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MARITAL HAPPINESS: UNDERGRADUATE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSESS
THEIR PARENTS' MARRIAGE REGARDING COMMUNICATION,
POWER, EDUCATION, AND RELIGIOSITY

by

Margaret F. Oak

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

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Family and Human Development
(Marriage and Family Therapy)

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ABSTRACT

Marital Happiness: Undergraduate University Students Assess
Their Parents' Marriage Regarding Communication,
Power, Education, and Religiosity

by

Margaret F. Oak, Master of Science
Utah State University, 2003

Major Professor: Dr. Scot M. Allgood
Department: Family, Consumer, and Human Development

This study was designed to investigate undergraduate university students' appraisals of their parents' marital happiness, and how those views affect respondents' current attitudes toward marriage. The sample included 1,437 undergraduate students between the years 1970 and 1999. The dependent variable was perceived marital happiness in the family of origin. The independent variables were perceived communication quality, perceived level of egalitarianism, level of education, and perceived religious activity of the respondents' parents as reported by the respondents. Respondents' desire to have a communication situation in their own marriage similar to that of the parents' marriage, and desire to have a power situation in their own marriage similar to that of the parents' marriage was also assessed. The results indicate that respondents saw perceived communication quality as the strongest correlate of perceived

marital happiness, and high perceived levels of parental marital happiness were associated with students' desires to have both a power situation and a communication situation in their own marriage similar to that of their parents' marriage. Perceived communication quality yielded a strong correlation with perceived marital happiness. Other correlates of perceived marital happiness included perceived level of egalitarianism and perceived religiosity. Parents' level of education correlated negatively with perceived marital happiness. Correlations among predictor variables fail to support the theoretical base used in this study, indicating that couples within the past 30 years do value the socially prescribed processes of communication quality and egalitarianism when evaluating marital happiness.

(102 pages)

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My dear grandparents Grant Anderson Harris, Jennabee Ballif Harris, Marion Davis Oak, and Cecil Raymond Oak created this vision through a century of exemplary lifelong learning. The education ethic they planted in my parents, and in turn in me, has made this all possible. My gratitude is great.

Harold Davis Oak, Patricia Florence Harris Oak, Brian Harris Oak, Kristen Matthews Oak, and Nathan Harris Oak have stood by me, and at times propped me up, during the entire graduate process. Words cannot express my appreciation or the

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Margaret F. Oak

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In our society, marriage continues to be the avenue through which the majority of people hope to be emotionally nourished and satisfied (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Corrales, 1975; Popenoe, 1993, 1996). It is often asserted that happy families share certain common characteristics (Burr, Klein, & McCubbin, 1995; Kosciulek & Lustig, 1998; McCubbin & McCubbin, 1991, 1994; McCubbin, 1989; Stinnett, 1997), with marital happiness depending primarily on good communication (Erickson, 1993; Fitzpatrick, 1988; Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Smutzler, & Vivian, 1994), shared power (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Hendrix, 1997; Longmore & Demaris, 1997; Lu, 1952; Rainwater, 1965; Rosenbluth, Steil, & Whitcomb, 1998; Steil, 1997), and homogamy between partners (Call & Heaton, 1997; Glenn, 1982; Heaton, Albrecht, & Martin, 1985; Heaton & Pratt, 1990; Kalmijn, 1998; Maneker & Rankin, 1993; Ortega, Whitt, & Williams, 1988; Strawbridge, Cohen, Shema, & Kaplan, 1996).

People gradually come to accept the evaluation and judgement of themselves they see reflected in those around them (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Cooley, 1902; Stone, 1988). Social factors influence people's personal choices by both expanding and limiting people's options and the ease with which people may choose them (Lamanna & Riedmann, 2000). If our current society promotes the idea that marital happiness can only exist when good communication and shared power are present, then the majority of American marriages should only be happy when these qualities are present. But what if there is more than one way to be happy in marriage (Edwards, 1991; Stacey, 1990,

1996)? What if the prerequisites to marital happiness do not necessarily include excellent communication and equalitarianism (Gottman, 1994)?

Rationale

The effects of the parents' marital relationship on their children's well-being has been a topic of research throughout the 20th century. As early as 1937, Popenoe and Wicks concluded that there was a marked relationship between being brought up in a happy home and a successful marriage. Focusing on the effects of the parents' marital happiness on the adult child's marital quality was studied as early as 1939, when Burgess and Cottrell compiled information from a convenience sample of 526 married couples in Illinois. Over eight years, the authors found that the happiness of the parents' marriage was associated with the adult child's "good" marital adjustment.

More recent research has produced similar findings, both to the positive and negative impact on the children of the marital relationship in the family of origin. For instance, Hagan, Simpson, and Gillis' (1979) power-control theory linked traditionally patriarchal family structures to gender differences in adolescent risk taking. Gabardi (1990) studied differences between college students from divorced and intact families on several measures of intimate relationships. Multivariate analyses of variance indicated that parental marital conflict was a significant predictor of total number of sexual partners and negative attitudes toward marriage. These attitudes regarding marriage play a pivotal role in later marital interactions, from the choice of a mate to the quality of the marriage, as well as fertility in the adult child's own family.

Grasmick, Hagan, Blackwell, and Arneklev (1996) further investigated power control theory and found that among adults who were raised in more patriarchal families, females had a significantly lower level of risk-taking. They also found that this gender difference did not appear among adults who were raised in less patriarchal family structures. It appears that the power structure in the family of origin impacts the adult children's risk-taking behaviors. A German study of South Korean, American and German mothers (Boettcher & Nickel, 1998) showed that the climate in the mothers' family of origin significantly impacted the number of children as well as the fertility orientation in her own family. White (1990) reviewed related research from the decade of the 1980s and found that parental divorce is significantly positively correlated with divorce. According to the aforementioned literature, the effects on children of parental marital functioning appear to be varied and great.

Furthermore, Kemper and Bologh (1981) obtained preferences from 227 undergraduate university students (representing 25% sample of sociology undergraduate classes at an eastern university) about the characteristics of their ideal love objects. Through factor analysis they found that the most important predictors of love choice included the respondents' mothers' marital happiness. Thus, the quality of the parents' marriage directly influences the adult child's choice of a mate, one of the most crucial decisions in life. Women's family of origin functioning was significantly linked to the communication behaviors within her marriage (Levy, Wambolt, & Fiese, 1997). Amato (1993) examined national longitudinal data from a random sample of 1,189 individuals used in the Study of Marriage Over the Life Course (Booth, Amato, Johnson, & Edwards,

1993) and employed regression analyses to conclude that parental divorce is associated with an increased risk of offspring divorce. Moreover, evidence presented by a number of researchers using different samples and covering different time periods indicates that parental conflict is associated with an increase in adjustment problems among children (see Buehler et al., 1998; Camara & Resnick, 1988; Ellis & Stuckless, 1996; Emery, 1982; Klein, Forehand, Armistead, & Brody, 1994). Popenoe (1996) argued that fatherhood and marriage are indispensable for the good of children and society at large. Finally, a growing literature suggests that having parents who divorced increases the likelihood of divorcing (Amato, 1996; Amato & DeBoer, 2001; White, 1990). The evidence pointing to the connection between parents' marital interaction and children's well-being appears to be strong.

There are research findings to the contrary, however. Terman and Oden's (1947) groundbreaking longitudinal study of 567 children found that lack of marital aptitude, or success, was due more to what Terman called neuroticism traits, or personal difficulties, than childhood family background. In 1959, Johannis and Rollins' research indicated that there was no significant correlation between the happiness of 8th graders' parents and their attitudes toward home life. Furthermore, Sykes' (1981) study of black American college students found no significant relationship between the marital happiness of parents and the students' attitudes toward marriage. Kelly and Conley (1987) studied 300 recruited couples between their engagements in the 1930s and 1980. Pearson correlations echoed Terman and Oden's (1947) results, as well as indicating that parental divorce is not a significant predictor of divorce. Bartle-Haring and Sabatelli (1998) found limited

support for the connection between experiences of family of origin and marital adjustment in adult children.

Although he acknowledged that early familial disruption has been demonstrated to affect the surviving children negatively later in life, Peacock (1997) studied 328 subjects from the original Terman sample and implemented hierarchical multiple regression statistics to find that early family divorce/separation or death did not have a lasting effect on subjective well-being 55 years later. Peacock did find, however, that parental marital happiness contributed to subjective well-being. He stated that some familial and social environmental factors affected subjective well-being in later life regardless of whether or not respondents experienced early familial disruption. Thus, the quality of parents' marriage may contribute both positively and negatively on the adult child's well-being. Feng, Giarrusso, Bengtson, and Frye (1999) gathered data from a subset of 361 subjects of the larger ongoing Longitudinal Study of Generations (Bengtson, 1975) and applied MANCOVA statistics to find that parental divorce had little impact on children's marital quality. Furthermore, King (2002) found that although parental divorce is negatively associated with trust, these effects largely disappear once the moderator of quality of the past parent-child relationship is taken into account.

Perhaps the research most relevant to the current study is found in Phelps' (1996) work, which examined the association between parental marital and adult child marital processes. Phelps analyzed 89 conveniently sampled married couples in Colorado and found that marital processes may be modeled and intergenerationally transmitted. Moreover, parental marital processes affected adult male children's marriages much more

than adult female children's marriages. These findings are especially crucial in the field of marital therapy. The therapeutic implications of recognizing the extent to which males are influenced by their parents' marriage versus the extent to which females are influenced by the same are of great import. As therapists seek to assist couples in overcoming marital difficulties, knowledge of clients' beliefs regarding their parents' marriage is an indispensable tool.

Therapists must take into account the ghosts of families of origin in any couples work (Stone, 1988), but the advantages of being aware of the magnitude of the influence of partners' perceptions of their parents' marital functioning appears to be of great value. Skowron and Friedlander (1998) convenience-sampled three separate, heterogeneous groups of adults. Factor analyses of these samples' self-report questionnaires linked adult children's relationships with their families of origin with their marital satisfaction. These findings increase the value of any insight the therapist can gain into adult children's perceptions of family of origin functioning. The clinician will be aided by gathering this information while conducting joining and genogramming, and therapy will be augmented by the direction family-of-origin information can provide to the therapist.

Conceptual Framework

The research in this study is based on systems theory and perspectivist epistemology. General Systems Theory proposes that organisms are "...any entity maintained by the mutual interaction of its parts..." (Davidson, 1983, p. 26). This includes the family organism. Organisms display several unique characteristics,

including being a subsystem of larger systems, and interacting with those environments by continuously exchanging informational material with them. As living systems, families demonstrate equifinality, the concept that all roads lead to Rome; in this way organisms are not mechanistic, all going through the same exact motions to achieve the same goal (Nichols & Schwartz, 1998). Organisms actively strive to flourish through this process of equifinality, in which the organism possesses an auto-directed ability to maintain or restore its wholeness (Davidson). This ability often initiates creative and spontaneous methods to achieve the goal of wholeness as a means of survival (Nichols & Schwartz).

