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Marital Quality, Context, and Interaction: A Comparison of Individuals Across Various Income Levels

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MARITAL QUALITY, CONTEXT, AND INTERACTION: A COMPARISON OF INDIVIDUALS ACROSS VARIOUS INCOME LEVELS

by

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ABSTRACT

Marital Quality, Context, and Interaction: A Comparison

of Individuals Across Various Income Levels

by

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This research compared measures of marital quality between married respondents who were classified as adults currently receiving government assistance (GA) or adults not currently receiving government assistance (NGA). Additional demographic/ contextual variables such as gender, age, age at first marriage, religiosity, income, education, cohabitation, mental health, and substance abuse along with four interactional variables – escalating negativity, criticism, negative interpretation, and withdrawal – were measured as potential correlates with marital quality.

Results indicated statistically significant differences between GA and NGA individuals on all of the marital quality measures and on 8 of the 11 demographic/ contextual variables. Additionally, the four interactional variables showed strong predictive associations for each measure of marital quality for both GA and NGA individuals. Findings from this study are synthesized to help legislators, policy makers,

therapists, and other helping professionals target specific needs and intervention strategies for each of these two distinct populations.

(269 pages)

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The changes impacting marriages in America have resulted in important social, emotional, health, and economic costs and benefits for adults, children, and taxpayers (Council on Families in America, 1995; Goldscheider & Waite, 1991; Popenoe, 1993; Schramm, 2003; Waite, 2000). Because over 90% of Americans will eventually marry (Bianchi & Casper, 2000), the study of marital quality is an important endeavor to assess and understand the marital processes that can lead to greater emotional, health, and economic benefits for individuals and society.

Thirteen of the nation's marriage scholars (Institute for American Values, 2002) have reported that there are at least 21 benefits of marriage for men, women, and children (see Appendix A, Figure A1). Among the most important benefits of marriage reported by these scholars are the potential increases in psychological, physical, and economic well-being (Council on Families in America, 1995; Goldscheider & Waite, 1991; Institute for American Values).

For this reason, family researchers, educators, and practitioners are compelled to improve existing tools as well as continue to search for new tools that can guide married couples toward greater marital quality through positive change, more functional interactions, and healthier relationships. There is also a need to use culturally appropriate measures to better understand marital quality among those who receive government assistance, and those who do not, across various income levels and racial/ethnic groups so national and local programs can be devised to enhance the likelihood that these marriages will also succeed (Dilworth-Anderson, Burton, & Turner, 1993).

Marital quality, as one definition suggests, is a subjective perception of the health of the marital relationship (Larson & Holman, 1994). Another definition of marital quality includes the constructs of marital happiness, marital interaction, and divorce proneness (Amato, Johnson, Booth, & Rogers, 2003). The current study uses the expanded definition of marital quality developed by Howard Markman and Scott Stanley (Johnson et al., 2002), which expands on the definition offered by Amato and colleagues and subdivides it into six categories: (a) marital happiness/satisfaction, (b) divorce proneness, (c) positive and negative marital interaction, (d) positive bonding, (e) interpersonal commitment, and (f) feeling trapped. Correspondingly, while each of these constructs can be studied as separate outcome variables, they can also be conceptualized under one theoretical umbrella that constitutes relationship or marital quality.

One important reason for studying marital quality is to discover potential contextual and other demographic variables that may enhance marital relationships and protect couples from the consequences of prolonged negative interaction and subsequent divorce. For example, according to Amato (in press), "early age at marriage, low socioeconomic status, and various forms of marital heterogamy are consistent predictors of divorce" while "religious individuals and people who voice strong support for the norm of lifelong marriage tend to have relatively low rates of divorce" (p. 1). Amato concedes, however, that while we know a great deal about the distal (i.e., demographic and attitudinal) factors that may predict marital happiness and stability, researchers need to focus more on the proximal (i.e., interpersonal mechanisms and interactional processes) that mediate and moderate marital happiness and stability (see Appendix A, Figure A2). Gottman's research (1994a, 1994b) has provided an important contribution

in this area by identifying how couples develop a fondness and admiration system, create shared meaning, and regulate conflict, but more research is needed into the micro-interpersonal proximal mechanisms that contribute to the marital outcomes of stability and happiness.

In addition to Gottman's work, Wallerstein (1996) asserts that marital happiness can be achieved through the perceived goodness of fit between individual and couple needs, wishes, and expectations. The perceived needs, wishes and expectations of individuals and couples that influence happy and stable marriages tend to vary across gender, racial/ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic lines (Acitelli, 1992; Acitelli & Antonucci, 1994; Amato et al., 2003; Broman, 2002; Contreras, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 1996; Rogers & Deboer, 2001; Vinokur, Price, & Caplan, 1996; White & Rogers, 2000).

This is particularly true among the low-income population whose needs, wishes, and expectations are strongly shaped by economic insecurity (Clark-Nicholas & Gray-Little, 1991; McLaughlin & Lichter, 1997; Rogers & Amato, 1997; Stier & Tienda, 1997; Vega, Kolody, & Valle, 1986). Specifically, economic insecurity for low-income individuals tends to heighten tensions and stressors and may negatively influence their ability to respond appropriately to both external and internal environmental changes and processes. This lessened ability makes low-income individuals particularly vulnerable to "family chaos" and relationship disruption (see Dyk, 2004).

The United States provided its solution to economic insecurity through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program that provides block grants to states who meet specific child support, time-limit, and work requirement guidelines set forth by the federal government. The 1996 Welfare Reform Act modified the focus of

these guidelines to include marriage by stating that "marriage is the foundation of a successful society" (H.R. 3734, sec. 101(1), 104th Congress). The marriage component was included in the initiative not simply to promote any kind of marriage, but to promote *healthy* marriage as a potential intervention for minimizing the growing trends of economic insecurity while maximizing the potential benefits of healthy marriages for both parents and their children.

Supported by TANF funding, and inspired by several other statewide studies conducted by the Oklahoma State University Bureau of Social Research, the *Marriage in Utah: 2003 Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce* (Schramm, Marshall, Harris, & George, 2003) was commissioned to better understand marriages in Utah. Utilizing data from the *Survey*, a broader knowledge was gained by analyzing some of the factors that may increase or reduce marital quality among those who were currently receiving government assistance and those who were not across four income levels.

The current study provides a theoretical framework in which to study marital quality and a review of the current literature on marital quality and contextual factors among low-income and non-low-income individuals. It also includes the methods and analyses employed in the Utah study, discusses relevant findings, describes potential limitations, and suggests a course for future directions in marital quality research.

Theoretical Framework

This study uses ecological systems theory in conceptualizing marital quality and contextual factors. Specifically, it uses ecological systems theory as a framework to study those who were currently receiving government assistance at the time of the study

and those who were not. A synthesis of the relevant research using ecological systems theory will be included at the end of the literature review to summarize and clarify the findings.

Human ecology theory was primarily developed during the nineteenth century. It was spearheaded by a German zoologist, named Ernest Haeckel, who is credited for the word "ecology" (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). Human ecology theory has been greatly influenced by such disciplines as sociology, geography, psychology, political science, economics, and general systems theory (Bubolz & Sontag).

Specifically, from this theoretical perspective, the family is housed within an ecosystem that interacts with the human built, the social-cultural, and natural physical-biological environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, 1989; Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). Additionally, human ecology theory focuses on adaptation and learning processes that both allow humans to adapt to changing environmental structures as well as to modify these structures in accordance with their needs and values.

"Values," according to Bubolz and Sontag (1993), "are human conceptions of what is good, right, and worthwhile" (p. 435). "Needs" are the requirements both individuals, families, and intimate partners have "that must be met at some level if they are to survive and engage in adaptive behavior" (Bubolz & Sontag, p. 435). These include physiological, social, emotional, and behavioral needs, all of which may be influenced by the human built, the social-cultural, and the natural physical-biological environmental ecosystems.

Coplen and MacArthur (1982) have attempted to identify at least eight of these needs that shape individuals, families, intimate partners, and their environments. They

are the need to feel safe, to feel as though we belong, to develop a positive sense of personal identity, to have close real love relationships, to receive respect, to feel worthwhile, to feel capable (competent), and to experience growth.

In sum, human ecology theory focuses on the interdependence and interaction of individuals, families, intimate partners, and their environments within the context of available resources, choice, adaptation, and learning (see Bronfenbrenner, 1986; 1989). Similarly, it also focuses on the underlying values and needs which shape human behavior and motivate humans to modify both their resources and environments in order to improve life and subsequent well-being.

Human ecological systems theory clearly underlies the research done on marital quality with its emphasis on the individual, parent, peer, social, and cultural systems and their interrelated and interdependent layers of influence (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Woodward, Ferguson, & Horwood, 2001). The focus of ecological system's theory is to study these layers of influence (see Appendix A, Figure A2) and the filters between them within the framework of emerging and developing macrosystem, mesosystem, and microsystem contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). According to Bronfenbrenner, neither individual psychological characteristics nor specific environments can be explained without considering the interaction between them. Bretherton (1993) suggested that these specific "contexts are always defined from the viewpoint of the developing person" (p. 286).

Bronfenbrenner's unique contribution to theory, according to Bretherton (1993), is the focus on the interrelationships between the subsystems and the impact that each subsystem has on the others. These systems can be enhanced when the individual, the

family, the community, and the society at large share mutual goals, trust, positive orientation, and consensus. In addition, because the principal component of the macro, meso, and microsystems is the individual, who either allows or resists filtered influences from these surrounding systems, and because marital quality has been defined as a subjective perception of the health of the marital relationship (Larson & Holman, 1994), human ecological systems theory offers a viable vantage point from which to study and view individual perceptions of the quality of the relationship.

For example, Amato's *Factors that Influence Marital Outcomes* model (see Appendix A, Figure A2) combines macro, meso, and microsystems into what he calls "distal factors" (i.e., age at marriage, parental divorce, socio-economic status, heterogamy, attitudes toward marriage, and religiosity) and he postulates that each of these systems influences the proximal factors associated with marital interaction and subsequent marital happiness and stability. Amato's distal and proximal factors are clearly subsumed in human ecology theory which explains that is the interdependence and interaction of intimate partners and their environments within the context of available resources, choice, adaptation, and learning that shapes human behavior and motivates humans to modify both their resources and environments in order to improve life and subsequent well-being (e.g., marital happiness).

Definitions

Important concepts and constructs have been variously defined by researchers. Therefore, for this study, the salient concepts and constructs are defined as follows:

Age at first marriage: The chronological age at which a person engages in his or

her first marriage.

Alcohol or drug problems: The misuse or abuse of legal or illegal substances that may lead to interpersonal and intrapersonal problems, decreased physical, mental, social, emotional, and behavioral health and functioning (Schramm et al., 2003).

Anxiety: A state of mind characterized by mental anguish and physiological arousal usually caused by abnormal apprehension and fear about a perceived threat (Schramm et al., 2003).

Cohabited: Individuals who have lived together with their current spouse in an intimate, sexual relationship outside of the contract of marriage (Johnson et al., 2002).

Depression: A state of mind characterized by abnormal mental sadness, inactivity, dejection, and/or difficulty in thinking and concentration (Schramm et al., 2003).

Divorce proneness: A negative perceptual evaluation of a couple's marital relationship characterized by thoughts of dissolving the relationship and divorce (Johnson et al., 2002; Schramm et al., 2003).

Education: The highest grade in school for which credit was received, or the highest degree earned.

Feeling trapped: A perceptual evaluation of feeling stuck in a relationship with very few options to leave the relationship (Johnson et al., 2002; Schramm et al., 2003).

Individuals currently receiving government assistance (GA): Individuals surveyed who were currently receiving government assistance, specifically TANF, Medicaid, Food Stamps, and/or assistance related to Women, Infants, and Children (WIC; Johnson et al., 2002; Schramm et al., 2003).

Individuals not currently receiving government assistance (NGA): Individuals surveyed who were not currently receiving government assistance, specifically TANF, Medicaid, Food Stamps, and/or assistance related to Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), divided into four income level categories based upon the last year of total income before taxes and other deductions: (a) under $20,000, (b) $20,000-$39,999, (c) $40,000-$59,999, and (d) more than $60,000 (Schramm et al., 2003).

Interpersonal commitment: An individual "desire to maintain or improve the quality of the relationship for the mutual benefit of both partners" (Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 2001, p. 325), or to stay in the relationship because the perceived costs of leaving the relationship are too high.

Marital quality: A "subjective evaluation of a couple's relationship" (Larson & Holman, 1994, p. 228) that includes the general constructs of marital happiness/ satisfaction, divorce proneness, positive and negative marital interaction, positive bonding, interpersonal commitment, and feeling trapped (Johnson et al., 2002, Schramm et al., 2003).

Marital satisfaction: A positive perceptual evaluation of a couple's marital relationship (e.g., happiness; Larson & Holman, 1994).

Marital interaction: How a married couple relates to and reciprocally influences one another (Johnson et al., 2002; Schramm et al., 2003).

Negative interaction: A negative perceptual, emotional, and behavioral evaluation of how a couple relates to and reciprocally influences one another (Johnson et al., 2002; Schramm et al., 2003).

Other mental health conditions: Mental health problems that may include ADD,

ADHD, personality disorders (e.g., bipolar, eating disorders, anger management, obsessive compulsive, schizophrenia, split personality, dementia, etc.), chemical imbalance, insomnia, seizures, post-traumatic stress, psychosomatics, and panic attacks (Schramm et al., 2003).

Positive bonds: A positive perceptual, emotional, and behavioral evaluation of a couple's closeness, connectedness, and intimacy (Johnson et al., 2002; Schramm et al., 2003).

Positive interaction: A positive perceptual, emotional, and behavioral evaluation of how a couple relates to and reciprocally influences one another (Johnson et al., 2002; Schramm et al., 2003).

Religiosity: Religious attitudes and behaviors (Schramm et al., 2003).

Purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the differences in marital quality between individuals who were currently receiving government assistance and those who were not, across four income levels. Specifically, those who were currently receiving government assistance were compared as a separate group to those who were not currently receiving government assistance across the following four income levels: (a) under $20,000, (b) $20,00-$39,999, (c) $40,000-$59,999, and (d) more than $60,000. Because much of the literature on marital quality has focused on White, middle-class samples (Broom, 1998; Canary, Stafford, & Semic, 2002; Huston, Caughlin, Houts, Smith, & George, 2001), this study sought to better understand how marital quality and income factors may or may not be related. Therefore, the first major research question

asked in this study was "How are married individuals who are currently receiving government assistance similar to or different from married individuals across various income levels who are not receiving government assistance with regard to marital quality?"

In addition to looking at both similarities and differences in marital quality between GA and NGA individuals, the impact of other contextual or background variables on the levels of marital quality was examined. Accordingly, the second research question in this study was "How are married individuals who are currently receiving government assistance similar to, or different from, married individuals across various income levels who are not receiving government assistance with regard to marital quality and specific contextual factors?" The contextual variables used in this study included measures of mental health (i.e., depression, anxiety, other mental health problems), age at marriage, gender, education, religiosity, substance abuse, and cohabitation.

It was hypothesized that GA individuals would have lower levels of marital quality than NGA individuals across each of contextual variables for the four income levels but that these lower levels would be mediated by specific interactional processes that may play a critical role in contributing to the similarities and differences between these groups (see Amato, in press; Gottman, 1994a, 1994b). For example, Kurdek (1995) found that marital satisfaction for both men and women was highly correlated with conflict resolution styles and that changes in marital satisfaction were strongly linked to changes in conflict resolution styles. Specifically, Kurdek found that it was the wives' conflict resolution strategies that were the most predictive of both spouses' satisfaction.

Marital quality and contextual factors among GA and NGA individuals were assessed using an instrument designed by Christine A. Johnson, Scott M. Stanley, Norval D. Glenn, Paul R. Amato, Steve L. Nock, Howard J. Markman, M. Robin Dion, and the Oklahoma State University Bureau for Social Research. The instrument was modified by the author and the Utah State University Extension Marriage Project Team in conjunction with the Utah Governor's Commission on Marriage. The following questions regarding marital quality and contextual factors were addressed.

Research Questions

1. Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to report overall marital satisfaction when compared to NGA Utahans?

2. Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to report positive bonding when compared to NGA Utahans?

3. Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to report interpersonal commitment when compared to NGA Utahans?

4. Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to report divorce proneness when compared to NGA Utahans?

5. Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to report feeling trapped when compared to NGA Utahans?

6. Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to report negative interaction when compared to NGA Utahans?

7. Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to have ever cohabited when compared to NGA Utahans?

8. Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to have experienced anxiety when compared to NGA Utahans?

9. Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to have experienced depression when compared to NGA Utahans?

10. Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to have experienced other mental health problems when compared to NGA Utahans?

11. Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to have experienced alcohol or drug problems when compared to NGA Utahans?

12. Do currently married GA Utahans report higher or lower levels of educational attainment when compared to NGA Utahans?

13. Do currently married GA Utahans report higher or lower levels of religiosity when compared to NGA Utahans?

14. Do currently married GA Utahans report higher or lower levels of age at first marriage when compared to NGA Utahans?

15. Were there differences in marital quality, or any of the contextual factors, by gender for currently married GA Utahans when compared to NGA Utahans?

16. Were there differences in marital quality, or any of the contextual factors, by income level for currently married GA Utahans when compared to NGA Utahans?

17. Which contextual factors are predictive of marital quality among GA and NGA Utahans?

18. What interactional processes are predictive of marital quality among GA and NGA Utahans?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This review of literature uses an inductive approach to the study of marriage and the contextual and interactional factors that may influence marital quality. It begins with a review of the changing marital structures, roles, and trends, continues with a specific review of recent research on the six constructs of marital quality (i.e., happiness/ satisfaction, divorce proneness, positive/negative interaction, commitment, feeling trapped, and positive bonds). It proceeds with a review of the contextual factors (i.e., income level/receipt of government assistance, cohabitation, mental health, substance abuse, religiosity, education, and age at marriage) identified in this study, and concludes with a brief summary of the relevant findings. Any gender differences will be reported within the specific literature reviews of marital quality and contextual factors.

Changing Marital Structures, Trends, and Roles

The structure of the traditional institutions of marriage and family have changed dramatically within the past 20-60 years. This brief review of changing marital structures, trends, and roles uses results from the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau (Bianchi & Casper, 2000) and Amato and colleagues' (2003) landmark review as the most reliable sources for conceptualizing current marital structures, trends, and roles as a critical baseline for understanding marital quality.

A traditional family is currently defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as "one or more people living together who are related by blood, marriage, or adoption" (Bianchi &

Casper, 2000, p. 8), while a household is defined as "one or more people who occupy a house, apartment, or other residential unit (but not 'group quarters' such as dormitories)."

The majority of households in America are family households (Bianchi & Casper, 2000). However, the percentage of family households has declined from 85% of all households in 1960 to 69% of all households in 2000. For example, current research estimates reveal that 91% of U.S. children were living in a home with both father and mother in 1960 compared with 76% in 2000 (Bianchi & Casper). Moreover, in 1960, 8% of children lived with a single mother while in 2000, 22% of U.S. children lived with a single mother. Single-father households with children increased from 1% in 1960 to 5% in 2000 (Bianchi & Casper). The most common household type today is the "married couples without children" household due to the ongoing trend that couples are either "empty nesters" or they are postponing childbearing for their first few years (U.S Census Bureau, 2001).

According to Bianchi and Casper (2000), the birth rate among married women dropped dramatically from 1940 to 2000, while birth rates among unmarried women skyrocketed (e.g., births to unmarried women increased from 4% of all births in 1940 to 33% of all births in 1999). Women of color from diverse ethnic backgrounds are especially at risk for unmarried births.

In general, single mothers are currently younger, less educated, and earn a lower income than married mothers (Bianchi & Casper, 2000), which poses challenges for both single mothers and their children. This tendency for female-headed families to earn lower incomes has been termed "the feminization of poverty" (Pearce, 1978), thus elevating the risk for their children to also live in poverty (Bianchi & Casper). In

addition to experiencing higher risks for poverty, when compared with children who live in two-parent households, children of single parents are more likely to experience emotional and behavioral problems, become pregnant, use drugs, become juvenile delinquents, and terminate their education (Bennett, 1993; Whitehead, 1993).

In general, however, the past 20 years has seen an increase in education levels for both men and women with almost one fourth of women and over one-fourth of men currently completing four or more years of college (Amato et al., 2003; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Such increases in educational attainment, according to Amato and colleagues, are not positively correlated with greater marital happiness but they are positively correlated with divorce proneness and are negatively correlated with marital interaction. In sum, these authors concluded that "well-educated individuals, compared with poorly educated individuals, earn more income, possess better communication skills, are at lower risk of depression, and experience a stronger sense of personal control" (Amato et al., p. 3). Such increases in educational attainment may provide both men and women with more options, less time, and increased resources, thus raising their expectations for marriage, but not providing them with the skills to interact more positively and to resist divorce proneness.

Income levels, in general, have also increased during the past 20 years with the median income levels increasing from $46,000 to $55,000 (Amato et al., 2003; Bianchi & Casper, 2000). This increase in the median income level has led to declines in poverty and unemployment and subsequent increases in martial quality and stability for all races, thus identifying income level as a key contextual factor that may predict and promote individual and relationship well-being.

Age at marriage has also increased for both men and women over the past several decades (i.e., from 23.2 in 1970 to 26.8 in 2000 for men and from 20.8 in 1970 to 25.1 in 2000 for women). This trend towards later age at marriage offers some potential benefits for couples' marital quality and stability such as greater maturity and increased economic security, but may be misleading in light of the dramatic increases in the couples who are cohabiting, which for many has become a stage between dating and marriage (Amato et al., 2003; Bianchi & Casper, 2000; Bumpass, Martin, & Sweet, 1991).

Cohabitation has become the choice of a growing number of single unmarried Americans although, as reported above, it is estimated that approximately 90% of men and women in the U.S. will eventually marry at some point in their lives (Bianchi & Casper, 2000; Popenoe, 1993). "Marriage," according to Waite (2000), "is a legally and socially recognized union, ideally life-long, that entails sexual, economic, and social rights and obligations for partners" (p. 4). "Cohabitation, by contrast," according to Waite, "refers to an intimate sexual union between two unmarried partners who share the same living quarters for a sustained period of time" (p. 4).

In 1995, the *National Survey of Family Growth* (NSFG) found that approximately one in four unmarried women were cohabiting (Bianchi & Casper, 2000). Non-Hispanic white women showed the highest percentages of cohabitation in 1998 followed by single Hispanic and non-Hispanic black women respectively (Bianchi & Casper).

Casper and Sayer (2000) studied cohabiting couples and found that they cohabited for at least four different reasons: substitute for marriage, precursor to marriage, trial marriage, and coresidential dating. About 40% of all the couples Casper and Sayer surveyed married within five to seven years. According to Bianchi and Casper

(2000), Casper and Sayer's results indicated the following:

> Those with the strongest commitment to one another and to marriage were most likely to get married. More than one-half of couples who characterized their living together as a precursor to marriage did marry within five to seven years, compared with 33 percent of "dating" couples with no long-term expectations about their partner, their relationship, or marriage. About one-quarter of unmarried couples in "trial marriage" or "substitute marriage" married within seven years. (p. 17)

Although many who cohabit eventually marry, cohabitation has been significantly associated with lower levels of marital interaction, higher rates of divorce proneness, and a decreased commitment to life-long marriage (Amato et al., 2003; Smock, 2000). It is also associated with poorer outcomes for children in these arrangements. Children are present among approximately 50% of previously married cohabiters and 35% of never-married cohabiters. Children living in these cohabiting households are more likely to live in poverty, to experience family instability, and to experience significant hardship (Smock; "Vulnerability and Strength of Low-Income Families," 1999).

In sum, the trends over the past 20-60 years have revealed that family households are indeed changing, with the greatest changes occurring due to the decreased birth rates among married women, the relatively level birth rates among unmarried women, the increased percentages of single-parent headed households, and the growth of cohabitation, although the traditional two-parent household is still the statistical norm. Specifically, the increases in single-parent households, especially among single mothers, may signal an elevated risk for poverty, behavioral and emotional problems, adjudication, substance abuse, lower educational attainment, and teen pregnancy for both them and their children.

Additionally, couples who cohabit prior to marriage may be at an elevated risk for

interactional problems and divorce proneness while their children may face an increased risk of poverty, family instability, and other hardships. Trends over the last 20 years such as later age at marriage, increased levels of education for both men and women, and increases in the median income level may offer viable explanatory associations for increases in marital quality and stability, but may be tempered by other mediating and moderating variables (see Amato et al., 2003). Such trends, and their potential positive and negative consequences, offer a logical rationale for the promotion of healthy marriages among those who desire to choose marriage (see Bianchi & Casper, 2000; Council on Families in America, 1995; Goldscheider & Waite, 1991; Popenoe, 1993; Schramm, 2003; Waite, 2000).

Changing Roles

In conjunction with changing relationship structures and trends, such as non-marital cohabitation, men and women are also experiencing changing roles. Women are participating in more of the traditionally masculine roles (e.g., breadwinner, career, etc.) while men are assuming more of the traditionally feminine roles (e.g., housework, child care, etc.), though not to the same degree.

Indeed, the dominant family model in the new millennium is the dual-income model (Amato et al., 2003; Bianchi, 2000; Bianchi & Casper, 2000; Bird, 1999; Coltrane, 2000). Such changes, especially in light of the increased cohabitation and single-parent household trends, have likely caused individuals and couples to experience dissonance in such areas as role clarity, role conflict, role incompatibility, role allocation, role viability, and role differentiation (Ahlburg & Devita, 1992; Amato et al; Bianchi & Casper; Bird;

Schvaneveldt, 1994).

For example, although women's labor force participation has increased dramatically over the past 20 years, men's help with the housework has increased very little (Bird, 1999). This has given rise to the notion of the "second shift" for women in which they must not only manage the increasing demands of labor force participation, but also continue to manage the household responsibilities when they return home from work. Perceived equity in the division of household labor, but not necessarily the amount of time actually engaged in household tasks, was found by Bird to be a critical component to psychological well-being, especially for women, while employment status was found to moderate the effect of the division of labor on depression.

Correspondingly, Amato and colleagues (2003) found that although increases in women's long hours of labor force participation may have decreased marital quality, the potential negative consequences may have largely been offset by increases in family income, decision-making equality, support for the norm of life-long marriage, and religiosity.

Clearly, the increase of women in the workforce has created new demands for childcare and new demands on grandparents who are shouldering more and more of the childcare responsibilities. In 1998, for example, 17% of single mothers and 10% of single fathers were living with their children at their parents' residence (Bianchi & Casper, 2000). Similarly, Black single mothers (72%) and never-married women of all races (60%) are very likely to live in their parents' home at least for some time before their children are grown. Surprisingly, in nearly one-third of the homes where grandchildren are living with grandparents, the parents are not present.

The increases in the dual-earner role model have also increased the number of children who are left unsupervised at home while the mother or parents are working. For example, Bianchi and Casper (2000) reported that in 1995, 5.2 million children ages 5-13 in America engaged in self-care. Although mothers have increased their participation in the workforce since the 1970s, the authors reported that nearly two thirds of the mothers of preschoolers in America are *not* trading the raising of their children for employment. However, in 1998, 71% of the mothers who had children less than 6 years of age reported working for pay at some point during the year. This provides a critical paradox for some mothers who are compelled to care for their children and yet provide for part or all of the family income.

Finally, the increased age of first marriage (i.e., currently 26.8 for males and 25.1 for females) is reflective of what Bianchi and Casper (2000) call the new ideology that has emerged in America. This new ideology promotes patterns and roles associated with personal satisfaction, gratification, and self-fulfillment (Doherty, 2001).

In sum, the roles experienced by men and women have undergone some dramatic changes within the last 50 years. Indeed, according to Bianchi and Casper (2000), from the 1950s to the present,

> people became more accepting of divorce, cohabitation, and sex outside marriage; less sure about the universality and permanence of marriage; and more tolerant of blurred gender roles and of mother's working outside the home.... A new ideology was emerging during these years that stressed personal freedom, self-fulfillment, and individual choice in living arrangements and family commitments. People began to expect more out of marriage and to leave bad marriages if their expectations were not fulfilled. (p. 6)

National Marital Quality Trends

The results from eight longitudinal studies over the past 30 years revealed that changes in marital quality have remained relatively stable (Amato et al., 2003; Glenn, 1998; Herman, 1994; Johnson, Amoloza, & Booth, 1992; Karney & Bradbury, 1997; Kurdek, 1991; Orbuch, House, Mero, & Webster; 1996; Vaillant & Vailliant, 1993). However, only four of these eight studies were included in this review due to specific design, sampling, and external validity issues identified within the framework of the omitted studies. Two examples of studies that were not used in this review because of design, sampling, and external validity issues were Kurdek's (1991) study that included a 97% White sample recruited from marriage licenses published in the *Dayton Daily News* and Vaillant and Vaillant's (1993) study whose sample consisted of 99% college graduates and all of the husbands were Caucasian.

Using the 1973-1994 *American General Social Surveys* and a repeated cross-sectional design, Glenn (1998) followed five American cohorts from 1973-1994 and found no overall increases in the total levels of marital quality, suggesting that marital quality remained relatively stable during that historical period. Johnson and colleagues (1992) used data from an eight-year longitudinal nationally representative sample of couples 55 and under and also found that marital quality tends to remain relatively stable over time. However, they also found that while marital happiness and marital interaction tend to decline with the duration of time in marriage they found no significant increases in divorce proneness, problems, or disagreements.

Orbuch and colleagues (1996) used first-marriage data from the *American's Changing Lives* study ($N = 5,312$). They oversampled Blacks and individuals over 60 at

twice the rate of Whites and individuals under 60 and found that declines in workload and parenting responsibilities, as well as increases in financial well-being, explained a substantial portion of the variance in the increase in marital satisfaction in later life. However, they found no explanation for the decrease in divorce proneness in later life.

