both coasts, and those falling into the religious category of Other were most liberal in this regard.

#### Hypothesis #9

It was hypothesized that those who are physically attractive are more successful in attracting a mate. The findings demonstrate that obesity significantly detracted from one's marital worth, especially that of women (see Table 14). Obesity ranked sixth for women and fifteenth for men as being an obstacle in the mate selection process (see Table 2).

The findings indicate that it is more costly for a woman to be unattractive. Statistically significant differences existed in the mean scores of men and women on the items dealing with sexy but not good looking ( $t(899) = 7.46, p < .001$ ), not considered good looking ( $t(900) = 3.55, p < .001$ ), and obesity ( $t(898) = 2.56, p < .05$ ). In all three cases men's responses were more conservative compared to those of women.

Referring to Table 5, those under age 20 also indicated more concern about physical attractiveness. In evaluating their responses, it can be seen that this group is less likely to marry someone perceived to be sexy yet ugly (80% said no) and more likely to marry someone who was

pretty, but not sexy (85.8% said yes). Younger respondents also expressed less tolerance for someone with acne (61.3% said no). Analysis of the answers given by respondents from the Southern region showed that they were least likely to want to marry someone with acne (71.4% said no), whereas West coast students were most tolerant (50.5% said yes).

Over 90 percent of East coast residents stated that they would marry someone who was sexy but not good looking (see Table 6) compared to 77.5 percent of Rocky Mountain students and 82.6 percent of Southern participants. Responses by Jewish respondents were most tolerant; LDS students demonstrated the least tolerance of this variable (see Table 7).

#### Hypothesis #10

The final hypotheses states that exchange principles can be utilized in predicting an individual's chances for marriage. Briefly, from the findings of the factor analysis, principal aspects of the mate selection process were identified (see Table 3). When factor scores were analyzed, it was found that individuals fell into a positive, negative or neutral category (refer to Table 4). Subsequently, results from the regression analysis, utilizing factor scores with demographic and attitudinal variables, showed statistically significant values for each factor analyzed. Table 19 delineates the findings for each

of the factors.

Finally, it was found that when each factor is given a societal weighting, and the individual is scored on each, a simple regression equation can be utilized to predict marital worth. By drawing upon the extensive findings of the study, exchange principles can then be employed to help explain the courtship process (see Figures 1 and 2).

Table 19  
 Results of Stepwise Regression Analysis Utilizing  
 Individual Factor Scores

Factor	Variables	R <sup>2</sup>	F	df	p
1 Values Orientation	Religion (Catholic) (Cons. Prot) Willingness to cohabit Age	.59	180.82	4/496	.000
2 Health Issues	Area (South) Willingness to cohabit	.04	9.94	2/498	.000
3 Marital Status	Age Parents approve Religion (Catholic) Willingness to cohabit	.13	18.63	4/496	.000
4 Personality Attributes	Gender Age	.08	21.45	2/498	.000
5 Consequences of Life Style	Has lived with someone Area (East)	.03	6.80	2/498	.001

Table 19  
Continued

Factor	Variables	R <sup>2</sup>	F	df	p
6 Social Norms	Age Marital status SES	.05	7.84	3/497	.000
7 Masculine Expectations	Gender Area (Midwest) (South) Age Race	.23	29.10	5/495	.000
8 Drug Use/ Abuse	Has lived with someone Marital status	.03	7.18	2/498	.001
9 Feminine Expectations	Gender	.27	172.49	1/499	.000
10 Sexual Orientation	Religion (Other) (Catholic) Area (East) Willingness to cohabit	.07	9.16	4/496	.000
11 Anti-social. Characteristics	Parents approve Religion (Catholic)	.03	6.45	2/498	.002



Table 19  
Continued

Factor	Variables	R <sup>2</sup>	F	df	p
12		.03	8.58	2/498	.000
Future Family Expectations	No kids				
	Can't have kids				
13		.03	8.40	2/498	.000
Bizarre Attitude/ Behavior	No sex				
	Cult				

FACTORS

LET

1. Values Orientation
2. Health Issues
3. Marital Status
4. Personality Attributes
5. Consequences of Life Style
6. Social Norms
7. Masculine Expectations
8. Drug Use/Abuse
9. Feminine Expectations
10. Sexual Orientation
11. Anti-social Characteristics
12. Future Family Expectations
13. Bizarre Attitude/Behavior

Y = Predicted Marital Worth of the Individual  
 $\beta_0$  = Inherent Human Characteristics  
 $\beta$  = Weighted Value of a Specific Factor  
in a Given Society  
X = Individual's Score on a Specific Factor

THEN

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \dots + \beta_{13} X_{13}$$

Figure 1. Predicting individual worth on the marriage market in a given society.