Furthermore, although organisms often tend toward homeostasis (Jackson, 1957) (the tendency to resist change and promote equilibrium), they also display morphogenesis, the process of changing one's structure to adapt to new situations (Speer, 1970). In other words, organisms don't always struggle to maintain homeostasis of the system. They also facilitate adaptation. Organisms both seek and resist change, depending on what is necessary for the survival of the organism (von Bertalanffy, as quoted by Davidson, 1983, p. 32).

As organisms, families experience the push and pull of homeostasis and morphogenesis, both seeking and resisting change in order to promote the continuation of the family system. This infers that family members will recognize a process which is harmful and/or threatens the family's existence, and will actively work to eradicate the process and replace it with one that will promote the family's well-being. According to Systems Theory, members of the family system will not sit idly by while harmful

practices erode the system and threaten its dissolution (Nichols & Schwarz, 1998). Furthermore, the research will support the idea that marital happiness is based on perceptions rather than socially prescribed ideas of good power and communication, and that happy marriages can exist despite the lack of perfect power structures and communication habits.

Perspectivist epistemology states that, while reality exists, it is impossible for humans to be completely objective about it because our personal perspectives act as lenses which filter, or bend our view of reality differently from others (Nichols & Schwarz, 1998). Concerning perspectivism, Bertalanffy wrote, "Our cognition is not a mirroring of ultimate reality but rather is an active process, in which we create models of the world. These models direct what we actually see, what we consider as fact" (quoted in Davidson, 1983, p. 32).

This study is grounded in perspectivism: the idea that individuals perceive their own realities and do not necessarily conform to society's ideas of success or propriety (Bertalanffy, 1968). In other words, if marital partners perceive their own realities surrounding marital happiness according to individual beliefs and views, then quality of communication and distribution of power will not be the predominant predictors of marital happiness. The results of the present study indicate that marital happiness exists even when quality of communication and egalitarianism are not high, and this study maintains that this is the product of individual perceptions of happiness. If internalized values and expectations dictate marital happiness, then adult children will rank their

parents' marriages as highly desirable to them, despite reporting low levels of egalitarianism and communication quality.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore young adult children's perceptions of their parents' marriages in order to examine the association between marital happiness, communication quality, levels of egalitarianism, and several other independent variables. This research combines the exploration of what contributes to marital happiness and undergraduate university students' assessments of their parents' marriages. Because the marital process in the parents' dyad greatly impacts the child's attitudes toward marriage and the family (Boettcher & Nickel, 1998; Gabardi, 1991), the importance of these studies in tandem is great. The awareness and understanding of adult children's appraisals of the marriage in their family of origin is necessary in the field of family theory and practice, but crucial to the field of marriage and family therapy.

Very little research has been conducted examining adult children's assessments of their parents' marriage. The value of such research to the field of family studies, and marriage and family therapy in particular, is estimated to be great by professionals in this field (Nichols & Schwartz, 1998). This study will attempt to refine the meaning of the impact parents' marital process has on adult children's attitudes toward marriage and the family. Specifically, answers will be sought to three questions: (1) What is the association between perceived marital happiness and perceived communication quality, level of education, and perceived religiosity? (2) What is the association between the

parental generations' marriage as seen by the respondent and the adult child's desires toward marriage, power, and communication in his or her own marriage? (3) Are perceived high levels of marital happiness associated only with perceived egalitarian-style marriages?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the past 50 years a distinct dichotomy as to what makes a marriage happy has appeared in social research and literature. Much of this split centers around traditional marital styles and gender roles versus egalitarian marital power structure. In this section examples of results and conclusions in each area will be discussed, as well as how education and religiosity affect marital happiness.

Marital Happiness

Levinger (1965) stated that modern Western society is characterized by both a wider range of alternatives and a greater opportunity for exit from unsatisfactory bonds. Within these greatly increased alternatives, decreased social constraints, and rising relationship instability, Levinger postulated that it matters much more how well partners are pleased with the quality of their relationship. Modern relational continuance depends more on satisfaction and less on duty or obligation. Much recent research has supported Levinger's hypothesis (Axinn & Barber, 1997; Lamanna & Riedmann, 2000). Accordingly, if one or both partners in a relationship are not satisfied they must strive to improve the connection or risk its dissolution. Therefore, relational happiness and satisfaction are necessary components of the viable marriage. The social stigma surrounding the single lifestyle has lessened greatly within the past 50 years (Axinn & Barber; Kuhn, 1955; Shostak, 1987; Stein, 1976; Yankelovich, 1981). It is no longer

necessary to remain in a marriage for survival reasons, despite the lack of happiness therein. In society's development, marital happiness has become one of the main predictors of marital stability (Lamanna & Riedmann, 2000).

Marital satisfaction has been defined as a subjective judgement made by both spouses regarding his or her overall relationship satisfaction (Busby, Crane, Larson, & Christensen, 1995; L'Abate & Bagarozzi, 1993; Miller, 1976). Bahr, Chappell, and Leigh (1983) called marital satisfaction a subjective evaluation of the overall degree to which marriage meets individuals' needs, expectations, and desires. Furthermore, marital satisfaction has been termed a dominant goal in marriage, and an important component for having a successful adjustment to marriage (Schvaneveldt, 1966; Spanier, 1976). Marital adjustment was defined as a general term that encompasses several components relating to spouses' subjective evaluation of how happy they are in the marriage (Spanier).

Over the past century, the quality of marriage has been studied under various terms, including "satisfaction," "adjustment," "success," "happiness," and "companionship" (Fincham, Beach, & Kemp-Fincham, 1997). The terms marital adjustment, marital satisfaction, marital quality, and marital happiness are related and often used synonymously in marital literature (Bahr et al., 1983; Bingham, 1996; Burgess & Cottrell, 1939; Glenn, 1990). This review of literature will focus on previous research surrounding marital happiness, and will include several studies featuring research on marital satisfaction and marital adjustment.

Power

Bertrand Russell posited “I shall be concerned to prove that the fundamental concept in social science is Power, in the same sense in which Energy is the fundamental concept of physics” (1938, p. 9). Similarly, in their 1975 book *Power in Families*, Olson and Cromwell classify power as one of the most fundamental aspects of all social interaction, as it governs the terms on which people meet. Balswick and Balswick (1995) stated that the marital relationship is profoundly affected by power. The literature reveals that the structure of decision-making power is significantly related to marital satisfaction (Corrales, 1975; Steil, 1997). Any study of marriage would be incomplete without addressing this substantial component of the marital structure.

Power in Marriage

The definitions of power are similar in much of the literature regarding human interaction. Power, viewed as a system property, is described as the ability (potential or actual) of an individual to change the behavior of other members in a social system (Olson & Cromwell, 1975), the ability to influence important decisions and to get others to do what they otherwise wouldn't (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983), attempts by spouses to influence one another during problem solving (Gottman, 1994), the ability to influence others while resisting their influence on ourselves (Bannester, 1969; Huston, 1983; Steil, 1997), and the ability to exercise one's will (Lamanna & Riedmann, 2000).

Degler (1930) concluded, “Marriage has been many things, but at all times it has been a relationship of power, however muted or disguised it may be in any particular

case" (p. 29). In their work titled "Gender Relations and Marital Power," Balswick and Balswick (1995) narrowed down the meaning of power, asserting that power is the *ability* to influence another person, not the use of it. They stated, "[L]egitimate power is authority; illegitimate power is dominance" (p. 301). Balswick and Balswick went on to state that the process and outcome of power in marriage are determined by each partner using her/his resources to negotiate and bargain for what each needs in the relationship. Conjugal power involves a partner's sense of empowerment, or feeling free to raise complaints to one's spouse about the relationship (Komter, 1989; Lamanna & Riedmann, 2000).

Power and Marital Happiness

Much of the literature indicates that asymmetric power structures within the marital relationship share a negative correlation with levels of marital happiness (Steil, 1997). In early research on marital power, Rainwater (1965), Blood and Wolfe (1960), and Lu (1952) examined the relationship between decision-making and marital satisfaction. They found that high levels of marital satisfaction are found most frequently among equalitarian couples. Moreover, equalitarian interaction structures have been shown to be somewhat more conducive to high marital satisfaction than asymmetrical categories (Corrales, 1975). Gottman (1979) studied 14 clinically-recommended distressed and 14 recruited non-distressed couples through questionnaires and observational behavior coding. Univariate analyses indicated that the husband having greater power in the marriage was more characteristic of dissatisfied than satisfied

marriages. Heynen (1982) found that an androgynous dyad provides a better model of marital happiness than the traditional masculine husband/feminine wife dyad. Furthermore, Antill, Cotton, and Tindale (1985) found that the husband's egalitarianism was associated with marital happiness for their wives. They also found, however, that when husbands held traditional views, wives' egalitarianism was associated with less marital happiness for their husbands. Mashal (1985) found marital satisfaction for both husband and wife was positively related to joint authority sharing. Maier's (1986) study suggests that egalitarianism may be the most satisfying relationship structure for both partners. Similarly, Rabin and Shapira-Berman (1997) found that among Israeli marriages, equal role sharing and decision making were predictive of women's marital satisfaction but also of men's marital tension. Hendrix (1997) found that role sharing is a crucial factor to marital quality. The evidence for egalitarian power structures being a prerequisite to marital happiness appears to be strong.

However, there is also research supporting the traditional marital structure as a significant contributor to marital happiness (Balswick, 1992; Balswick & Balswick, 1990). Kolb and Straus (1974) found that families above the median in husband to wife power tended to be high in marital happiness. In a 1975 study of authority and control in Catholic and Lutheran families in Minnesota, Corrales showed that husband-dominated marriages registered the highest levels of satisfaction for both husbands and wives (Corrales, 1975). Johnson, Eberly, Duke, and Sartain (1988) found that traditional homemakers scored highest on global marital happiness, followed by full-time employed wives. Moreover, wives identified as traditional homemakers with preschool children

report higher global marital happiness, consensus and sexual satisfaction. Lueptow, Guss, and Hyden (1989) examined sex role ideology in the General Social Survey (Davis & Smith, 1986) between 1972 - 1986 and through intercorrelations found that traditional sex-role ideology was positively related to happiness measures for women, but not for men. Furthermore, the study showed some indirect support for the proposition that nontraditional role orientations in married women cause stress and negative affect leading to marital dissolution. Finally, the traditional division of gender roles has been defended as being most successful in rearing children to compete in modern society (Balswick & Balswick, 1995; Berger & Berger, 1983). Obviously, arguments for either egalitarian or traditional power structures as contributors to marital happiness cannot thoroughly represent the entire truth of the matter.

The body of literature regarding the impact of power structures on marital happiness is clearly mixed in its conclusions. There is no consensus concerning what power situation must exist in order for a marriage to be perceived as happy. This study seeks to add to the existing body of literature by finding results which link low levels of egalitarianism with high levels of marital happiness, despite popular rhetoric stating that the two cannot exist in tandem.