The study by Amato and his colleagues (2003) was the most comprehensive in its scope (see Table 1; see also Appendix A, Figure A5). Their study was taken from two national probability samples, one collected in 1980 and the other in 2000. In both samples participants were randomly selected from the United States as the target population and telephone interviews were conducted with a 68% response rate (N = 2,034) for the 1980 survey and a 63% (N = 2,100) response rate for the 2000 survey. All of the questions in both surveys were worded the same way so that reliable comparisons could be made. Both samples were weighted according to the 1980 and 2000 U.S. population statistics with respect to the demographic variables of gender, age, race (non-Hispanic White, non-Hispanic Black, Hispanic, and other), years of education, metropolitan status, and household size to assure their representativeness.

Amato and colleagues (2003) identified three indicators of marital quality: marital happiness, marital interaction, and divorce proneness. They used a 10-item scale to measure marital happiness with alpha coefficients ranging from .87 in 1980 to .89 in 2000. A 6-item scale was used to measure marital interaction with alpha coefficients of .64 in 1980 and .69 in 2000. A final 27-item scale was used to measure divorce proneness with .92 reported alpha coefficients for both 1980 and 2000. The correlation between marital happiness and marital interaction in 1980 was r = .44, marital happiness and divorce proneness was r = -.53, and marital interaction and divorce proneness was

Table 1

Summary of Significant Associations Between Changes in Explanatory Variables and Changes in Dimensions of Marital Quality: 1980-2000

Explanatory variable	Direction of change (1980-2000)	Association with marital quality: Marital happiness	Marital interaction	Divorce proneness
Demographic variables				
Age married	Increase	ns	ns	–
Years married	No change	ns	ns	ns
Remarried	Increase	ns	ns	+
Preschool children	No change	ns	ns	ns
School-age children	No change	ns	ns	ns
Black	No change	ns	ns	ns
Hispanic	Increase	ns	ns	ns
Other non-White	Increase	NS	+	–
Heterogamy index	Increase	–	–	ns
Cohabitation	Increase	ns	–	+
Employment and income				
Education	Increase	ns	–	+
Husband employed	Decrease	ns	ns	ns
Wife employed part time	Increase	ns	ns	ns
Wife employed full time	No change	ns	ns	ns
Wife extended hours	Increase	–	–	+
Husband job demands	No change	ns	ns	ns
Wife job demands	Increase	ns	–	+
Family income	Increase	+	ns	ns
Public assistance	Decrease	ns	+	–
Finances better	No change	ns	ns	ns
Finances worse	Decrease	ns	ns	–
Gender arrangements				
Wife proportion income	Increase	ns	ns	ns
Husband housework	Increase	+	+	–
Equal decision making	Increase	+	+	–
Attitudes and values				
Traditional gender attitudes	Decrease	+	+	ns
Lifelong marriage	Increase	+	+	–
Religiosity	Increase	+	ns	ns

Note. From "Continuity and Change in Marital Quality Between 1980 and 2000," by P.R. Amato, D.R. Johnson, A. Booth, and S.J. Rogers, 2003, *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 65*(1), p. 16. Copyright 2003 by the National Council on Family Relations. Reprinted with permission.

$r = -.32$. The correlations between each of these variables in 2000 were .45, -.51, and -26, respectively.

Amato and colleagues (2003) contended that increased demographic, economic, social, and attitudinal changes over the last 20 years led to expectations that increases or decreases in marital happiness and divorce proneness would be found along with those found for marital interaction. Decomposition analysis was used by the authors to investigate why these expectations were not fulfilled and they found that marital happiness and divorce proneness did indeed undergo substantial changes from 1980-2000 but that increases in some variables were offset by decreases in other variables and vice versa. Thus, according to Amato and colleagues,

> [I]t appears that the stability of marital happiness and divorce proneness during this time was attributable to a variety of positive and negative forces that largely offset one another. For example, increases in heterogamy and wives' long hours of employment appear to have lowered marital happiness, whereas increases in family income, decision-making quality, support for non-traditional gender relations, support for the norm of lifelong marriage, and religiosity appear to have increased marital happiness. Similarly, increases in the proportion of second and higher-order marriages, premarital cohabitation, wives' long hours of employment and wives' job demands appear to have raised divorce proneness, whereas increases in age at marriage, financial stability, decision-making quality, and support for the norm of lifelong marriage appears to have lowered divorce proneness....the decline in marital interaction would have been greater if it had not been offset partially by changes in husbands' share of housework, decision-making equality, nontraditional gender attitudes, and support for the norm of lifelong marriage. (p. 19)

Marital Quality

A review of marital quality provides increased understanding of the marital processes that lead to greater emotional, health, and economic benefits rather than costs

for American families. The meta-analyses of Larson and Holman (1994) and Higginbotham and Adler-Baeder (2003), who overlapped slightly in their analyses of the construct of marital quality from 1975–2003, were used as the foundation of this literature review.

Larson and Holman's (1994) meta-analysis included a comprehensive review of the salient predictors of marital quality and stability published in professional journals from 1975–1993 using bibliographical references such as the *Inventory of Marriage and Family Literature*, *Psychological Abstracts*, and the computer-aided search systems *PsychLit* and *Sociofile*. They concluded from their analysis that three general domains of variables predicted marital quality (i.e., from the least to the most predictive) – background and contextual factors, individual traits and behaviors, and couple interactional processes.

Higginbotham and Adler-Baeder (2003) used the *EBSCO* Academic Search Elite and *PsychINFO* databases to research the keywords "marital satisfaction," "relationship satisfaction," and "marital quality." Their review limited the over 2,000 articles to those that were peer-reviewed from 1990 to 2003. The result yielded a review of over 796 articles. Limitations were placed upon these remaining articles by the authors who focused only on the predictor variables that can lead to the outcomes of marital satisfaction and quality from studies whose samples were obtained from within the United States. The subsequent result of these limitations offered over 250 articles for review.

The present study synthesizes the comprehensive research of Larson and Holman

(1994) and Higginbotham and Adler-Baeder (2003) into six general predictor variables of marital quality operationalized by Johnson and colleagues (2002). These variables are overall marital satisfaction, divorce proneness, positive/negative interaction, positive bonding, interpersonal commitment and feeling trapped. Although many of the studies reviewed here addressed issues in more than one of the six categories, they were placed in the current review where they approached an appropriate goodness of fit.

Additionally, because marital happiness/satisfaction has often been used as a synonymous term with marital quality (Broom, 1998; Huston & Chorost, 1994; Shapiro, Gottman, & Carrere, 2000), it was only reviewed within the context of the other five variables. Tables 2-6 (each shown and discussed separately in the following sections) review the studies of marital quality using the variables of divorce proneness, positive interaction, negative interaction, positive bonds, and interpersonal commitment. The variable of "feeling trapped" is closely allied with interpersonal commitment and is, therefore, subsumed under this research heading in Table 5. A brief summary synthesizing the research precedes each table.

Divorce Proneness

The research on divorce proneness suggests that expectations, faulty assumptions, negative interaction, negative affect, and negative attributions influence perceptions about divorcing (Carrere, Buehlman, Coan, Gottman, & Ruckstuhl, 2000; Crohan, 1992; Gottman & Levenson, 2000; Karney & Bradbury, 2000; Karney, Bradbury, Fincham, Sullivan, & Kieran, 1994; Kelley & Burgoon, 1991; Kurdek, 1992). Amato and colleagues (2003) found that increases in divorce proneness from 1980-2000 were

significantly associated with increases in the number of remarriages, cohabitation before marriage, levels of educational attainment, wives' extended work hours (i.e., 46+), and stressors associated with increases in wives' job demands. However, several variables that helped to reduce the trend toward divorce proneness from 1980-2000 included later age at marriage, a decline in the use of government assistance, a decrease in the perception that financial resources were declining, an increase in husbands' doing more housework, an increase in the equity of decision-making between couples, and an increase in the perception and value of lifelong marriage (see Table 2).

Amato and colleagues (2003) concluded that at least two different social force trends influenced the national fluctuation of divorce proneness from 1980-2000 although they did not specifically summarize and synthesize these two opposing trends. Scrutiny of their findings appears to reveal that one trend was associated with increasing individualism, stressors, and educational attainment and the other trend was associated with increased self-sufficiency, egalitarianism, and valuing of marriage as a lifelong institution.

In a statewide study, the *Marriage in Utah: 2003 Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce* (Schramm et al., 2003) reported that setting aside gender and income level, Utahans in the sample reported the following five reasons for their divorces: (a) a lack of commitment, (b) too much conflict and arguing, (c) infidelity or extramarital affairs, (d) getting married too young, and (e) financial problems or economic hardship. The associations between marital quality and commitment, negative interaction, age at marriage, and economic hardship are addressed elsewhere in this

Table 2

Summary of Studies Linking Divorce Proneness with Marital Quality

Author(s)/year	Main findings
Amato et al. (2003)	Increases in the number of remarriages, cohabitation before marriage, educational attainment, wives' extended work hours (i.e., 46+), and wives' job demands were significantly associated with divorce proneness.
Broman (2002)	Younger and black (compared to white) couples, and couples who were parents, were more likely to think about divorce, but blacks were less likely than whites to get a divorce. Approximately 90% of spouses who think about getting a divorce do not get a divorce. Thoughts of divorce were correlated with divorce and separation 3 years later. Those who stayed together reported higher satisfaction.
Carrere et al. (2000)	Newlywed wives' and husbands' perceptions about each other and their marriage predicted with over 80% accuracy their marital stability at 4-6 and 7-9 years and thus shapes their marital trajectory.
Crohan (1992)	There was a negative correlation at Time 1 between couples who both believed that conflict should be avoided and marital satisfaction at Time 2 when compared to couples who both believed that conflict should not be avoided.
Gottman & Levenson (2000)	The lack of positivity and positive affect in the events-of-the-day and conflict discussions between spouses predicted later but not earlier divorce.
Karney & Bradbury (2000)	Changes in attributions predicted changes in marital satisfaction more so than vice versa.
Karney et al. (1994)	Negative affect and negative attributions were positively correlated with each other and negatively correlated with marital satisfaction.
Kelley & Burgoon (1991)	Differences between expectations of perceptions of how a spouse should behave and actual behaviors predicted levels of satisfaction.
Kurdek (1992)	Dysfunctional beliefs (e.g., faulty assumptions and standards) were negatively correlated with marital satisfaction.
Liu (2000)	Infidelity and extramarital affairs are associated with marital sexual life and divorce.

study. Interestingly, the findings in the Utah study replicated the *Marriage in Oklahoma: 2001 Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce* in each of the first four reasons reported for divorce (Johnson et al., 2002). The fifth reason reported for divorce in the Oklahoma study was "little or no helpful premarital preparation." Similarly, in both statewide studies, over 90% of those who reported that their marriage

had been seriously in trouble at some point later reported greater satisfaction about their relationship and that they were glad they were still together (Johnson et al.; Schramm et al.).

These findings appear to be consistent with those of Amato and colleagues (2003) with regard to the specific variables of age at marriage and financial problems or economic hardship. High conflict and lack of commitment appear to have the strongest associations with divorce proneness and eventual divorce in each of these statewide studies, although infidelity and extramarital affairs also appear to have a strong association.

Liu's (2000) study of marital sexual life revealed a unique connection between divorce proneness, marital quality, and infidelity that is noteworthy to discuss. His social capital and exchange theory introduced the notion that because families are becoming less viable as sources of the production of goods and services, they are losing their power and versatility. Therefore, men and women may be more prone to engage in extramarital sex outside the home and less committed to monogamy. Further, he introduced social capital (e.g., socialization, job training, health care, entertainment, and protection) and other factors (e.g., type of marriage, love, marital happiness, AIDS, distribution of marital power, sex ratio, and social norms) as potential reasons for why individuals may choose to engage or not engage in extramarital affairs and sexual relationships. These potential explanatory reasons may be an outgrowth of couple and individual expectations,

faulty assumptions, negative interaction, and negative affect that could influence perceptions about divorcing.

Positive Marital Interaction

Commonalities in the research findings linking positive marital interaction with marital quality include the expression and reception of positive affect (Huston & Vangelisti; 1991; Shapiro et al., 2000), a perception of quality communication — especially for the wives (Thomas, 1990), an ability to disclose one's own innermost feelings, thoughts, and behaviors (Bograd & Spilka, 1996; Erickson, 1993; King, 1993; Rosenfeld & Bowen, 1991), the skill to validate their partner's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors (Burleson & Denton, 1997), and the couple's ability to engage in relationship maintenance behaviors such as humor, feeling disclosure, and information exchange (Broom, 1998; Canary et al., 2002; Dainton, 2000; Gill, Christensen, & Fincham, 1999; Weigel & Ballard-Resich, 1999).

Specifically, Gottman, Coan, Carrere, and Swanson (1998) highlighted the spouses' (i.e., usually the wives) use of a soft start-up to communication that can short-circuit defensiveness along with the implementation of humor as a soothing mechanism. Similarly, Gottman and colleagues illuminated the need for husbands to accept influence from their wives, to become skilled at expressing positive affect, and to learn to soothe themselves. Gottman and his colleagues contended that it may be the husbands' ability to accept influence from their wives (who tend to become the emotional managers of relationships) that is a crucial mechanism for relationships to survive in the long term (see Table 3).

Table 3

Summary of Studies Linking Positive Marital Interaction with Marital Quality

Author(s)/year	Main findings
Bograd & Spilka (1996)	Intentionality to disclose, positive disclosure, and honesty of disclosure were positively associated with marital satisfaction.
Broom (1998)	Perceptions of greater spousal pleasing behaviors were associated with higher marital quality.
Burleson & Denton (1997)	Skills and satisfaction were associated positively for happy couples and negatively for distressed couples.
Cartensen et al. (1995)	Expressed emotional behaviors by couples differed by age, gender, and marital satisfaction. Older couples expressed less negative affect. Husbands expressed more positive affect behaviors than wives, and increased exchanges of positive behaviors predicted greater happiness for both spouses.
Contreras et al. (1996)	Passionate love predicted marital satisfaction for Mexican Americans and Anglo-Americans.
Dainton (2000)	Perceptions of frequency of spousal use of maintenance behaviors predicted relationship satisfaction.
Erickson (1993)	Husbands' emotion work (i.e., confided innermost thoughts and feelings, had faith in wife, stuck by wife in times of trouble, and initiated talking things over) compared to housework and child-care tasks was the biggest predictor of wives' well-being and happiness
Gill, Christensen, & Finchman (1999)	Positive behaviors by both spouses predicted greater wives' satisfaction
Goodman (1999)	Intimacy was positively associated with marital satisfaction and hostile control was negatively associated with marital satisfaction. Older couples rated their spouses higher in intimacy than middle aged couples. For long-term married couples, intimacy and avoidance of hostile control were more important than autonomy.
Gottman (1994a)	Calming down, complaining, speaking non-defensively, validating, and over learning are the key skills that promote positive interaction.
Gottman et al. (1998)	Wives who used a soft start-up and humor to soothe their husbands, and husbands who accepted influence from their wives, used positive affect, and de-escalated negative affect to soothe themselves, were happy and stable at Time 2
Huston & Vangelisti (1991)	Positive affection was associated with marital satisfaction.
King (1993)	Husbands' emotional expressiveness was positively correlated with wives' satisfaction.
Rosenfeld & Bowen (1991)	Spouse's own self-disclosure predicted their relationship satisfaction more than their partners' self-disclosure patterns. Spouses low in their own self-disclosure patterns reported lower marital satisfaction.
Shapiro et al. (2000)	Husbands' expression of fondness predicted wives satisfaction, while husbands and wives expressions of fondness and admiration in the Oral History Interview predicted marital stability.
Thomas (1990)	Family cohesion predicted marital happiness for husbands while quality communication predicted marital happiness for wives.
Weigel & Ballard-Reisch (1999)	Husbands' marital satisfaction was predicted by wives' maintenance behaviors but not vice versa.

Interestingly, older couples were found to express less negative affect than younger and middle-aged couples (Cartensen, Gottman, & Levenson, 1995). This may evidence a positive correlation between perceived intimacy and less control and power issues as the couples learn to negotiate marital conflict (Goodman, 1999). Critical to these perceptions is the component of positive/negative affect during marital interaction.

Larson and Holman (1994) have identified *interactional processes* as the most predictive of marital satisfaction and quality when compared with *individual couple traits* and *context*. Gottman et al. (1998) identified gentleness, soothing behaviors, and de-escalation of negativity as the key factors in successful positive interaction. Interestingly, they found little or no support for the technique of active listening as a successful strategy for positive interaction. Similarly, no support was found for expressing anger or negative affect reciprocity as a deterrent to positive communication behaviors. Balance theory was cited as an explanation for the need to balance negative interactions with positive interactions. According to Gottman (1994a), the optimal ratio of positive to negative interactions is 5:1.

Gottman (1994a) has specifically identified five positive behaviors that promote positive interaction: calm down, complain, speak nondefensively, validate, and over learn the skills of positive communication. *Calming down* involves disengaging from a potential negative interaction before something hurtful is said and should endure for at least 20 minutes or longer to insure that a person has really calmed down. Otherwise, it becomes easy to slip back into an emotionally charged conversation and to say or do things that are hurtful.

Bringing up a *complaint* about a specific issue or behavior, according to Gottman (1994a), is one of the healthiest behaviors couples can engage in because it allows the resentment and frustration a venue for expression and discussion. Skillfully using "I messages" during the bringing up of a specific complaint is a particularly positive method of facilitating positive interaction and avoiding criticism.

Individuals who acquire and use the skill of *Speaking non-defensively* tend to speak with gentleness and positivity, avoid using criticism and contempt, and elicit trust from the listener without eliciting defensiveness. *Validating* others requires not only tracking the communication of the speaker through head nods, short statements, and eye contact, but requires giving full attention to the speaker and seeking to understand the emotions and needs that are being communicated. Ultimately, the art of validation involves the ability to engage in perspective-taking and empathic behaviors. *Over-learning* these skills refers to learning these other four skills so well that they become a part of an individual's regular interaction repertoire (Gottman, 1994a).

Negative Marital Interaction

As shown in Table 4, research reveals that negative affect appears to be the major predator of marriages and marital satisfaction (Filsinger & Thomas, 1988; Gill et al., 1999; Gottman, 1994a; Huston & Vangelisti, 1991; Watson, Hubbard, & Wiese, 2000). Defensiveness, contempt, criticism, and withdrawal were found to be negatively correlated with marital quality and stability (Cartensen et al., 1995; Flora & Segrin, 2000; Gavazzi, McKenry, Jacobson, Julian, & Lohman, 2000; Gottman, 1994a; Gottman & Levenson, 1999). Similarly, negativity expressed by the husbands, or their lack of

Table 4

Summary of Studies Linking Negative Marital Interaction with Marital Quality

Author(s)/year	Main findings
Cartensen et al. (1995)	In unhappy marriages, wives showed greater negative affect and husbands' showed greater defensiveness.
Davila et al. (1998)	Negative affect directly effected marital satisfaction and mediated between insecure attachment and marital dissatisfaction.
Filsinger & Thomas (1988)	Negative reciprocity was correlated with marital instability over 5 years.
Flora & Segrin (2000)	Satisfaction decreased with increases in complaining.
Gavazzi et al. (2000)	There was a negative association between verbal aggression and marital quality.
Gill et al. (1999)	Negative behavior of both spouses predicted declines in wives' satisfaction.
Gottman (1994a)	Criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling predicted marital unhappiness and divorce.
Gottman & Levinson (1999)	Contempt and physiological arousal predicted declines in fondness and admiration.
Huston et al. (2001)	The intensity of romance and the extent to which negative affect was expressed, predicted marital happiness 13 years later for newlywed couples and how long their marriage endured. Disillusionment predicted instability.
Huston & Vangelisti (1991)	Husband and wife negativity showed greater associations with wives' dissatisfaction longitudinally. Wives and husbands married to a negative spouse became more negative themselves over time.
King (1993)	Husbands' lack of expression behaviors was negatively correlated with wives' satisfaction.
Roberts (2000)	Wives' withdrawal predicted negative marital outcomes and dissatisfaction for husbands while husbands' hostile responsiveness predicted negative marital outcomes and dissatisfaction for wives. Wives' intimacy avoidance predicted husbands' distress.
Shapiro et al. (2000)	Variables that predicted dissatisfaction for wives who became mothers: (a) husbands' negativity toward her; (b) husbands' disappointment in the marriage; and (c) descriptions of their lives as chaotic.
Watson et al. (2000)	Negative affect predicted marital dissatisfaction for both spouses.

expressive behaviors (King, 1993), tends to have a significant negative influence on wives' satisfaction (Davila, Bradbury, & Fincham, 1998; Karney & Bradbury, 1997), who then tend to withdraw emotionally (Roberts, 2000). When either spousewithdraws,

negative marital outcomes such as distress, depression, disillusionment, and dissatisfaction were found to follow (Huston et al., 2001; Kurdek, 1995).

Gottman and colleagues (1998) explored several types of interactional processes among newlywed couples and how these interactional processes might be able to predict later relationship stability: (a) anger as a dangerous emotion (i.e., an emotion that is harmful to the stability of the relationship); (b) active listening; (c) negative affect reciprocity (i.e., when one partner initiates negativity the other partner responds negatively); (d) negative start-up by the wife (i.e., the wife advances a complaint with negativity, accusation, and blame); (e) de-escalation of negativity (i.e., one or both partners short circuit negative affect reciprocity through the use of humor or other repair techniques); and (f) physiological soothing of the male (i.e., the use of humor, kindness, a soft voice or other soothing mechanisms to reduce physiological tension).

No support was found by Gottman and his colleagues (1998) for expressing anger as a dangerous emotion or for the use of active listening techniques. They also highlighted key components of expressed negativity in a typical negative interaction sequence as follows:

1. Harsh start-up by the wife (e.g., criticism and speaking defensively);
2. Refusal to accept influence by the husband (e.g., defensiveness);
3. The wife's reciprocation of low-intensity negativity (e.g., contempt);
4. Absence of de-escalation of low-intensity negativity by the husband (e.g., flooding, feeling emotionally overwhelmed, and stonewalling).

In contrast, a positive interaction sequence might include a soft start-up by the wife, a husband's acceptance of the complaint and the de-escalation of negativity, the wife's use of soothing behaviors, and the husband's use of positive affect and de-escalation skills to soothe and keep himself from emotional flooding. De-escalation attempts are usually the most successful early on in a negative interaction sequence when emotions are still at a low intensity level.

Gottman and colleagues (1998) concluded that the only variable that predicted marital stability and happiness for both husbands and wives was the use of positive affect during conflict. Gottman's (1994b) earlier research, however, revealed that conflict may serve many prosocial functions for couples as they explore their disagreements and seek to negotiate positive solutions. In fact, conflict may create a "dynamic equilibrium" that becomes the means of change and growth and successfully keeps the relationship alive in the long term. Indeed, it is not the conflict that can lead a couple on a trajectory toward marital dissolution, but it is their ability to keep negativity at bay through avoiding the use of criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling tactics.

Criticism, according to Gottman (1994a), includes attacking someone's personality or character with accusation and blame (e.g., "You never think of anyone else," or "How can you be so stupid?") Contempt, on the other hand, moves from criticism to the disastrous employment of attacks such as intentional insulting, name-calling, mocking, rolling the eyes, and sneering. Defensiveness is the natural reaction to criticism and contempt as an individual refuses to take responsibility for personal actions. Being defensive blocks a couple's ability to deal effectively with an issue. Even if one

person feels completely justified in his/her actions, becoming defensive will only add to the couple's problems. One reason that defensiveness inhibits couple success is that it places one person in the victim role who can then justify his/her actions by blaming and accusing the partner. Stonewalling occurs when one or both partners withdraw from interaction and simply refuse to communicate.

Commitment

Higher levels of commitment continue to be positively associated with dyadic adjustment (see Table 5) and negatively associated with marital problems (Clements & Swensen, 2000). Amato (in press) believes that commitment in marriage consists of several components: how couples perceive the possibility of their relationships lasting in the long term; cohesion maintenance behaviors; the degree and extent to which couples

Table 5

Summary of Studies Linking Commitment and Feeling Trapped with Marital Quality

Author(s)/year	Main findings
Clements & Swensen (2000)	Commitment to spouse was highly, consistently, and positively correlated with marital quality, expressions of love, and dyadic adjustment, and negatively correlated with marital problems.
Drigotas, Rusbult, & Verette (1999)	Marital adjustment and relationship well-being were positively correlated with mutual commitment, and mutual commitment was partially mediated by negative affect and partially to wholly mediated by levels of trust.
Johnson, Caughlin, & Huston (1999)	Personal, moral, and structural commitments, and their interactions, are three important components in understanding why relationships continue or dissolve.
Stanley & Markman (1992)	Total dedication commitment was more strongly correlated with relationship satisfaction than constraint commitment.
Surra & Hughes (1997)	Relationship-driven and event-driven men and women are significantly different from each other in reported conflict, interaction, similarities, and preferences.

are willing to make sacrifices for their partner and the good of the relationship; and, a willingness to stay in the relationship for the long term, even when in the short term the rewards of staying in the relationship are being outweighed by the costs.

The research on commitment reveals that *dedication* and *constraint* commitment are important to the stability and quality of marriage. Dedication commitment, according to Markman, Stanley, and Blumberg (2001), "refers to the desire to maintain or improve the quality of the relationship for the mutual benefit of both partners" while constraint commitment "refers to the forces that keep individuals in relationships whether or not they're dedicated" (pp. 325-326). Dedication commitment is more highly correlated with relationship satisfaction than is constraint commitment (Stanley & Markman, 1992).

Johnson, Caughlin, and Huston (1999) cited three components of commitment—personal, moral, and structural—in their study about why couples stay married. Personal commitment includes the perceptions of wanting to stay married because of the attraction to the partner, to the relationship, and to the couple's sense of identity. Moral commitment to staying married involves value judgments about whether or not it is all right to dissolve certain kinds of relationships, personal moral obligations to another person, and what the authors call "general consistency values" (i.e., value judgments about how we try to maintain consistency in how we think, feel, and act).

Structural reasons to stay married include all of the perceived barriers to leaving a marriage and would be akin to Stanley and Markman's (1992) constraint commitment.

The authors concluded that each of these three components of commitment are not highly correlated with each other and , therefore, could be considered viable constructs for understanding marital commitment. Similarly, they cited the notion of global (i.e., overall) commitment as being highly associated with personal commitment and advanced the idea that all three of these components of commitment, and their interactions, must be understood and measured in order to adequately understand why relationships continue or dissolve.

Surra and Hughes (1997) studied the subjective processes of how commitment develops in premarital partners that can lead toward or away from the commitment and contract of marriage. Two specific commitment types were identified by these authors as associated pathways toward or away from marriage. The first was termed "relationship-driven commitment" in which commitment evolves smoothly with few problems or obstacles that inhibit the trajectory toward marriage. The second was termed "event-driven commitment" and is characterized by the "ups and downs" associated with specific events and episodes of conflict.

The relationship-driven couples in this study reported less conflict and negativity, more positive experiences together, and more similarity in their preferences. This is consistent with other research in which positive/negative affect was found to be an important mediator to both levels of commitment and perceptions of trust (Drigotas, Rusbult, & Verette, 1999). Indeed, according to these authors, relationship-driven couples tend to "determine their compatibility through interaction."

This interactionally determined compatibility sequence was termed *SVR—stimulus-values-roles* by Murstein (1986). Accordingly, the *stimulus* stage of determining relationship compatibility and commitment tends to include the interaction associated with attraction and is associated with what Johnson et al. (1999) termed *personal commitment*. The next stage—*values*—is closely related to the *moral commitment* component of Johnson and colleagues (1999) in which couples determine if their value and belief systems are both similar and compatible. If couples successfully traverse these first two stages, then they begin to more fully explore the final stage—*role compatibility*—in which relationship roles are tested and tried to determine overall relationship compatibility and commitment. In sum, it appears that commitment toward relationship stability increases or decreases depending upon a couple's ability to progress through these stages both before and during marriage (see Johnson et al.).

Interestingly, in Surra and Hughes' (1997) study, relationship-driven men clearly reported more positive beliefs about network involvement in relationships than did the event-driven men while event-driven women reported more conflict with their partners than did relationship-driven women. Overall, event-driven women were also found to be less similar to their partners in their preferences for leisure activities. Interestingly, neither the relationship-driven group nor the event-driven group differed significantly in their reports of love or on indicators of involvement.

The authors concluded that it may be that the event-driven couples perceive that feelings of love and interest in each other can be enhanced when their relationship appears to be unpredictable and unstable. In other words, it may be that event-driven

couples find intrinsic rewards in the interactive ups-and-downs that can potentially bring both drama and excitement to the relationship. This conclusion by the authors is supported by Gottman's (1994a) finding that the "volatile" relationship style can indeed be a stable marital style. In fact, volatile relationships, like event-driven relationships, tend to be characterized by a great deal of conflict but are also characterized by a high degree of cohesion and passion. The down side for couples who engage in the volatile relationship style is that they can easily move into an unstable relationship style if trust breaks down and they can't keep negativity at bay.

Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster, and Agnew (1999) correlated trust and commitment and offered an interesting cycle of commitment by including the word *dependence* rather than the word *respect* to begin the cycle. According to their proposed commitment cycle, dependence promotes strong commitment, commitment promotes pro-relationship behaviors, pro-relationship behaviors are perceived by the partner, the perception of pro-relationship behaviors enhances the partner's trust, and trust increases the partner's willingness to become dependant upon the relationship.

In sum, commitment seems to involve the processes of assimilation and accommodation as couples progress toward greater stability or instability in their relationships. Perceptions of attraction, couple identity, moral obligations, norms, dedication, constraints, and context all seem to be interwoven into the fabric of how commitment is defined as a construct. Amato (in press) reports that commitment tends to load on the same factor as marital happiness and, therefore, more work needs to be done to separate commitment from its related constructs and potential predictors.