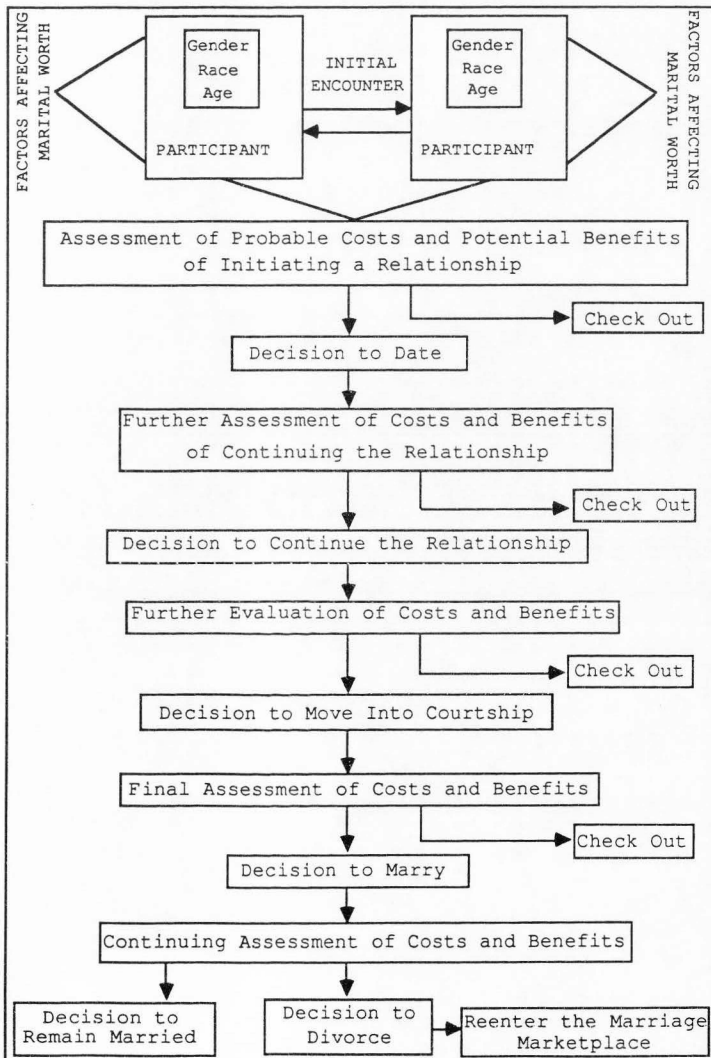


Figure 2. Exchange principles as they affect the courtship process in a given society.

## CHAPTER V

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Theory building in family science has been seriously underway since the early 1950s, yet much remains to be done empirically to determine to what extent current theories explain the major domains of family life. It was in this context of the need to test theory and to promote development of theory that this study was conducted.

The main purpose of this study was to apply exchange theory to the mate selection process. More specifically, objectives included: (1) identifying qualities and characteristics influencing marital worth, (2) determining the impact of social and cultural aspects on the mate selection process, and (3) evaluating the influence of attitudes and behaviors on mate selection. Of particular interest was determining whether marital worth of individuals could be measured and predicted.

The study was cross-regional and included 913 respondents from nine universities across America. Eighty-five percent of the participants were female, 15% male. The sample included 825 whites and 76 non-whites, with race not listed for two respondents. Ages of the respondents ranged from 18 to 65 years, with a mean age of 22.2. Students in this sample were currently enrolled in general family life and human development courses and in most cases

were taking such courses as part of their general education programs.

A three-part questionnaire was completed by each participant. Extensive demographic information in addition to attitudinal information was sought in the first portion. The information obtained from this segment of the study revealed that participants came from widely varying backgrounds.