Power and Gender Roles

The power distribution in the marital dyad encourages classifications of marriages along the lines of the extent to which power is shared in the relationship. Because studies consistently show that husbands are unwilling to take responsibility for domestic work,

the extent to which they do assume such responsibilities has been viewed as a measure of the relative power of the partners (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, & Crouter, 2000). In 1983, Peplau divided couple relationships into three types based on power and role-specialization: traditional, egalitarian/role-sharing, and modern/participant. Traditional marriages are based on a form of benevolent male dominance paired with clearly specialized roles (Bott, 1971; Gans, 1962; Komarovsky, 1967; LeMasters, 1975; Rubin, 1976). Egalitarian marriages reject male dominance and polarized gender roles. Modern marriages represent the middle position (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Gilbert, 1985; Peplau, 1983; Scanzoni & Scanzoni, 1976; Young & Willmott, 1973). Although Sexton and Perlman (1989) found in their study of 50 dual-career and 50 single-career couples who had been selected randomly from membership lists of professional organizations (using a multivariate analysis of variance) that gender role orientation did not affect marital power, a great deal of the literature is founded on the premise that marriages can be classified according to the power distribution which is usually determined along gender lines (Brines, 1994; Risman & Johnson-Sumerford, 1998; Steil, 1997).

In the field of marital and family studies, power is often defined as influence in decision making (Kingsbury, 1983; Sprecher & Schwartz, 1994), and this influence is generally perceived as being based on access to resources (Gillespie, 1971; Sprecher & Schwartz; Steil, 1983; Van Yperen & Brunk, 1990, 1994). The following compilation is the work of Raven (1974), Raven and Kruglanski (1970), and French and Raven (1959) regarding personal resources as bases of power.

Reward power: based on the capacity to provide either concrete or personal outcomes that are perceived to be desirable. Over time, reward power is believed to enhance the attractiveness of the influencer.

Coercive power: based on the ability to administer outcomes that are perceived to be negative. To be effective, coercive power requires surveillance and, over time results in diminished attraction and alienation.

Legitimate power: based on a mutual recognition of one partner's "right" to exercise the authority associated with his or her position or social role.

Legitimate power has a "should" or "ought" component evolving from internalized values prescribing that one is entitled to exercise authority, and the other has an obligation to accept that authority.

Expert power: based on a recognition of another's special knowledge or abilities and is limited in scope to the influencer's areas of expertise (Blood & Wolfe, 1960).

Referent power: based on our desire to identify with, or want to be like, another.

Informational power: based on the content of the message and the only power base perceived to be independent of the person by whom it is exercised.

Each of these power bases has been viewed as gender linked. Men have been seen as being higher in reward, coercive, legitimate, expert, and informational power and to have greater access to income and prestige (Steil, 1997). Of these six bases of power, referent power is the only resource to which men and women are perceived as having equal access (Johnson, 1978).

Husbands, however, view referent power as wives' primary source of marital power (Raven, Centers, & Rodrigues, 1975). Of the six bases of power, referent power is associated with the most positive happiness outcomes among the married, while coercive power is associated with the most negative outcomes of any power base (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983). It is possible to translate this information to mean that wives' power usually results in positive outcomes, while husbands' power often ends with a negative result. In a study of 382 randomly selected two-earner couples, Wilkie, Ferree, and Ratcliff (1998) utilized a path analysis to conclude that modern feminist stereotypes of marital power appear to ascribe to this idea as well, which might account for the opinion commonly held in feminist thought which encourages equal sharing of power and roles as a requirement for marital happiness.

Moreover, certain resources, such as money, love, and prestige, are more universally valued than others (Foa & Foa, 1980). According to England and Farkas' (1986) review of relevant research, access to relationship-specific resources (which are usually traditionally ascribed to women) is associated with limited alternatives and greater relationship dependency. Furthermore, access to resources that are valued outside the relationship (usually ascribed to men) expands one's alternatives and increases one's bargaining power within the relationship. It is, therefore, obvious that access to resources is often split down gender lines, creating a stark contrast between men's and women's abilities to wield power in interpersonal relationships.

Marital Power and Personal Well-Being

The Report of the Special Populations Subpanel of the President's Commission on Mental Health in 1978 concluded that marriage has a differential and more stressful impact on women than on men because of the inequality in the status of husbands and wives. In a review of related literature, Bernard (1982) postulated that, when assessed as influence in decision making, the distribution of power between husbands and wives closely parallels the patterns of well-being in marriage (Bernard, 1982). Longmore and Demaris (1997) interviewed 5,320 participants in the National Survey of Families and Households (Sweet, Bumpass, & Call, 1988) and conducted an OLS regression to determine that when married people perceive themselves as equal partners, they are less depressed. Furthermore, they are generally happier (Steil, 1997), and more satisfied with their marriage (Rosenbluth et al., 1998). Ray (1990) and Weingarten (1978) found that employed wives have more influence in marital decisions than wives who are unemployed. This suggests that unemployed wives, or wives in traditional marital structures, experience lower levels of personal well-being and therefore lower levels of marital happiness due to their lack of access to resources and therefore personal power. This suggestion is sustained by the figures that show that in the 1970s employed husbands had the greatest decision-making say in their marriages and scored highest on measures of well-being, while unemployed housewives had the least decision making say in their marriages and scored lowest on measures of well-being (Steil, 1983).

Sholomskas and Axelrod (1987) studied 67 women conveniently sampled (including women with jobs, women with careers, and career women who chose to leave

the workforce while their children were young) in New York and New Haven. Through multiple regression of several self-report measures, they found that the professional women who had chosen to step out of the workforce to care for their children had the lowest self-esteem of any of the three groups analyzed. The literature suggesting that women suffer in marriage is abundant. Steil (1997) reported that a wife's influence appears to be greatest when there are no or few young children, when her income and her husband's income are relatively close, and when she continues to pursue a full-time career that she began before her marriage. Furthermore, Steil indicated that women in these conditions also seemed to experience the highest levels of physical and psychological well-being.

Marriage has been called a "vehicle for oppressing women" by feminist writers who argue that marriage is at the heart of women's exploitation in society (Dryden, 1999, p. 5). Bernard (1981) found that wives are likely to be less satisfied with marriage than husbands, and that wives pay a greater psychological price than husbands. Steil (1997) has argued that because women are primarily responsible for the home, child rearing, and emotion work and relationship maintenance, they develop primarily personal, relationship-specific resources. On the other hand, because men are primarily responsible for the financial support of the family, they are more likely to develop concrete, universally valued resources like earning power and prestige.

Balswick and Balswick (1995) concluded that for women, lack of economic power is a barrier to becoming a more powerful force in marriage. Steil (1997) has further argued that unemployed wives' loss of financial independence, their access to

limited and mostly relationship-specific resources, their absence of alternative sources of achievement, self-esteem, and affirmation, and the inevitable reduction in their bargaining power converge in ways that make it exceedingly difficult for them to interact with their husbands as equal partners. Even when women have a great deal of resources, financial and otherwise, "...they have been normatively inhibited from using [them] in a powerful way" (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1991, p. 262).

Steil (1997) wrote that separate gender roles undermine men's and women's ability to achieve an equal relationship in several mutually reinforcing ways: separate gender roles limit wives' access to universally valued resources, give different meanings to the resources that husbands and wives contribute, and prescribe differences in men's and women's sense of entitlement. Moreover, Steil (1997) stated that relationship equality is inconsistent with, and unachievable within the context of separate gender roles.

Peplau (1983) and Gilbert (1985) both wrote that relationship equality requires an equal sharing of power and an equal investment in waged work in addition to work in the home. They stated that partners who divide economic and domestic responsibilities along gender lines cannot achieve an equal relationship, even if that is their goal. Although it remains untested, according to these arguments, as well as the position that marital happiness depends on shared power (Hendrix, 1997; Steil, 1997), it follows that traditional marital structures cannot produce high levels of marital happiness. However, the findings reported in the coming section indicate that the actual trends of the American married couple would indicate otherwise.

Gender Role Perceptions in Society

There has been a remarkable consensus between professional and public opinion over many years that the keys to marital stability are good communication and shared power (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Fowers, 1998; Lu, 1952; Rainwater, 1965; Steil, 1997). Blood and Wolfe (1960) proclaimed that, although the American family's ancestors were patriarchal, "the predominance of the male has been so thoroughly undermined that we no longer live in a patriarchal system" (pp. 18 - 19). However, despite public opinion, the following references indicate that a majority of Americans continue to practice traditional gender roles within their families, including an inequity of power between marital partners.

In 1982 and 1983, a study of 489 randomly-sampled spouses in high-achieving, dual-career couples in the Cincinnati, Ohio area found that 68% of husbands and 52% of wives believed that earning income was solely the husband's responsibility (Vannoy-Hiller & Philliber, 1989). Silberstein's (1992) interview study of white professional dual-career couples found that almost all men and women felt that it would be easier for the wives' careers to be less successful than the husbands' than the reverse. Among the reasons the wives gave for this disparity were that his work was more important to his sense of self, she needed her husband to be successful, and she feared that people would say his lack of success was her fault for making him help at home. In 1997, Steil reported that although 61% of married women are now employed, wives are still more likely to work part-time, to earn less, and to be in lower-status jobs than their husbands.

In 1991, Steil and Weltman analyzed a recruited sample of 60 Caucasian couples in New York City. Implementing a series of ANOVAs, the authors found that even among dual-career couples in which wives hold high-status positions, "his career" is still likely to be considered more important than "hers." Husbands who earn more than their wives said that their careers were more important than their spouses' careers, and their wives agreed. For women who earned significantly more than their husbands, neither they nor their husbands thought that her career was more important than his. In her 1997 book *Marital Equality*, Steil reported that the U.S. Census discontinued the practice of automatically designating the man as the head of the household in 1980. However, a series of studies published in the 1980s and 1990s show that a majority of men and women, including employed wives and their spouses, continue to view the husband as primarily responsible for providing for the financial security of the family (Steil, 1997).

Steil (1997) has posited that the division of domestic responsibilities along gender lines and women's difficulty in having their careers valued equally is less a matter of conscious choice than a manifestation of internalized gender expectations. Further support for this idea is found in Kessler and McRae's work (1982), which analyzed a national sample of 1,086 married individuals. Simple correlations revealed that wives' employment is infrequently negatively associated with husbands' well-being, but when it is, it is only for husbands who believe their wives should be home full-time (Burke & Weir, 1976).