Positive Bonds

As demonstrated in Table 6, increased time spent together both before and after marriage was found to be positively associated with marital quality, especially for the wives (Grover, Russell, Schumm, & Paff-Bergen, 1985; Szinovacz, 1996). Mediated by marital duration, both spouses experienced gains in marital happiness with increased time spent together (Russell-Chapin, Chapin, & Sattler, 2001; Zuo, 1992). Results from the *Marriage in Utah: 2003 Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce* (Schramm et al., 2003), revealed that married couples in Utah spend time together on a date an

Table 6

Summary of Studies Linking Positive Bonds with Marital Quality

Author(s)/year	Main findings
Berg, Trost, Schneider, & Allison (2001)	The influence of joint-leisure activities on relationship satisfaction appears to be mediated by the nature of the activities and the interactions.
Crawford, Houts, Huston, & George (2002)	Marital satisfaction for husbands was positively correlated with joint-activities engaged in by both spouses and negatively correlated for wives if they engaged in activities more frequently that only the husbands liked.
Doherty (2001)	Couple rituals are associated with marital quality and stability.
Feeney (1994)	Wives' low anxiety levels were positively associated with both husbands and wives' satisfaction. In short term marriages, "anxious wives" and "low in comfort with closeness" husbands predicted dissatisfaction. Attachment bonds were mediated by communication.
Grover et al. (1985)	There is a positive relationship between time spent together and acquaintance before marriage and higher marital quality.
Russell-Chapin et al. (2001)	Time spent together as a couple significantly predicted marital satisfaction for middle-aged, moderately educated, first-married Caucasian couples with children.
Szinovacz (1996)	Husbands perceive high marital quality with more time spent together as a couple. Wives perceive marital quality as higher with more daily time spent together.
Zuo (1992)	A strong reciprocal relationship was found between time spent together and marital happiness for both spouses that changed with marital duration.

average of every 4½ weeks. The survey did not include, however, the daily rituals couples may use to increase their time spent together that can lead to higher levels of positive bonding.

Doherty (2001) describes marital rituals as "the social interactions that are repeated, coordinated, and significant" (p. 126) that include positive feelings and meaning. Similarly, it is the significance, positive emotions, and meaning of daily connection, love, and special occasion rituals that distinguish rituals from routines. Such rituals may include regular conversations throughout the day, nonsexual and sexual touching, words of affirmation and appreciation, or a myriad of other behaviors that serve to keep couples connected and positively bonded.

Additional research on positive bonding reveals that the influence of the activities engaged in by couples was mediated by the nature of the activities and the interactions that occurred during those activities (Berg, Trost, Schneider, & Allison, 2001; Crawford, Houts, Huston, & George, 2002). For example, according to Crawford and colleagues, marital satisfaction for husbands was positively correlated with joint-activities engaged in by both spouses and negatively correlated for wives if the couples engaged in activities more frequently that only the husbands liked.

Anxiety levels were also associated with positive bonding and satisfaction (Feeney, 1994). For example, Davila and Bradbury (1993) found a positive association between an insecure attachment history and an individual's willingness to remain in a stable but unhappy marriage. Overall, it appears that positive/ negative affect, time spent together, and perceptions of connectedness through marital rituals were found to be

influential to the bonding process for couples. The nature of the activities engaged in and the perceived balance of participating in activities that both partners enjoy, along with the actual interactions during these activities, appear to be important factors in determining the levels of positive bonds experienced by couples.

Contextual Factors and Marital Quality

In addition to interactional factors that predict marital quality, contextual factors have been consistently shown to be associated with marital quality (Amato et al., 2003; Higginbotham & Adler-Baeder, 2003). The contextual factors discussed herein include income level, cohabitation, mental health, alcohol and substance abuse, religiosity, education, and age at marriage.

Income Level

Marital quality and family stability among low-income populations have been directly or indirectly studied with regard to value differences (Ernst, 1990; Rubin, 1976; Stier & Tienda, 1997), gender (Blalock, Tiller, & Monroe, 2004; Coltrane, Parker, & Adams, 2004; Dalla, 2004;), cohabitation practices (Bianchi & Casper, 2000; Bumpass, Sweet, & Cherlin, 1991; Kenney, 2004), marital history (Franklin & Smith, 1995; Miller & Davis, 1997; Osmond & Martin, 1978), mate selection (McLaughlin & Lichter, 1997), mental health (Simon, 2002; Vega et al., 1986; Weitzman, Knickman, & Shinn, 1992), substance abuse (Smith, Haynes, & Phearson, 2000; Zahnd & Klein, 1997), dangerous behaviors and violence (Anderson, 2002; Jarrett & Jefferson, 2004), resilience and

strengths (Orthner, Jones-Sanpei, & Williamson, 2004), mortality (Zick & Smith, 1991), and income level (Bianchi & Casper, 2000; Blalock, Tiller, & Monroe, 2004; McGlauglin & Lichter, 1997; White & Rogers, 2000). Each of these factors may also influence non-low-income individuals' marital quality and stability, but the low-income population tends to exhibit some unique differences in each of these areas of research.

For example, income level among low-income populations has been shown to be associated with the likelihood to marry, be happily married, and to stay married (Amato et al., 2003; Bianchi & Casper, 2000; Blalock et al., 2004; Mclaughlin & Lichter, 1997; White & Rogers, 2000). Mclaughlin and Lichter highlighted the strong association between the reception of higher welfare payments, lower mate availability, and the likelihood that women experiencing poverty would marry. Interestingly, these authors found that if women living in poverty could retain a job, they were more likely to marry, thus tying the propensity to marry with economic advantage or disadvantage.

Such findings offer some interesting challenges for program developers who want to assist low-income populations. Ernst (1990) found, for example, that family education programs tend to focus on White, middle-class families rather than low-income or diverse families. Such a focus tends to ignore the value differences between low-income and middle-income families that may exist (Ernst; Kohn & Schooler, 1983; Rubin, 1976). Ernst's in-depth review of Kohn and Schooler's work revealed that

> [m]iddle-class families give higher priority to values that are reflective of internal standards of behavior and working-class families give higher priorities that are reflective of external standards of behavior…[m]iddle-class families value self-direction (i.e., self-control, happiness, and curiosity) whereas working-class parents place a higher priority on values of a conforming nature (i.e., obedience and neatness). (p. 402)

Dyk's (2004) introduction to the special issue on low-income and working-poor families in *Family Relations* cited similar values between non-low-income and low-income families with regard to the interrelated needs for economic stability, safety, good health, and engagement in the larger community, but also organized some of the complex issues that may tend to distinguish these two groups from each other into three different categories: (a) competing stressors and tensions; (b) effective parenting; and (c) economic stability and financial decision-making. Dyk's summary of some of the critical issues impacting low-income and working-poor families is insightful:

> Low-income and working-poor families face competing stressors and tensions that decrease their ability to respond to their changing environments. This makes them vulnerable to family chaos, poor decision making, and the inability to plan beyond immediate needs. Competing stressors may be internal to the family, such as poor health, domestic violence, or lack of education. They also may be external environmental factors, such as lack of employment opportunities, poor access to health care, poor schools, or community violence. (p. 123)

These and other issues make low-income marriages particularly vulnerable to instability and lower marital quality (Conger et al., 1990), especially for those who receive government assistance (Amato & Rogers, 1999). Such stressors and strains can be exacerbated by the role ambiguities that are created by economic and employment insecurity (Forthhofer, Markman, Cox, Stanley, & Kessler, 2000). For example, Barling and MacEwen (1992) found that role ambiguity, conflict, and job insecurity affected marital functioning (i.e., sexual satisfaction, psychological aggression, and marital satisfaction) through decreased levels of concentration and increased levels of depression. Similarly, because low-income families tend to experience more conflict over work and they participate more in shift work, they are more at risk for relationship

dissatisfaction and divorce (Campbell & Snow, 1992; Clark-Nicolas & Gray-Littles 1991; Presser, 2000; White & Keith, 1990).

This relationship between work and marital distress appears to also be reciprocal. In other words, marital distress is also positively correlated with work loss and lower work productivity, thus creating the possibility of a downward cycle toward job loss and marital dissolution (Campbell & Snow, 1992; Forthhofer et al., 2000; Presser, 2000). In sum, income level has shown a strong association with levels of marital quality and stability and these levels appear to be moderated by the stressors and tensions that influence individual and couple abilities to respond to changing environments and issues.

Cohabitation

Cohabitation is significantly associated with lower levels of marital satisfaction and interaction and higher rates of divorce proneness and alcohol problems (Amato et al., 2003; Brown & Booth, 1996; Horowitz & White, 1998). According to Smock (2000), individuals of lower socioeconomic status (SES) are more likely to engage in cohabitation practices than those who are in moderate or high SES categories. The prevalence of cohabitation has been attributed to the growth of individualism and goal attainment and SES factors that have contributed to widespread changes in women's labor force participation (Bianchi & Casper, 2000; Waite, 2000).

Using data from the first and second waves of the *National Survey of Families and Households*, McGinnis (2003) has offered an interesting conceptualization of how cohabitation influences how decisions are made with regard to marriage. According to McGinnis, cohabitation influences perceptions about the potential costs and benefits

associated with getting married, which in turn influence the intentions and expectations about marriage to a specific partner, which then influence the choice of whether or not to get married. This author concluded that the practice of cohabitation not only predicts marriage entry but also changes the context in which this decision is made.

Additionally, approximately three out of every ten children are living in a cohabiting household (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The movement of mothers into and out of cohabitation significantly increases family instability for children as well as poverty and other hardships (Raley & Wildsmith, 2004; Smock, 2000; Society, 1999). Similarly, married parents with children tend to have higher incomes than single parents or cohabiting couples with children. Therefore, children of married parents tend to suffer less poverty and material hardship than children of single or cohabiting parents (Bianchi & Casper, 2000; Forste, 2001; Nock, 1995).

The fact that cohabitation has become a stage in the dating process for many Americans has led to an increase in research about the underlying principles of stability or instability in cohabiting relationships. For example, Brines and Joyners' (1999) research studied the underlying equality principle in cohabiting relationships:

> Cohabiting couples are prone to follow the equality principle because of the conditions they confront—high uncertainty, an unspecified time horizon, and the absence of a reliably enforceable contract....Equality is a costly principle to maintain, in part because it requires frequent monitoring of each partner's holdings. An equal balance of power is also precarious when wages become the object of comparison between partners....For a relationship to persist, however, *some* operating principle must mediate the tension between the interests of the parties involved. For husbands and wives, the marriage contract helps to manage these interests, encourages joint investment, and permits some flexibility around the norm of male providership. (pp. 350-351)

When economic disadvantage is present, these tensions are heightened and individual and couple abilities to respond to stressors, uncertainty, and changing environments can be greatly reduced (Dyk, 2004). Alternatively, if couples allow these tensions and stressors to escalate into increased negativity, invalidation, negative interpretations, and withdrawal, the stability of the relationship is likely to become fragile.

Mental Health

The NSAF study reported that parents in low-income families were much more likely than parents in non-low-income families to report mental health problems (25% compared to 10%) and to experience "frequent high levels of aggravation" (14% compared to 6%). Specifically, Dyk (2004) concluded that "low-income and working-poor families face competing stressors and tensions that decrease their ability to respond to their changing environments" (p. 123). Such competing stressors and tensions can lead to increased vulnerabilities for mental health issues like depression and anxiety.

Correspondingly, after 27 years of clinical work, Wentz (2004) concluded that the majority of mental health disorders concern issues related to anxiety or depression. Unfortunately, with the changes in the Medicaid laws, many mental health centers are no longer able to provide services with their left over dollars to serve populations that normally could not afford these services, such as the low-income population. This provides an interesting irony in the sense that, even though low-income and working poor populations face greater competing stressors and tensions and are more vulnerable to

mental health issues, they are less likely to receive the mental health assistance and treatment they need.

Being married has the potential to serve as an important buffer to these stressors and tensions (Institute for American Values, 2002). For example, in the NSAF study, when comparing unmarried and married respondents, mental health problems were reported more frequently by low-income respondents who were not married than by those who were (32% compared to 21%). This finding offers a plausible rationale for trying to understand the costs and benefits associated with marriage and mental health among the low-income population.

Depression and marital quality. Depression, anxiety, and other affective disorders have been linked with lower marital quality and marital distress in a number of significant studies (Dehle & Weiss, 1998; McLeod & Eckberg, 1993; Merikangas, 1984; Vinokur et al., 1996; Weisman, 1987). For example, Vinokur and colleagues found that financial strain significantly influenced depressive systems for both members of a couple. These depressive symptoms, in turn, were associated with the withdrawal of social support and an increase in social undermining by the partners which were inversely correlated with marital satisfaction. Additionally, the resources of coping strategies, cohesion, help, self-esteem support, trust, and dependability appear to be less available to individuals in distressed and depressed relationships. Criticism, threats of separation and divorce, verbal and physical aggression, and ritual and routine disruption tend to increase relationship distress and decrease partner support when the couples need it the most (Dehle & Weiss).

Correspondingly, Dehle and Weiss (1998) and Weisman (1987) reported a clear correlation between depression and marital distress. In fact, Weisman found that being in a discordant or depressed marriage increased the likelihood of experiencing depression by twenty five times the norm. Women tend to be particularly vulnerable to the depressive symptoms associated with marital distress at double the rate of men (Dehle & Weiss; Weisman). This may prove true because women tend to be the emotional managers of relationships and therefore experience more depression when the relationship they are managing is not going well (Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1997).

Additionally, chronic distress (e.g., anxiety and depression) not only increases the propensity for one partner to feel depressed, but depressive symptomology exhibited by one partner also tends to be transmitted to the other partner who then reciprocates with depressive behaviors themselves (Thompson & Bolger, 1999). Relatedly, Larson and Gillman (1999) concluded that negative emotion seems to be more easily transmitted than positive emotion, especially to children, who then tend to exhibit distressed, anxious, and depressive behaviors in their relationships.

Race, living location, and family type have also been associated with marital quality and depression. For example, among specific ethnic groups, a husband's willingness to help with housework, increasing marital satisfaction, and higher job prestige were associated with decreased levels of depression among women (Saenz, Goudy, & Lorenz, 1989). Additionally, interracial couples tend to experience higher rates of psychological distress than non-interracial couples with Black-White couples experiencing the highest levels (Bratter, 2004).

Although nearly 75% of low-income individuals live in metropolitan areas (Rank, 2000), not all of the focus on poverty issues should be on the metropolitan areas. For example, Simmons-Wescott (2004), citing the results from the first wave of a longitudinal well-being study across several states called *Rural Families Speak*, reported that nearly 50% of rural, low-income mothers were at risk for experiencing clinical depression. Barriers to improved mental health for rural mothers included a lack of access to mental health providers, high costs, a lack of health insurance, and a lack of awareness that they were actually experiencing depressive symptoms. These mothers expressed less confidence in their own parenting skills, a lack of satisfaction with social supports, worse health, and lower levels of life satisfaction.

Additionally, Davies, Avison, and McAlpine (1997) found that single mothers, regardless of whether or not they have ever been married, separated, or divorced, tended to report higher levels of depressive symptoms than did currently married mothers. Interestingly, their findings revealed that single mothers reported more traumatic childhood adversities when compared to the married mothers in their study. In fact, women in either group who reported low levels of childhood adversity were the least likely to report depressive symptoms, thus identifying depression as a possible individual vulnerability that "predates marriage or parenthood." Larson and Gillman (1999) reported, however, that depressive symptoms among single mothers may also be a function of experiencing more stress and responsibility with less personal time to do the things that can help to reduce depressive symptoms and anxiety.

Anxiety and marital quality. According to Caughlin, Huston, and Houts (2000), anxiety is also associated with lower marital quality. Their findings revealed that marital satisfaction was found to be mediated more by existing communication practices rather than by anxiety levels. Additionally, anxiety was not only linked with an individual's own negativity, but individual negativity, especially for wives, was positively associated with eliciting negativity from their spouse. This negativity was inversely correlated with marital satisfaction, thus linking higher individual anxiety levels with lower couple satisfaction (see also Karney & Bradbury, 1997).

Merikangas' (1984) study linked anxiety and other disorders to childhood experiences. In fact, Davies and colleagues (1997) found that many psychological disorders, such as anxiety and depression, can be linked with childhood adversity. McLeod (1995) identified this childhood adversity with such events and states as parental loss, parental conflict, parental low-income, poor relationships with parents, and parents who were abusive.

Merikangas (1984) offered some interesting insights into the nature and implications of these subsequent psychological disorders for couples. For example, he noted that couples who both possess psychological disorders are much more at risk for divorce than those who do not. Similarly, his findings revealed that psychologically ill women were much more likely to choose a psychologically ill husband with a troubled background as a marriage partner, although McLeod's (1995) study of homogamy and psychological disorders revealed that both psychologically disturbed and non-disturbed partners preferred a nondisturbed partner in a relationship, if possible.

According to Merikangas (1984), women who experienced anxiety were much more likely, however, to choose a husband who was psychologically ill. Similarly, men who experienced anxiety disorders were much more likely to choose women to marry who had troubled childhoods and poor relationships with their parents.

Merikangas (1984) also noted that those in his study who experienced psychological problems tended to possess low self-esteem, to marry at an early age, and to marry quickly without an extended dating period. Unfortunately, because those who are anxious tend to marry those who also experience a psychological disorder, the anxious person often receives little help and support for their disorder from his/her partner. In other words, such individuals not only tend to marry others with "disadvantaged backgrounds," but they are also at increased risk to tolerate inappropriate levels of certain behaviors. Merikangas speculates that this may help to explain why some women tolerate men's aggressiveness and may even find it attractive.

Alcohol and Substance Abuse

Amato and Rogers (1999) studied marital problems and subsequent divorce longitudinally and found that for many couples drinking and drug abuse were significant problems that predicted relationship instability and divorce. Reciprocally, instability and divorce have also been found to increase the probability of substance abuse (Yamaguchi & Kandel, 1997). Additionally, individuals with alcohol and substance abuse problems are more likely to select themselves out of marriage and therefore, show lower marriage rates than those who do not report alcohol or substance abuse as a problem (see Fu & Goodman, 1996). This is also the case with low-income individuals who may be even

more likely to experience substance abuse problems than non-low-income individuals (Smith et al., 2000; Zahnd & Klein, 1997).

On the other hand, being married significantly reduces the likelihood that a person will abuse alcohol and other substances and increases the likelihood he/she will seek treatment (Smith et al., 2000; Waite, 2000; Yamaguchi & Kandel, 1997). This may be because the spouse of a substance abuser pressures their partner to seek help or it may be that marriage and potential parenthood forces the substance abuser to become more responsible when other lives could be directly affected by the substance abuse.

Interestingly, Grzywacz and Marks (2000) studied work-related issues and problem drinking among couples and reported that family stress, spousal conflict, and work pressures all exhibited independent effects on problem drinking behaviors. Similarly, problem drinking and substance abuse among spouses have also been linked to childhood adversity (Davies et al., 1997; Merikangas, 1984). This link between childhood adversity and drinking and substance abuse was highlighted by McLeod (1995) who identified parental loss, parental conflict, parental low-income, poor relationships with parents, and abusive parents as the primary childhood risk factors for substance abuse. However, peer networks and socialization are also predictive of substance abuse (Yamaguchi & Kandel, 1997).

For this study, it is important to note the clear association between parental low income and alcohol and substance abuse among married couples. Additionally, it is also important to note that substance abuse, such as the use of marijuana, is also linked with premarital cohabitation and delays in marriage and parenthood. Additionally, cigarette

use, but not alcohol or drug use, among adolescents has been significantly associated with early age at marriage (Martino, Collins, & Ellickson, 2004) but both phenomena may reflect more of a disposition to participate in risky behaviors.

Finally, Thomas, Farrell, and Barnes (1996) found that children of single mothers are more at risk for heavy drinking and illicit drug use, but these risks may be buffered by involvement from the non-resident father, especially among white adolescents. Interestingly, children of black single mothers tended to exhibit less problem behaviors when the non-resident fathers were not involved. Such findings indicate the need to further study the impact of remaining single, cohabitation, divorce, and marriage and their potential associations with substance abuse.

Religiosity

Religiosity has been variously defined by both experts and laypersons (Mahoney & Graci, 1999). It generally includes specific attitudes and behaviors associated with the constructs of private religious faith (e.g., religious beliefs, spiritual experiences, and private religious behavior) and/or public religious practice (e.g., attendance at church/ public religious behavior, family religious activities, integration into the congregation; see Chadwick & Top, 1993).

Studies of religiosity have linked this construct to physical health (Ferraro & Albrecht-Jensen, 1991; Miller & Thoresen, 2003; Powell, Shahabi, & Thoresen, 2003; Seeman, Dubin, & Seeman, 2003), mental health (Dorahy & Lewis, 2001; McGovern, 1998), coping with stress (Siegel, Anderman, & Schrimshaw, 2001), gender (Walter & Davie, 1998), personality and maturity (Kernberg, 2000), ritual (Everson, 1991), guilt

(Young & Hubbard, 1992), judgmentalism (Beck & Miller, 2000), sexual satisfaction in marriage (Young & Luquis, 1998), marital quality (Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar, & Swank, 2001), and marital stability (Lehrer & Chiswick, 1993) among other topics.

For example, using a sample of 1,481 adults, ages 18-89, taken from the general social survey, Mookherjee (1994) found that religious affiliation and frequency of church attendance were significantly correlated with positive individual perceptions of well-being. Using a sample of 4,587 couples from the National Survey of Families and Households and the constructs of religious belief, religious attendance, and the heterogamy between husband and wife in religious belief and attendance, Call and Heaton (1997) found that the frequency of religious attendance was the strongest predictor of marital stability. Husbands and wives who attended church together regularly evidenced the lowest risk of divorce while wives' beliefs about marital commitment and nonmarital sex predicted greater stability in their marriages. Additionally, Anthony's (1993) study of religious maturity and marital satisfaction among 400 couples from 4 major protestant denominations found a clear correlation between higher levels of intrinsic religiosity (i.e., "subordination of personal motives and practices to precepts of one's religion") and higher levels of marital satisfaction. Individuals and couples who "lived out their faith," according to Anthony, were those who experienced the highest levels of marital satisfaction across all four religious denominations.

Mahoney and colleagues' (2001) meta-analysis of religion and marital quality is the most in-depth review to date of the associations between marital quality and

religiosity. Interestingly, these authors reported a weak link between specific religious affiliation and marital satisfaction across studies and highlight the positive association found between couples reporting engaging in "joint religious activities" and couples who report higher levels of marital quality. Similarly, their meta-analysis revealed a positive correlation between religious faith (i.e., private religiosity) and religious practice (i.e., public religiosity) and positive bonds, positive interaction and greater levels of commitment. Their analysis also revealed an inverse relationship between religious faith and practice and divorce, divorce proneness, and negative interaction.

Specifically, Mahoney and colleagues (2001) found that frequency of church attendance was positively correlated with lower incidence of divorce; religious affiliation and marital satisfaction showed weak links, but few studies have adequately examined these links; intrinsic religiosity (i.e., "personal religiousness") was positively correlated with marital satisfaction; numerous studies have found an inverse relationship between religious homogamy and marital satisfaction, but the overall effect size across studies was weak and may be a function of frequency of church attendance; frequency of church attendance was highly correlated with marital commitment, even when controlling for demographic diversity and marital satisfaction; and, perceptions of the costs-benefits of marriage and marital satisfaction were positively associated with intrinsic religiosity (i.e., "personal religiousness") for women but not for men.

Additionally, Mahoney and colleagues (2001) found a weak but positive correlation between "couple's similarity in religious denomination;" little evidence to correlate greater tolerance of maladaptive communication behaviors and conflict among

more religious couples; a positive association between "adaptive communication skills" and greater religiosity among couples; and, a positive association between belonging to the same religious denomination and reconciliation among couples who have separated. Finally, engagement in joint religious activities (i.e., private and public) was positively associated with marital satisfaction, negatively associated with marital conflict, positively associated with marital commitment, and positively associated with "collaboration in problem solving" among couples (Mahoney et al.).

Links between education, government assistance, and marital quality. Recent research suggests that education level is correlated with marital quality constructs such as marital interaction and divorce proneness (Amato et al., 2003). Additionally, low education level, poverty and lower marital quality have consistently been linked together (Campbell & Snow, 1992; Clark-Nicolas & Gray-Littles, 1991; Presser, 2000; Rogers & Amato, 1997; White & Keith, 1990; White & Rogers, 2000). These links highlight the connection between educational awareness, socialization, and the skills necessary to achieve economic security and marital quality and stability.

This connection is explored in the research of Seccombe, Delores, and Walters (1998) who not only cited lower education levels as a significant reason for some women to become recipients of welfare or government assistance, but their qualitative study also sought to explore the underlying beliefs of these women in an attempt to understand how those who receive government assistance justify their use of government assistance, and how they perceive themselves and other government assistance recipients. The

conclusions of these authors revealed a dominant reason for the use of government assistance they termed the "individualist perspective."

This perspective was shared by the majority of women experiencing government assistance who attributed their own use of government assistance to structural variables, fate, and so forth, while they attributed others' use of government assistance to their own laziness, lack of human capital, substance abuse, personal choices, or other personal weaknesses. It was upon the human capital concept that the majority of the women on government assistance were most likely to build their case that their use of welfare differed from the norm. For example, the majority of women gave at least the following five reasons for their use of government assistance: (a) wanted to make something of themselves; (b) did not abuse the system; (c) tried to live within their means; (d) health problems or other difficulties limited them from working; and (e) it was for their children (see Seccombe et al., 1998).

Clearly, the majority of those accepting government assistance are aware of the stigmas placed upon them and most are either embarrassed, pained, or resigned to this help. Educational attainment and vocational training is the path to leaving the trail of government assistance, but many fail to achieve it. In sum, Seccombe and colleagues (1998) concluded:

> Most had dreams of getting off welfare. Many had already left welfare for a time. Yet, they turned or returned to welfare because of broken relationships; because of jobs that failed to pay wages that enabled them to support themselves so that they could go to college or obtain vocational training; because of fathers who refuse to pay child support; because of concern that their children were being adequately cared for; and, in order to receive valuable benefits such as health insurance, that their jobs did not provide. Moreover, they turned to welfare because they felt tired, weary, and demoralized from the stress of raising children

> alone, from juggling bills, and from working in boring and low-paying jobs in the service sector. (p. 863)

The information presented in this section associates education level with economic advantage, quality of life, and marital quality. However, the hierarchical nature of each (i.e., one seems to build upon the other) may necessitate a different focus on the nature and structure of how marital quality can be achieved for low-income families. In other words, achieving marital quality appears to be, in Maslow's (1943) terms, a "self-actualizing" process and perception that must first be preceded by specific underlying physiological needs being met. Indeed, it is hard to focus on relationship quality when economic disadvantage dominates the perceptions in a daily struggle to survive.

Age at Marriage

Age at marriage as a construct was deeply researched in the late 1970s and into the 1980s and, therefore, much of the research that specifically identifies age at marriage as the principle factor being studied comes from these two decades. It is still included in many contemporary studies, but more as a demographic construct for which much is already known. This review will seek to maintain a balance between old and new research on the construct of age at marriage.

An increase in the later age of marriage from 1980-2000 was found by Amato and colleagues (2003) not to be a significantly associated with marital happiness or marital interaction, but it did have a negative association with divorce proneness. Current median estimates of age at first marriage are 26.5 years for men and 24.4 years for

women (Bianchi & Casper, 2000). The lowest median ages at first marriage occurred in the 1950s with men and women marrying at 22.6 years and 20.2 years, respectively. Since then, age at first marriage has been continuously on the rise.

Later age at marriage is positively associated with marital satisfaction and the successful performance of marital roles (Lee, 1977). Bahr, Bradford, and Leigh (1983) also studied the possible associations between age at marriage, role performance, and marital satisfaction. Specifically, they sought to determine the possible associations between the variables of quality of self-role enactment, quality of spouse-role enactment, and role consensus as potential intervening variables between age at marriage and marital satisfaction.

Their findings revealed a positive association between the quality of self-role enactments and marital satisfaction. A stronger positive association was found between spouse-role enactments and marital satisfaction while the strongest association was found between role consensus and marital satisfaction. In fact, role consensus explained 44% of the variance in marital satisfaction for wives while the quality of spouse-role enactment explained 35% of the variance in marital satisfaction for husbands. Thus, their research reveals that consensus about roles and their perceived adequate or inadequate performance may largely explain why early age at marriage is negatively associated with marital satisfaction and is positively associated with marital instability (see also Booth & Edwards, 1985).

Heaton (1991) has argued that age at marriage reflects the experience and maturity brought into the marriage. This experience and maturity likely influences

perceived role consensus and the successful performance of these roles for marital partners, which in turn influence marital satisfaction and stability. A key conceptualization of why age at marriage can exhibit such a strong influence on marital stability and satisfaction comes through understanding that experience and maturity exhibit a strong influence on the successful navigation of marital transitions. Therefore, according to Heaton, marital instability and dissolution may best be understood by looking at the interactions of age at marriage and the sequencing of events such as childbirth, marital duration, historical time, and selectivity.

Perceived locus of control may also be an important intervening variable between age at first marriage and marital quality and stability. According to Myers and Booth (1999),

> Locus of control is the extent to which individuals perceive that their actions have little influence on the life conditions that they face and the extent to which they attribute their circumstances and rewards to fate, luck, chance, or powerful others, instead of believing that their circumstances and rewards are influenced by their own actions. (p. 423)

In their study, Myers and Booth (1999) found that married partners who perceived a higher internal locus of control possessed higher levels of negotiation skills, greater desire to seek win/win solutions, and higher marital quality. Additionally, higher perceptions of an internal locus of control was also found to be a vital protective factor against the stresses and strains that inevitably occur within the marriage experience. The authors also found strong reciprocal associations between internal locus of control, marital quality, educational attainment, and income level. They concluded that locus of control may be a primary determinant of marital duration and how successfully couples

negotiate the stresses and strains of life within marriage. It may therefore be that early age at marriage inhibits the perceptions of an internal locus of control for married individuals who are still trying to find themselves and their identity.