The second portion consisted of 49 individual scale items designed to measure an individual's worth on the marriage market. The investigator hypothesized that differences would exist among a number of designated groups. Comparisons were made between different age groups, between and within gender groups, between whites and non-whites, between never-married and ever-married individuals, across religious domains, between SES groups, and across regions of the country. Comparisons were also made between those coming from large and small families and birth-order positions.

The 49 items of the scale each loaded onto one of 14 distinguishable factors, providing a basis for predictive analysis. The 14th factor was dropped as it consisted of only one variable. The items fell together in coherent groups with the exception of alcohol and tobacco use. It was hypothesized that these two items would load onto the substance use/abuse factor along with drug use. However,

the two items loaded most highly on the values orientation factor. Characteristics of the sample may account for this occurrence due to the relatively large proportion (21%) of LDS students in the sample who are encouraged to abstain from these substances as part of their religious beliefs.

When factor scores of individuals were analyzed, differences were readily apparent among those who loaded negatively, positively, and neutrally on each factor. Therefore, characteristics of individuals could be identified; and by employing regression analysis, it was possible to theoretically predict "marital worth." The most important implication of the factor analysis is that mate selection across the nation involves a process of elimination that eventually excludes those having perceived detrimental or negative characteristics. Thus, the distraction model holds up and allows prediction to a certain extent.

The extensive findings from this study support those of prior studies and fully or partially support all of the hypotheses put forth by the investigator. Differences existed in all of the domains, although few differences were present between racial groups and SES groups. Lack of variation between these groups may reflect the "trickle-down effect," wherein those in disadvantaged or minority groups in society adopt middle-class values.

The present findings suggest that younger people are more idealistic in choosing a marriage partner than are those who are older. Religion and area of the country may have been confounding variables contributing to these findings, as those in the youngest age group were primarily from the Rocky Mountain area and LDS. However, the nature of the study suggests that youth do have a tendency to have high expectations of future spouses. In addition, ever-married persons appear to be more realistic in their expectations of future spouses than never-marrieds. Age may have been an intervening variable in these findings, as older respondents were more apt to have been married than younger participants.

Women were somewhat more conservative than men on most items where differences were noted. With the exception of those questions addressing physical characteristics, men's responses were more liberal overall. Differences also existed within as well as between the sexes across different regions of the country. It may be that the differences were primarily due to different social and religious backgrounds rather than to the innate differences of males and females.

Those students attending school on the East Coast and the West Coast were more liberal in their responses than the other groups overall. These findings are most probably reflections of different lifestyles and values in different

regions of the country. Those living in the Midwest, South, and Rocky Mountain areas were somewhat more conservative in their views. While researchers are often reluctant to include religious issues in their investigations, the findings of this study indicate that religion plays a major role in the attitudes and values of those seeking a potential mate. Significant differences were observed between the various religious categories. LDS students were most conservative overall, while Jewish respondents were most liberal.

Family size contributed slightly to the variation in responses. The findings were mixed in that those from small families were more conservative on personality and social issues, while those from large families were more concerned about religious issues and substance abuse. Religion is thought to be an intervening variable here, as the majority of those coming from large families were LDS or Catholic. Birth order, although not a significant variable in this study, also contributed to the variations noted in responses. First- and second-born participants were more liberal in their responses. Family size and religion may be intervening variables in these findings.

Lifestyle practices have changed over the past two or three decades as reflected in the large percentage of young people willing to cohabit. Comparisons were made between those who were willing and those who were unwilling to live



with someone of the opposite sex outside of marriage. Those willing to cohabit were more liberal in their responses overall. It may be that people willing to cohabit are "selected out" by several factors including religious preference, social surroundings, and family attitudes and background. Therefore, these findings may be based upon factors other than willingness to live with someone outside of marriage. Nevertheless, an expression of willingness to cohabit is predictive of a more liberal orientation in mate selection.

Characteristics found to be most detrimental to marital worth include homosexuality or bisexuality, being a rapist, belonging to a cult, having AIDS or herpes, and being overweight. Premarital sex was not considered to be an important issue with any of the groups, although promiscuity was a detractant to marital worth. This finding reflects the contemporary attitudes regarding premarital sexual behavior in American society. Were this study undertaken in the 1950s, it is presumed that premarital sex would have detracted from overall marital worth, especially for females.