Employed wives are less likely than housewives to endorse traditional sex-role ideologies (Dugger, 1988; Mason & Bumpass, 1975; Mason, Czajka, & Arber, 1976;

Spitze, 1988), and women who are employed who perceive paid employment to be desirable are less depressed and less anxious than women who are employed but prefer to be home full-time (Steil, 1997). Similarly, Steil, Smrz, Wilkins, and Barnett (1995) found that among employed mothers, those who endorse conservative gender-role ideologies and those who believe that maternal employment has a negative effect on children are more likely to be depressed than those who endorse more liberal ideologies and who see maternal employment as either benign or beneficial. In his 1998 study of differences in relationship outcomes among heterosexual married, gay cohabiting, and lesbian cohabiting couples, Kurdek implemented Pearson's correlation and unstandardized regression on responses gathered from a convenience sample of 353 partners to conclude that marital stability is more linked to perceptions of the fairness of the marital relationship than it is to actual equality (Greenstein, 1995; Wilkie et al., 1998).

Furthermore, a national survey found that for almost 80% of the American adult population, being a man meant being a good provider (Yankelovich, 1974). Potuchek (1992) interviewed 153 wives in dual-earner couples and employed multiple regression analysis to find that a majority of the men and women in our society continue to endorse the husband's role as primary provider (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Haas, 1986; Steil, 1997). More than half of dual-career marriages report that men's ultimate responsibility is providing for the family and that husbands bear the primary obligation to work to provide that support (Haas, 1986; Perry-Jenkins & Crouter, 1990; Perry-Jenkins, Seery, & Crouter, 1992; Potuchek, 1992; Steil, 1997).

In 1991, Biernat and Wortman studied a convenience sample of 139 women professionals with preschool children and their husbands. Through multiple regression and correlation techniques, they found that the higher a husband's earnings, the better he reports he is doing in both his parental and his spousal roles; the greater a wife's earnings relative to her husband, the worse she says she feels about herself as a spouse. In 1989, Hochschild found that couples will go to great lengths (such as deception and obfuscation) to conceal a high-earning wife's income to protect the husband's status as primary provider.

Silberstein (1992) summed up this disparity between couples' behaviors and social norms influenced by feminist ideology when he stated that dual career couples "build life structures with one foot in the past, mimicking traditional marriages of their parents' generation, and one foot in the feminist influenced present" (p. 174). He stated that they hold not only "consciously altered expectations (about gender roles, work, family, and marriage) but also deeply socialized, internalized, and probably change-resistant experiences, emotional needs and entrenched patterns of behavior" (p. 13). These statements could explain why society tells couples that traditional gender role power structures are bad, but even the bulk of those couples going through the motions of sharing careers believe that men should be the primary providers for the family. This paradox indicates that couples do not adhere to any socially acceptable norm, but create working power structures which satisfy their own needs and perspectives, supporting the position that high levels of marital happiness are not always associated with high levels of shared power.

Communication

Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967) stated that all behavior has communicative value. According to Raush, Barry, Hertel, and Swain (1974), communication occurs when what I do affects you in some way. Fitzpatrick (1988) wrote that individuals use communication in diverse ways based on implicit beliefs about what is appropriate for maintaining a marital relationship. There are many different communication patterns associated with happy and unhappy marriages, and Fitzpatrick asserted that the literature needs a more pluralistic view of what constitutes "good" communication in close relationships.

Fitzpatrick (1988) wrote that for many years, scholars tried to find predictors of marital success or failure by looking at socio-demographic factors, but that social scientists now believe that these factors are much less important than the communication within the marital relationship. Markman (1989) wrote that the two major tasks of marriage involve managing conflicts and disagreements, and promoting intimacy. Storaasli and Markman (1990) later found that at pre-marriage, early marriage, and early parenting stages, couples included communication in the top five problems they faced. They also discovered that problems in communication had the greatest impact on relationship satisfaction for both husbands and wives at pre-marriage, early marriage, and early parenting. Burleson and Denton (1997) found that communication problems are the relationship difficulty most frequently cited by couples in community surveys, as well as

couples entering therapy. Quality of communication is included in this study because it is widely viewed as a necessary component of marital happiness.

Communication and Marital Happiness

Fitzpatrick (1988) reported that happily married couples consistently exhibit several qualities of communication. In a review of research on communication in family relationships, Fitzpatrick and Caughlin (2002) discovered that these include more positive nonverbal cues, more agreement and approval, a higher ratio of agreement to disagreement, attempts to avoid conflict, supportive behaviors, compromises, consistency in their use of nonverbal cues, less criticism of each other, and a higher ratio of pleasing to displeasing behaviors. Furthermore, the same study found that happily married people can resolve their problems and express their emotions to one another, as well as communicate well with each other and accurately interpret each other's nonverbal communication. In fact, Storaasli and Markman (1990) stated that the inability of marital partners to cope with their problems has been viewed as one of the most powerful factors contributing to marital dissatisfaction. Furthermore, Robinson (1990) found that intimacy and communication were key elements of enduring marriages.

Assessing communication is a complicated task, as not all human communication is spoken. Fitzpatrick (1988) reminds the reader that a spouse is rarely presented with a "disembodied transcript of a marital conversation" (p. 205). Words are accompanied by gestures, facial expressions, touch, posture, eye contact, and vocal cues (such as pitch, volume and tone of voice), which reveal important emotional dynamics of the marital

relationship. Gottman (1994) has conducted groundbreaking research which has accommodated many facets of communication when assessing couples' interactions.

Gottman (1994) found that divorce can be predicted with a fairly high rate of accuracy by observing couples' interactions. A very clear pattern of communication emerged among couples who were headed for divorce in Gottman and Levenson's (1992) study of 73 recruited married couples. After gathering questionnaire, observed verbal and physical behaviors, and physiological data on each couple, analyses of variance pointed to a specific progression in communications between couples who would eventually divorce. The authors named this pattern the Cascade Model of Marital Dissolution. The model is based on couples' behavior while disagreeing or arguing and begins with one or both partners complaining or criticizing. This leads to defensiveness and contemptuousness in one or both of the partners. Finally, the cascade ends in one or both of the partners "stonewalling," or withdrawing from the affective relationship. By evaluating a couple's communicative interactions, the risk for dissolution can be assessed.

The effects of conflict on marital satisfaction are always negative, whether in the long or the short term (Noller & Feeney, 1998). However, Gottman (1994) found that all marriages represent an equilibrium which attempts to manage positivity and negativity within the relationship. According to Gottman, the successful marriages maintain a five to one ratio of positivity to negativity. Any disequilibrium in this system places the marriage at risk for entering the cascade toward dissolution, thus sharply decreasing marital happiness.

Levy and colleagues' (1997) finding that family of origin communication practices greatly impact both men's and women's communication behaviors increases the importance of understanding adult children's appraisals of their parents' quality of communication. Because "good" communication encompasses so many meanings and signifies something different for each person's perspective, it is difficult to define. However, the assumption can be made that adults can recognize ineffective communication in their parents' marriage and will indicate such in the instrument using global evaluative terms (Feeney, Noller, & Ward, 1997).

Religion and Religiosity

Sud (1991) postulated that religion constitutes "one of the most important socio-cultural factors that govern the behavior of its adherents" (p. 46). The author placed further emphasis on the importance of religion, stating that it influences the value pattern and life philosophy of its adherents. The importance of religion as a socio-cultural factor in explaining the variations among couples, regarding the type of marital power structure they have, has also been found empirically valid by Richmond (1976), and Aderinto (1975). Sud's (1991) study of 291 randomly sampled Indian women and subsequent correlational procedures also demonstrated that the marital power structure is influenced by religion because it acts as an important agency of socialization, and influences the value pattern and life philosophy of its adherents.

Many feminist writers have denounced religion as a vehicle for oppressing women through justifying suppression and control of women and by restricting them to

traditional gender roles within the family (Balswick & Balswick, 1995; Exdell, 1994; Hunter, 1992; McPhillips, 1994; Newman, 1994). Although traditional religion often endorses a patriarchal power structure in the church and the home, Balswick and Balswick (1995) have theorized that religious involvement may enhance the quality of the life in the home because "...when the husband takes his commitment to God seriously..." he will assume the role of a "suffering servant" (p. 303). The authority remains with the husband, but he is expected to assume the responsibility and decision-making power in the best interest of his family, whom he serves as a fulfillment of his duty to God (Hawley, 1994). Furthermore, Johnson (2000) proposed that religion fosters persons and builds communities, both making life fulfilling for its adherents and advancing society.

Is it possible that the role of religion and religiosity can have a consistently positive effect on marital functioning and happiness for both partners? Call and Heaton (1997) examined 4,587 married couples from the National Survey of Families and Households (Sweet et al., 1988) and implemented logistic regression models to deduce that frequency of religious attendance has the greatest positive impact on marital stability. When both spouses attend church regularly, the couple has the lowest risk for divorce. Strawbridge et al. (1996) also found that frequent church attenders were more likely to stay married. Hunt and King (1978) found that a couple's belief, effort, and participation in religion are particularly related to marital satisfaction. Females' increased religious involvement was found to be a predictor of increased marital happiness by Smith (1990). Similarly, in their longitudinal study Rao and Rao (1986) found that church attendance was a strong correlate of and one of the most significant predictors of marital happiness.

Finally, both Call and Heaton (1997) and Lawson and Thompson (1995) found that differences in religious activity and practices increase the risk of marital distress and subsequent dissolution.

It is interesting to note that religious affiliation has been found to increase the likelihood of marital dependency (Wilson & Musick, 1996). Related results were found by Booth, Johnson, Branaman and Sica (1995), who interviewed a random sample of 1,008 married persons and through path analysis concluded that the link between religion and marital quality is both reciprocal and weak. They submit that increases in religiosity slightly decrease the probability of considering divorce, and an increase in marital happiness slightly increases some aspects of religiosity. Does this mean that religious couples stay married because they cannot make it on their own? Or does marital happiness boost religiosity? It is important to note that in 1982, DeVries examined 124 volunteer couples selected from the teaching staffs of school districts, and through stepwise multiple regression analysis found that religious involvement did not explain a significant amount of the variance in marital happiness. Furthermore, wide religious differences were found to be relatively unimportant to marital happiness in Burgess and Cottrell's 1939 study.

Religiosity will be included as an independent variable in this study due to the disparity in previous research regarding its impact on marital happiness, as well as the apparent dominance of religiosity in the current sample. The current research will attempt to add to this discussion.

Education

Because education generally increases one's access to resources, it influences the marital power structure. Raven et al. (1975) found that education affects conjugal power. Furthermore, Sud (1991) asserted that education influences the marital power structure as it ensures greater participation of the wife in family decision making. An educated wife may be perceived by the husband as possessing the capability and skill to make decisions. The literature generally reports that wives' education levels are positively related to marital happiness.

While studying marital happiness in Israel, Weller and Rofè (1988) found that education was the most important factor affecting marital happiness. Although Burgess and Cottrell's (1939) work yielded similar results, finding that increasing amounts of education are favorable to marital success, they also found that wide educational differences between spouses are relatively unimportant to marital happiness. The spouse's education level was found to be a strong correlate of marital happiness in Rao and Rao's (1986) longitudinal study. Moreover, Patel (1974) also found a positive relationship between marital happiness and education.