There is a large body of research that points to identity formation as the key factor behind healthy and successful development (Adams & Montemayor, 1983; Archer 1989; Benson, 1997). Concerning the importance of identity development, Spanner and Rosenfeld (1990) reported:

> Identities provide continuity in people's lives, both in an actual form of reflecting the demands, constraints, and sanctions of the world around them and in a social psychological form, capturing and organizing hopes, expectations, self-images, and the self's repertoire of 'where one is' and 'where one wants to be.' (p. 295)

Erickson (1968) believed that adolescence is characterized by the need to resolve the psychosocial crisis between the developmental processes of identity formation and role confusion and there is evidence that these developmental processes continue into early adulthood and beyond, especially for young women (Spanner & Rosenfeld, 1990). Marcia (1966) studied four "identity statuses"—achievement, moratorium, diffusion, and foreclosure. Underlying each of these identity statuses are the processes of commitment and exploration (Marcia). Adams and Jones (1983) have defined each of these identity statuses as follows:

> An individual who has achieved an identity had made a self-defined commitment following a period of questioning and searching (crisis). An individual who is currently engaged in this questioning and searching process is defined as being in a state of moratorium. Foreclosed persons have accepted parental values and advice without question or examination of alternatives. Individuals who are diffused show no sign of commitment nor do they express a need or desire to begin the searching process. (p. 249)

Early age at marriage and its association with subsequent relationship instability and inadequate role performance may, therefore, be better understood as an outcome of the ongoing developmental processes associated with identity statuses and role confusion. For example, how will an adolescent or young adult who is in the state of moratorium perform successful spousal roles or how can diffused individuals show commitment and the desire to search out new ways to improve marital quality?

Indeed, Heaton's (1991) findings that age at marriage reflects the experience and maturity brought into the relationship is key to understanding subsequent marital quality and stability as well as the intergenerational transmission of divorce, which Feng, Glarusson, Bengston, and Frye (1999) found is largely explained by early age at marriage. Interestingly, these authors also found little association between parental divorce and their children's future marital quality which was found to be most influenced by the children's interpersonal competence, emotional adjustment, and psychological well-being, each a reflection of successful or unsuccessful identity development.

Summary of Literature

Structural developments and trends such as increases in single-parenting, cohabitation, and women's participation in the workforce, among others, have led to qualitative changes in how men and women experience and perform their roles in significant relationships. For those who choose to marry, the quality of the marital relationship is influenced by individual levels of commitment, the time that binds and bonds them together, and the nature of the interaction between them. Contextual factors

such as economic advantage or disadvantage, educational attainment, religiosity, age at marriage, mental health, and substance abuse also appear to mediate and moderate the quality of marital relationships.

Central to marital quality is the perceived "positivity" or "negativity" that pervades the couple's relationship. Couples who enjoy increased levels of satisfaction and stability in their marital relationships tend to create a marital culture and environment in which "positivity" prevails over "negativity" in at least a 5 to 1 ratio (Gottman, 1994a). This ratio is generally maintained by happy and stable couples in the midst of the inevitable stressors and strains that they experience.

For low-income couples, however, the impact of economic stress and disadvantage tends to adversely affect their ability to deal with their changing environmental structures, roles, and demands. This reduction of ability tends to leave them vulnerable to the effects of increased negativity and, subsequently, lower relationship quality and stability.

Synthesizing Theory and Research

Human ecology theory assumes that the environment provides resources and that individuals have the capacity to use these available resources to shape their surroundings and to improve life and well-being (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, 1989; Schvaneveldt, 1997). The specific contextual factors used in this study such as income level, religion, cohabitation, anxiety, depression, other mental health problems, substance abuse, age at first marriage, educational attainment, and even gender differences are a reflection of the

individual respondents' environments, available resources, and choices they have made to use these resources and shape their environments, hopefully, to improve well-being.

It is important to note that an individual's genetic make-up also influences the possible choices s/he can make and either limits or increases his/her ability to use the available resources to design or modify the surrounding environments. In sum, it is the interactions between genetic make-up, available resources, environments, and personal choices that determine the outcomes and consequences of increased or decreased well-being. Marital quality and the six constructs used to define it were used in this study as outcome measures of the interactions between genetics, available resources, environments, and the individual choices reported by the sample respondents.

While it is impossible to measure all of the genetic, environmental, resource, and choice interactions for each individual, it is also possible to measure the associations between specific constructs and their viability in predicting specific outcomes. Therefore, in the current study this author has chosen not only to measure the possible associations between specific contextual factors and marital quality but also their predictive viability on the marital quality outcomes of satisfaction, divorce proneness, negative/positive interaction, commitment, feeling trapped, and positive bonds.

In this study it was hypothesized that while specific contextual factors may be associated with, and even predict, some of the variance that can be explained in these six constructs of marital quality, the major predictors of marital quality outcomes will be due to interactional factors (see Amato, in press; Gottman, 1994a, Gottman et al., 1998). This hypothesis lends support for the premise of human ecology theory that people can

design and modify their available resources and environments, if they choose to, to improve their marital quality and individual well-being.

In conclusion, the cross-sectional nature of the survey measure in this study limits our ability to understand many of the genetic, environmental, resource and personal choice factors that influence marital quality outcomes, but it does allow us to focus on some of the more salient constructs that may be worthy of future study. Additionally, although it initially appears from the literature review that some of the specific contextual factors may be more or less influential on marital quality outcomes for both the GA and NGA samples in this study, the research overwhelmingly supports the predictive association of marital interaction on marital quality outcomes.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following research questions and hypotheses were used to guide this study.

Research Question #1: Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to report overall marital satisfaction when compared to NGA Utahans?

H1. Currently married GA Utahans will report lower levels of marital satisfaction than NGA Utahans.

Research Question #2: Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to report positive bonding when compared to NGA Utahans?

H2. Currently married GA Utahans will report lower levels of positive bonding than NGA Utahans.

Research Question #3: Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to report interpersonal commitment when compared to NGA Utahans?

H3. Currently married GA Utahans will report lower levels of interpersonal commitment than NGA Utahans.

Research Question # 4: Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to report divorce proneness when compared to NGA Utahans?

H4. Currently married GA Utahans will report higher levels of divorce proneness than NGA Utahans.

Research Question # 5: Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to report feeling trapped when compared to NGA Utahans?

H5. Currently married GA Utahans will report higher levels of feeling trapped than NGA Utahans.

Research Question # 6: Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to report negative interaction when compared to NGA Utahans?

H6. Currently married GA Utahans will report higher levels of negative interaction than NGA Utahans.

Research Question # 7: Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to have ever cohabited when compared to NGA Utahans?

H7. Currently married GA Utahans will be more likely to have ever cohabited than NGA Utahans.

Research Question # 8: Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to have experienced anxiety when compared to NGA Utahans?

H8. Currently married GA Utahans will be more likely to have experienced anxiety than NGA Utahans.

Research Question # 9: Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to have experienced depression when compared to NGA Utahans?

H9. Currently married GA Utahans will be more likely to have experienced depression than NGA Utahans.

Research Question #10: Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to have experienced other mental health problems when compared to NGA Utahans?

H10. Currently married GA Utahans will be more likely to have experienced other mental health problems than NGA Utahans.

Research Question #11: Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to have experienced alcohol or drug problems when compared to NGA Utahans?

H11. Currently married GA Utahans will be more likely to have experienced alcohol or drug problems than NGA Utahans.

Research Question #12: Do currently married GA Utahans report higher or lower levels of educational attainment when compared to NGA Utahans?

H12. Currently married GA Utahans will report lower levels of educational attainment when compared to NGA Utahans.

Research Question #13: Do currently married GA Utahans report higher or lower levels of religiosity when compared to NGA Utahans?

H13. There will be no significant differences between the reported levels of religiosity among currently married GA Utahans when compared to NGA Utahans.

Research Question # 14: Do currently married GA Utahans report higher or lower levels of age at first marriage when compared to NGA Utahans?

H14. There will be no significant differences between the reported levels of higher or lower age at first marriage for GA Utahans when compared to NGA Utahans.

Research Question #15. Were there differences in marital quality, or any of the contextual factors, by gender for currently married GA Utahans when compared to NGA Utahans?

H15. There will be no significant differences in marital quality, or any of the contextual factors, by gender for currently married GA Utahans when compared to NGA Utahans.

Research Question #16. Were there differences in marital quality, or any of the contextual factors, by income level for currently married GA Utahans when compared to NGA Utahans?

H16. There will be significant differences in marital quality, or any of the contextual factors, by income level for currently married GA Utahans when compared to NGA Utahans.

Research Question #17: Which contextual factors are predictive of marital quality among GA and NGA Utahans?

H17. There will be significant differences in how contextual factors predict marital quality for currently married GA and NGA Utahans.

Research Question #18: Will interactional processes be predictive of marital quality among currently married GA and NGA Utahans?

H18. Interactional processes will significantly predict marital quality among currently married GA and NGA Utahans.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Design

The random cross-section research design used in exploring the nature of marital quality and contextual factors among low-income and non-low-income individuals is examined in this section. The research questions and hypotheses listed above guided the comparisons between the samples being studied. In an effort to measure attitudes toward marriage and divorce in the state of Utah, the Bureau for Social Research (BSR) at Oklahoma State University (OSU) was contracted to conduct the 2003 *Marriage in Utah* (MIU) study as a replication of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative (OMI) Statewide Baseline Survey conducted in 2001.

Specifically, Welch and Johnson (2003) stated that the 2003 Marriage in Utah Statewide Baseline Survey had two basic objectives. The first was to determine how respondents feel about marriage, divorce, and preventive education. The second was to collect information on the respondents' own marital/ relationship history and current status. More specifically, the aims of this baseline survey were to:

1. Assess attitudes about intimate relationships, marriage/divorce, and family.
2. Gather qualitative data on couples' relationship quality.
3. Assess family involvement/support for marriage.

4. Assess knowledge and acceptance of preventative education.

5. Collect demographic data on patterns of cohabitation, intent to marry, marriage, divorce, and remarriage among Utah residents (i.e., marriage and divorce history).

6. Collect data on other variables of interest such as religious involvement, utilization of government services, mental health conditions, and other demographic data. (p. 2).

Instrument

Data for the *Marriage in Utah* study were collected using telephone interviews conducted by the Bureau for Social Research at Oklahoma State University. The instrument used for the telephone interviews was designed by contracted scholars under the direction of Christine Johnson and the Bureau for Social Research at Oklahoma State University (see Welch & Johnson, 2003). It is divided into nine sections including attitudes toward marriage/divorce, marriage/divorce history, relationship quality, family involvement, preventative education, religious involvement, mental health, utilization of government services, and demographic information. The current study focused primarily on relationship quality, religious involvement, mental health, utilization of government services, and demographic information.

A brief description of each of these five areas was recorded by the Bureau for Social Research at Oklahoma State University as follows:

1. *Relationship Quality* asked respondents to indicate if they were happy or unhappy with their current marriage. Other questions concerned possible thoughts of ending the marriage and feelings toward dealing with problems in the marriage.

2. *Religious Involvement* asked respondents to indicate their religious preference and perceptions relating to religious ideas.

3. *Mental Health* asked respondents if they had experienced mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, or other conditions and how these conditions may have affected their marriage.

4. *Utilization of Government Services* asked respondents if they had ever received governmental assistance such as TANF/AFDC, food stamps, and/or Medicaid. Additional items addressed attitudes toward a statewide initiative to promote marriage and reduce divorce.

5. *Demographic Data* asked respondents to provide basic demographic information such as age, race, education level, and marital status. Demographic data were also obtained for the respondent's spouse when applicable (Welch & Johnson, 2003, pp. 2-3).

Data Collection and Population Identification

Two samples were identified in this study. This first included a statewide sample of 1,316 adults, 18 years of age or older. The second was an additional sample of 130 low-income households to insure this population was adequately represented.

The main sample included persons from the entire state of Utah acquired from Survey Sampling of Fairfield, Connecticut. Specifically, according to Welch and Johnson (2003),

> ...three quota areas were established: 1) the Provo-Orem Metropolitan Statistical Area (Utah County), 2) the Salt Lake City-Ogden Metropolitan Statistical Area (Davis, Salt Lake, and Weber Counties) and , 3) the remaining 25 counties. Known business telephone numbers were excluded from the random digit dialing sample. In addition, the selected telephone numbers were screened for disconnected numbers by Survey Sampling through a computerized dialing protocol that does not make the telephone ring, but which can detect a unique dial tone that is emitted by some disconnected telephone numbers. (p. 3)

For the second over-sample of TANF recipients, the Utah Department of Workforce Services identified 900 potential respondents and sent them a letter informing them that they had been selected to participate in a statewide survey about marriage and family relationships. Specifically, persons who were interested in participating in the study were instructed to call the Oklahoma State Bureau of Social Research and a toll-free telephone number was provided. The letter emphasized that responses would remain confidential; it also indicated that persons completing the interview would be paid $15.00.

For purposes of the present study, only currently married individuals were included in both the government assistance (GA) and nongovernment-assistance (NGA) samples. The GA married sample consisted of 77 respondents while the NGA married sample consisted of 809 respondents. Demographic characteristics of both samples are shown in Table 7 below. Missing data are responsible for where the sample *n* does not equal 77 and 809 for the GA and NGA groups, respectively. As in all telephone interviews and opinion surveys, the results are subject to biases (e.g., social desirability,

Table 7

Demographic Characteristics of the GA and NGA Samples

	Sample size (*n*)*		Percent of sample	
Source	GA	NGA	GA	NGA
Gender				
Male	18	258	40	53
Female	59	543	60	47
Age				
20-24	15	80	19	10
25-44	40	343	52	42
45-64	19	280	25	35
65+	3	103	4	13
Race				
White	65	762	85	95
Hispanic/Latino	8	17	10	2
Other	4	20	5	3
Religion				
LDS	57	656	74	82
Catholic	7	21	9	3
Protestant	7	52	9	7
Other	1	10	1	1
No formal religion	5	59	7	7
Education level				
Less than high school	9	27	12	3
High school graduate	23	169	30	21
Some college	23	264	30	33
Trade/technical training	9	29	12	4
College graduate	13	222	16	28
Postgraduate work/degree	0	89		11
Children in the home				
0	11	337	14	42
1	22	134	29	17
2	17	125	22	16
3	11	89	14	11
4	12	63	16	8
5+	4	51	5	6
Work status				
Full-time (35+ hours)	11	320	14	40
Part-time	11	144	14	18
Employed but out due to illness/leave	1	7	1	1
Seasonal work	0	3		
Unemployed/laid off	6	17	8	2
Full-time homemaker	33	194	43	24

(*table continues*)

	Sample size (n)*		Percent of sample	
Source	GA	NGA	GA	NGA
In school only	3	9	4	1
Retired	2	100	3	12
Disabled for work	9	5	12	1
Other	1	2	1	1
Income				
Less than $20,000	36	46	50	6
$20,000 - $39,999	28	185	39	25
$40,000 - $59,999	5	207	7	28
$60,000 - $79,999	3	136	4	18
$80,000 - $99,999	0	74		10
$100,000+	0	94		

*Numbers do not equal 77 and 809 in each category due to missing data.

underreporting, etc.), sampling, and other nonsampling errors. For example, the response rate of 51% limits external validity because this rate was derived from the percentage of completed interviews compared to potential interviews. When total completed interviews were compared to total attempted interviews the response rate was 30%. Additionally, another limiting factor included responses of "don't know" and "refused" that were dropped from the analysis.

Measures

The questions on this survey were taken from the 2001 Oklahoma Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce. The original questions from the Oklahoma survey were mainly taken from surveys that have been conducted around the U.S., allowing direct comparisons between state and national findings. Additionally, the 2003 Utah Marriage Statewide Baseline Survey asked additional questions regarding religious involvement and mental health.

The survey instrument (see Appendix B) included questions on the following

topics: (a) attitudes toward marriage, divorce, and cohabitation; (b) marriage, divorce, and relationship history; (c) qualitative information on couple's relationship quality; (d) involvement and support from family members and friends; (e) knowledge and acceptance of prevention education; (f) religious involvement;(g) mental health; (h) utilization of government services; and (i) demographic data on marriage, divorce, remarriage, patterns of cohabitation, intent to marry/remarry, and other demographic data. Marital quality and contextual questions used in this study were taken from sections C, F, G, and I of the Utah Marriage Statewide Baseline Survey.

Dependent Variables

Marital quality. Sixteen relationship quality questions were used to assess marital quality (see Table 8). For purposes of this study, six areas of relationship quality were assessed separately using these sixteen relationship quality questions that included divorce proneness, commitment to spouse, negative interaction, marital happiness and satisfaction, feeling trapped in the relationship, and positive bonds.

Divorce proneness. This variable was assessed using five questions taken from the Oklahoma baseline study developed by Johnson et al. (2002). These questions were developed from Booth, Johnson, and Edwards' (1983) Marital Instability Index. The first question queries, "Sometimes couples experience serious problems in their marriage and have thoughts of ending their marriage. Even people who get along quite well with their spouse sometimes wonder whether their marriage is working out. Have you ever thought your marriage might be in trouble?" Subsequent questions included the following: "Has the thought of getting a divorce or separation crossed your mind?"; "Have you discussed

Table 8

Items Used for the Marital Quality Measure

Measure	Questions (see Appendix B, QRQ1-QRQ6)
Divorce proneness	• Have you discussed divorce or separation from your spouse with a close friend?
	• Have you or your spouse ever seriously suggested the idea of divorce?
	• Sometimes couples experience serious problems in their marriage and have thoughts of ending their marriage. Even people who get along quite well with their spouse sometimes wonder whether their marriage is working out. Have you ever thought your marriage might be in trouble?
	• Has the thought of getting a divorce or separation crossed your mind?
	• Have you and your spouse talked about consulting an attorney regarding a possible divorce or separation?
Commitment	• My relationship with my spouse/partner is more important to me than almost anything else in my life.
	• I may not want to be with my spouse/partner a few years from now. Do you…
	• I like to think of my spouse/partner and me more in terms of "us" and "we" than "me" and "him/her."
Negative interaction	• Little arguments escalate into ugly fights with accusations, criticisms, name calling, or bringing up past hurts. Is that…
	• My spouse/partner criticizes or belittles my opinions, feelings, or desires. Is that…
	• My spouse/partner seems to view my words or actions more negatively than I mean them to be. Does that happen…
	• When we argue, one of us withdraws…that is, does not want to talk about it anymore, or leaves the scene. Does that happen…
Marital happiness and satisfaction	• Taking things altogether, how would you describe your marriage?
	• All in all, how satisfied are you with your marriage? Are you…
Feeling trapped	• I feel trapped in this marriage/relationship but I stay because I have too much to lose if I leave.
Positive bonds	• We regularly have great conversations where we just talk as good friends.

divorce or separation from your spouse with a close friend?"; "Have you or your spouse ever seriously suggested the idea of divorce?"; "Have you and your spouse talked about consulting an attorney regarding a possible divorce or separation?" Responses were coded as 1 = never; 2 = yes, but not within the last 3 years; 3 = yes, within the last 3 years; 4 = yes, within the last year; 5 = yes, within the last 6 months; 6 = yes, within the last 3 months; 8 = don't know; and 9 = refused (Note: a response of 8 or 9 was recorded as missing data throughout the study). These five questions were combined to form the *divorce proneness* variable with an alpha reliability coefficient of .833.

Commitment to spouse. This variable was measured using three questions from the Oklahoma baseline study (Johnson et al., 2002). The three questions used for this study were developed by Stanley and Markman (1992) who created a measure identifying two predominant constructs of marital commitment—personal dedication commitment and constraint commitment. The first question stated, "My relationship with my spouse/partner is more important to me than almost anything else in my life" and then asked, "Do you..." Responses were coded as 1 = strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = disagree; 5 = strongly disagree; 8 = don't know; and 9 = refused. The second question asked, "I may not want to be with my spouse/partner a few years from now. Do you..." Responses for this question were coded the same as for the first question. The third question stated, "I like to think of my spouse/partner and me more in terms of 'us' and 'we' than 'me' and 'him/her.' Again, responses were coded the same as for the first question. Questions 1 and 3 were reverse coded so that a higher

score indicated higher levels of commitment. These three questions were combined into the *commitment* variable with an alpha reliability coefficient of .795.

Negative interaction. This variable was assessed using four questions from the Oklahoma baseline study (Johnson et al., 2002). These questions were taken from Notarius and Markman (1989) and Julien, Markman, and Lindahl (1989) to assess four areas of negative interaction: (a) escalating negativity, (b) criticism, (c) negative interpretation, and (d) withdrawal. Negative interaction, according to Stanley (2003),

> ...has a rich tradition of explaining differences in distressed and non-distressed couples, and in classifying couples with regard to eventual outcomes (so called prediction studies). When measured even simply, negative interaction often explains more variance in other indices of couple functioning than anything else measured. This is perhaps the case because negativity is both a very potent corrosive force on the positive bond between partners, and it is also very likely a marker for other things like overall level of commitment (dedication) reflected in a willingness to inhibit negative responses in response to frustration. (p. 50)

The question that assessed escalating negativity asked, "Little arguments escalate into ugly fights with accusations, criticisms, name calling, or bringing up past hurts. Is that..." Responses were coded for all four negative interaction questions as 1 = never or almost never, 2 = once in a while, 3 = frequently, 8 = don't know; 9 = refused. The question that assessed criticism stated, "My spouse/partner criticizes or belittles my opinions, feelings, or desires. Is that..." The negative interpretation question queried, "My spouse/partner seems to view my words or actions more negatively than I mean them to be. Does that happen..." The withdrawal question states, "When we argue, one of us withdraws...that is, does not want to talk about it anymore, or leaves the scene. Does that happen..." These four negative interaction questions were coded so that a higher score indicated higher negative interaction and were combined into the *negative*

interaction variable with an alpha reliability coefficient of .683. Although for this study the reliability coefficient was slightly lower than expected, further investigation revealed that each item was a significant contributor to capturing the construct of negative interaction and, therefore, none of the four questions could be dropped.

M*arital happiness and satisfaction.* This variable was assessed using two questions taken from Johnson et al. (2002) based upon the simplicity of the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (Schumm et al., 1986). These questions were combined to measure overall marital satisfaction. The first question asked "Taking things altogether, how would you describe your marriage?" Answers were coded 1 = very happy, 2 = pretty happy, 3 = not too happy, 8 = don't know, and 9 = refused. The second question asked "All in all, how satisfied are you with your marriage? Are you…" Responses were coded 1 = completely satisfied, 2 = very satisfied, 3 = somewhat satisfied, 4 = not very satisfied, 5 = not at all satisfied, 8 = don't know, and 9 = refused. These two questions were combined to form the *overall marital happiness/satisfaction* variable. The responses were reverse coded so that a higher score indicated higher overall marital happiness/satisfaction.

Because there were only three responses possible for the marital happiness question and five possible responses for the satisfaction question, a common metric was developed so that a reverse coded response of 3 = very happy was coded as a 5 to correspond with the metric 5 = completely satisfied on the marital satisfaction scale. Similarly, a reverse coded response of 2 = pretty happy on the happiness scale was coded as a 3 to correspond with the metric 3 = somewhat satisfied on the marital satisfaction

scale. Finally, a reversed coded score of 1 = not too happy was coded as a 1 to correspond with the metric 1 = not at all satisfied on the marital satisfaction scale. When combined, these two questions had an alpha reliability of .75.

Feeling trapped. This variable was measured using one question from the Oklahoma baseline study (Johnson et al., 2002). This question was developed by Stanley and Markman (1992) who created a measure identifying two predominant constructs of marital commitment—personal dedication commitment and constraint commitment. The first three commitment questions, mentioned earlier, assessed personal dedication commitment, while this question about feeling trapped assessed constraint commitment. The question stated, "I feel trapped in this marriage/ relationship but I stay because I have too much to lose if I leave." Responses were coded as 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree, 8 = don't know, and 9 = refused. The responses were identified as the *feeling trapped* variable and reverse coded so that a high score represented a feeling that a person felt more trapped in the relationship. Because only a single question was used in the survey for this construct, an alpha reliability coefficient was not computed.

Positive bonds. This variable was assessed using one question developed for the Oklahoma baseline study (Johnson et al., 2002) by Stanley and Markman (1992) in which people responded to the statement, "We regularly have great conversations where we just talk as good friends." Responses were coded as 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree; 5 = strongly disagree, 8 = don't know, 9 = refused. These responses were identified as the variable "positive bonds" and were

reverse coded so that a higher score indicated higher positive bonds. Because only a single question was used in the survey for this construct, an alpha reliability coefficient was not computed.

Independent Variables

Twelve variables, including three scales, were used to assess the following contextual/demographic factors: income level, ever cohabited, anxiety, depression, other mental health problems, alcohol or drug problems, religiosity, educational attainment, receipt of government assistance, age at first marriage, gender, and age (see Appendix B).

Income level. The total family income reported by the respondent for the previous year. Income level was measured with the question, "For purposes of statistical calculations only, we would like to know about how much was your total family income from all sources last year before taxes and other deductions?" Responses were coded as 1 = less than $20,000 per year, 2 = at least $20,000 but less than $40,000, 3 = at least $40,000 but less than $60,000, 4 = at least $60,000 but less than $80,000, 5 = at least $80,000 but less than $100,000, 6 = $100,000 or more, 8 = unsure/don't know, 9 = refused. The variable was named "income level" and was recoded as follows: 1 = under $20,000, 2 = $20,000-$39,999, 3 = $40,000-$59,999, 4 = $60,000 or more (Schramm et al., 2003).

Cohabited. The individual respondent's report of whether or not they had cohabited prior to their current marriage. Cohabitation was assessed using one question from the Oklahoma baseline study (Johnson et al., 2002) that asked, "Did you and your

current spouse live together before you got married?" The variable was named "cohabited" and responses were coded 1 = yes, 2 = no, 8 = don't know, 9 = refused.

Anxiety, depression, other mental health problems, and alcohol or drug problems. Mental health conditions reported by the individual respondent. Anxiety, depression, other mental health problems, and alcohol or drug problems were assessed through a self-report measure authored by Allgood (personal communication, January 5, 2005). According to Hawthorne (2002), self-reported mental health assessments for mental illness are preferred in research because reports by others, including mental health professionals, have not been found to be as reliable. The question stated, "Now we'd like to ask you a few questions about your health," and then asked, "Have you ever experienced any of the following mental health conditions?" Responses were coded separately for the variables named "anxiety," "depression," "alcohol or drug problems," and "other mental health conditions." Similarly, they were separately coded as 1 = yes, 2 = no, 3 = unsure/don't know, 4 = refused.

Religiosity. Religious attitudes and behaviors reported by the individual respondent. Religiosity was measured using five questions that assessed religious beliefs, religious attitudes, and religious behaviors (see Appendix B). Four questions assessing religious attitudes were asked as follows: (1) "My outlook on life is based on my religion;" (2) "Although I believe in my religion, many other things are important in my life;" (3) "My faith helps me know right from wrong;" and (4) "All things considered, how religious would you say that you are?" Responses for the first three questions were coded as 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree,

4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree, 8 = undecided/don't know, 9 = refused. Question 4 was coded as 1 = not at all religious, 2 = slightly religious, 3 = moderately religious, 4 = very religious, 8 = unsure/don't know, 9 = refused. Religious behavior was assessed using a fifth question, "How often do you attend religious services? Would you say…" Responses were coded as 1 = never or almost never, 2 = occasionally but less than once per month, 3 = one to three times per month, 4 = one or more times per week, 8 = don't know, 9 = refused.

Questions 1 and 5 are found in Mahoney et al. (1999); questions 2-4 are found in Gorsuch and McPherson (1989). These five questions were combined into an overall religiosity scale titled "religiosity." Questions 1 and 3 were reverse coded so that a high score indicated a higher positive religious attitude. The overall religiosity scale had an alpha reliability coefficient of .83.

Educational attainment. The years of education a respondent had completed as of the survey year. Educational attainment was assessed with two questions. The first measured the respondent's educational attainment and asked, "What is the highest grade in school that you finished, and got credit for, or the highest degree you have earned?" The second question measured the respondents spouse's educational attainment and asked, "What is the highest grade in school that your spouse/partner finished, and got credit for, or the highest degree they have earned?" Responses for both questions were combined into the variable "education level." Responses were initially coded as 1 = less than high school graduate (0-11), 2 = high school graduate, 3 = some college; 4 = trade/ technical/vocational training, 5 = college graduate, 6 = postgraduate work/degree,

8 = unsure/don't know, 9 = refused. However, some college and trade/technical/ vocational training were collapsed into one variable and the responses were then recoded so that 1 = less than high school graduate (0-11), 2 = high school graduate, 3 = some college/trade/technical/vocational training, 4 = college graduate, 5 = postgraduate work/degree, 8 = unsure/don't know, 9 = refused.

Government assistance. Individuals surveyed who were currently receiving government assistance, specifically TANF, Medicaid, Food Stamps, and/or assistance related to WIC (Johnson et al., 2002; Schramm et al., 2003). Three questions were used to assess whether or not the individual respondent was currently receiving government assistance. The first question asked, "Are you currently receiving TANF assistance?" The second question asked, "Are you currently receiving Food Stamps?" The third question asked, "Do any members of your household, including children, currently receive Medicaid?" These three questions were combined to form the variable called "government assistance."

Age at first marriage. The age at which the respondent began his or her first marriage. Individual respondents were asked the question, "How old were you when you first got married?" Responses were coded with a range of 1-110 with a minimum age of 13, a maximum age of 48, a mean of 20.94, a median of 20.00, and a mode of 18.

Gender. The sex which was reported by the respondent as being male or female. Gender was coded as 1 = male, 2 = female, 8 = don't know and was recoded so 0 = female, 1 = male, 8 = don't know.

Age. Chronological age grouped from 20-24, 25-44, 45-64, and 65 and above.

Data Analysis

Analyses of the data included the statistical use of *t* tests, chi-squares, ANOVA's, correlation, and regression to determine the relationships between contextual and marital quality variables for GA and NGA individuals. Specifically, independent samples *t* tests were computed for hypotheses 1-6 analyzing differences between the GA and NGA groups in the indicators of marital quality for marital satisfaction, positive bonding, commitment, divorce proneness, feeling trapped, and negative interaction. The *t* tests were also used to analyze differences in the effects of each contextual factor for hypotheses 13-15 on marital quality for the GA and NGA individuals.

Pearson chi-square tests were used to determine relevant associations between married GA and NGA individuals for hypotheses 7-12 because these contextual questions concerning cohabitation, anxiety, depression, other mental health issues, alcohol or substance abuse problems, and educational attainment were coded as categorical data (i.e., responses of either "yes" or "no," or of only one value). Chi-square tests were also used with hypothesis 15 when these contextual variables were analyzed in association with the variable of gender. Hypothesis 16 employed the use of univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) to analyze potential group differences for the GA and NGA individuals for each of the six marital quality variables, religiosity, and age at first marriage by income level. Post hoc tests were then used to analyze individual group differences and these differences were plotted using graphs to highlight the findings. Additionally, chi-square tests were also used to analyze the categorical contextual variables discussed in research questions 7-12.