Drug use/abuse is a definite drawback to those on the marriage market now, as it was in the past. Alcohol consumption is a minor consideration in determining marital worth compared to the use of other substances, including tobacco. Again, this is an interesting finding in light of

contemporary health attitudes. Social drinking is not regarded as detracting from marital worth now and was probably not a major consideration two decades ago. However, 20 years ago, when smoking was associated with rugged manliness, it may have been considered to be attractive. Smoking is now perceived to be a definite drawback, especially for women. This change is likely due to extensive media coverage addressing the hazards of smoking to one's self and to others in addition to the recent emphasis on living a healthy lifestyle.

The third portion of the questionnaire invited respondents to list any other qualities that they believed would affect a person's perceived marital worth. In this portion of the study, women listed a warm and caring attitude as the number one positive attribute in a potential mate and abusiveness as the worst trait one could have. Men considered attractiveness the top quality for a woman to have and moodiness the least desirable characteristic. To the extent that physical characteristics are considered important, these findings suggest that exchange principles are applicable in the beginning stages of the mate selection process. For example, personality traits often are not apparent at first and may not be utilized as initial bargaining tools, whereas physical attractiveness is immediately noticed and, therefore, places one at an advantage or disadvantage in a

first encounter.

Given the contemporary nature of society, having been impacted by the women's movement, affirmative action, and social upheaval, it was interesting to note that some ideas have remained the same over time. As potential mates, men are still expected to be taller, older, more educated, and to provide for the family. Conversely, women are expected to be attractive, shorter, younger, and less educated. These findings support the idea that men marry "down" and women marry "up" (Bernard, 1972). Interestingly, considering the modern attitudes of those presently living in the United States, love is still the primary motivation for both men and women to marry. Companionship, security, and having children were also listed as important reasons to marry.

#### Discussion

While utilizing exchange theory was the underlying motivation of the study, it was not possible to ascertain whether or not respondents were actually utilizing exchange principles in contemplating mate selection. However, in considering the mate selection process, and especially initial encounters, the exchange process appeared to be operating. A number of characteristics were identified as detracting from one's marital worth, and these findings will be useful to those currently on the marriage market as

well as those who are studying the mate selection process.

In considering contemporary values and attitudes, predicting marital worth in today's society was of primary interest to the investigator. The findings of this study make it theoretically possible to predict an individual's value on the marriage market. The factors emerging from the study helped to identify substantive facets of the mate selection process, making it feasible to predict marital worth. By using the "marriage market" concept, exchange principles can be utilized to help explain the courtship process (see Figures 1 and 2).

Although variables may be defined and marital worth predicted, mate selection to a certain extent still remains somewhat of an elusive phenomenon. Exchange theory explains only one facet of the mate selection process. Scientists are still intrigued with the fact that no one can fully explain why a certain man is attracted to a particular woman and she to him. Perhaps John Cheever (1977) said it best:

I am today and will be forever astonished at the perspicacity with which a man can, in a glimpse, judge the scope and beauty of a woman's memory, her tastes in color, food, climate and language, the precise clinical dimensions of her visceral, cranial, and reproductive tracts, the conditions of her teeth, hair, skin, toenails, eyesight and bronchial tree, that he can in a second, exalted by the diagnostics of love, seize on the fact that she is meant for him or that they are meant for one another. (pp. 76-77)

### Limitations

The limitations of this study are due mainly to the sample. The present study was a cross-sectional design utilizing a non-random population of college students. Therefore, the findings may not be applicable across all strata of society. The researcher suggests that future investigators exercise discretion in applying the findings to the general population.

Finally, exchange theory falls short in providing a complete explanation of mate selection (i.e., it does not account for altruism or changes that occur as the relationship progresses). However, when considering initial interpersonal encounters in the mate selection process, exchange theory provides a plausible explanation (Walster et al., 1978). It may be more useful for scientists to combine exchange with equity theory thereby considering balance and adjustment along with costs and rewards in ongoing relationships (Hatfield et al., 1979).

### Recommendations for Future Research

Considering previous research, and in light of the findings of the present study, the investigator suggests several areas for future study addressing theoretical issues as well as the phenomenon of mate selection:

1. A replication of the present study utilizing a sample of working class individuals would provide

insight regarding the mate selection process in that population.