Sud's (1991) study of the marital power structure in India found that the proportion of respondents having an equalitarian marital power structure in the family correlated with an increase in the level of education. Similarly, Ericksen, Uancey, and Ericksen's (1979) data showed that wives' education was positively related to shared roles. Based on research connecting equalitarian marital relationships with increased

levels of marital happiness (Antill et al., 1985; Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Corrales, 1975; Gottman, 1979; Lu, 1952; Maier, 1986; Mashal, 1985; Rainwater, 1965), these results indicate that education levels are positively related to marital happiness levels.

There is research pointing to the opposite. Keithley (1988) studied a systematic random sample of husbands and wives in Salt Lake County through mailed questionnaires. He found a significant negative relationship between wives' level of education and marital happiness. Finally, DeVries (1982) found that education level does not explain a significant amount of variance in marital happiness.

Like religiosity, research on education level and marital happiness has reported mixed results. This study will attempt to add to the research, one way or the other. It is logical that levels of education in both spouses would have a positive relationship with marital happiness, in males because it would increase earning power and in females because it would increase personal power and therefore egalitarianism. However, if increased levels of egalitarianism do not always correlate positively with marital happiness this may not be the case.

Synthesis of Literature

The literature indicates disparity of results in how power, communication, education, and religiosity affect marital happiness. This is due, in part, to differences in methodological sophistication, variety in samples and measurement which affect results, but the disparity exists nonetheless. This disparity points to a lack of consensus on what

makes a marriage happy. To help clarify these relationships, this study poses the questions:

1. What is the association between perceived marital happiness and perceived communication quality, level of education, and perceived religiosity?
2. What is the association between the parental generations' marriage as seen by the respondent and the adult child's desires toward marriage, power, and communication in his or her own marriage? And finally,
3. Are perceived high levels of marital happiness associated only with perceived egalitarian-style marriages?

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to examine adult children's assessments of their parents' marriages with specific regard to communication quality, power, level of education, and religiosity and their association with marital happiness. This study also explores adult children's attitudes toward marriage and how they are impacted by their views of their parents' marriages.

Design

This study was conducted in an ex post facto design which polled a convenience sample of adult children's attitudes concerning their parents' marriage, and assessed the adult children's appraisal of their parents' communication, power distribution, and happiness. The design is ex post facto because the independent variables of egalitarianism, quality of communication, religiosity and level of education have already had their effects on the happiness of the parental marriage of the sample. The results will also be used to assess respondents' desires toward future marital behaviors in their own lives.

Sample

This study is based on a non-probability convenience sample consisting of undergraduate students at Utah State University, all enrolled in Family and Human

Development classes. A total of 1,437 respondents contributed to the data. The sample was 77% female ($N = 1,129$) and 21% male ($N = 308$). Approximately 88% indicated that one or both parents belong to the LDS religion (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), and most respondents indicated that one or both parents was very active or above average in church activity (father 66.7%, mother 69.3%) (see Table 1). Most (86.5%) came from intact families (13.5% indicated that their parents' marriage was not the first marriage for both). The majority of respondents indicated that their parents had at least some college or had attained a college or graduate degree (father 77.3%, mother 67.7%). Students in the sample are mostly from western American states (Utah 70.3%, Idaho 11.5%, California 3%, Wyoming 2%, Colorado 1%, Washington 1% - see References under Analysis, Assessment & Accreditation, No date). The homogenous nature of the sample increases control of extraneous variables, however the most obvious extraneous variables in the present sample of religiosity and education level have been built into the design so that both their direct effects and interaction effects can be examined.

Data were collected between the years of 1970 and 1999 as part of a class assignment in a USU undergraduate FHD course: Marriage and the American Family. Students were given the questionnaire and instructed to fill it in and write a short paper on the information they gave. Students were told to contact members of their family of origin to obtain some of the information on the questionnaire. The assignment was graded on the completeness of the questionnaire and the thoroughness of the paper attached. It is therefore assumed that students were very careful, thoughtful, and truthful

Table 1

Demographic Summary of Parents' Religion, Religiosity, and Education Level (N = 1,437)

Demographic category	Parent	
	Father <i>n</i> (%)	Mother <i>n</i> (%)
Religious Affiliation		
LDS	1,270 (88.4)	1,283 (89.2)
No Preference	59 (4.1)	52 (3.6)
Protestant	42 (2.9)	41 (2.9)
Catholic	34 (2.4)	29 (2.0)
Christian	19 (1.3)	19 (1.3)
Non-Christian	13 (0.9)	13 (0.9)
Parents' Religiosity		
Very active in church	744 (51.7)	771 (53.6)
Above average in activity	215 (15.0)	226 (15.7)
Average in activity	206 (14.3)	219 (15.2)
Below average in activity	115 (8.0)	102 (7.1)
Not active at all	156 (10.8)	118 (8.2)
Education Level of Parents		
College Degree/Graduate Degree	808 (56.9)	473 (32.9)
Vocational School/Some College	293 (20.4)	500 (34.8)

(table continues)

High School Graduate	257 (17.9)	366 (25.5)
Non-High School Graduate	35 (2.4)	45 (3.1)

in completing the questionnaires. Any temptation to give erroneous answers would have been curbed by the necessity of explaining the responses in the attached paper. The papers were returned to students and, with the students' permission, the questionnaire was saved for research purposes.

Measurement

The instrument is a self-administered structured questionnaire that includes demographic questions such as occupation, education level, number of children in family of origin, religious preference and activity, year of parents' marriage, and number of parents' marriage. The instrument goes on to include a measure of perceived marital power, a measure of perceived communication quality, and a judgment of perceived marital happiness or outcome (see Appendix B). The student was also invited to provide recommendations about what would be helpful to this couple (the parents) in improving the happiness of their marriage in terms of power, communication, and marital well being. Finally, the subjects in the study were asked to respond as to how their parents' marriages have influenced them in regard to power and communication in marriage, and marital happiness.

All questionnaires obtained were included in the research, save two which were mostly blank and were therefore discarded. This resulted in a sample of 1,437 completed

questionnaires. The variables in this study were based on the respondents' own opinion (indicated on the instrument as "as seen by you").

Marital happiness was measured with a single item on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 represents extremely happy and 7 represents very unhappy. In the present study, marital happiness is measured using global evaluative terms (ranging between extremely happy, average, and very unhappy), rather than descriptive terms which assess specific marital behaviors (Feeney et al., 1997). Descriptive indicators of marital happiness were not employed in order to avoid partial overlap in item content and in order to avoid presupposing particular models of marriage (Feeney et al.; Norton, 1983).

Communication quality was also measured on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 represents excellent and 7 represents poor. Power was assessed as a subjective measure of fairness (Sprecher & Schwartz, 1994) on a scale of 1 to 7 as well, where 1 represents husband as clearly the boss and 7 represents wife as clearly the boss. The power variable was transformed to indicate points away from egalitarianism, represented by a 4 on the Likert scale which is directly in between "husband clearly the boss" and "wife clearly the boss."

Respondents' assessment of the desirability of their parents' marriage was measured by the three items on which respondents indicated how pleased they would be to have a marriage just like that of their parents' in regard to power situation, communication quality, and marital happiness into a composite score. Each of these questions used a 5 point Likert- scale format.

The instrument contained mostly ordinal level variables (which were treated as interval in the multiple regression procedures), most of which included a Likert-scale

mode of measurement. The dependent variable, marital happiness, was assessed with a summated rating scale. The independent variable of power relations in the marriage was similarly assessed. The respondent's family's religiosity was also measured with a summated rating scale. The level of education of each of the respondents' parents was placed adjacent to their occupations.

Arguments for face validity appear to be satisfactory: the background information was demographic in nature (with objective assessments, such as family size and level of education) and the assumption is made that respondents would be completely truthful in completing this section. The rating scales employed a Likert-type pattern and were easily completed by students. There is every reason to conclude that their own perceptions and beliefs were exactly what they expressed in completing the form. Because this study is analyzing adult children's perceptions of their parents' marriages, face validity appears to be strong.

Procedures

Because this research is based on the attitudes of adult children, it was impossible to conduct the study any less obtrusively than instructing respondents to complete a questionnaire based on their views. Respondents had free access to their instructor to ask any questions regarding the questionnaire and future of the data collected. The instrument was disseminated by one principal investigator in the same course each year, thus strengthening the design by eliminating variance between research gatherers. The instrument was relatively short and simple, and required little time to complete. Credit

was given for the completion of the questionnaire. However, students were given the option to have their questionnaires not included in research data sets. The number of refusals is unknown. It is assumed that the risks in completing the instrument were low, especially when compared with the benefits of gathering information on the family of origin and examining personal goals with regard to marital functioning.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study examined the extent to which perceived marital happiness levels covaried with independent variables such as perceived quality of communication, perceived level of egalitarianism, level of education, and perceived religiosity according to adult children's appraisals of their parents' marriages. It is necessary to note that the large sample size in this study resulted in statistical significance of some correlations which do not otherwise share a practical relationship. Therefore, probability values are often extremely low and considered statistically significant even when the correlation itself is not practically significant. For this reason, the difference between statistical and practical significance is occasionally discussed. Furthermore, to address this issue the probability values will be evaluated at the $p < .001$ to assist in differentiation between statistical and practical significance.

Question 1

What is the association between perceived marital happiness and perceived communication quality, level of education, and perceived religiosity?

The dependent variable of perceived marital happiness and the independent variables of perceived communication quality, perceived religiosity, and level of education were measured on an ordinal level. Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient was computed to test for the relationship between the independent variables and perceived marital happiness (Heiman, 1996) (see Table 2).

Table 2

Spearman Correlation Coefficients Depicting Relationships Between Marital Happiness and Explanatory Variables

	Comm. Quality	Religious Activity	Level of Egal.	Father's Education	Mother's Education	Desired Comm.	Desired Power
Marital Happiness (N)	.76 (1,408)	.36 (1,412)	.30 (1,408)	-.16 (1,382)	-.08* (1,364)	.73 (1,406)	.63 (1,402)
Comm. Quality (N)		.31 (1,413)	.30 (1,410)	-.21 (1,383)	-.10 (1,365)	.83 (1,404)	.59 (1,400)
Religious Activity (N)			.14 (1,416)	-.28 (1,398)	-.18 (1,379)	.31 (1,414)	.26 (1,410)
Level of Egalitarianism (N)				-.08* (1,387)	-.08* (1,368)	.33 (1,406)	.49 (1,402)
Father's Education (N)					.41 (1,370)	-.20 (1,385)	-.15 (1,381)
Mother's Education (N)						-.11 (1,367)	-.09 (1,364)
Desired Communication (N)							.67 (1,364)

Note. Comm. = communication. Egal. = egalitarianism. Desired Comm. = desire for one's own marital communication situation to be like that of parents'. Desired Power = desire for one's own marital power situation to be like that of parents'.

All correlations significant at $p < .001$ level except when noted *, where $p < .005$.