For hypothesis 17, a separate bivariate correlation matrix was first developed for GA and NGA individuals on all of the marital quality and contextual factor measures to assess the potential associations between each of these variables. A third bivariate correlation matrix was also developed with the GA and NGA groups integrated into one matrix. Regression analysis was then utilized to analyze the associations of each contextual factor for marital quality in both the GA and NGA groups separately and then with both groups combined (i.e., Model 1). Finally, according to hypothesis 18 and Amato's (forthcoming) findings, the contextual factors and marital quality measures from Model 1 were included in regression analysis for four specific interactional questions that identify criticism, withdrawal, negative interpretation, and the escalation of negative reciprocity to ascertain whether or not negative interaction is the major predictor of marital quality (Model 2). Model 1 and Model 2 were then compared to identify similarities, differences, and variation among the predictor variables and the marital quality measures. Results are listed in both table and figure format with the corresponding explanations provided.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The results of the statistical tests conducted on the eighteen research questions and the hypotheses presented in Chapter II are reported. The hypotheses follow each of the research questions. A brief description of the statistical findings follows each hypothesis. They are grouped into three categories: Marital Quality Research Questions and Hypotheses (Questions 1-6); Contextual/Demographic Factor Research Questions and Hypotheses (Questions 7-16); and, Regression and Interactional Process Research Questions and Hypotheses (Questions 17-18).

Results for Marital Quality Research Questions and Hypotheses 1-6

Independent samples *t* tests revealed statistically significant differences between GA and NGA individuals for every measure of marital quality (see Table 9). The use of *t* tests assumes independent sample observations (i.e., one subject's responses does not influence another subject's responses), homogeneity of variance (i.e., the variances or squared standard deviations between groups are approximately the same), and normality (i.e., the subjects and their responses are normally distributed in roughly the same shape as their overall population mean). Levene's Test for equality of variances confirmed homogeneity of variance for each of the marital quality constructs being studied.

The independent samples *t* test analysis revealed that although the differences between the GA and NGA groups for each marital quality construct were statistically

Table 9

The t-*Test Summary of Differences in Comparisons of Marital Quality Between GA and NGA Individuals*

	GA individuals			NGA individuals				
Variable	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*t*	*ES*[a]
Overall satisfaction	.83	.22	77	.89	.16	809	3.15***	.32
Positive bonding	.81	.22	77	.85	.17	809	2.06*	.21
Commitment	.87	.17	77	.90	.11	809	2.57**	.22
Divorce proneness	.32	.22	77	.24	.13	809	-4.35***	.46
Feeling trapped	.35	.20	77	.30	.14	809	-2.71**	.29
Negative interaction	.51	.18	77	.46	.13	809	-3.33***	.32

[a]ES = $\frac{X\ \text{NGA} - X\ \text{GA}}{SD\ \text{weighted}}$

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$ (one-tail)

significant, the effect sizes were small. Cohen (1988) loosely characterized effect sizes as small ($d = .20$), medium ($d = .50$), and large ($d = .80$). Further, Cohen identified a small effect size of .20 or higher as a meaningful mean difference and a medium effect size as noticeable mean difference (Howell, 2002). The effect sizes for each dependent variable were calculated by subtracting the mean of the GA individuals from the NGA individuals and then dividing by the average of the standard deviations for both the NGA and GA groups as outlined by Call, Call, and Borg (2003).

Research Questions #1-6

Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to report overall marital satisfaction, positive bonding, interpersonal commitment, divorce proneness, feeling trapped, and negative interaction when compared to NGA Utahans?

Hypotheses #1-6

Currently married GA Utahans will report lower levels of marital satisfaction, positive bonding, and interpersonal commitment, and higher levels of divorce proneness, feeling trapped, and negative interaction when compared to NGA Utahans.

As shown in Table 9, the GA and NGA individuals as a group reported statistically significant differences from one another for the construct of overall marital satisfaction t(884) = 3.15, $p < .001$, positive bonding $t(882) = 2.06$, $p < .05$, commitment $t(879) = 2.57$, $p < .01$, divorce proneness $t(883) = -4.35$, $p < .001$, feeling trapped $t(881) = -2.71$, $p < .01$, and negative interaction $t(877) = -3.33$, $p < .001$ with the GA group reporting lower levels of overall marital satisfaction, positive bonding, and commitment and higher overall levels of divorce proneness, feeling trapped, and negative interaction. Although the effect sizes were small for marital satisfaction ($d = .32$), positive bonding ($d = .21$), commitment ($d = .22$), feeling trapped ($d = -.29$), and negative interaction ($d = -.32$), the mean differences between the two groups were meaningful (Cohen, 1988).

The effect size ($d = -.46$) for divorce proneness was the largest for any of the marital quality constructs suggesting that the mean differences between the two groups were not only meaningful but also noticeable for this construct. In sum, as hypothesized, currently married GA Utahans were less likely to report overall marital satisfaction, positive bonding, and interpersonal commitment and more likely to report divorce proneness, feeling trapped, and negative interaction when compared to NGA Utahans.

Results for Contextual Factor Research Questions and Hypotheses 7-16

Pearson's chi-square nonparametric statistical tests were used instead of *t* tests to analyze research questions 7-12 (see Table 10) because these contextual questions concerning cohabitation, anxiety, depression, other mental health issues, alcohol or substance abuse problems, and educational attainment were coded as discrete data (i.e., responses of either "yes" or "no"). The use of chi-square tests, like with the *t* test, assumes independence, normality, and homogeneity of odds ratios (i.e., equality of observed frequency counts compared to expected frequency counts).

Research Questions #7-11

Are currently married GA Utahans more or less likely to have ever cohabited, experienced anxiety, depression, other mental health problems, alcohol or drug problems when compared to NGA Utahans?

Hypotheses #7-11

Currently married GA Utahans will be more likely to have cohabited, experienced anxiety, depression, other mental health problems, and alcohol or drug problems when compared to NGA Utahans.

As shown in Table 10, Pearson chi-square statistical test results indicated a significant difference between GA and NGA Utahans who reported having experienced cohabitation ($\chi^2 = 42.67$, $p < .001$), anxiety ($\chi^2 = 10.58$, $p < .001$), depression ($\chi^2 = 11.86$, $p < .001$), other mental health problems ($\chi^2 = 9.45$, $p < .001$), and alcohol or drug problems ($\chi^2 = 9.54$, $p < .001$). Therefore, as hypothesized, currently married GA

Table 10

Chi-Square Summary of GA and NGA Individuals' Observed and Expected Scores Who Reported Having Experienced Specific Contextual Factors

Group	Observed	%	Expected	*n*	*df*	χ^2
Ever cohabited						
GA	34	44.2	13.3	77		
NGA	119	14.7	139.7	809	1	42.67***
Anxiety						
GA	32	41.6	20	77		
NGA	197	24.5	209	803	1	10.58***
Depression						
GA	40	51.9	26.3	77		
NGA	260	32.5	273.7	801	1	11.86***
Other mental health problems						
GA	5	6.6	Ŧ1.5	76		
NGA	12	1.5	15.5	802	1	9.45***
Alcohol of substance abuse						
GA	7	9.1	Ŧ 2.5	77		
NGA	21	2.6	25.5	802	1	9.54***
Respondent's education attainment						
Less than high school						
GA	9	11.7	32			
NGA	27	3.4	32.8			
High school graduate						
GA	23	29.9	16.9			
NGA	169	21.1	175.1			
Some college						
GA	23	29.9	25.2			
NGA	264	33.0	261.8			
Trade/technical/vocational						
GA	9	11.7	Ŧ 3.3			
NGA	29	3.6	34.7			
College graduate						
GA	13	16.9	20.6			
NGA	222	27.8	214.4			
Post-graduate work/degree						
GA	Ŧ 0	0	7.8			
NGA	89	11.1	81.2			
Total GA				77		
Total NGA				800	5	36.69***

(*table continues*)

Group	Observed	%	Expected	*n*	*df*	χ^2
Spouse's educational attainment						
Less than high school						
GA	11	14.3	₸3.0			
NGA	23	2.9	31.0			
High school graduate						
GA	26	33.8	18.5			
NGA	185	23.2	192.5			
Some college						
GA	21	27.3	21.0			
NGA	218	27.3	218.0			
Trade/technical/vocational						
GA	₸2	2.6	₸2.9			
NGA	31	3.9	30.1			
College graduate						
GA	11	14.3	21.1			
NGA	229	28.7	218.9			
Post-graduate work/degree						
GA	6	7.8	10.5			
NGA	113	14.1	108.5			
Total GA				77		
Total NGA				799	5	34.52***

Note. Cell count does not me the chi-square test assumptions.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$ (one-tail)

Utahans were more likely to have cohabited, experienced anxiety, depression, other mental health problems, and alcohol or drug problems when compared to NGA Utahans. However, other mental health problems and alcohol or substance abuse must be interpreted with caution for the GA Utahans due to a low cell count that is too small to meet the assumptions.

Research Question #12

Do currently married GA Utahans report higher or lower levels of educational attainment when compared to NGA Utahans?

Hypothesis #12

Currently married GA Utahans will report lower levels of educational attainment

when compared to NGA Utahans.

As shown in Table 10, Pearson chi-square statistical test results indicated a significant difference ($p < .001$) between GA and NGA Utahans for both individual educational attainment ($\chi^2 = 36.69$, $p < .001$) and spouse's educational attainment ($\chi^2 = 34.52$, $p < .001$) with the GA group reporting lower overall levels of both individual educational attainment and spouse's educational attainment. Therefore, as hypothesized, currently married GA Utahans reported lower levels of both individual educational attainment and spouse's educational attainment than did NGA Utahans. However, care must be taken when interpreting the trade/technical/vocational and post-graduate work/degree individual and spouse educational attainment for the GA Utahans due to a low cell count that is too small to meet the assumptions.

These differences in cohabitation, anxiety, depression, other mental health problems, alcohol or drug problems, and educational attainment between currently married GA and NGA Utahans may or may not reflect meaningful differences. Research questions 17-18 further explore these potentially meaningful differences.

Research Questions #13-14

Do currently married GA Utahans report higher or lower levels of religiosity and age at first marriage when compared to NGA Utahans?

Hypothesis #13-14

There will be no significant differences between the reported levels of religiosity and age at first marriage among currently married GA Utahans when compared to NGA Utahans.

As shown in Table 11, the GA and NGA individuals as a group showed no statistically significant differences from one another for the construct of religiosity $t(877) = 1.07$, $p = .28$ or age at first marriage $t(884) = .79$, $p = .43$ with the NGA group reporting slightly higher overall levels of religiosity and age at first marriage. Therefore, as hypothesized, there were no significant differences between the reported levels of religiosity and age at first marriage among currently married GA Utahans when compared to NGA Utahans, and as a result, the null hypothesis was retained.

Research Question #15

Were there differences in marital quality, or any of the contextual factors, by gender for currently married GA Utahans when compared to NGA Utahans?

Hypothesis #15

There will be no significant differences in marital quality, or any of the contextual factors, by gender for currently married GA Utahans when compared to NGA Utahans.

Table 11

The t-Test Summary of Differences in Comparisons of Religiosity and Age at First Marriage Between GA and NGA Individuals

	GA individuals			NGA individuals				
Variable	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*t*	*ES*[a]
Religiosity	3.90	1.13	77	4.05	1.17	809	1.07	.13
Age first marriage	21.30	4.17	77	21.65	3.65	809	.79	.09

$^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$ (one-tail)

[a]ES = $\frac{\bar{x}\text{NGA} - \bar{x}\text{GA}}{SD \text{ weighted}}$

Gender differences for the marital quality variables and two continuous contextual variables (i.e., religiosity and age at first marriage) are reported in Table 12. Univariate analysis of variance revealed no significant gender differences between the GA and NGA groups for the continuous variables of marital quality, religiosity, and age at first marriage measures so the groups were combined ($N = 886$) and t tests were used to determine if overall gender differences existed for any of the marital quality variables or for either of the two contextual variables. Effect sizes were generally small for the significant differences in overall commitment, satisfaction, and divorce proneness with the exception of the gender differences reported for age at first marriage $t(876) = -8.79$, $p < .001$.

Table 12

The t*-Test Summary of Gender Differences in Comparisons of Marital Quality, Religiosity, and Age at Marriage Variables among Both Combined Groups of GA and NGA Individuals*

	Mean		Standard deviation			
Variable	Male	Female	Male	Female	*t*	*ES*[a]
Overall satisfaction	.90	.88	.13	.17	-2.17*	.13
Positive bonding	.84	.85	.18	.17	.32	-.06
Commitment	.92	.89	.10	.13	-2.83**	.26
Feeling trapped	.30	.31	.14	.15	.78	-.07
Divorce proneness	.23	.26	.11	.15	2.78**	-.23
Negative interaction	.46	.47	.13	.14	1.17	-.07
Religiosity	3.94	4.08	1.21	1.14	1.67	-.12
Age at first marriage	23.18	20.91	3.83	3.40	-8.79***	.63

Note. Males ($N = 276$); Females ($N = 609$).
[a]ES = $\frac{\bar{x} \text{ Male} - \bar{x} \text{ Female}}{SD \text{ weighted}}$
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$ (two-tail)

Gender differences for the remaining discrete contextual variables (i.e., cohabited, anxiety, depression, other mental health problems, alcohol or substance abuse, and educational attainment) are reported in Table 13. Cross tabulations revealed no significant gender differences between the GA and NGA groups for these contextual variables so the groups were again combined ($N = 886$) and Pearson chi-square tests were employed to determine if overall gender differences existed for any of the remaining contextual variables.

Statistically significant gender differences were found to exist between males and females for anxiety ($\chi^2 = 15.04$, $p < .001$) and depression ($\chi^2 = 22.01$, $p < .001$) with females in this sample experiencing higher levels of each of these mental health problems when compared to males. Similarly, males in this sample reported significantly higher levels of alcohol or substance abuse ($\chi^2 = 8.87$, $p < .01$) than females. Correspondingly, respondent males and females reported significant differences in educational attainment with females reporting equal or higher overall percentages of educational attainment for every education level but *Post Graduate Work/Degree*. Additionally, when reporting the spouses' educational attainment, especially noteworthy was the percentage of females (17%) who had worked on *Post Graduate Work/Degree(s)* compared to men (6%). It must be noted that males had a low cell count for other mental health problems, less than high school and trade/technical/vocational education (both individual and spouse), and, therefore, theses findings must be interpreted with caution.

Research Question #16

Were there differences in marital quality, or any of the contextual factors, by

Table 13

Chi-Square Summary of Combined GA and NGA Individuals' Observed and Expected Scores by Gender Who Reported Having Experienced Specific Contextual Factors

Group	Observed	%	Expected	χ^2
Ever cohabited				
Male	41	14.9	47.8	
Female	111	18.4	104.2	1.70
Anxiety				
Male	48	17.4	71.4	
Female	179	29.7	155.6	15.04***
Depression				
Male	63	23.0	93.5	
Female	236	39.2	205.5	22.01***
Other mental health problems				
Male	4	1.5	5.0	
Female	12	2.0	11.0	31
Alcohol of substance abuse				
Male	16	5.8	8.8	
Female	12	2.0	19.2	8.87**
Respondent's education attainment				
Less than high school				
Male	11	4.0	11.3	
Female	25	4.2	24.7	
High school graduate				
Male	52	18.8	60.4	
Female	140	23.3	131.6	
Some college				
Male	77	27.9	90.3	
Female	210	34.9	196.7	
Trade/technical/vocational				
Male	12	4.3	12.0	
Female	26	4.3	26.0	
College graduate				
Male	73	26.4	74.0	
Female	162	27.0	161.0	
Post-graduate work/degree				
Male	51	18.5	28.0	
Female	38	6.3	61.0	32.15***

(*table continues*)

Group	Observed	%	Expected	χ^2
Spouse's educational attainment				
Less than high school				
Male	10	3.6	10.7	
Female	24	4.0	23.3	
High school graduate				
Male	89	32.2	66.5	
Female	122	20.3	144.5	
Some college				
Male	21	27.3	21.0	
Female	160	26.7	163.7	
Trade/technical/vocational				
Male	11	4.0	10.4	
Female	22	3.7	22.6	
College graduate				
Male	70	25.4	75.6	
Female	170	28.3	164.4	
Post-graduate work/degree				
Male	17	6.2	37.5	
Female	102	17.0	81.5	28.49***

Note. Male (N = 276), Female (N = 609). Ŧ Cell count does not me the chi-square test assumptions.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$ (one-tail)

income level for currently married GA Utahans when compared to NGA Utahans?

Hypothesis #16

There will be significant differences in marital quality, or any of the contextual factors, by income level for currently married GA Utahans when compared to NGA Utahans.

GA and NGA individuals' raw income levels (1 = under $20,000, 2 = $20,000-$39,999, 3 = $40,000-$59,999, 4 = $60,000 and above) were compared using univariate analysis for each marital quality and contextual variable (see Tables 14-23 shown later in this chapter). Univariate analysis of variance is a statistical procedure used to determine whether discrete factor(s) have an effect on the mean of a dependent (continuous) variable. A Two Way Factorial ANOVA was used to compare group differences by

income level for overall satisfaction, positive bonds, divorce proneness, negative interaction, commitment, and feeling trapped. Assumptions for the analysis of variance include that the samples are independent, normally distributed, and have equal variances (see also Green & Salkind, 2005, p. 177). Similarly, an interaction effect of income by group reveals that one factor depends on the value of the other to explain the association with the dependent variable.

Statistically significant differences by group and income level were found for four of the six measures of marital quality, with the positive bonds and feeling trapped variables not showing overall significance (see Tables 14-20), although pair-wise differences were found for feeling trapped. When the data were separated by income level and group, statistically significant differences were found in overall levels of satisfaction (see Table 14) across levels of income averaged across groups, $F(3, 807) = 5.21$, $p < .001$. Additionally, the overall satisfaction means were the same by group averaged across income levels $F(1, 807) = 18.13$, $p < .001$. A statistically significant interaction effect $F(2, 807) = 6.32$, $p < .01$ was also found for mean differences in

Table 14

Analysis of Variance for Overall Satisfaction

Source	*df*	*F*	η^2	*p*
Between subjects				
Income level (I)	3	5.21***	.019	.001
Government assistance (G)	1	18.13***	.022	.000
I x G	2	6.32**	.015	.002
S within-group				
Error	807	(20.50)		

Note. Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square errors.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

overall satisfaction across income levels by group membership.

Post hoc contrasts showed statistically significant mean differences for overall satisfaction between NGA and GA groups for income levels 1 and 2. Figure 1 highlights these differences and shows the similar levels of overall satisfaction between groups when the government assistance individuals reported yearly income reached level 2. The sharp decline in marital satisfaction of GA individuals for income level 3 must be interpreted with care because only 8 GA individuals reported a yearly income of $40,000-$59,999. We assume, however, that if we had a larger sample the trend would have remained similar to Level 2 in all of the post hoc contrasts.

A two-way factorial ANOVA revealed no statistically significant differences between income level and group nor an interaction effect for positive bonds (see Table 15).

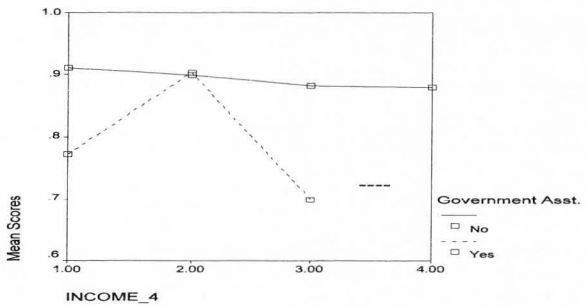

Figure 1. Mean overall satisfaction scores by income level for married GA and NGA individuals.

Table 15

Analysis of Variance for Positive Bonds

Source	*df*	*F*	η^2	*p*
Between subjects				
Income level (I)	3	.05	.000	.983
Government assistance (G)	1	1.70	.002	.193
I x G	2	.2	.000	.980
S within-group				
Error	807	(20.50)		

Note. Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square errors.
$*p < .05$; $**p < .01$; $***p < .001$

Although the post hoc contrast in Figure 2 below appears to reveal a difference between currently married GA and NGA individuals, the means show a lack of statistically significant differences by income level and group for positive bonds.

When the data were separated by income level and group, statistically significant differences were found in overall levels of commitment (see Table 16) across levels of

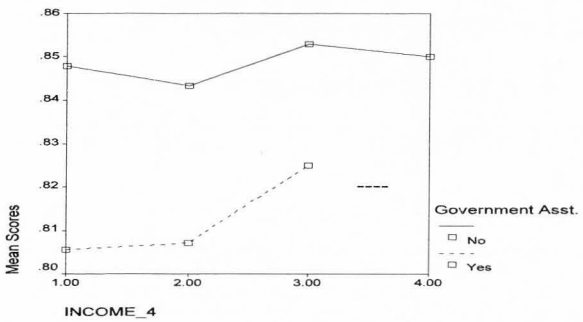

Figure 2. Mean positive bonds scores by income level for married GA and NGA individuals.

income averaged across groups, $F(3, 804) = 6.24$, $p < .001$. Additionally, the commitment population means were the same by group averaged across income levels, $F(1, 804) = 11.92$, $p < .001$. A statistically significant interaction effect, $F(2, 804) = 6.71$, $p < .001$ was also found for mean differences in commitment across income levels by group membership was also found for mean differences in commitment across income levels by group membership.

Post hoc contrasts showed statistically significant mean differences for commitment between groups for income levels 1 and 2. Figure 3 highlights these differences and shows the similar levels of commitment between groups when the GA individuals reported yearly income reached level 2. In fact, GA individuals for income level 2 reported higher levels of commitment than NGA individuals. Again, the decline in commitment of GA individuals for income level 3 compared to NGA individuals must be interpreted with care.

A two-way factorial ANOVA revealed no overall statistically significant differences between income level and group nor an interaction effect for feeling trapped

Table 16

Analysis of Variance for Interpersonal Commitment

Source	*df*	*F*	η^2	*p*
Between subjects				
Income level (I)	3	6.24***	.023	.000
Government assistance (G)	1	11.92***	.015	.001
I x G	2	6.71***	.016	.001
S within-group				
Error	804	(11.73)		

Note. Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square errors.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

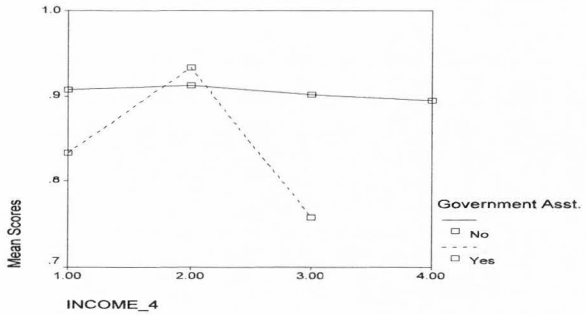

Figure 3. Mean commitment scores by income level for married Government Assistance GA and NGA individuals.

at the .05 level of statistical significance, although both group $F(1, 806) = 3.406$, $p = .065$, and the interaction of income level and group $F(2, 806) = 2.633$, $p = .072$, approached significance (see Table 17). However, post hoc contrasts showed pairwise statistically significant mean differences for feeling trapped between NGA and GA groups for income level 1 compared with 2, income level 1 compared with 3, and income level 1 compared with 4. Figure 4 highlights these differences and shows the similar levels of feeling trapped between groups when the GA individuals reported yearly income in level 2. The slight increase in feeling trapped of GA individuals for income level 3, when compared to NGA individuals, must be interpreted with care.

When the data were separated by income level and group, statistically significant differences were found in overall divorce proneness (see Table 18) across levels of proneness population means were the same by group averaged across income levels, $F(1, 807) = 15.68$, $p < .001$. No statistically significant interaction effect was present.

Table 17

Analysis of Variance for Feeling Trapped

Source	*df*	*F*	η^2	*p*
Between subjects				
Income level (I)	3	1.99	.01	.115
Government assistance (G)	1	3.41	.01	.065
I x G	2	2.63	.01	.072
S within-group				
Error	806	(16.89)		

Note. Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square errors.
$^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$.

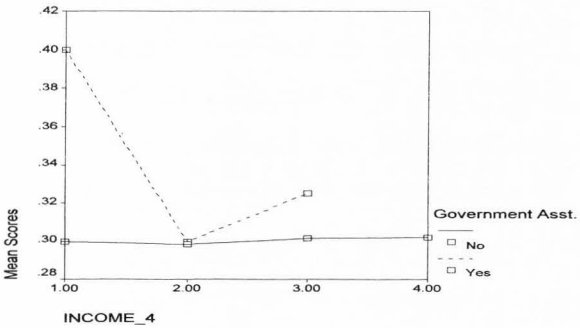

Figure 4. Mean feeling trapped scores by income level for married GA and NGA individuals.

Post hoc contrasts showed statistically significant mean differences for divorce proneness between NGA and GA groups for income level 1 compared with 2, income income averaged across groups, $F(3, 807) = 2.77$, $p < .05$. Additionally, the divorce level 1 compared with 3, and income level 1 compared with 4. Figure 5 highlights these

Table 18

Analysis of Variance for Divorce Proneness

Source	*df*	*F*	η^2	*p*
Between subjects				
Income level (I)	3	2.77*	.01	.041
Government assistance (G)	1	15.68***	.02	.000
I x G	2	2.35	.01	.096
S within-group				
Error	807	(577.79)		

Note. Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square errors.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

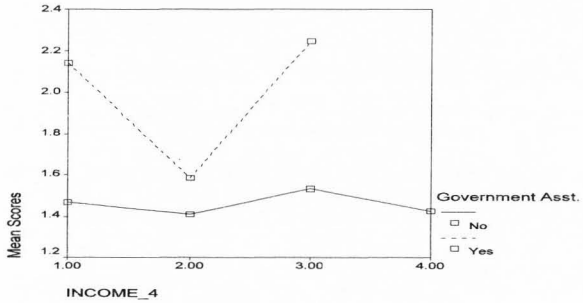

Figure 5. Mean divorce proneness scores by income level for married GA and NGA individuals.

differences and shows the similar levels of divorce proneness between groups when the GA individuals reported yearly income approached level 2. Again, income level 3 must be interpreted with care.

When the data were separated by income level and group, statistically significant differences were found in negative interaction (see Table 19) across levels of income averaged across groups, $F(3, 804) = 5.75$, $p < .001$. Additionally, the negative

Table 19

Analysis of Variance for Negative Interaction

Source	*df*	*F*	η^2	*p*
Between subjects				
Income level (I)	3	5.75***	.021	.001
Government assistance (G)	1	11.26***	.014	.001
I x G	2	3.63*	.009	.027
S within-group				
Error	804	(14.81)		

Note. Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square errors.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

interaction population means were the same by group averaged across income levels, $F(1, 804) = 11.26$, $p < .001$. A statistically significant interaction effect, $F(2, 804) = 3.63$, $p < .05$, was also found for mean differences in negative interaction across income levels by group membership.

Post hoc contrasts showed statistically significant mean differences for negative interaction between NGA and GA groups for income level 1 compared with 2, income level 1 compared with 3, income level 1 compared with 4, and for income level 2 compared with 3. Figure 6 highlights these differences and shows the similar levels of negative interaction between groups when the GA individuals reported yearly income in level 2. Again, the sharp increase in negative interaction of GA individuals for income level 3, when compared to NGA individuals, must be interpreted with care.

A two-way factorial ANOVA was also calculated for religiosity. Although not statistically significant, Figure 7 reflects the same trend for income level by group in which GA individuals reported nearly similar mean levels of religiosity when compared to NGA individuals when they approached the second income level.

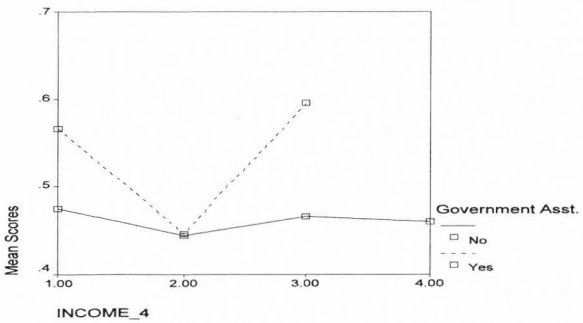

Figure 6. Mean negative interaction scores by income level for married GA and NGA individuals.

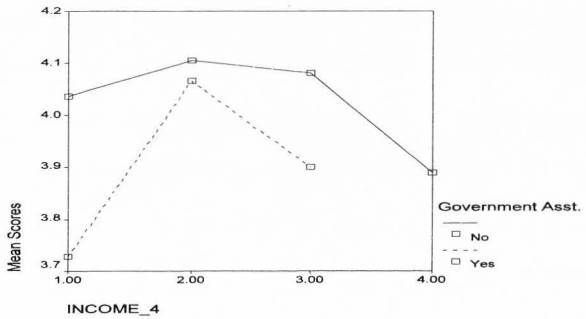

Figure 7. Mean religiosity scores by income level for married GA and NGA individuals.

For age at first marriage, a two-way factorial ANOVA (see Table 20) revealed income level only as having an effect on age at first marriage, $F(3, 804) = 3.10$, $p < .05$.

Table 20

Analysis of Variance for Age at First Marriage

Source	*df*	*F*	η^2	*p*
Between subjects				
Income level (I)	3	3.10*	.011	.026
Government assistance (G)	1	.48	.001	.491
I x G	2	.71	.002	.493
S within-group				
Error	804	(10572.86)		

Note. Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square errors.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Figure 8 shows an interesting relationship between GA and NGA individuals with regard to income level. While both groups share similar levels of age at first marriage for income level 1, they tend to diverge as income level increases. This divergence may reflect real differences between groups, but it most likely reflects a generational trend in which the 8 GA individuals in income level 3 may be older and may have married earlier according to cohort trends and norms.