2. A similar study utilizing more in-depth information from the respondents would add richness to our present knowledge of the mate selection process.
3. Contemporary cross-cultural comparisons of mate selection would provide additional insight into the mate selection process in different areas of the world.
4. Studies of mate selection as it affects the subsequent outcomes of couples who eventually marry would advance what we know about the mate selection process.
5. Further studies of mate selection, as well as other selected areas of family life and human behavior, utilizing various family theories would add empirical richness to the field of family studies.

It is clear that we have come a long way in theory building, but the journey has only begun. Much of the theory work has been dealing with refinement, conceptual clarification, and cataloging activities. Fewer attempts have been made to actually test family theories. The present study is posited as a needed direction and a renewed dedication to testing theory.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. The Original Version of the  
Mate Selection Questionnaire

Please complete the following about yourself:

Male \_\_\_ Age \_\_\_ Your present level of education \_\_\_\_\_  
 Female \_\_\_ Marital Status \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of children in family of orientation \_\_\_\_\_  
 I was number 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (circle one)

My religious preference or membership is \_\_\_\_\_

Would you be willing to live with someone outside of  
marriage? \_\_\_\_\_

Would your parents approve of you living with someone  
outside of marriage? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you lived with someone outside of marriage? \_\_\_\_\_  
 If yes, how long? \_\_\_\_\_

How old were you when you truly became serious about  
someone? \_\_\_\_\_

How many serious loves have you had? \_\_\_\_\_

What would be or what was your major motivation to  
marriage? \_\_\_\_\_

WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO MARRY SOMEONE  
(answer Yes or No to each of the following):

1. \_\_\_ who did not want to have any children.
2. \_\_\_ who could not have any children.
3. \_\_\_ who was not a member of your religious faith.
4. \_\_\_ who had been married before (no children).
5. \_\_\_ who had been married before (one or more children).
6. \_\_\_ who had premarital sexual intercourse.
7. \_\_\_ who was a member of another race.
8. \_\_\_ who was 5-10 years younger than you.
9. \_\_\_ who was 3-4 inches taller than you
10. \_\_\_ who was 3-4 inches shorter than you.
11. \_\_\_ who was from another country, but your same race.
12. \_\_\_ who was a member of your faith, but very inactive.
13. \_\_\_ who was "sexy", but not good looking.
14. \_\_\_ who was good looking, but not "sexy".
15. \_\_\_ who had a "bad" reputation.
16. \_\_\_ who was a lot older than you, but very rich.
17. \_\_\_ who was in a completely different social class.

18. \_\_\_\_\_ who was a drug user (alcohol and tobacco not included)
19. \_\_\_\_\_ who was a drug user (alcohol and tobacco included).
20. \_\_\_\_\_ who had been raped.
21. \_\_\_\_\_ who had raped someone.
22. \_\_\_\_\_ who wanted you to be the primary bread winner.
23. \_\_\_\_\_ who was considered "not good looking" by most people.
24. \_\_\_\_\_ who had a "bad" personality as judged by most people.
25. \_\_\_\_\_ who was significantly overweight.
26. \_\_\_\_\_ who did not like to dance.
27. \_\_\_\_\_ who was not a college graduate.
28. \_\_\_\_\_ who was an extremely nervous, restless type person.
29. \_\_\_\_\_ who could not drive an automobile.
30. \_\_\_\_\_ who was extremely thin.
31. \_\_\_\_\_ who had a severe complexion problem (face).
32. \_\_\_\_\_ who had a chronic health problem.



Appendix B. The Revised Version of the  
Mate Selection Questionnaire

Please complete the following about yourself:

Male \_\_\_ Age \_\_\_ Your present level of education \_\_\_\_\_

Female \_\_\_ Marital status \_\_\_\_\_

# of children in family of orientation \_\_\_\_\_

I was number 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (circle one)

Race of father \_\_\_\_\_

Race of mother \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation of father \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation of mother \_\_\_\_\_

Education of father \_\_\_\_\_

Education of mother \_\_\_\_\_

My religious preference or membership is \_\_\_\_\_

Would you be willing to live with someone outside of marriage? \_\_\_\_\_

Would your parents approve of you living with someone outside of marriage? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you lived with someone outside of marriage? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, how long? \_\_\_\_\_

How old were you when you truly became serious about someone? \_\_\_\_\_

How many serious loves have you had? \_\_\_\_\_

What would be or what was your major motivation to marriage? \_\_\_\_\_

Please check Yes or No to each of the following 49 questions. In a general sense, we are interested in finding out what makes someone attractive or not so attractive in terms of a marriage market. We realize that it would depend on the situation, but for each of the items, try to evaluate the impact of the item on selecting an eventual marital partner.

WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO MARRY SOMEONE (check Yes or No to the following):

Yes   No

1. \_\_\_   \_\_\_ who did not want to have any children.
2. \_\_\_   \_\_\_ who could not have any children.
3. \_\_\_   \_\_\_ who was not a member of your religious faith.
4. \_\_\_   \_\_\_ who was not a member of any organized religious faith.
5. \_\_\_   \_\_\_ who had been married before (no children).

- | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> |  |
|------------|-----------|--|
| 6. ___     | ___       | who had been married before (one or more children)                   |
| 7. ___     | ___       | who had premarital sexual intercourse.                               |
| 8. ___     | ___       | who was a member of another race.                                    |
| 9. ___     | ___       | who was 5-10 years younger than you.                                 |
| 10. ___    | ___       | who was 3-4 inches taller than you.                                  |
| 11. ___    | ___       | who was 3-4 inches shorter than you.                                 |
| 12. ___    | ___       | who was from another country, but your same race.                    |
| 13. ___    | ___       | who was a member of your faith, but very inactive.                   |
| 14. ___    | ___       | who was "sexy", but not good-looking.                                |
| 15. ___    | ___       | who was not interested in having sex.                                |
| 16. ___    | ___       | who had a chronic health problem.                                    |
| 17. ___    | ___       | who had been exposed to AIDS.  |
| 18. ___    | ___       | who had herpes.  |
| 19. ___    | ___       | who belonged to a cult.  |
| 20. ___    | ___       | who was good-looking, but not "sexy".                                |
| 21. ___    | ___       | who had a bad reputation.  |
| 22. ___    | ___       | who had been in prison.  |
| 23. ___    | ___       | who was a lot older than you, but very rich.                         |
| 24. ___    | ___       | who was in a completely different social class.                      |
| 25. ___    | ___       | who used tobacco.  |
| 26. ___    | ___       | who used alcohol.  |
| 27. ___    | ___       | who was a user of illegal drugs.                                     |
| 28. ___    | ___       | who was an abuser of prescribed drugs.                               |
| 29. ___    | ___       | who had been raped.  |
| 30. ___    | ___       | who had raped someone.   |
| 31. ___    | ___       | who wanted you to be the primary breadwinner.                        |
| 32. ___    | ___       | who was considered "not good looking" by most people.                |
| 33. ___    | ___       | who had a "bad" personality as judged by most people.                |
| 34. ___    | ___       | who was significantly overweight.                                    |
| 35. ___    | ___       | who did not like to dance.   |
| 36. ___    | ___       | who was not a college graduate.                                      |
| 37. ___    | ___       | who was an extremely nervous, restless type person.                  |
| 38. ___    | ___       | who could not drive an automobile.                                   |
| 39. ___    | ___       | who was extremely thin.  |
| 40. ___    | ___       | who had a severe complexion problem (face).                          |
| 41. ___    | ___       | who was bisexual.  |
| 42. ___    | ___       | who was homosexual.  |
| 43. ___    | ___       | who had a history of mental problems.                                |
| 44. ___    | ___       | who had experienced many sexual encounters with a variety of people. |
| 45. ___    | ___       | who was considered to be a very liberal person (nonconformist).      |
| 46. ___    | ___       | who had been divorced once.  |
| 47. ___    | ___       | who had been divorced more than once.                                |

Yes No

48. \_\_\_ \_\_\_ who was considered to be a lazy person.  
49. \_\_\_ \_\_\_ who was extremely bad tempered.

Please list any other characteristics you feel would increase or decrease opportunities for marriage.

Increase Opportunities

Decrease

1. \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

Please add any other comments you would like to share regarding opportunity or lack of opportunity for marriage.