As indicated in Table 2, Mother's education level was not statistically significantly correlated with perceived marital happiness at the $p < .001$ level ($r_s = -.08$, $p = .004$). Father's education level indicated a very weak relationship with perceived marital happiness ($r_s = -.16$, $p < .001$). However, there was a positive relationship between perceived power and perceived marital happiness ($r_s = .30$, $p < .001$), indicating that as perceived power increases in egalitarianism, perceived marital happiness also increases. Perceived religious activity was originally evaluated separately for mother and father, but due to their strong correlation ($r_s = .88$, $p < .001$), the two scores were combined and their mean utilized in these statistics (Heiman, 1996). This new combined score was named perceived religious activity, and was mildly positively correlated with perceived marital happiness ($r_s = .36$, $p < .001$), meaning that as one variable increases, the other does as well. Perceived communication quality held the strongest statistical correlation with perceived marital happiness ($r_s = .76$, $p < .001$). These results indicate that perceived parental marital happiness increases when perceived parental level of egalitarianism, perceived religiosity, and perceived communication quality increase. Conversely, as parental education level increases, perceived parental marital happiness may decrease slightly.

In this study, all of the independent variables (perceived level of egalitarianism, perceived religiosity, perceived communication quality, and parents' education level) were related to perceived marital happiness as indicated by statistically significant correlations. Taking into account the large sample size, however, parents' education levels were the only independent variables not practically significantly related to

perceived marital happiness, as indicated by a low Spearman's correlation coefficient of -.08 for mother's ($p = .004$) and -.16 for father's ($p < .001$).

Question 2

What is the association between the parental generation's marriage as seen by the respondent and the adult child's views toward marriage, power, and communication?

The respondent's desire for a power situation in their own marriage similar to their parents (DPS) was positively correlated with perceived marital happiness of the parents as reported by the respondent ($r_s = .63, p < .001$). A strong relationship is indicated between DPS and perceived power situation ($r_s = .49, p < .001$), as well as between DPS and perceived communication quality ($r_s = .59, p < .001$). The statistics suggest a modest relationship between DPS and perceived religious activity ($r_s = .26, p < .001$). Only a weak association was inferred between DPS and mother's education level ($r_s = -.09, p < .001$), and DPS and father's education level ($r_s = -.15, p < .001$). These results indicate that as parents' perceived level of marital happiness increases, so does their adult children's desire to have a power situation in their own marriages similar to that of their parents. Moreover, as parents' education level, perceived religiosity, perceived level of egalitarianism, and perceived communication quality increase, their adult children's desires to have a power situation in their marriage similar to that of their parents tend to decrease.

As indicated in Table 2, the respondent's desire to have a communication situation in their own marriage similar to that of their parents (DCS) exhibited strong

correlations with perceived parental communication quality ($r_s = .83, p < .001$) and perceived marital happiness ($r_s = .73, p < .001$). DCS correlated moderately with the perceived parents' power situation ($r_s = .33, p < .001$) and perceived religious activity ($r_s = .31, p < .001$). Father's education level ($r_s = -.20, p < .001$) and mother's education level ($r_s = -.09, p < .001$) held only weak correlations with DPS. In terms of statistical significance, as perceived parents' marital happiness, perceived communication quality, perceived power situation, and perceived religious activity increase, so does their adult children's desire to have a communication situation in their own marriage similar to that of their parents. However, an increase in the parents' education level was related to a decrease in the respondent's desire to have a communication situation in his or her own marriage similar to that of the parents. In practical terms, however, only the stronger correlations between DCS and perceived parents' communication quality, perceived marital happiness, and perceived power situation should be considered. In summary, how children perceive their parents' marriages appears to be tied to their children's views toward marriage, power, and communication as demonstrated by the aforementioned statistics.

Question 3

Are perceived high levels of marital happiness associated only with egalitarian-style marriages?

There appears to be a modest correlation between perceived egalitarian-style marriages and perceived marital happiness ($r_s = .30, p < .001$). Statistical correlations

shared by these two variables may indicate a relationship in which variations in the level of perceived egalitarianism are specifically related variations in the perceived level of marital happiness.

The data were treated as interval level and the correlations between the dependent variable of perceived marital happiness and the independent variables of perceived communication quality, perceived level of egalitarianism, and perceived religiosity were high (see Table 2). Multiple regression procedures are useful to simultaneously consider multiple predictor variables for one dependent variable, as well as to evaluate the strength of the model when the independent variables are considered in groups (Heiman, 1996). Multiple regression was used to select the most influential combinations of predictor variables, and revealed that the combination of perceived communication quality, perceived religious activity, and perceived level of egalitarianism as a model is correlated with variance in perceived marital happiness (see Table 3).

The model used in Step 1 of the regression analysis indicates that perceived communication quality explains 58% of the variance in perceived marital happiness (see Table 3). Step 2 of the regression includes perceived religious activity, and suggests that when perceived communication quality is held constant, an increase of one standard unit in perceived religiosity results in an increase of .13 of a standard unit in perceived marital happiness. The addition of perceived religiosity to Step 2 explains an additional 1% of the variance in perceived marital happiness.

Step 3 added perceived level of egalitarianism to the model. With perceived communication quality and perceived religious activity held constant, an increase of one

Table 3

Perceived Parents' Marital Happiness Regressed on Perceived Communication Quality, Perceived Religious Activity, and Perceived Level of Egalitarianism (N = 1,330)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Step 1			
Communication Quality	.74	.02	.76
Step 2			
Communication Quality	.70	.02	.72
Religious Activity	.18	.03	.13
Step 3			
Communication Quality	.68	.02	.70
Religious Activity	.18	.03	.13
Level of Egalitarianism	.17	.03	.09

Note. Adjusted $R^2 = .58$ for Step 1; Adjusted $R^2 = .59$ for Step 2; Adjusted $R^2 = .60$ for

Step 3.

$p < .001$.

standard unit of perceived level of egalitarianism equates to a .09 standard unit increase in perceived marital happiness. The addition of perceived level of egalitarianism in the model increases the amount of variance explained in perceived marital happiness by only

1%. Thus, although it is not the only variable predictive of perceived marital happiness, perceived level of egalitarianism is part of the combination of variables which, as a model, may help predict how happy undergraduate students perceive their parents are in their marriages.

CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

This chapter will be dedicated to a discussion of the research findings.

Limitations to the study will be addressed, as will suggestions for future research and applications to the field of marriage and family therapy. It is important to note that most of the literature cited reports on research conducted on respondents' own marriages, not respondents' evaluations of their parents' marriage. This may contribute to discrepancies between previous research findings and current results. However, this study may provide a more accurate picture of relationships between the dependent and the independent variables due to the relative removal of the respondent from the marital processes which were evaluated in the questionnaire.

Question 1

What is the association between perceived marital happiness and perceived communication quality, level of education, and religiosity?

The independent variables of perceived religiosity and perceived communication quality were correlated with perceived marital happiness as indicated by statistically significant correlational coefficients yielded by Spearman's statistical test. Parents' education levels were the only independent variables which were not practically correlated with perceived marital happiness.

These results confirm existing research into contributors to marital happiness as discussed in several major studies cited in the Review of Literature. Burleson and Denton (1997) found that communication problems are the relationship difficulty most frequently cited by couples in both clinical and public surveys. Gottman (1994) found that communication patterns were the most accurate predictors of whether a marriage would endure or fail. Storaasli and Markman (1990) reported that problems in communication had the greatest impact on relationship satisfaction during the early stages of marriage. Robinson (1990) found that intimacy and communication were key elements of enduring marriages.

The outcome of this study concurs with earlier results stressing the necessity of good communication to marital happiness and success. Out of the independent variables, the perceived parents' quality of communication holds, by far, the strongest correlation with perceived parental marital happiness. Although the independent variables of perceived parents' religiosity and father's level of education are statistically significantly correlated with perceived parents' marital happiness, perceived communication dwarfs the amount of variance explained by the other independent variables. Overall, perceived parental communication quality explains the greatest amount of variance in the dependent variable of perceived marital happiness of the parents, which is consistent with other research (Heiman, 1996).

While perceived communication quality and perceived religiosity yield positive correlations with perceived marital happiness, both father's education level and mother's education level are negatively correlated with perceived marital happiness. These statistics, however strong, suggest that as education levels increase, marital happiness as perceived by the respondent decreases, and vice-versa.

Conversely, one might suppose that higher education should increase partners' awareness of the importance of communication, as well as their ability to communicate effectively with each other, thereby contributing to increased marital happiness (Fitzpatrick & Caughlin, 2002; Gottman, 1994; Gottman & Levenson, 1992; Noller & Feeny, 1998; Robinson, 1990; Storaasli & Markman, 1990). Indeed, a review of related literature reveals wide agreement that as education level increases, marital happiness and stability increase (Burgess & Cottrell, 1939; Patel, 1974; Rao & Rao, 1986; Weller & Rofè, 1988), often because increased education leads to increased power in the marital dyad, resulting in higher levels of egalitarianism (Antill et al., 1985; Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Corrales, 1975; Erickson et al., 1979; Gottman, 1979; Lu, 1952; Maier, 1986; Mashal, 1985; Rainwater, 1965; Raven et al., 1975; Sud, 1991). Only Keithley (1988) dissented, finding a significant negative correlation between wives' level of education and overall marital happiness. The current study surprisingly concurs with Keithley's results. Furthermore, education level also shared a statistically significant negative correlation with perceived religiosity and perceived communication quality. Father's and

mother's education level are also statistically significantly correlated with perceived level of egalitarianism at the $p < .005$ probability level. The only positive correlation that was practically and statistically significant yielded by mother's education level is with father's education level.

It is interesting to note that the sample in this study reported much higher levels of parental education than national and state averages. National averages from the 2000 Census indicated that 24.4% of the adult population age 25 and over had earned a Bachelors degree or higher. State averages taken from "Economic and Demographic Profiles" by the Utah Office of Planning and Budget (2000) indicated that 26.1% of Utah adults have 4-year college educations or more. In this study's sample, 32.9% of the mothers were 4-year college graduates or more and 56.9% of the fathers were college graduates or beyond. An additional 34.8% of mothers in this study had vocational training or some college, as had an additional 20.4% of fathers. Combined percentages indicate that 67.7% of mothers had at least some higher education experience, as had 77.3% of fathers. Thus, respondents come from families with strong academic traditions and experiences. It is unclear why, if respondents considered higher than average educational attainment the norm, their results indicated that it shared a negative relationship with perceived marital happiness. This is one example of how the respondents' evaluations of their parents' marriages differed from research based on self-reported measures, as the respondents in this study apparently unwittingly yielded results contrary to familial and societal traditions.

Question 2

What is the association between the parental generation's marriage as seen by the respondent and the adult child's views toward marriage, power, and communication?