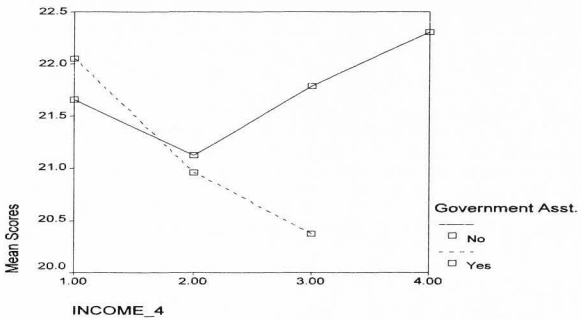

Figure 8. Mean age at first marriage scores by income level for married GA and NGA individuals.

For the contextual variables used in this study, only two (i.e., cohabitation and anxiety) showed significant differences by income level and group membership (see Tables 21-22). However, the variable of depression was also included to show the marked differences in depression by income level for both the GA and NGA groups. Table 21 shows that those who received government assistance were statistically significantly more likely to have cohabited ($\chi^2 = 6.897$, $p < .05$) if they were in income level 1 (61% who had cohabited compared to 39% who had not) when compared to the other income levels.

Additionally, for those who had never received government assistance, higher income level was significantly associated ($\chi^2 = 10.378$, $p < .05$) with lower levels of anxiety (see Table 22). Interestingly, for those who have never received government assistance, the anxiety levels are the lowest in the first income category, whereas this was not the case for those who had ever received government assistance. Similarly, for those who had received GA, although not statistically significant, anxiety levels tended to be

Table 21

Chi-Square Summary of GA and NGA Individuals' Observed and Expected Scores by Income Level for the Contextual Variable of Cohabitation

	No, Cohabited[a]			GA			NGA			Yes, Cohabited[b]			
Income level	O	%	E	O	%	E	O	%	E	O	%	E	χ^2
1	38	83	39.2	8	17	6.8	14	39	19.5	22	61	16.5	
2	158	85	157.6	27	15	27.4	19	68	15.2	9	32	12.8	
3	297	87	292.2	46	13	50.8	6	75	4.3*	2	25	3.7*	6.897
4	139	83	143.1	29	17	24.9							1.581

Note. Low cell count does not meet the chi-square statistical test assumptions.
[a] χ^2 (3, n = 742) = 1.581, p = .664; [b] χ^2 (2, n = 72) = 6.897, p = .032

Table 22

Chi-Square Summary of GA and NGA Individuals' Observed and Expected Scores by Income Level for the Contextual Variable of Anxiety

	NGA Anxiety[a]						GA Anxiety[b]						
	No			Yes			No			Yes			
Income level	O	%	E	O	%	E	O	%	E	O	%	E	χ^2
1	38	83	35.0	8	17	11.0	19	53	20.0	17	47	16.0	
2	125	68	140.9	60	32	44.1	18	64	15.6	10	36	12.4	
3	269	78	261.2	74	22	81.8	3	38	44[c]		62	3.6[c]	2.033
4	133	79	127.9	35	21	40.1							10.378

[a] χ^2 (3, n = 742) = 10.378, p = .016; [b] χ^2 (2, n = 72) = 2.033, p = .362

[c] Low cell count does not meet the chi-square statistical test assumptions.

reduced as income levels increased. This reflects a consistent trend toward the reduction of stress and strain (see Dyk 2004) when income level increases. Again, the results for the GA individuals for income level 3 must be interpreted with care.

Table 23 was included in this analysis to highlight the associations between receipt of GA, income level, and depression. Although no statistically significant

Table 23

Chi-Square Summary of GA and NGA Individuals' Observed and Expected Scores by Income Level for the Contextual Variable of Depression

	NGA Depression[a]						GA Depression[b]						
	No			Yes			No			Yes			
Income level	O	%	E	O	%	E	O	%	E	O	%	E	χ^2
1	33	73	30.1	12	27	14.9	15	42	17.0	21	58	19.0	
2	117	64	123.1	67	36	60.9	16	57	13.2	12	43	14.8	
3	228	67	229.4	115	33	113.6	3	38	3.8*	5	62	4.2*	1.855
4	117	70	112.4	51	30	55.6							2.352

Note. Low cell count does not meet the chi-square statistical assumptions.

[a] χ^2 (3, n = 740) = 2.352, p = .503; [b] χ^2 (2, n = 72) = 1.855, p = .396

relationship was found between receipt of government assistance, depression and income level, some meaningful comparisons should be noted between the two groups. For example, mean percentage scores across income levels 1-3 for GA individuals who experienced depression were 53% when compared to 32% of NGA individuals. This may or may not point to unique selection differences between the two groups that may already exist or it may suggest other factors are related to these differences.

Regression and Interactional Process Research

Questions and Hypotheses 17-18

Research Question #17

Which contextual factors are predictive of marital quality among GA and NGA Utahans?

Hypothesis #17

There will be significant differences in how contextual factors predict marital quality for currently married GA and NGA Utahans.

This study sought to better understand the relationships between the identified contextual and marital quality variables. Therefore, bivariate correlations were conducted between the variables studied and the separate results for GA and NGA individuals are presented in Tables 24-25. Additionally, the results of both groups combined and the overall relationships between variables are presented in Table 26. As

Table 24

Correlation Matrix for Government Assistance Individuals on Marital Quality Measures and Contextual Factors

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. Income	–																
2. Religiosity	.10	–															
3. Ever cohabited	-.29**	-.64***	–														
4. Anxiety	.02	-.21	.21	–													
5. Depression	-.05	-.19	.23*	.49**	–												
6. Alcohol/drug problems	-.09	-.12	.17	.01	.12	–											
7. Other mental health problems	-.08	-.09	.19	.00	.26*	.28**	–										
8. Age	.36**	.10	-.19	.08	.11	-.03	-.05	–									
9. Education level	.25*	.27*	-.39***	-.24*	-.21	-.27*	-.07	-.15	–								
10. Gender	.08	.08	-.06	-.15	-.02	.15	.11	.18	.01	–							
11. Age at first marriage	-.15	.04	.14	-.09	.01	.35***	.20	.11	.07	.41***	–						
12. Positive bonds	.02	.07	-.13	-.17	-.18	-.21	-.16	-.01	.10	.01	-.06	–					
13. Divorce proneness	-.08	-.24*	.27*	.37**	.34***	.19	.21	-.24*	-.25*	-.03	.05	-.50***	–				
14. Feeling trapped	-.20	-.40***	.29**	.39**	.41***	-.01	.14	-.06	-.35***	-.07	-.10	.36***	.59***	–			
15. Negative interaction	-.13	-.34***	.26*	.31**	.27*	.31**	.10	-.16	-.25*	-.09	.05	-.42***	.70***	.42***	–		
16. Overall satisfaction	.06	.32***	-.33***	-.27*	-.28**	-.21	-.23*	.11	.16	.20	-.08	.48***	-.64***	-.55***	-.71***	–	
17. Commitment	.03	.38***	-.34***	-.28*	-.25*	-.02	-.33***	.06	.18	.15	.06	.45***	-.53***	-.59***	-.52***	.74***	–

Note. $N = 77$.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 25

Correlation Matrix for NGA Individuals on Marital Quality Measures and Contextual Factors

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. Income	–																
2. Religiosity	-.05	–															
3. Ever cohabited	.01	-.52***	–														
4. Anxiety	-.06	-.05	.07*	–													
5. Depression	-.02	-.05	.09**	.55***	–												
6. Alcohol/drug problems	.00	-.16***	.13***	.09**	.09**	–											
7. Other mental health problems	.01	-.06	.04	.12***	.11***	.17***	–										
8. Age	.04	.05	-.11***	.03	-.04	-.02	-.02	–									
9. Education level	.31	.20***	-.18***	-.11***	-.04	.11***	.05	-.03	–								
10. Gender	-.01	-.07*	-.03	-.12***	-.17***	.10***	-.04	-.08*	.13***	–							
11. Age at first marriage	.10	.07*	-.03	-.10***	-.07*	-.04	-.07*	.00	.36***	.27***	–						
12. Positive bonds	.01	.12***	-.07	-.01	-.07	-.13***	-.01	-.09**	.11***	-.02	-.03	–					
13. Divorce proneness	.01	-.10***	.15***	.15***	.21***	.08*	.00	-.13***	-.08*	-.10**	-.06	-.30***	–				
14. Feeling trapped	.01	-.24***	.19***	.04	.11***	.11***	.06	.07*	-.11***	-.02	-.01	-.47***	.35***	–			
15. Negative interaction	.02	-.10***	.07*	.10***	.17***	.16***	.01	-.10**	-.02	-.03	.00	-.37***	.52***	.36***	–		
16. Overall satisfaction	-.06	.14***	-.10**	-.07	-.16***	-.10***	-.02	-.01	.02	.05	-.04	.48***	-.56***	-.48***	-.55***	–	
17. Commitment	-.05	.29***	-.20***	.02	-.10***	-.08*	-.02	-.09**	.07*	.09*	.03	.49***	-.41***	-.59***	-.35***	.55***	–

Note. $N = 809$.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 26

Correlation Matrix for Combined GA and NGA Individuals on Marital Quality Measures and Contextual Factors

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1. GA	–																	
2. Income	-.39***	–																
3. Religiosity	-.04	-.02	–															
4. Ever cohabited	.22***	-.11***	-.53***	–														
5. Anxiety	.11***	-.10**	-.06	.11***	–													
6. Depression	.12***	-.06	-.07*	.13***	.55***	–												
7. Alcohol/drug problems	.10***	-.05	-.15***	.16***	.08**	.10***	–											
8. Other mental health problems	.10***	-.05	-.06	.09**	.11***	.14***	.21***	–										
9. Age	-.14***	.11***	.06	-.15***	.02	-.04	-.04	-.03	–									
10. Education level	-.14***	.34***	.21***	-.22***	-.13***	-.07*	-.14***	.02	-.02	–								
11. Gender	-.05	.02	-.06	-.04	-.13***	-.16***	.10***	-.02	.09**	.13***	–							
12. Age at first marriage	-.03	.08*	.07*	-.01	-.10***	-.06	.02	-.03	.01	.34***	.28***	–						
13. Positive bonds	-.07	.04	.11***	-.09**	-.03	-.09**	-.15***	-.05	-.07*	.12***	-.01	-.04	–					
14. Divorce proneness	.14***	-.06	-.12***	.20***	.19***	.24***	.12***	.06	-.16***	-.12***	-.09**	-.04	-.34***	–				
15. Feeling trapped	.09**	-.05	-.26***	.22***	.09**	.15***	.09**	.08*	.05	-.15***	-.03	-.02	-.46***	.40***	–			
16. Negative interaction	.11***	-.05	-.13***	.12***	.14***	.19***	.20***	.04	-.12***	-.06	-.04	.00	-.38***	.56***	.38***	–		
17. Overall satisfaction	-.11***	.01	.16***	-.15***	-.11***	-.19***	-.13***	-.07*	.02	.05	.07*	-.04	.48***	-.58***	-.50***	-.58***	–	
18. Commitment	-.09**	.00	.30***	-.23***	-.03	-.13***	-.08*	-.09**	-.06	.09**	.10***	.04	.48***	-.44***	-.59***	-.38***	.58***	–

Note. $N = 809$.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

expected, correlations between all six measures of marital quality were strong and statistically significant at the ($p < .001$) level for both groups in the study. Moreover, for both groups, having ever cohabited, depression, and religiosity held strong correlations with nearly all of the other marital quality variables and a number of the contextual/demographic variables.

However, unique relationship differences existed between the marital quality and contextual variables for both groups. For example, for the government assistance group only, income level and having ever cohabited were negatively correlated. On the other hand, the NGA group had some unique correlations of their own. These included statistically significant correlations between alcohol and drug problems and lower overall satisfaction, lower positive bonding, higher divorce proneness, lower commitment, and being more likely to feel trapped in the relationship (see Table 25).

Worthy of note for the GA group are the correlations that were not quite significant at the .05 level. For example, the results showed a negative correlation between religiosity and anxiety ($p = .07$); a negative correlation between religiosity and depression ($p = .10$); positive correlations between cohabitation and anxiety ($p = .07$) and other mental health problems ($p = .10$); a negative correlation with cohabitation and age ($p = .09$); a negative correlation between depression and education level ($p = .07$); a negative correlation between alcohol and drug problems and the marital quality measures of positive bonds ($p = .06$) and overall satisfaction ($p = .07$); a positive correlation between other mental health problems and age at first marriage ($p = .08$) and divorce proneness ($p = .06$); a positive correlation between gender and overall satisfaction for men ($p = .07$).

Interestingly, level of education was significantly and negatively associated with divorce proneness and feeling trapped for both groups while it was positively associated with positive bonds and commitment for the NGA individuals and negatively associated with negative interaction for the GA individuals. Additionally, education level was also significantly associated with income, religiosity, ever having cohabited, anxiety, and alcohol or substance abuse problems for both groups.

Also noteworthy were the correlations that approached significance for NGA satisfaction ($p = .10$); ever having cohabited was negatively associated with positive bonds ($p = .06$); anxiety was negatively correlated with overall satisfaction ($p = .06$); depression was negatively correlated with positive bonds ($p = .06$); and other mental health problems were positively correlated with feeling trapped ($p = .10$).

When GA and NGA groups were combined, the variable of government assistance was significantly and negatively associated with income, age, education level, overall satisfaction, and commitment (see Table 26). Similarly, the receipt of government assistance was significantly and positively correlated with having cohabited, anxiety, depression, alcohol and drug problems, divorce proneness, and negative interaction.

Correlations that approached significance when both the GA and NGA groups were combined included the following: income level was positively correlated with depression ($p = .07$) and divorce proneness (($p = .08$); religiosity was negatively correlated with anxiety ($p = .06$), other mental health problems ($p = .06$), age ($p = .06$), and gender ($p = .10$); depression was negatively associated with age at first marriage ($p = .06$); other mental health problems were positively correlated with divorce proneness ($p =$

.08); age was negatively correlated with commitment ($p = .07$); education level was negatively correlated with negative interaction ($p = .08$).

These bivariate correlations served to illuminate the unique correlations between variables as an introductory procedure before regression analysis was employed. Regression analyses were conducted for both GA and NGA individuals separately and then both groups were combined to determine how predictive (i.e., associated) the contextual/ demographic variables were of the six measures of marital quality (see Tables 27-29 shown later in this chapter). Regression Model 1 included each of the contextual/ demographic variables while Regression Model 2 added the four negative interaction variables—escalating negativity, criticism, negative interpretation, and withdrawal—to the analysis (see Tables 30-32 shown later in this chapter).

Additionally, Tables 33-35 (shown later in this chapter) show the relationship between variables for the regression analyses in both Model 1 and Model 2 in a side-by-side format for the GA individuals (see Table 33 later in this chapter), the NGA individuals (see Table 34 later in this chapter), and both the GA and NGA individuals combined (see Table 35 later in this chapter). These tables are particularly helpful in making comparisons between individuals and between models. The inclusion of the four negative interaction variables in Model 2 strongly supports previous research findings that interaction variables are the strongest predictors of marital quality outcomes (Gottman, 1994a; 1994b; Larson, 2003).

For the GA individuals in Model 1 (see Table 27), other mental health problems were predictive of lower levels of commitment ($b = -.211$, $p < .01$), while depression was positively predictive of feeling trapped ($b = .131$, $p < .01$) and divorce proneness

Table 27

Unstandardized Regression Coefficients Showing Associations Between Contextual Factors and Marital Quality Variables for Married GA Individuals (Model 1)

Contextual factors	Overall satisfaction	Positive bonds	Commitment	Feeling trapped	Divorce proneness	Negative interaction
Gender	.114	.096	.067	-.011	-.043	.029
Age	.016	.003	.010	-.005	-.045*	-.022
Age at first marriage	-.008	-.002	-.002	-.002	.006	.001
Religiosity	.024	-.030	.030	-.038	.008	-.026
Cohabitation	-.021	-.073	-.020	-.035	.030	-.033
Depression	-.094	-.025	-.048	.131**	.125*	.086
Alcohol/substance abuse	-.037	-.138	.076	-.112	.020	.121
Other mental health problems	-.107	-.083	-.211**	.059	.064	-.027
Income level	-.029	-.022	-.027	-.049	.042	.001
Education level—individual	-.001	.014	.015	-.015	-.039	-.015
Education level—spouse	.041	.008	.016	-.057	-.034	-.039
Constant	.812	.987	.747	.787	.374	.771
R^2	.279*	.126	.293*	.428***	.311*	.297

$N = 71$. Source: Marriage in Utah: 2003 Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce (Schramm et al., 2003).

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

($b = .125$, $p < .05$). This same statistically significant predictive association was found in Model 2 with the exception of divorce proneness. Unique to Model 2 (see Table 30) was the increased variance in each of the marital quality measures that could be explained by the four negative interaction variables. For example, the variance explained by the contextual factors for overall satisfaction ($r^2 = .279$) in Model 1 was greatly increased with the inclusion of the four negative interaction variables ($r^2 = .676$) in Model 2. In addition, regression associations that approached significance in Model 1 for the GA group included the following predictive associations, each in the expected

direction: gender was predictive of higher overall satisfaction for men ($p = .092$); depression was predictive of lower overall satisfaction for women ($p = .089$); and, religiosity was predictive of lower levels of feeling trapped ($p = .097$).

For NGA individuals, Model 1 (see Table 28) indicated that religiosity was significantly associated with every measure of marital quality but divorce proneness and negative interaction. This association remained constant for each measure of marital quality in Model 2 (see Table 31) with the exception of positive bonds. Additionally, in Model 1, depression was significantly associated with every measure of marital quality

Table 28

Unstandardized Regression Coefficients Showing Associations Between Contextual Factors and Marital Quality Variables for Married NGA Individuals (Model 1)

Contextual factors	Overall satisfaction	Positive bonds	Commitment	Feeling trapped	Divorce proneness	Negative interaction
Gender	.027*	.005	.28**	-.013	-.021	-.017
Age	-.003	-.010**	-.009***	.008**	-.006*	-.007**
Age at first marriage	-.004*	-.005**	-.001	.003*	.000	.001
Religiosity	.015*	.014*	.026***	-.020***	-.003	-.008
Cohabitation	-.008	.004	-.018	.028	.027	-.009
Depression	-.048***	-.019	-.018*	.026*	.050***	.048***
Alcohol/ substance abuse	-.073*	-.118**	-.034	.049	.044	.127***
Other mental health problems	.036	-.007	.017	.030	-.050	-.027
Income level	-.010	.001	-.003	.001	.005	.003
Education level—individual	.002	.022**	.000	-.009	-.006	.003
Education level—spouse	.001	-.003	-.001	-.003	.000	-.007
Constant	.952	.894	.872	.303	.287	.489
R^2	.062***	.063***	.124***	.093***	.077***	.073***

$N = 71$. Source: Marriage in Utah: 2003 Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce (Schramm et al., 2003).

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

except for positive bonds but this association generally weakened with each of these marital quality measures in Model 2 with the exception of the substantially strengthened positive association with divorce proneness.

Alcohol and drug problems were also significantly associated with lower levels of overall satisfaction and positive bonds, and higher levels of divorce proneness in Model 1. However, these associations were not statistically significant in Model 2. Again, unique to Model 2 was the increased variance in each of the marital quality measures that could be explained by the four negative interaction variables. For example, the variance explained by the contextual factors for divorce proneness ($r^2 = .077$) in Model 1 was greatly increased with the inclusion of the four negative interaction variables ($r^2 = .355$) in Model 2.

Predictive associations that approached significance for the NGA group individuals included the following: ever having cohabited was predictive of higher levels of feeling trapped ($p = .088$) and divorce proneness ($p = .085$); gender was predictive of higher levels of divorce proneness for women ($p = .064$); religiosity was predictive of lower levels of negative interaction ($p = .086$); and, depression was also predictive of higher levels of negative interaction ($p = .065$).

For both the GA and NGA groups combined, age, age at first marriage, religiosity, and depression were significantly associated with measures of marital quality in both Model 1 and Model 2 (see Tables 29 and 32). Additionally, in Model 1 and Model 2, individual educational attainment was significantly associated with positive bonds. Again, unique to Model 2 was the increased variance in each of the marital quality measures that could be explained by the four negative interaction

Table 29

Unstandardized Regression Coefficients Showing Associations Between Contextual Factors and Marital Quality Variables for NGA Individuals and GA Individuals Combined (Model 1)

Contextual factors	Overall satisfaction	Positive bonds	Commitment	Feeling trapped	Divorce proneness	Negative interaction
Gender	.035**	.011	.030**	-.016	-.023*	-.021
Age	-.002	-.009**	-.008***	.008**	-.007**	-.008**
Age at first marriage	-.004*	-.005*	-.001	.002	.000	.002
Religiosity	.015**	.012	.026***	-.022***	-.003	-.010*
Cohabitation	-.016	-.003	-.024	.020	.035*	-.006
Depression	-.051***	-.019	-.019*	.035***	.055***	.047***
Alcohol/ substance abuse	-.072*	-.118***	-.013	.015	.052	.134***
Other mental health problems	-.010	-.026	-.054	.038	-.003	-.025
Income level	-.010	.001	-.004	.000	.005	.003
Education level—individual	.001	.020**	.001	-.009	-.007	.002
Education level—spouse	.006	-.002	.001	-.008	.003	-.010*
GA	-.060**	-.016	-.029	.018	.033	.036*
Constant	.943	.891	.863	.345	.286	.506
R^2	.093***	.065***	.136***	.114***	.111***	.107***

$N = 71$. Source: Marriage in Utah: 2003 Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce (Schramm et al., 2003).
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

variables. For example, the variance explained by the contextual factors for commitment ($r^2 = .136$) in Model 1 was increased with the inclusion of the four negative interaction variables ($r^2 = .301$) in Model 2. Predictive relationships that approached significance for both the combined GA and NGA individuals included the following associations in the expected directions: religiosity was predictive of higher levels of positive bonds ($p = .059$); other mental health were predictive of lower levels of commitment ($p = .085$);

Table 30

Unstandardized Regression Coefficients Showing Associations Between Contextual Factors, Negative Interaction Behaviors, and Marital Quality Variables for Married GA Individuals (Model 2)

Contextual factors	Overall satisfaction	Positive bonds	Commitment	Feeling trapped	Divorce proneness
Gender	.081	.040	.045	0.026	-.027
Age	.005	-.004	.003	-.007	-.023
Age at first marriage	-.009	.002	-.002	-.001	.003
Religiosity	.013	-.012	.028	-.046*	.027
Cohabitation	-.020	-.021	-.004	-.038	.046
Depression	-.041	0.003	-.009	.127**	.039
Alcohol/substance abuse	.065	-.142	.104	-.154*	-.056
Other mental health problems	-.068	-.119	-.187*	.019	.105
Income level	-.042	-.023	-.051	.000	.060
Education level—individual	.009	-.004	.025	-.046	-.029
Education level—spouse	.008	.005	0.004	-.030	-.007
Negative marital behaviors					
Escalating negativity					
Dummy 1	.009	.026	-.022	-.025	.062
Dummy 2	-.178	-.500***	-.218*	.148	.226*
Criticism					
Dummy 1	-.012	-.077	-.004	.048	.020
Dummy 2	-.223*	.048	-.092	.054	-.013
Negative interpretation					
Dummy 1	-.023	.059	.035	.003	.014
Dummy 2	.004	-.089	.026	-.170*	.151*
Withdrawal					
Dummy 1	-.088	-.136*	-.027	-.027	.048
Dummy 2	-.204**	-.040	-.127	.131	.218**
Constant	1.095	.986	.883	.738	.056
R^2	.676***	.504**	.578***	.614***	.607***

$N = 71$. Source: Marriage in Utah: 2003 Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce (Schramm et al., 2003).

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

receipt of government assistance was predictive of lower levels of commitment (p = .076); cohabitation was predictive of lower levels of commitment (p = .078) cohabitation

Table 31

Unstandardized Regression Coefficients Showing Associations Between Contextual Factors, Negative Interaction Behaviors, and Marital Quality Variables for Married NGA Individuals (Model 2)

Contextual factors	Overall satisfaction	Positive bonds	Commitment	Feeling trapped	Divorce proneness
Gender	.019	-.001	.026*	-.008	-.013
Age	-.006*	-.011***	-.009***	.009	-.003
Age at first marriage	-.003*	-.004**	-.001	.003	-.001
Religiosity	.011*	.010	.024***	-.015***	-.002
Cohabitation	-.005	-.001	-.015	.032	.024
Depression	-.020*	-.002	-.005	.010	.028***
Alcohol/substance abuse	.005	-.041	.002	0.010	-.021
Other mental health problems	.021	-.004	.010	.028	-.032
Income level	-.006	.004	-.002	-.002	.002
Education level—individual	.001	.022***	.000	-.009	-.005
Education level—spouse	-.001	-.004	-.002	-.002	.002
Negative marital behaviors					
Escalating negativity					
Dummy 1	-.029*	-.002	0.008	.008	.055***
Dummy 2	-.191***	-.015	-.089*	.057	.177***
Criticism					
Dummy 1	-.076***	-.022	-.027*	.051***	.037**
Dummy 2	-.211***	-.080***	-.064***	.159***	.143***
Negative interpretation					
Dummy 1	-.053***	-.009	-.016	.018	.039***
Dummy 2	-.110***	-.180***	-.064***	.159***	.082***
Withdrawal					
Dummy 1	-.006	-.013	.001	.010	.002
Dummy 2	-.091***	-.180***	-.064***	.159***	.082***
Constant	1.014	.930	.896	.263	.232
R^2	.380***	.248***	.263***	.254***	.355***

N = 737. Source: Marriage in Utah: 2003 Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce (Schramm et al., 2003).

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

was predictive of higher levels of feeling trapped ($p = .060$); alcohol and drug problems were predictive of higher levels of divorce proneness ($p = ..065$); government assistance

Table 32

Unstandardized Regression Coefficients Showing Associations Between Contextual Factors, Negative Interaction Behaviors, and Marital Quality Variables for Married NGA Individuals and GA Individuals Combined (Model 2)

Contextual factors	Overall satisfaction	Positive bonds	Commitment	Feeling trapped	Divorce proneness
Gender	.024*	.002	.026**	-.009	-.013
Age	-.006*	-.011***	-.009***	.009***	-.004
Age at first marriage	-.003*	-.004*	-.001	.002	.000
Religiosity	.012**	.007	.025***	-.019***	.000
Cohabitation	-.007	-.003	-.015	.028	.027*
Depression	-.021*	.003	-.006	.017	.029***
Alcohol/substance abuse	.012	-.046	.022	-.040	-.021
Other mental health problems	-.007	-.025	-.046	.039	.001
Income level	-.007	.004	-.003	-.003	.004
Education level—individual	.000	.019**	.000	-.008	-.006
Education level—spouse	.000	-.004	-.002	-.005	.001
GA	-.027	.007	-.009	-.001	.007
Negative marital behaviors					
Escalating negativity					
Dummy 1	-.029*	-.002	-.012	.015	.056***
Dummy 2	-.213***	-.130**	-.134***	.116**	.202***
Criticism					
Dummy 1	-.067***	-.026	-.022*	.047***	.032**
Dummy 2	-.223***	-.043	-.155***	.060	.127***
Negative interpretation					
Dummy 1	-.050***	-.002	-.010	.015	.036***
Dummy 2	-.094***	-.156***	-.045*	.111***	.091***
Withdrawal					
Dummy 1	-.012***	-.023	-.001	.005	.006
Dummy 2	-.100***	-.117***	-.046***	.053***	.083***
Constant	1.019	.941	.892	.304	.219
R^2	.423***	.242***	.301***	.259***	.411***

N = *808*. Source: Marriage in Utah: 2003 Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce (Schramm et al., 2003).
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

was predictive of higher levels of divorce proneness ($p = .078$); gender was predictive of increased negative interaction for women ($p = .057$).

In sum, gender, age, age at first marriage, religiosity, depression, alcohol or substance abuse problems, and government assistance were generally salient predictors of marital quality outcomes and this remained consistent even when the four negative interaction variables were added to the regression analysis in Model 2. However, the inclusion of the negative interaction variables greatly increased the prediction validity of the marital quality outcomes.

A word of caution must be entertained about the negative interaction variables' predictive validity for the GA individuals in Model 2. In order to avoid chance variation, approximately 15 cases per predictor variable entered into the regression analyses are needed. The NGA individuals ($N = 809$) meet this criteria but the GA group ($N = 77$) does not. Model 2 uses 19 predictor variables, thus making the ratio of cases per predictor variable necessary to avoid biased and chance results at 3.7 cases per 1 predictor variable. This is likely the reason Model 2 for the GA individuals shows such high R^2 values. This does not mean that negative interaction may not show a highly predictive association with the other marital quality variables, but it does mean that the findings in this study are less likely to replicated with such high R^2 values and must be interpreted with caution.

Research Question #18

Will interactional processes be predictive of marital quality among currently married GA and NGA Utahans?

Hypothesis #18

Interactional processes will significantly predict marital quality among currently

Table 33

Unstandardized Regression Coefficient Models Showing Associations Between Contextual Factors, Negative Interaction Behaviors, and Marital Quality Variables for Married GA Individuals

	Overall satisfaction		Positive bonds		Commitment		Feeling trapped		Divorce proneness	
Variable	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Contextual factors										
Gender	.114	.081	.096	.040	.067	.045	-.011	-.026	-.043	-.027
Age	.016	.005	.003	-.004	.010	.003	-.005	-.007	-.045*	-.023
Age at first marriage	-.008	-.009	-.002	.002	-.002	-.002	-.002	-.001	.006	.003
Religiosity	.024	.013	-.030	-.012	.030	.028	-.038	-.046*	.008	.027
Cohabitation	-.021	-.020	-.073	-.021	-.020	-.004	-.035	-.038	.030	.046
Depression	-.094	-.041	-.025	-.003	-.048	-.009	.131**	.127**	.125*	.039
Alcohol/ Substance Abuse	-.037	.065	-.138	-.142	.076	.104	-.112	-.154*	.020	-.056
Other mental health problems	-.107	-.068	-.083	-.119	-.211**	-.187*	.059	.019	.064	.105
Income level	-.029	-.042	-.022	-.023	-.027	-.051	-.049	.000	.042	.060
Education level—individual	-.001	.009	.014	-.004	.015	.025	-.015	-.046	-.039	-.029
Education level—spouse	.041	.008	.008	.005	.016	-.004	-.057	-.030	-.034	-.007
Negative marital behaviors										
Escalating negativity										
Dummy 1	—	.009	—	.026	—	-.022	—	-.025	—	.062
Dummy 2	—	-.178	—	-.500***	—	-.218*	—	.148	—	.226*
Criticism										
Dummy 1	—	-.012	—	-.077	—	-.004	—	.048	—	.020
Dummy 2	—	-.223*	—	.045	—	-.092	—	.054	—	-.013
Negative Interpretation										
Dummy 1	—	-.023	—	.059	—	.035	—	.003	—	.014
Dummy 2	—	-.004**	—	-.089	—	.026	—	-.170*	—	.151*
Withdrawal										
Dummy 1	—	-.088	—	-.136*	—	-.027	—	-.027	—	.048
Dummy 2	—	-.204**	—	-.040	—	-.127	—	.131	—	.218**
Constant	.812	1.095	.987	.986	.747	.883	.787	.738	.374	.056
R^2	.279*	.676***	.126	.504**	.293*	.578***	.428***	.614***	.311*	.607***

N = 71. Source: Marriage in Utah: 2003 Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce (Schramm et al., 2003).
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

married GA and NGA Utahans.