Children's perceptions of their parents' marital processes are related to their children's views toward marriage, power, and communication as demonstrated by a statistically significant correlation between the respondent's desire for a communication situation in their own marriage similar to that of their parents and perceived marital happiness of the parents, perceived parental religiosity, perceived parental level of egalitarianism, perceived parental communication quality, mother's education level, and father's education level. Support for this position is also provided by a statistically significant correlation between the respondent's desire for a power situation in their own marriage similar to that of their parents and perceived marital happiness of the parents, perceived parental religiosity, perceived parental level of egalitarianism, perceived parental communication quality, mother's education level, and father's education level.

These findings agree with previous research demonstrating that parents' marital relationships affect both children's well-being and their marital success (Burgess & Cottrell, 1939; Popenoe & Wicks, 1937). Levy et al. (1997) found that women's family of origin functioning was significantly linked to the communication behaviors later within her own marriage. Gabardi's 1990 study indicated that parental marital conflict was a significant predictor of negative attitudes toward marriage. White (1990) found

that parental divorce is statistically significantly positively correlated with divorce in adult children.

Furthermore, an expanding amount of literature reports the connection between parents' divorce and adult children's divorce (Amato, 1996; Lamanna & Riedmann, 2000; White, 1990). Kemper and Bologh (1981) found that the quality of the parents' marriage directly influences the adult child's choice of a mate, which contradicts other research results which discount the relationship between parents' marital interaction and children's views toward marriage, power, and communication (Johannis & Rollins, 1960; Kelly & Conley, 1987; Peacock, 1997; Sykes, 1981; Terman & Oden, 1947). However, the current study indicates a relationship between perceived parental marital functioning and adult children's attitudes toward marital happiness as indicated by statistically significant positive correlations between perceived parental marital happiness and adult children's desires for marital situations similar to that of their parents with regard to egalitarianism and quality of communication. Further research would be useful to reconcile the disparity in these results.

Once again, both parents' level of education correlated negatively with the adult children's desire for a communication situation and desire for a power situation in his or her own marriage similar to that of his or her parents. In other words, the higher the father's and/or mother's education level, the lower the respondent's desire to have a power or communication situation in his or her own marriage similar to that of his or her

parents. Although parental education levels in this sample are higher than national and state averages, the effects of higher education are negative on perceived communication quality, perceived level of egalitarianism, and perceived religiosity in parents as viewed by their adult children. This could be due to increased career demands as a result of more education, or possibly to greater feelings of entitlement often found in possessors of higher education which spawn a lack of effort at effective communication, egalitarianism, and religious activity (all of which were found to contribute to marital happiness in this study).

Moreover, the successful pursuit of a college degree, and especially a graduate degree, requires a certain amount of self-focus and self-aggrandizement (Krambule, 2000). This self-serving lifestyle, however necessary to obtain academic success, may directly erode correlates of marital happiness, such as communication quality, egalitarianism, and religiosity (Krambule). In any case, the higher the parents' education level, the less likely the respondent was to report high levels of perceived parental marital happiness, and the less likely the respondent was to indicate a desire to have a communication and/or power situation in his or her own marriage similar to that of his or her parents.

This consensus of the data regarding level of education may partly be a result of the homogenous nature of the sample. The predominant religion of the sample was Latter-day Saint (LDS, also known as Mormons). This religion is known for its emphasis

on education and strong family values (Ludlow, 1992). Perhaps this may explain, in part, the increased levels of education among respondents' parents due to the high cultural value placed on education. It may also explain the negative correlations reported by respondents regarding increased levels of education due to the high cultural value placed on family, and the strains on family time and resources which higher educational attainment can present (Krambule, 2000).

Question 3

Are perceived high levels of marital happiness associated only with perceived egalitarian-style marriages?

Although it is not the only variable predictive of perceived marital happiness, perceived level of egalitarianism is tied with how happy parents of respondents are perceived to be in their marital situations. The independent variable of perceived level of egalitarianism yielded a statistically significant positive correlation with perceived marital happiness. The combination of perceived communication quality, perceived religiosity, and perceived level of egalitarianism proved to be the most accurate predictor of variance in perceived marital happiness as indicated by results from multiple regression procedures.

These results support the literature already existing in this field as discussed in the Review of Literature. Hendrix (1997) found that joint authority sharing was positively

related to marital satisfaction for both husbands and wives. Similarly, Rabin and Shapira-Berman (1997) made a case for equal role sharing and decision making being predictive of women's marital satisfaction. In fact, Steil (1997) found that much of the literature indicates that asymmetric power structures within the marital relationship correlate with low levels of marital happiness. In 1986, Maier stated that egalitarianism may be the most satisfying relationship structure for both partners. Antill et al. (1985) also found that the husband's egalitarianism was associated with marital happiness for their wives. Finally, Mashal (1985) found that marital satisfaction for both husband and wife was positively related to joint authority sharing.

Of all the independent variables, perceived quality of parents' communication was by far the most strongly correlated with perceived parental marital happiness. The stepwise regression also revealed that perceived communication quality explains 58% of the variance in perceived marital happiness. When perceived religiosity is added to the model, the amount of variance in perceived marital happiness increases by 1%. Finally, when perceived communication quality and perceived religiosity are augmented by perceived level of egalitarianism, the model explains 60% of the variance in perceived marital happiness. This supports the initial position of this study as discussed in the rationale section, to some degree, in that perceived level of egalitarianism proved to not be the most decisive factor in perceived marital happiness; in fact, it was a distant third. This suggests that marriages may be happy without high levels of egalitarianism.

This also supports literature indicating that egalitarian power structures are not a necessary ingredient in happy marriages: traditional gender roles in the marital structure have been found to be a significant contributor to marital happiness (Balswick, 1992; Balswick & Balswick, 1990). Several studies showed that more traditional gender roles within marriage tend to result in high levels of marital happiness (Corrales, 1975; Johnson et al., 1988; Kolb & Staus, 1974). These results, coupled with the results of the current study, would indicate that couples do indeed create their own functional power structures and don't necessarily conform to the socially valued ideas of perfect egalitarianism in marriage.

The predominant LDS religion among the respondents likely affected these results, as well. The LDS religion is traditionally patriarchal in structure, and while women are greatly valued, more traditional and separate gender roles are generally practiced (Ludlow, 1992). Thus, perhaps the overwhelming LDS contingent of the sample practices traditional gender roles while at the same time maintaining high communication quality and religiosity, which, in this study, results in high marital happiness. Also, respondents may have characterized their parents' traditional gender roles as egalitarian sharing of power because of the equity of respect observed between the marital partners despite the separation of gender roles. Furthermore, while the incidence of egalitarianism in successful and happy marriages may fluctuate, this study's results suggest that high levels of communication quality do not fluctuate as much, and are more necessary for a happy marriage.

Limitations

Results of this study are specific to Utah State University undergraduate students taking entry-level Family and Human Development courses and may not be generalized to other populations. This specificity was used to generate a convenient, nonrandom sampling procedure. The overwhelming majority of one religion among respondents may skew results. This homogeneity among respondents resulted in little diversity within the sample and limits the application and generalization of the research findings to this specific group.

Because the data were gathered over a long period of time (1970 - 1999), the risk of social attitudes about marital roles shifting is great. The effects on the results of current events and popular movements over the past 70 years (which the respondents' parents' marriages span), including World War II, women's liberation, sexual revolution, and the reflection of these shifts in social attitudes in the media, cannot be discounted (Lamanna & Riedmann, 2000). The possibility of trend effects was not considered in this study. Moreover, the fact that data were collected as part of an assignment in a class discussing these topics may have skewed the results owing to the effects of social desirability.

The basic purpose of this study was to explore correlates of marital happiness in parents as viewed by adult children. The study should be replicated using instruments of measurement with established reliability and validity, and specifically better controlled

threats to validity such as social desirability, homogeneity of the sample, trend effects, etc.

Future Research

Suggestions for future research into the area of how appraisals of marital functioning in the family of origin affect views and opinions toward marriage and contributors to marital happiness would focus on how these opinions and attitudes are expressed in adult children's own marriages. This study only inventoried how respondents *thought* they would like to apply what they learned from their parents' marriages in their own unions. Ideally, interviews and observations of respondents and their spouses would indicate how attitudes toward marriage which were adopted from families of origin are expressed in current marital behavior, and how they contribute to marital happiness.

Furthermore, this study begs further exploration into why higher levels of education contribute negatively to marital communication, or at least why respondents view it that way. Further research would also be useful to investigate the relationship between communication and level of egalitarianism, and how one influences and contributes to the other. Other productive queries would lead to a closer look at why father's perceived religiosity was viewed as having such a stronger impact on perceived marital happiness than mother's perceived religiosity. Ideally, this research would

control for religion in order to explore whether this is a phenomenon associated solely with the L.D.S. population, or with a wider stratum of society, as well.

Implications for Practice

Cultural insights and details can generate greater awareness and proficiency when dealing with any specific population. An understanding of why adult children possess certain views regarding what contributes to marital happiness, and how these views impact marital functioning, can be useful to professionals in formulating treatment plans and specific interventions; further awareness regarding religious values and gender roles held by clients expands the clinician's ability to both relate to clients similar to this study's sample, and to be therapeutically effective. Intergenerational transmission of attitudes toward marriage and contributors to marital happiness must be considered by any clinician seeking to work with couples to increase marital happiness, as ignoring this pivotal facet of the marital dyad would leave a gaping hole in both assessment and treatment (Phelps, 1996).

Viewing this process from a behavioral standpoint, therapists will see adult children modeling their parents' marital processes, as well as exhibiting role rehearsal as observed in the family of origin (Bandura & Walters, 1963). This modeling of behaviors is indicative of cognitive processes reflecting beliefs and attitudes toward marriage which the adult children were conditioned to adopt while growing up in the family of origin

through social learning (Bandura, 1969). Symptoms of marital discord are treated as learned responses which are involuntarily acquired in childhood and reinforced in youth (Nichols & Schwartz, 1998). Clinicians who implement genograms to gather information regarding marital functioning in the family of origin may tap into the wealth of information surrounding attitudes toward marriage and how they contribute to the clients' current functioning. By assessing such factors as perceived communication quality, perceived level of egalitarianism, perceived religiosity, and level of education in clients' families of origin, professionals may help intervene in the most meaningful manner to clients seeking greater marital happiness (Dattilio, 1997). Thus, awareness of perceived marital functioning in the family of origin may be a valuable assessment tool, as well as a helpful component of the treatment planning process.

Respondents in this study indicated desires to have a situation in their own marriages which closely resembled that of their parents' marriage when they also reported high levels of perceived communication quality and perceived egalitarianism in the family of origin. Pointing this tendency out to clients in the therapeutic setting, and guiding them to identify and model specific steps their parents used to achieve high levels of communication and egalitarianism in their marriage will assist the clients in setting concrete behavioral goals toward increased marital happiness.

One behavioral theory which may prove useful in this arena is that of exchange theory, which introduces a type of emotional banking (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959).

According to exchange theory, people seek to maximize interpersonal rewards while minimizing interpersonal costs. Relationships are successful and experience greater happiness when the ratio of rewards to costs is high (Nichols & Schwartz, 1998).