Table 33 shows the predictive nature of the interactional variables for each of the marital quality measures for the GA individuals. For example, escalating negativity was

predictive of lower levels of commitment, higher levels of divorce proneness, and was strongly predictive of lower levels of positive bonds. Interestingly, criticism was only predictive of lower levels of overall satisfaction and negative interpretation was only predictive of higher levels of feeling trapped and divorce proneness for this group.

Similarly, withdrawal was predictive of lower levels of overall satisfaction and positive bonds, and higher levels of divorce proneness.

Table 34 shows the predictive nature of the interactional variables for each of the marital quality measures for the NGA individuals. For example, escalating negativity was predictive of lower levels of commitment, and strongly predictive of lower levels of overall satisfaction and higher levels of divorce proneness. Criticism was highly predictive with every measure of marital quality but positive bonds. Similarly, negative interpretation and withdrawal were highly predictive of every measure of marital quality.

Table 35 shows the predictive nature of the interactional variables for each of the marital quality measures for the GA and NGA individuals combined. With the groups combined, all of the four negative interaction variables were consistently predictive of overall satisfaction, positive bonds, commitment, feeling trapped, and divorce proneness.

In sum, escalating negativity was a strong predictor of overall satisfaction and an even stronger predictor of divorce proneness; criticism tended to be a strong predictor of overall satisfaction, commitment, and divorce proneness; and, negative interpretation along with withdrawal was a strong predictor of all five marital quality outcomes. Again, the inclusion of the four negative interaction variables in Model 2 strongly supports previous research findings that show that interaction variables, particularly negative interaction, are the strongest predictors of marital quality.

Table 34

Unstandardized Regression Coefficient Models Showing Associations Between Contextual Factors, Negative Interaction Behaviors, and Marital Quality Variables for Married NGA Individuals

	Overall satisfaction		Positive bonds		Commitment		Feeling trapped		Divorce proneness	
Variable	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Contextual factors										
Gender	.027*	.019	.005	-.001	.028**	.026*	-.013	-.008	-.021	-.013
Age	-.003	-.006**	-.010**	-.011***	-.009***	-.009***	.008**	.009	-.006*	-.003
Age at first marriage	-.004*	-.003*	-.005**	-.004**	-.001	-.001	-.003*	.003	.000	-.001
Religiosity	.015*	.011*	.014*	.010	.026***	.024***	-.020***	-.015***	-.003	-.002
Cohabitation	-.008	-.005	.004	-.001	-.018	-.015	.028	.032*	.027	.024
Depression	-.048***	-.020*	-.019	-.002	-.018*	-.005	.026*	.010	.125*	.028***
Alcohol/ Substance Abuse	-.073*	.005	-.118**	-.041	-.034	.002	.049	-.010	.050***	-.021
Other mental health problems	-.036	.021	-.007	-.004	.017	.010	.030	.028	.044	-.035
Income level	-.010	-.006	.001	.004	-.003	-.002	.001	-.002	.050	.002
Education level—individual	.002	.001	.022**	.022***	.000	.000	-.009	-.009	-.006	-.005
Education level—spouse	.001	-.001	-.003	-.004	-.001	-.002	-.003	-.002	.000	.002
Negative marital behaviors										
Escalating negativity										
Dummy 1	—	-.029*	—	-.002	—	-.008	—	.008	—	.055***
Dummy 2	—	-.191***	—	-.015	—	-.089*	—	.057	—	.177***
Criticism										
Dummy 1	—	-.076***	—	-.022	—	-.027*	—	.051***	—	.037**
Dummy 2	—	-.211***	—	-.080	—	-.150***	—	.054	—	.143***
Negative Interpretation										
Dummy 1	—	-.053***	—	-.009	—	-.016	—	.018	—	.039***
Dummy 2	—	-.110***	—	-.180***	—	-.064***	—	-.159***	—	.082***
Withdrawal										
Dummy 1	—	-.006	—	-.013	—	.001	—	.010	—	.002
Dummy 2	—	-.091***	—	-.119***	—	-.036**	—	.039**	—	.072***
Constant	.952	1.014	.894	.930	.872	.896	.303	.263	.287	.232
R^2	.062***	.380***	.063***	.248***	.124***	.263***	.093***	.254***	.077***	.355***

N = 71. Source: Marriage in Utah: 2003 Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce (Schramm et al., 2003).

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 35

Unstandardized Regression Coefficient Models Showing Associations Between Contextual Factors, Negative Interaction Behaviors, and Marital Quality Variables for Married NGA Individuals and GA Individuals Combined

	Overall satisfaction		Positive bonds		Commitment		Feeling trapped		Divorce proneness	
Variable	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Contextual factors										
Gender	.035**	.024*	.011	.002	.030**	.026**	-.016	-.009	-.023*	-.013
Age	-.002	-.006*	-.009**	-.011***	-.008***	-.009***	.008**	.009***	-.007**	-.004
Age at first marriage	-.004*	-.003*	-.005*	-.004**	-.001	-.001	.002	.002	.000	.000
Religiosity	.015*	.012**	.012	.007	.026***	.025***	-.022***	-.019***	-.003	.000
Cohabitation	-.008	-.007	-.003	-.003	-.024	-.015	.030	.028	.035*	.027*
Depression	-.051**	-.021*	-.019	.003	-.019*	-.006	.035***	.017	.055***	.029***
Alcohol/ Substance Abuse	.072*	.012	-.118***	-.046	-.013	.022	.015	-.040	.052	-.021
Other mental health problems	-.010	-.007	-.026	-.025	-.054	-.046	.038	.039	-.003	.001
Income level	-.010	-.007	.001	.004	-.004	-.003	.000	-.003	.005	.004
Education level—individual	.001	.000	.020**	.019**	.001	.000	-.009	-.008	-.007	-.006
Education level—spouse	.006	.000	-.002	-.004	.001	-.002	-.008	-.005	.003	.001
GA	-.060**	-.027	-.016	.007	-.029	-.009	.018	-.001	.033	.007
Negative marital behaviors										
Escalating negativity										
Dummy 1	—	-.029*	—	-.002	—	-.012	—	.015	—	.056***
Dummy 2	—	-.213***	—	-.130**	—	-.134***	—	.116**	—	.202***
Criticism										
Dummy 1	—	-.067***	—	-.026	—	-.022*	—	.047***	—	.032**
Dummy 2	—	-.233***	—	-.043	—	-.155***	—	.060	—	.127***
Negative Interpretation										
Dummy 1	—	-.050***	—	-.002	—	-.010	—	.015	—	.036***
Dummy 2	—	-.094***	—	-.156***	—	-.045*	—	-.111***	—	.091***
Withdrawal										
Dummy 1	—	-.012	—	-.023	—	-.001	—	.005	—	.006
Dummy 2	—	-.100***	—	-.117***	—	-.046***	—	.053***	—	.083***
Constant	.943	1.019	.891	.941	.863	.892	.345	.304	.286	.219
R^2	.093***	.423***	.065***	.242***	.136***	.301***	.114***	.259***	.111***	.411***

$N = 808$. Source: Marriage in Utah: 2003 Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce (Schramm et al., 2003).

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This section briefly reviews the hypotheses, their theoretical basis, and how each was supported or not supported by the analyses. Limitations and possible avenues for future research, indicated by the findings of this study, are also discussed.

Based on previous research, it appears that some unique similarities and differences existed between this sample of GA and NGA individuals with regard to marital quality and other specific contextual factors. Human ecology theory posits that humans seek to adapt to changing environmental structures as well as to modify these structures in accordance with their needs, values, and resources to improve life and well-being. Results from this study have shown that those who receive government assistance may not only possess different needs and values than those who do not receive government assistance, but these differences may primarily be a function of previous and current environmental influences and available resources including income level).

The stresses and strains associated with these environmental influences and a lack of available resources for GA individuals appear to be associated with lower levels of marital quality. Contextual, or distal (see Appendix A, Figure A2), factors such as mental health, whether or not to marry, alcohol and substance abuse, educational attainment, and income level and their influence on marital quality may also reflect environmental influence and a lack of available resources for this unique population. Environmental influences and available resources also appear to be associated with NGA individuals' marital quality and contextual factor outcomes. Specifically, socialized

interactional, or proximal (see Appendix A, Figure A2), patterns and economic advantage may or may not provide married individuals with the available resources to negotiate conflict successfully and avoid the major predator to marriage—negativity.

Perhaps the most compelling finding of this study was the influence of negative interaction on levels of marital quality for both GA and NGA individuals, but especially for GA individuals, although the results for this group must be interpreted with caution due to a low sample size. In other words, although the contextual factors used in this study showed an influence on marital quality, the influence of negative interaction and its predictive association with lower levels of marital satisfaction, positive bonds, and commitment and higher levels of divorce proneness, and feeling trapped for both groups supports the findings by previous researchers such as Gottman (1994a; 1994b) and Larson and Holman (1994) who found that interaction variables are the strongest predictors of marital quality and stability.

Hypotheses1-6

Hypotheses 1-6 stated that there were unique differences between married GA and NGA individuals for the marital quality constructs of overall satisfaction, positive bonding, interpersonal commitment, feeling trapped, divorce proneness, and negative interaction. The results in this study showed statistically significant differences between married GA and NGA individuals for every measure of marital quality.

Especially noteworthy differences were found in the measures of overall satisfaction, divorce proneness, and negative interaction with GA individuals exhibiting significantly lower scores for overall marital satisfaction and significantly higher scores

for divorce proneness and negative interaction than NGA individuals. GA individuals also showed statistically significant lower positive bonding and commitment scores and were much more likely to feel trapped in their marital relationships than NGA individuals.

Possible reasons for these differences between groups can possibly be understood through an increased understanding of specific personality, context, and interactional factors that may influence marital quality. For example, Larson and Holman (1994) highlighted three important influences on marital quality (i.e., individual traits, contexts, and couple traits) while showing that couple traits are most predictive of relationship quality outcomes. Larson (2003) includes difficulty coping with stress, dysfunctional beliefs, excessive impulsiveness, extreme self-consciousness, excessive anger and hostility, untreated depression, and chronic irritability as the major individual trait liabilities to marital quality. Similarly, he cites extroversion, flexibility, good self-esteem, assertiveness, commitment, and love as the major individual trait assets that strengthen marital quality.

Contextual factors that influence marital quality, according to Larson (2003), are family of origin influences, family process leftovers, autonomy from family, influences from the parents' marriage, parents' and friends' approval, work stress, parenting stress, outside interests stress, and other stressors (e.g., debt, health, in-laws) as the major contextual influences on marital quality. Similarly, Larson cited negative interaction styles as a couple trait liability with the most influence on relationship quality while showing that communication skills, conflict resolution skills, cohesion, intimacy, sharing power, and consensus are also powerful couple assets.

The differences in overall satisfaction, commitment, positive bonding, feeling trapped, and divorce proneness between the married GA and NGA individuals are presumably a unique combination of these individual trait, context, and couple trait factors for each individual and couple. This study offers further empirical evidence to support Larson and Holman's (1994) findings that differences in marital quality are highly influenced by the couple trait liability of negative interaction. Hypotheses 7-18 reflected an attempt to parcel out the couple trait, context, and individual trait influences through the identification and use of specific measurable constructs known from previous research to influence marital quality outcomes.

Hypotheses 7-16

Hypotheses 7-16 stated that individual traits and contextual factors such as mental health, cohabitation, alcohol and drug problems, religiosity, education, age at first marriage, income, and gender would show differences in associations with marital quality for married GA and NGA individuals living in Utah. Unique contextual differences were found between the GA and NGA groups on marital quality outcomes for the ever-having cohabited and educational attainment independent variables while individual trait differences were found between groups on marital quality outcomes for the independent variables of anxiety, depression, other mental health problems, and alcohol or drug problems.

These statistically significant differences may represent selection effect differences due to unique individual traits, context, or couple trait differences that are a result of environmental and personal choice factors. A brief review of Dyk's (2004)

conclusions about some of the critical individual trait, context, and couple trait factors impacting low-income and working-poor families is insightful and may help to explain why these meaningful differences in marital quality outcomes exist for the NGA and GA groups.

Low-income and working-poor families face competing stressors and tensions that decrease their ability to respond to their changing environments. This makes them vulnerable to family chaos, poor decision making, and the inability to plan beyond immediate needs. Competing stressors may be internal to the family, such as poor health, domestic violence, or lack of education. They also may be external environmental factors, such as lack of employment opportunities, poor access to health care, poor schools, or community violence. (p. 123)

Indeed, individual trait and contextual factor stressors and strains for low-income and working poor couples may overwhelm a couple's ability to negotiate and adapt to the myriad of changes necessary to promote healthy marital quality. Such vulnerabilities prompt the question of whether or not married individuals who receive government assistance are different than married individuals who do not receive government assistance to begin with (i.e., selection effects) or whether or not the actual experience of receiving government assistance changes individuals and couples along with their relationship expectations and outcomes. This question could not be definitively answered given the research design in this study.

This question is also pertinent when considering both the GA and NGA individuals choices of whether or not to cohabit. Reasons for differences in cohabitation practices between the GA and NGA groups may also reflect poor decision making, an

inability to plan beyond immediate needs, a desire for stability, a hope that the economic stresses and strains may be shared, differing needs and values, or a desire for need fulfillment. While many couples who cohabit plan to marry, it may also be that lower income couples simply cannot afford to marry. Such decisions about whether or not to marry are likely due to a unique combination of individual trait, context, and couple trait factors.

A brief review of the research of McGinnis (2003) offers an interesting conceptualization about cohabitation and how it may influence how decisions are made with regard to marriage. According to McGinnis, cohabitation influences perceptions about the potential costs and benefits associated with getting married, which in turn influence the intentions and expectations about marriage to a specific partner, which then influence the choice of whether or not to get married. This author concluded that the practice of cohabitation not only predicts marriage entry but also changes the context in which this decision is made. As a result, differences in marital quality outcomes between the GA and NGA groups may reflect individual trait (i.e., selection) and context differences, but these outcome differences may also be due to couple trait differences that have occurred because one or both partners cohabited prior to marriage. Such differences may influence the marriage premise (i.e., the perceived primariness and permanence of the relationship) and other aspects of marital quality.

McGinnis' (2003) research is supported by Schramm and colleagues (2003) findings who found that

> on average, those who lived with their spouses prior to marriage reported lower levels of marital satisfaction, commitment, and religiosity; higher levels of negative interaction; and greater tendencies to be thinking and talking about

> divorce, compared to those couples who did not live together prior to marriage. (p. 2)

Interestingly, the GA and NGA individuals in this study showed few initial differences in religiosity and age at first marriage for each of the marital quality measures. In this sample, it appears that religiosity is an important factor for marital quality outcomes for both the GA and NGA groups. Similarly, differences in age at first marriage (2 years) between males and females in this sample (Schramm et al., 2003) are reflective of the differences (almost 2 years) in the nation, although this sample reported marrying at a much younger age (approximately 3 years) than the national average (Bianchi & Casper, 2000).

While no unique gender differences were found between the married GA and NGA individuals in this sample, it is instructive to note the unique differences in the findings between men and women for the marital quality outcomes of overall satisfaction, commitment, and divorce proneness, with men reporting higher levels of overall satisfaction and commitment and women reporting higher overall levels of divorce proneness. One possible explanation for these gender differences in marital quality outcomes is provided by Gottman and colleagues (1997):

> There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that women are relentless in their pursuit of emotional intimacy and respect in marriages, and that they take the role of emotional managers in families. Thus, the critical dimension in understanding whether a marriage will work or not, becomes the extent to which the male can accept the influence of the woman he loves and become socialized in emotional communication. (p. 197)

This awareness or lack of awareness on the part of men to accept influence from their wives may be a critical factor in explaining why men in this study tended to report higher levels of commitment and satisfaction while women reported higher levels of

divorce proneness. Men tend to be socialized toward individualism in western societies and may or may not be aware of how much influence they accept from their wives. Because men are socialized toward individualism, it may be that they while they are satisfied with their relationships and committed to them according to their socialized individualistic perceptions and expectations, their wives may become increasingly frustrated in their failed attempts to pursue and achieve intimacy. This notion is reflected in another statement by Gottman and colleagues (1997) who found that the best single predictor of dissolution across studies tends to be contempt, particularly the wife's contempt. Contempt is the single clearest index of the disintegration of the affectionate and empathetic emotional connection in marriage, and there is ample evidence that the antidote for contempt is admiration. (p. 196)

Contempt expressed by the wife, according to these authors, reflects her frustration and dissatisfaction with the emotional connection in marriage (i.e., intimacy). When she fails enough times to create and maintain this connection, she will likely begin to contemplate and talk about divorce. In this study, this notion may be reflected in the findings that women were much more likely to report divorce proneness across both the GA and NGA groups.

The findings comparing income levels and marital quality measures across both the GA and NGA groups may yield one of the most important contributions of this research to the existing literature. With the exception of positive bonds, both the GA and NGA groups showed unique differences in marital quality outcomes when they earned under $20,000 per year. However, the levels of satisfaction, commitment, feeling trapped, divorce proneness, and negative interaction approached similar levels across

groups when both the GA and NGA individuals earned between $20,000-$39,999 per year.

Because income level and educational attainment are positively correlated (see Seccombe et al., 1998), this finding supports an intervention strategy to provide ongoing educational opportunities and job training for those who are under or near the poverty threshold and who are potential recipients of government assistance. Similarly, as has recently been proposed in the United States Senate and Congress, increasing the minimum wage substantially over the next five years may also be an important intervention strategy to assist in improving marital quality and well-being outcomes among low-income individuals.

Interestingly, this assessment is consistent with Amato and colleagues' (2003) 20-year study of marital quality who found that increases in family income level were associated with increases in marital happiness and that these income level increases helped to counteract some of the other negative influences on marital satisfaction. While this group of government assistance individuals in this present study may also face other challenges such as mental health, substance abuse, and so forth, these findings reveal that providing strategies to help them increase their income levels may be a key component in assisting them to reduce some of the economic stresses and strains they experience, and help them improve their marital quality in each of the six areas identified in this study.

Hypotheses 17 and 18

While it is interesting to note the correlations between variables in Tables 24-26, the bivariate correlations between the receipt of government assistance and other

contextual and marital quality variables are perhaps the most relevant to this particular study (see Table 26). The fact that the receipt of government assistance is highly and significantly associated with lower income levels, age, and educational attainment, and higher rates of cohabitation, anxiety, depression, other mental health problems, and alcohol and substance abuse reveals that we are studying a unique population with some unique needs and values. This is corroborated by the fact that the receipt of government assistance is significantly associated with lower levels of overall satisfaction and commitment and higher levels of divorce proneness, feeling trapped, and negative interaction.

As discussed previously, the data don't allow us to say whether those who receive government assistance are different as a result of the experience of receiving government assistance. We do know from this study that receiving government assistance significantly predicted lower levels of overall satisfaction and higher levels of negative interaction. This predictive relationship remained stable even when the negative interaction variable was used as a predictive variable.

The exclusion of negative interaction as a dependent variable and its inclusion as a predictor variable in our regression analysis showed strong support for Larson and Holman's (1994) findings that couple traits, in this case negative interaction, are the strongest predictors of marital quality. Similarly, the inclusion of these four negative interaction variables (i.e., as four unique components of the overall negative interaction variable) also supports Amato's (forthcoming) analysis of the Oklahoma Baseline study and, again, Gottman (1994a) who found that negativity is the major predator to marital quality and stability.

Escalating negativity, criticism, negative interpretation, and withdrawal each appear to wield an impact on overall satisfaction, positive bonds, commitment, feeling trapped, and divorce proneness on both GA and NGA individuals with varying degrees of influence. For example, for the GA group, escalating negativity significantly predicted lower positive bonds and commitment and higher divorce proneness. Similarly, criticism significantly predicted lower levels of satisfaction, negative interpretation significantly predicted higher levels of feeling trapped and divorce proneness, and withdrawal significantly predicted lower levels of satisfaction and positive bonds and higher levels of divorce proneness.

For the NGA group, escalating negativity significantly predicted lower satisfaction and commitment and higher divorce proneness. Similarly, criticism significantly predicted lower levels of satisfaction and commitment, and higher levels of divorce proneness and feeling trapped while negative interpretation and withdrawal were significant predictors of all five marital quality measures.

What is important to note by these findings is the significant increases in explaining the variance in marital quality outcomes that the inclusion of these four negative interaction variables provided. Again, contextual, demographic, and government assistance variables in the regression analyses explained a relatively small portion of the variance in marital quality until the negative interaction variables were included. For this reason, the results of this study show that it is crucial for educators and therapists to continue to develop ways to help couples, regardless of their income status, to reduce negativity in their relationships.

Additionally, while the stresses and strains of those who receive government

assistance are real and may be reduced by increases in income level or other contextual factors, negative interaction patterns are still a primary predictor of marital quality outcomes. This also held true for those who did not receive government assistance in this sample.

Limitations and Recommendations

Threats to Reliability and Validity

The Utah Marriage Baseline Survey was a randomized cross-sectional telephone survey. The survey questions were obtained from the Bureau of Social Research at Oklahoma State University. Some of these survey questions have been used in national surveys and, therefore, may be able to be generalized to regional and national populations, thus strengthening the external validity of the study. However, Utah is a special population, due to the characteristics of the majority of its inhabitants who profess adherence to the Mormon religion, and care should be given in attempting to generalize any of the results beyond the state of Utah. Additionally, the identification of only one married partner's responses to the survey may not necessarily reflect the quality or stability of the relationship.

Because the survey was a one-time cross-sectional exploratory survey conducted by trained professionals, ecological validity issues such as the Hawthorne effect and experimenter effect were reduced. Internal validity threats such as history, maturation, testing, instrumentation, statistical regression, differential selection, experimental mortality, selection-maturation interaction, experimental treatment diffusion, compensatory rivalry by the control group, compensatory equalization of treatments, and

resentful demoralization of the control group appear not to be of special concern because of the cross-sectional nature of the design or due to the careful controls used by the OSU Bureau of Research.

Limitations Within the Results

A major limitation to the generalizability of the results of this study to other low-income and non-low-income populations is the fact that the research done in Utah included only 77 married GA individuals in the analysis. Nonetheless, the findings were similar to findings in Oklahoma and other studies and, therefore, while results must be interpreted with care, we can have more confidence in our findings. Other limitations within the results included low cell counts in a few of the chi-square analyses and other limited assumptions that were violated as identified in the results section of this work. Additionally, the potential bias (e.g., excluding households without telephones, not being able to reach a specific household, etc.) associated with the interview response rates limits the external validity of this study.

Conclusions and Implications for Intervention

Those who received government assistance in this study differed significantly from non-government assistance individuals on all six of the indicators of marital quality that were measured and on eight of the eleven contextual variables that were measured. It was also discovered that many of the contextual variables measured were associated with different levels of marital quality for both government assistance and non-government assistance groups with the four negative interaction variables exhibiting the

highest predictive validity. Therefore, it is important to consider these unique individual and group differences between government assistance and non-government assistance individuals in a holistic way.

As educators and policymakers consider programming and policies aimed at strengthening marital relationships, they will want to consider how to best go about increasing levels of marital quality for these two distinct groups. They will also want to take into consideration the impact of other contextual/demographic variables that are predictive of increases or decreases in levels of marital quality.

This and other research indicates that individuals receiving government assistance face some unique struggles with regard to forming and maintaining strong marital relationships. This is evidenced by the fact that married individuals receiving GA differed significantly from NGA individuals on all six of the indicators of marital quality that were measured and on eight of the eleven contextual/demographic variables that were measured.

The following list contains a few ideas for educators and policymakers to consider as they formulate ideas of how to help both government assistance and non-government assistance individuals achieve higher quality marriage relationships: (1) teaching interpersonal and relationship skills is very important in improving the quality of marriage relationships; (2) the threat of a "marriage penalty" for low-income GA individuals needs to be addressed; (3) increasing income levels through such possibilities as minimum wage increases, educational and job training opportunities; (4) providing relationship education to individuals receiving government assistance that is affordable and accessible; (5) teaching that cohabitation may be a poor testing ground for

future marital quality; (6) strengthening mental health and providing access to substance abuse treatment; (7) gaining broad-based community support for providing efforts to improve marital quality; and (8) tailoring marriage education to the needs of specific populations.

Results from this study indicate that teaching skills to decrease negative interactions and to increase positive bonding and interpersonal commitment, would benefit couples across income levels. In sum, effective marriage education curricula ought to address relationship skills that reduce negative interaction and increase positive bonds, while addressing treatable mental health and substance abuse issues that tend to become marital problems. This education also needs to be sensitive to the unique needs of lower income couples and individuals. Finally, results from this study indicate that increasing income levels for those who receive government assistance appears to have a positive effect on overall levels of marital quality.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

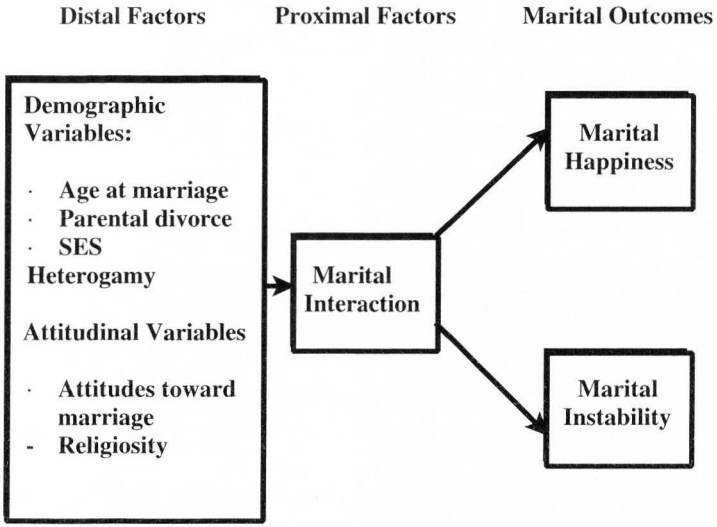
Theoretical Perspectives

2. Marriage increases the likelihood that fathers have good relationships with their children.
2. Cohabitation is not the functional equivalent of marriage.
3. Growing up outside an intact marriage increases the likelihood that children will themselves divorce or become unwed parents.
4. Marriage is a virtually universal institution.
5. Divorce and unmarried childbearing increase poverty for both children and mothers.
6. Married couples seem to build more wealth on average than singles or cohabiting couples.
7. Married men earn more money than do single men with similar education and job histories.
8. Parental divorce (or failure to marry) appears to increase children's risk of school failure.
9. Parental divorce reduces the likelihood that children will graduate from college and achieve high-status jobs.
10. Children who live with their own two married parents enjoy better physical health, on average, than do children in other family forms.
11. Parental marriage is associated with a sharply lower risk of infant mortality.
12. Marriage is associated with reduced rates of alcohol and substance abuse for both adults and teens
13. Married people, especially married men, have longer life expectancies than do otherwise similar singles.
14. Marriage is associated with better health and lower rates of injury, illness, and disability for both men and women.
15. Children whose parents divorce have higher rates of psychological distress and mental illness.
16. Divorce appears significantly to increase the risk of suicide.
17. Married mothers have lower rates of depression than do single or cohabiting mothers.
18. Boys raised in single-parent families are more likely to engage in delinquent and criminal behavior.
20. Marriage appears to reduce the risk that adults will be either perpetrators or victims of crime.
22. Married women appear to have a lower risk of experiencing domestic violence than do cohabiting or dating women.
24. A child who is not living with his or her own two married parents is at greater risk of child abuse.

Adapted from the Institute for American Values. *Why marriage matters: Twenty-one conclusions from the social sciences.* New York: Institute for American Values. Used with permission.

Figure A1. Benefits of marriage.

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE MARITAL OUTCOMES



Adapted from Amato, P.R. (forthcoming). Studying marital interaction and commitment with survey data. In Hofferth, S., & Casper, L. Eds.), *Handbook of Measurement Issues in Family Research.* Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum. Used with permission.

Figure A2. Factors that influence marital outcomes.