Behavioral family therapy maintains the goals of increasing the rate of rewards while decreasing the rate of costs, and maximizing communication and problem-solving skills (Bancroft, 1975). Because this study found that perceived communication quality was the most powerful predictor of perceived marital happiness, behavioral family therapy may offer a viable modality for applying these results to the field of marriage and family therapy.

Clients seeking to increase marital happiness in their own relationship will benefit from exploring how their parents' perceived marital interactions impact the clients' own perceptions of marital happiness (Phelps, 1996). Furthermore, partners may need to define what a "happy marriage" means to each of them, and how it influences their expectations in marriage. Assisting couples in therapy in unifying meanings surrounding marital happiness may include examining the couples' views of their parents' marital processes. When they realize how their parents' perceived interactions have impacted their meanings with regard to marital happiness, clients can begin to coordinate goals and efforts toward greater marital satisfaction (Neidhardt & Allen, 1993).

The objective of developing greater marital happiness may become more obtainable if clients are aware of the statistically significant positive correlations between

perceived quality of communication, perceived level of egalitarianism, perceived religiosity and perceived marital happiness which indicate that as communication quality, egalitarianism, and religiosity increase, marital happiness increases. This awareness will assist clients in defining clear, measurable, and concrete goals in these areas (Dattilio, 1997). It will also help the therapist to assist couples in identifying role models, whether these be their own parents or other couples the clients view as being successful in marriage, and pinpoint behaviors in the areas of communication, egalitarianism and religiosity which they view as contributing to increased marital happiness. Because "happiness" is such a nebulous, all-encompassing term, the couple will benefit from the clinician's help in operationalizing behavioral components of happy marriages, such as good communication quality, and high levels of egalitarianism and religiosity. However, the professional must remember that, to a certain extent, couples base their marital interactions on what works for them, not what they are told should work (Parsons & Bales, 1955). Clients should be encouraged to explore how communication, egalitarianism, and religiosity fit into their own beliefs and values as already formed in the marriage up to that point (Dattilio).

Couples who do not have examples of effective communication in their families of origin may require more detailed coaching in specific communication skills (Nichols & Schwartz, 1998) such as "I-messages," fair fighting rules, anger management techniques, win-win negotiation concepts (Jackson, 1965; Stuart, 1980), and the exchange

theory concept of emotional banking (Azrin, Naster, & Jones, 1973). As these skills are practiced and mastered, couples can implement them into their weekly goal-setting routines as they work toward greater marital happiness.

Clients who do not have much experience with egalitarian power structures in intimate relationships may require further instruction and coaching in sharing decision-making and other aspects of power. Carter and McGoldrick (1999) suggested that whether privilege is part of the presenting problem or not, the therapist must find ways of raising the issue of inequalities, such as sexism as it is expressed through gender roles. They asserted that routinely asking questions regarding access to resources related to power, such as income, division of childcare and housework chores, economic viability of each partner, money management and decision-making, work and family involvement, career plans and parenting, and the necessity of time spent between work and home will challenge the different advantages enjoyed by both sexes, and encourage partners to examine and discuss their gender values.

Therapists should respect couples' cultural values with regard to egalitarianism. Some couples may adhere to unbalanced power-structures in their marital relationships due to religious reasons or cultural traditions. Such clients can be encouraged to explore how all gender roles can be valued and honored in order to increase both partners' sense of importance and validation in the marital dyad. In such ways even traditional gender roles can be interpreted to increase marital happiness as both members of the partnership

feel appreciated in their separate responsibilities, however they choose to be equal or unequal in the division of labors.

In addition, couples who present in therapy seeking greater marital happiness should be educated to the positive correlation between perceived religiosity and perceived marital happiness. Therapists can guide clients in thinking about the meaning of spirituality in their lives, as well as what values make their lives meaningful to them and how these aspects of life can be explored and expressed through increased religiosity (Carter & McGoldrick, 1999). Encouraging clients to consider changes in their lives which help them live according to their own values will contribute to marital happiness by producing greater personal satisfaction and unifying meanings and paradigms. While being respectful of clients' experiences and values, the clinician may present increased activity in their faith of choice to couples as a step toward increasing marital happiness.

Despite the disparity in results regarding the effects of level of education on perceived marital happiness and the weakness of the correlation in this study, therapists may wish to explore the impact each partner's educational experience has on the marital relationship. Although the clinician should not discourage educational attainment, the added stressors incident to higher education should be addressed. Specifically, the therapist might address the demands on energy, time, and finances that schooling generally poses (Krambule, 2000), and how this drain of resources uniquely affects each partner. Couples in therapy may seek to offset the often negative impacts of higher education by setting behavioral goals surrounding time management and budgeting, as

well as negotiating a division of family responsibilities which will appear fair to both partners.

In all aspects of the therapeutic process, the professional therapist must be aware of privilege and how it impacts family relationships and limits or enhances the ability to change. Carter and McGoldrick (1999) suggested that the early stages of therapy must include assessment of the level of awareness of privilege in all its forms (and how it affects power inequality in the form of bias against race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, family status, or disability) and individual responsibilities pursuant to this privilege.

Even within a seemingly religiously, racially, and ethnically homogenous community, therapists must be aware of the different value systems held by the various socioeconomic classes in the United States. The authors state that different classes have different approaches to some of the most basic components of daily life, such as gender roles, education, religion, and work. By becoming aware of their own value systems when engaging couples in discussions surrounding these value-laden issues, therapists can achieve greater efficacy in their efforts to assist clients in increasing happiness in their marital relationship. Carter and McGoldrick (1999) asserted that strengths will always emerge from the process of struggling toward improving our relationships, and it is imperative that we validate and build on those strengths in every family that we encounter.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Human Subjects Letter

VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH OFFICE
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Telephone: (435) 797-1180
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March 15, 2002

MEMORANDUM

TO: Scot Allgood
Margaret Oak

FROM: True Rubal, IRB Administrator



SUBJECT: Marital Happiness: Adult Children Assess Their Parent's Marriage Regarding
Communication, Power, Education and Religiosity.

Your proposal has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board and is approved under exemption #4.

- X There is no more than minimal risk to the subjects.
There is greater than minimal risk to the subjects.

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file for the period of one year. If your study extends beyond this approval period, you must contact this office to request an annual review of this research. Any change affecting human subjects must be approved by the Board prior to implementation. Injuries or any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board.

Prior to involving human subjects, properly executed informed consent must be obtained from each subject or from an authorized representative, and documentation of informed consent must be kept on file for at least three years after the project ends. Each subject must be furnished with a copy of the informed consent document for their personal records.

The research activities listed below are exempt from IRB review based on the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regulations for the protection of human research subjects, 45 CFR Part 46, as amended to include provisions of the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, June 18, 1991.

4. Research, involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.



Human Participant Protections Education for Research

Completion Certificate

This is to certify that

Margaret Oak

has completed the **Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams** online course, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), on 09/16/2002.

This course included the following:

- key historical events and current issues that impact guidelines and legislation on human participant protection in research.
 - ethical principles and guidelines that should assist in resolving the ethical issues inherent in the conduct of research with human participants.
 - the use of key ethical principles and federal regulations to protect human participants at various stages in the research process.
 - a description of guidelines for the protection of special populations in research.
 - a definition of informed consent and components necessary for a valid consent.
 - a description of the role of the IRB in the research process.
 - the roles, responsibilities, and interactions of federal agencies, institutions, and researchers in conducting research with human participants.
-

National Institutes of Health
<http://www.nih.gov>

Appendix B. The Family of Orientation Survey

THE FAMILY OF ORIENTATION

Background Information

1. Father's Occupation _____ His highest level of education _____
2. Mother's Occupation _____ Her highest level of education _____
3. Number of children in your family of orientation: _____ You were number 1 2 3 4 5
6 7 8 9 10 (Please circle one of these for birth order)
4. The religious preference of your parents (family) _____
It would be accurate to categorize my parents as: _____
 _____ very active in their church
 _____ above average in church activity
 _____ average in church activity
 _____ below average in church activity
 _____ not active in church at all
5. Year of parents' marriage _____
6. Please check any of the following that describes your parents' marriage:
 - a. _____ this is the first marriage for both of my parents
 - b. _____ this is the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, marriage for my mother (other marriages ended due to divorce, death, other) (circle # and cause)
 - c. _____ this is the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, marriage for my father (other marriages ended due to divorce, death, other) (circle # and cause)

I. Power Relations in the Marriage

1. Rate the power in this marriage: (circle the one best indicator for each level)

	<u>Husband</u>			Equal	<u>Wife</u>		
	Clearly the Boss	•	•	•	•	•	•
As seen by husband:	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
As seen by wife:	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
As seen by you:	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
As seen by other family members:	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
As seen by friends and neighbors:	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

2. Power bases sometimes change in marriage. In regard to this marriage, the power base is (check one):
- a. _____ the same now as it has been throughout the marriage
 - b. _____ the husband is more in charge now than in previous times
 - c. _____ the husband is less in charge now than in previous times
 - d. _____ the wife is more in charge now than in previous times
 - e. _____ the wife is less in charge now than in previous times

II. Communication in the Marriage

1. Please evaluate the communication quality in the marital relationship (circle the one best indicator for each level)

	<u>Excellent</u>			<u>Average</u>	<u>Poor</u>		
	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
As seen by husband:	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
As seen by wife:	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
As seen by you:	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
As seen by other family members:	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
As seen by neighbors and friends:	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

THE FAMILY OF ORIENTATION

Utah State University

Department of Family & Human Development

Dr. Schvaneveldt

III. Marital Happiness of the Couple

1. Please rate the marital happiness of this couple:

	<u>Extremely Happy</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Very Unhappy</u>
As seen by the husband:	•	•	•
As seen by the wife:	•	•	•
As seen by you:	•	•	•
As seen by other family members:	•	•	•
As seen by neighbors and friends:	•	•	•

2. Happiness levels in marriage sometimes change. In regard to this marriage, the level of marital happiness is:

- a. ___ very much happier now than in previous times
- b. ___ slightly more happy now than in previous times
- c. ___ about the same now as it has been throughout the marriage
- d. ___ slightly less happy now than in previous times
- e. ___ very much more unhappy now than in previous times

3. If this couple could change one thing to make the happiness of their marriage greater, what would it be:

- a. As seen by the husband _____
- b. As seen by the wife _____
- c. As seen by you _____
- d. As seen by other family members _____
- e. As seen by neighbors and friends _____

4. As you think about this marriage, project for yourself in regard to power, communication and marital happiness. Would you be pleased to have a marriage just like that of your parent's marriage in regard to:

	<u>Power Situation</u>	<u>Communication Quality</u>	<u>Marital Happiness</u>
Very Pleased	_____	_____	_____
Pleased	_____	_____	_____
Acceptable To Me	_____	_____	_____
Not Very Pleased	_____	_____	_____
Not At All Pleased	_____	_____	_____