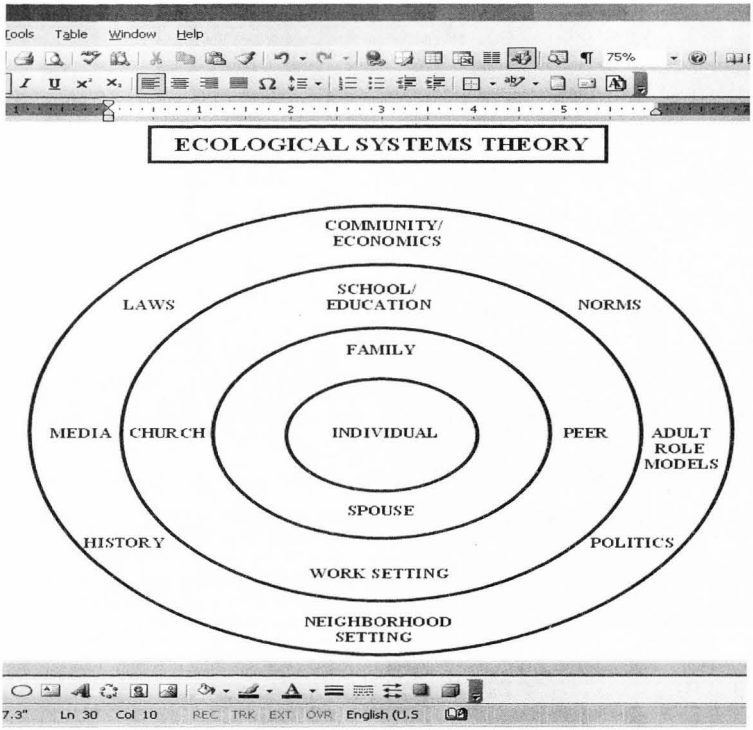
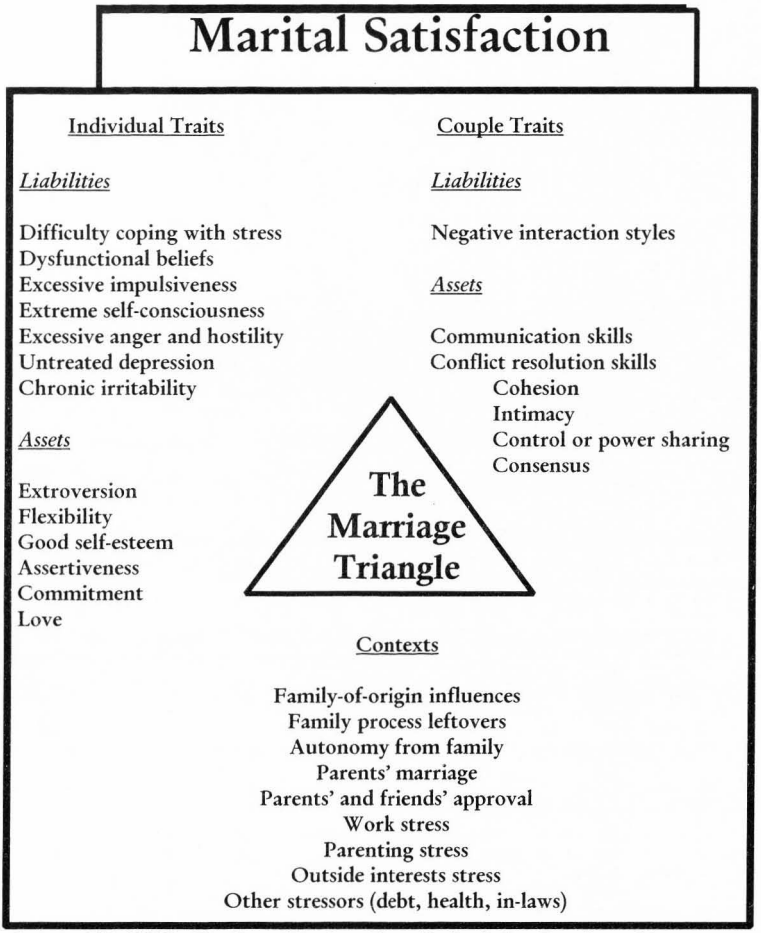
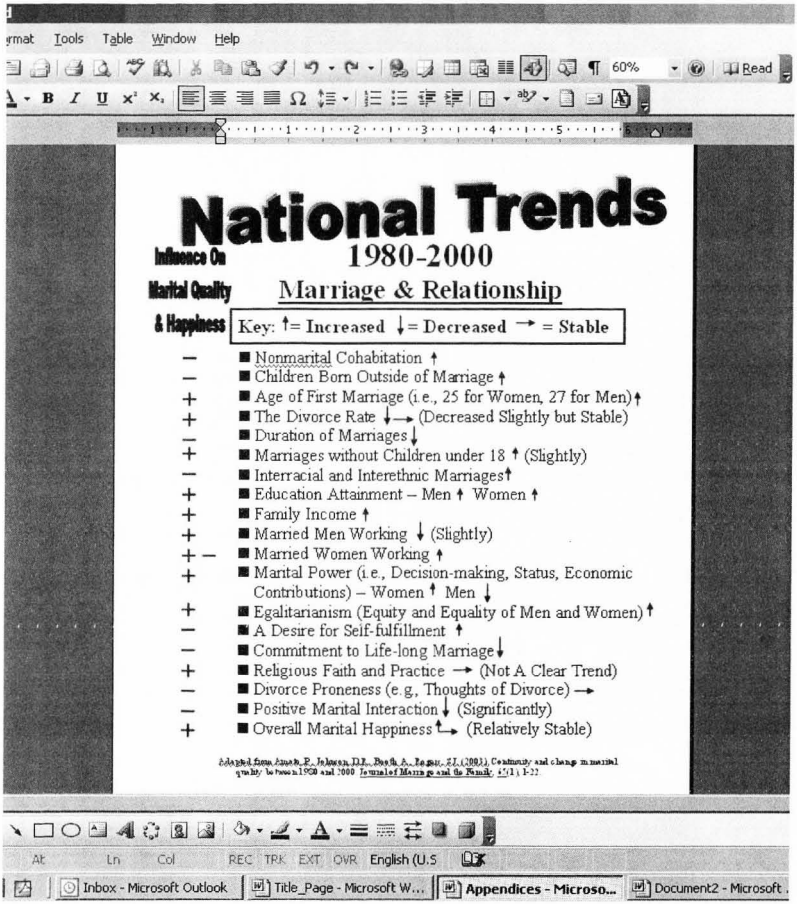


Figure A3. Ecological systems theory.



Larson, J.H. (2003). *The Great Marriage Tune-Up Book*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Used with permission.

Figure A4. The marriage triangle.



Adapted from Amato, P.R., Johnson, D.R., Booth, A., & Rogers, S.L. (2003). Continuity and change in marital quality between 1980 and 2000. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 65*(1), 1-22. Used with permission.

Figure A5. National marriage and relationship trends – 1980-2000.

Appendix B

Survey Instrument

CHAPTER 4

QUESTIONNAIRE AND RESULTS

The questionnaire used in the 2003 Utah Marriage Movement Statewide Baseline Survey is presented in this chapter. The questionnaire is presented in the order in which the questions were asked, section by section. The demographic questions were the last set of questions.

In addition to the questions themselves, question labels, response frequencies, and response percentages are presented. The data presented here are based on the weighted data file (weighted by gender, age, education, race, and marital status using "wate 2").

A. ATTITUDES TOWARD MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND COHABITATION

QAT1

To start, some people think that divorce is a serious national problem. Other people think that divorce is not a serious problem at all. How about you? Would you say that divorce is...

		Freq	(%)
1	a very serious problem	818	(62.4)
2	somewhat serious	386	(29.4)
3	not too serious a problem	80	(6.1)
4	not a problem at all	28	(2.2)
8	don't know	5	
9	refused	0	

Now, I am going to read some statements about marriage and divorce. Please tell me if you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree with each one. Here is the first statement.

QAT2

When married people realize that they no longer love each other, they should get a divorce even if they have children.

		Freq	(%)
1	strongly agree	64	(4.9)
2	agree	286	(21.9)
3	neither agree nor disagree	125	(9.6)
4	disagree	548	(42.0)
5	strongly disagree with this statement	282	(21.6)
8	undecided/don't know	12	
9	refused	0	

QAT3
When there are children in the family, parents should stay married even if they do not get along.

		Freq	(%)
1	strongly agree	56	(4.3)
2	agree	357	(27.4)
3	neither agree nor disagree	130	(10.0)
4	disagree	630	(48.3)
5	strongly disagree with this statement	132	(10.1)
8	undecided/don't know	9	
9	refused	2	

QAT4
Sure, divorce is bad, but a lousy marriage is even worse.

		Freq	(%)
1	strongly agree	142	(10.9)
2	agree	680	(52.4)
3	neither agree nor disagree	156	(12.0)
4	disagree	293	(22.5)
5	strongly disagree with this statement	28	(2.2)
8	undecided/don't know	16	
9	refused	2	

QAT5
Society would be better off if divorces were harder to get.

		Freq	(%)
1	strongly agree	171	(13.1)
2	agree	590	(45.3)
3	neither agree nor disagree	122	(9.3)
4	disagree	379	(29.0)
5	strongly disagree with this statement	43	(3.3)
8	undecided/don't know	12	
9	refused	0	

QAT6
Long waiting periods to get a divorce give people time to get over their anger, work out their problems, and reconcile.

		Freq	(%)
1	strongly agree	106	(8.2)
2	agree	728	(56.1)
3	neither agree nor disagree	146	(11.2)
4	disagree	287	(22.2)
5	strongly disagree with this statement	30	(2.3)
8	undecided/don't know	19	
9	refused	1	

QAT7
People who have children together ought to be married.

		Freq	(%)
1	strongly agree	381	(29.0)
2	agree	534	(40.8)
3	neither agree nor disagree	96	(7.3)
4	disagree	269	(20.5)
5	strongly disagree with this statement	30	(2.3)
8	undecided/don't know	5	
9	refused	0	

QAT8
Too many couples rush into marriage.

		Freq	(%)
1	strongly agree	313	(24.1)
2	agree	765	(58.9)
3	neither agree nor disagree	128	(9.8)
4	disagree	89	(6.8)
5	strongly disagree with this statement	5	(0.4)
8	undecided/don't know	17	
9	refused	0	

QAT9
It is wrong when married people have sex with someone other than their spouse.

		Freq	(%)
1	strongly agree	864	(65.6)
2	agree	405	(30.8)
3	neither agree nor disagree	19	(1.4)
4	disagree	24	(1.8)
5	strongly disagree with this statement	5	(0.4)
8	undecided/don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QAT10
Young couples focus too much on the happiness they expect from marriage and not enough on the hard work a successful marriage requires.

		Freq	(%)
1	strongly agree	382	(29.1)
2	agree	807	(61.4)
3	neither agree nor disagree	66	(5.0)
4	disagree	54	(4.1)
5	strongly disagree with this statement	5	(0.4)
8	undecided/don't know	3	
9	refused	0	

QAT11
In marriage you can count on your partner being there for you more than you can when you are living with someone outside of marriage.

		Freq	(%)
1	strongly agree	364	(28.1)
2	agree	664	(51.1)
3	neither agree nor disagree	99	(7.7)
4	disagree	165	(12.7)
5	strongly disagree with this statement	5	(0.4)
8	undecided/don't know	19	
9	refused	0	

QAT12
It is okay for a man and woman who are NOT married to live together. (when man and woman are romantically involved)

		Freq	(%)
1	strongly agree	65	(5.0)
2	agree	364	(27.8)
3	neither agree nor disagree	80	(6.1)
4	disagree	485	(37.0)
5	strongly disagree with this statement	316	(24.1)
8	undecided/don't know	5	
9	refused	0	

QAT13
People who live together before they are married are likely to improve their chances for a good marriage.

		Freq	(%)
1	strongly agree	56	(4.3)
2	agree	270	(20.9)
3	neither agree nor disagree	131	(10.1)
4	disagree	584	(45.1)
5	strongly disagree with this statement	254	(19.6)
8	undecided/don't know	21	
9	refused	0	

QAT14
These days, couples who live together outside of marriage get all the benefits of marriage without the legal details.

		Freq	(%)
1	strongly agree	36	(2.8)
2	agree	340	(26.6)
3	neither agree nor disagree	136	(10.6)
4	disagree	625	(48.9)
5	strongly disagree with this statement	142	(11.1)
8	undecided/don't know	36	
9	refused	2	

B. MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND RELATIONSHIP HISTORY

Now I am going to ask you some questions about your own marital or relationship status.

QMD1
First, are you currently married, widowed, divorced, separated or have you never been married?

		Freq	(%)
1	married	757	(57.5)
2	widowed	41	(3.1)
3	divorced	90	(6.9)
4	separated	4	(0.3)
5	never been married	424	(32.2)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMD2
(IF QMD1 = 1, then skip)
Do you have a main romantic involvement, a man or a woman you think of as a steady, a lover, a partner, or the like?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	239	(42.8)
2	no	320	(57.2)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

COUPLE
Couple Status (computed by interviewing software)
(IF QMD1 = 1, COUPLE = 1)
(IF QMD2 = 1, COUPLE = 1)

		Freq	(%)
0	no	320	(24.3)
1	yes	996	(75.7)

MARSEP
Married or Separated (computed by interviewing software)
(IF QMD1 = 1, MARSEP = 1)
(IF QMD1 = 4, MARSEP = 1)

		Freq	(%)
0	no	555	(42.2)
1	yes	761	(57.8)

QMD3
(IF QMD1 = 1, then skip)
(IF QMD2 <> , then skip)
Are you engaged to be married?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	53	(22.2)
2	no	186	(77.8)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMD4
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
Do you live with your spouse/partner?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	839	(84.2)
2	no	157	(15.8)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMD5
(IF QMD1 = 1, then skip)
(IF QMD2 <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD4 <> 1, then skip)
At the time you STARTED living together, were you engaged?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	8	(9.1)
2	no	78	(90.9)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMD6

(IF QMD1 = 1, then skip)
(IF QMD2 <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD4 <> 1, then skip)
Do your parents approve or disapprove of your living together without being married?

		Freq	(%)
1	approve	53	(62.2)
2	neutral/mixed	13	(14.8)
3	disapprove	12	(14.0)
4	parents unaware of situation	3	(3.6)
7	not applicable - parents not living/no parents	5	(5.4)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMD7
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
How long have you been with your spouse/partner? (in years) This includes time dating your spouse before marriage.

0 = LESS THAN 1 YEAR
RANGE = 1-85 YEARS (Round DOWN)
88 = don't know
99 = refused

	# of years
Valid n	995
Mean	16.93
Median	11.00
Mode	Less than 1 year
Minimum	Less than 1 year
Maximum	69

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QMD8
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
Do you and your current spouse/partner have children together by birth or adoption?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	652	(65.5)
2	no	344	(34.5)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMD9
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD8 <> 1, then skip)
How many?

RANGE = 1-30 CHILDREN (with CURRENT spouse/partner)
88 = don't know
99 = refused

	# of children
Valid n	652
Mean	3.34
Median	3.00
Mode	2
Minimum	1
Maximum	13

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QMD10
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD8 <> 1, then skip)
How many of these children are under the age of 18?

RANGE = 0-30 CHILDREN (with CURRENT spouse/partner)
88 = don't know
99 = refused

	# of children
Valid n	652
Mean	1.66
Median	1.00
Mode	0
Minimum	0
Maximum	8

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QMD11
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD8 <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD10 = 0, then skip)
Of these children from your current marriage/relationship who are under the age of 18, how many DO NOT live with you?

RANGE = 0-30 CHILDREN
88 = don't know
99 = refused

	# of children
Valid n	439
Mean	0.09
Median	0.00
Mode	0
Minimum	0
Maximum	5

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QMD12
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD8 <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD10 = 0, then skip)
(IF QMD11 = 0, then skip)
Regarding these children from your current marriage/relationship who are under the age of 18 AND who are NOT living with you, overall, how close do you feel to these children?

		Freq	(%)
1	not close at all	0	(0.0)
2	somewhat close	6	(28.6)
3	very close	16	(71.4)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	1	

QMD13
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD8 <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD10 = 0, then skip)
(IF QMD11 = 0, then skip)
How satisfied are you with your relationship with these children, overall?

		Freq	(%)
1	not very satisfied	4	(17.8)
2	somewhat satisfied	8	(35.3)
3	very satisfied	11	(46.9)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	1	

QMD14
(IF QMD1 <> 1, then skip)
How long have you and your current spouse been married, in years?

0 = LESS THAN 1 YEAR
RANGE = 1-85 YEARS (Round DOWN)
88 = don't know
99 = refused

	# of years
Valid n	755
Mean	19.59
Median	16.00
Mode	2
Minimum	Less than 1 year
Maximum	67

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QMD15
(IF QMD1 <> 1, then skip)
Were you and your current spouse married in a religious setting?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	626	(82.9)
2	no	129	(17.1)
8	don't know	2	
9	refused	0	

QMD16
(IF QMD1 <> 1, then skip)
Did you and your current spouse have pre-marital preparation, such as educational classes, a workshop, or counseling designed to help you get a good start in marriage?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	208	(27.4)
2	no	549	(72.6)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMD17
(IF QMD1 <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD16 <> 1, then skip)
Was your pre-marital preparation inside or outside a religious setting?

		Freq	(%)
1	inside	138	(66.5)
2	outside	25	(12.2)
3	both	44	(21.3)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMD18
(IF QMD1 <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD16 <> 1, then skip)
About how many hours did you spend in pre-marital preparation?

0 = LESS THAN 1 HOUR
RANGE = 1-80 HOURS (Round DOWN)
88 = don't know
99 = refused

	# of hours
Valid n	197
Mean	24.35
Median	15.00
Mode	10
Minimum	Less than 1 hour
Maximum	80

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QMD19
(IF QMD1 <> 1, then skip)
Did you and your current spouse live together before you got married?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	124	(16.4)
2	no	632	(83.6)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMD20
(IF QMD1 <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD19 <> 1, then skip)
At the time you STARTED living together, were you engaged?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	46	(36.6)
2	no	79	(63.4)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMD21
(IF QMD1 <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD19 <> 1, then skip)
Did your parents approve or disapprove of your living together prior to marriage?

		Freq	(%)
1	approve	55	(45.0)
2	neutral/mixed	11	(9.4)
3	disapprove	43	(35.4)
4	parents unaware of situation	8	(6.6)
7	not applicable - parents not living/no parents	4	(3.7)
8	don't know	3	
9	refused	0	

QMD22
(IF QMD1 = 5, then skip)
Altogether how many times have you been married?

RANGE = 1-30 MARRIAGES
88 = don't know
99 = refused

	# of times
Valid n	892
Mean	1.23
Median	1.00
Mode	1
Minimum	1
Maximum	6

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

NUMMAR
Number of Marriages (computed by interviewing software)
(IF QMD1 = 5, NUMMAR = 0)
(IF QMD1 <> 5, NUMMAR = QMD22)

	# of marriages
Valid n	1316
Mean	0.83
Median	1.00
Mode	1
Minimum	0
Maximum	6

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QMD23
(IF NUMMAR < 2, then skip)
(IF NUMMAR > 30, then skip)
Have you ever married the same person more than once?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	15	(8.6)
2	no	158	(91.4)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMD24
(IF QMD1 <> 1, then skip)
How old were you when you married your current spouse?

RANGE = 1-110 YEARS OLD
888 = don't know
999 = refused

	Age
Valid n	757
Mean	24.12
Median	22.00
Mode	22
Minimum	15
Maximum	72

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QMD25
(IF NUMMAR = 0), then skip)
(IF NUMMAR = 1 and IF QMD1 = 1, then skip)
(IF NUMMAR > 30, then skip)
How old were you when you first got married?

RANGE = 1-110 YEARS OLD
888 = don't know
999 = refused

	Age
Valid n	260
Mean	20.94
Median	20.00
Mode	18
Minimum	13
Maximum	48

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QMD26
(IF QMD1 = 3, then skip)
Have you ever been divorced?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	125	(10.2)
2	no	1101	(89.8)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

EVRDIV
Ever Divorced? (computed by interviewing software)
(IF QMD1 = 3, EVRDIV = 1)
(IF QMD26 = 1, EVRDIV = 1)

		Freq	(%)
0	no	1101	(83.7)
1	yes	215	(16.3)

QMD27
(IF EVRDIV <> 1, then skip)
How many times have you been divorced?

RANGE = 1-50 DIVORCES
88 = don't know
99 = refused

	# times divorced
Valid n	215
Mean	1.32
Median	1.00
Mode	1
Minimum	1
Maximum	4

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

NUMDIV
Number of divorces (computed by interviewing software)
(IF EVRDIV = 1, NUMDIV = QMD27)

RANGE = 0-30 DIVORCES

	# of divorces
Valid n	1316
Mean	0.22
Median	0.00
Mode	0
Minimum	0
Maximum	4

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

PRVSPO
Previous Spouse? (computed by interviewing software)
(IF EVRDIV = 1, PRVSPO = 1)
(IF QMD1 = 2, PRVSPO = 1)
(IF NUMMAR > 1, PRVSPO = 1)

		Freq	(%)
0	no	1053	(80.0)
1	yes	264	(20.0)

QMD28
(IF PRVSPO <> 1, then skip)
Do you have children with a spouse from a PREVIOUS marriage?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	201	(76.4)
2	no	62	(23.6)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMD29
(IF PRVSPO <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD28 <> 1, then skip)
How many?

RANGE = 1-30 CHILDREN
88 = don't know
99 = refused

	# of children
Valid n	201
Mean	2.98
Median	3.00
Mode	2
Minimum	1
Maximum	14

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QMD30
(IF PRVSPO <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD28 <> 1, then skip)
How many of these children are under the age of 18?

RANGE = 0-30 CHILDREN
88 = don't know
99 = refused

	# of children
Valid n	201
Mean	0.70
Median	0.00
Mode	0
Minimum	0
Maximum	5

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QMD31
(IF PRVSPO <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD28 <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD30 = 0, then skip)
Of these children from a previous marriage who are under the age of 18, how many DO NOT live with you?

RANGE = 0-30 CHILDREN
88 = don't know
99 = refused

	# of children
Valid n	79
Mean	0.76
Median	0.00
Mode	0
Minimum	0
Maximum	9

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QMD32
(IF PRVSPO <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD28 <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD30 = 0, then skip)
(IF QMD31 = 0, then skip)
Regarding these children from a previous marriage who are under the age of 18 AND who are NOT living with you, overall, how close do you feel to these children?

		Freq	(%)
1	not close at all	4	(13.6)
2	somewhat close	9	(27.6)
3	very close	18	(58.8)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMD33
(IF PRVSPO <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD28 <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD30 = 0, then skip)
(IF QMD31 = 0, then skip)
How satisfied are you with your relationship with these children, overall?

		Freq	(%)
1	not very satisfied	6	(20.6)
2	somewhat satisfied	8	(26.0)
3	very satisfied	16	(53.4)
8	don't know	1	
9	refused	0	

QMD34
(IF PRVSPO <> 1, then skip)
How long were you and your previous spouse married, in years?

0 = LESS THAN 1 YEAR
RANGE = 1-85 YEARS (Round DOWN)
88 = don't know
99 = refused

	# of years
Valid n	264
Mean	13.61
Median	9.00
Mode	3
Minimum	Less than 1 year
Maximum	60

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QMD35
(IF PRVSPO <> 1, then skip)
Were you and your previous spouse married in a religious setting?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	156	(59.2)
2	no	107	(40.8)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMD36
(IF PRVSPO <> 1, then skip)
Did you and your previous spouse have pre-marital preparation, such as educational classes, a workshop, or counseling designed to help you get a good start in marriage?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	32	(12.4)
2	no	230	(87.6)
8	don't know	1	
9	refused	0	

QMD37
(IF PRVSPO <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD36 <> 1, then skip)
Was your pre-marital preparation inside or outside a religious setting?

		Freq	(%)
1	inside	21	(65.1)
2	outside	7	(22.8)
3	both	4	(12.1)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMD38
(IF PRVSPO <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD36 <> 1, then skip)
About how many hours did you spend in pre-marital preparation?

0 = LESS THAN 1 HOUR
RANGE = 1-80 HOURS (Round DOWN)
88 = don't know
99 = refused

	# of hours
Valid n	27
Mean	17.48
Median	10.00
Mode	10
Minimum	1
Maximum	80

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QMD39
(IF PRVSPO <> 1, then skip)
Did you and your previous spouse live together before you got married?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	72	(27.3)
2	no	192	(72.7)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMD40
(IF PRVSPO <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD39 <> 1, then skip)
At the time you and your previous spouse STARTED living together, were you engaged?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	20	(28.3)
2	no	52	(71.7)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMD41
(IF PRVSPO <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD39 <> 1, then skip)
Did your parents approve or disapprove of your living together prior to marriage?

		Freq	(%)
1	approve	18	(25.8)
2	neutral/mixed	20	(28.1)
3	disapprove	21	(29.5)
4	parents unaware of situation	7	(9.5)
7	not applicable - parents not living/no parents	5	(7.0)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

There are many reasons why marriages fail. I'm going to read a list of possible reasons. Looking back at your most recent divorce, tell me whether or not each factor was a MAJOR contributor to your divorce. You can say "yes" or "no" to each factor. Please say 'yes' ONLY if it was a MAJOR contributor to your divorce.

QMD42_1
(IF EVRDIV <> 1, then skip)
Getting married too young.

		Freq	(%)
0	no	127	(59.2)
1	yes	88	(40.8)

QMD42_2
(IF EVRDIV <> 1, then skip)
Little or no helpful pre-marital preparation.

		Freq	(%)
0	no	163	(75.9)
1	yes	52	(24.1)

QMD42_3
(IF EVRDIV <> 1, then skip)
Financial problems or economic hardship.

		Freq	(%)
0	no	145	(67.5)
1	yes	70	(32.5)

QMD42_4
(IF EVRDIV <> 1, then skip)
Religious differences between partners.

		Freq	(%)
0	no	184	(85.3)
1	yes	32	(14.7)

QMD42_5
(IF EVRDIV <> 1, then skip)
Domestic violence.

		Freq	(%)
0	no	168	(78.2)
1	yes	47	(21.8)

QMD42_6
(IF EVRDIV <> 1, then skip)
Infidelity or extra-marital affairs.

		Freq	(%)
0	no	104	(48.3)
1	yes	111	(51.7)

QMD42_7
(IF EVRDIV <> 1, then skip)
Too much conflict and arguing.

		Freq	(%)
0	no	101	(46.9)
1	yes	114	(53.1)

QMD42_8
(IF EVRDIV <> 1, then skip)
Lack of commitment by one or both persons to make it work.

		Freq	(%)
0	no	36	(16.8)
1	yes	179	(83.2)

QMD42_9
(IF EVRDIV <> 1, then skip)
Lack of support from family members.

		Freq	(%)
0	no	171	(79.4)
1	yes	44	(20.6)

QMD42_10
(IF EVRDIV <> 1, then skip)
Other.

		Freq	(%)
0	no	167	(77.8)
1	yes	48	(22.2)

QMD42OTH
(IF EVRDIV <> 1, then skip)
What other factor was a MAJOR contributor to your divorce?

(OPEN-ENDED)

(SEE APPENDIX A)

QMD44
(IF EVRDIV <> 1, then skip)
Looking back at your last divorce, do you ever wish that you, yourself, had worked harder to save your marriage?

		Freq	(%)
1	Yes, I wish I had worked harder	47	(22.1)
2	No, I worked hard enough	166	(77.9)
8	don't know	2	
9	refused	0	

QMD45
(IF EVRDIV <> 1, then skip)
Do you ever wish that your spouse had worked harder to save your marriage?

		Freq	(%)
1	Yes, I wish my spouse had worked harder	149	(70.1)
2	No, my spouse worked hard enough	63	(29.9)
8	don't know	2	
9	refused	0	

QMD46
Do you have any children from a prior relationship OUTSIDE of marriage?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	40	(3.1)
2	no	1274	(96.8)
7	yes - but gave ALL children up for ADOPTION	2	(0.1)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMD47
(IF QMD46 <> 1, then skip)
How many children do you have from a prior relationship OUTSIDE of marriage?

RANGE = 1-30 CHILDREN
88 = don't know
99 = refused

	# of children
Valid n	40
Mean	1.17
Median	1.00
Mode	1
Minimum	1
Maximum	4

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QMD48
(IF QMD46 <> 1, then skip)
How many of these children from a prior relationship OUTSIDE of marriage are under the age of 18?

RANGE = 0-30 CHILDREN
88 = don't know
99 = refused

	# of children
Valid n	40
Mean	0.90
Median	1.00
Mode	1
Minimum	0
Maximum	4

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QMD49
(IF QMD46 <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD48 = 0, then skip)
Of these children from a prior relationship OUTSIDE of marriage who are under the age of 18, how many DO NOT live with you?

RANGE = 0-30 CHILDREN
88 = don't know
99 = refused

	# of children
Valid n	32
Mean	0.27
Median	0.00
Mode	0
Minimum	0
Maximum	1

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QMD50
(IF QMD46 <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD48 = 0, then skip)
(IF QMD49 = 0, then skip)
Regarding these children from a prior relationship OUTSIDE of marriage who are under the age of 18 AND who are NOT living with you, overall, how close do you feel to these children?

		Freq	(%)
1	not close at all	3	(33.7)
2	somewhat close	6	(64.9)
3	very close	0	(1.4)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMD51
(IF QMD46 <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMD48 = 0, then skip)
(IF QMD49 = 0, then skip)
How satisfied are you with your relationship with these children, overall?

		Freq	(%)
1	not very satisfied	6	(75.8)
2	somewhat satisfied	0	(0.0)
3	very satisfied	2	(24.2)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMD52
(IF QMD5 <> 1, then skip)
Would you like to be married some day?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	390	(94.0)
2	no	25	(6.0)
8	don't know	9	
9	refused	0	

QMD53
(IF QMD1 = 1, then skip)
(IF QMD1 > 3, then skip)
Would you like to re-marry some day?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	71	(58.8)
2	no	50	(41.2)
8	don't know	8	
9	refused	1	

C. RELATIONSHIP QUALITY

QRQ1
(IF QMD1 <> 1, then skip)
Taking things altogether, how would you describe your marriage?

		Freq	(%)
1	very happy	563	(74.3)
2	pretty happy	180	(23.8)
3	not too happy	14	(1.9)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QRQ2A
(IF QMD1 <> 1, then skip)
Sometimes couples experience serious problems in their marriage and have thoughts of ending their marriage. Even people who get along quite well with their spouse sometimes wonder whether their marriage is working out. Have you ever thought your marriage might be in trouble?

		Freq	(%)
1	never	400	(53.0)
2	yes, but not within the last 3 years	155	(20.5)
3	yes, within the last 3 years	91	(12.0)
4	yes, within the last year	51	(6.8)
5	yes, within the last 6 months	22	(2.9)
6	yes, within the last 3 months	36	(4.8)
8	don't know	1	
9	refused	0	

QRQ2B
(IF QMD1 <> 1, then skip)
Has the thought of getting a divorce or separation crossed your mind?

		Freq	(%)
1	never	522	(69.1)
2	yes, but not within the last 3 years	109	(14.4)
3	yes, within the last 3 years	63	(8.4)
4	yes, within the last year	27	(3.6)
5	yes, within the last 6 months	11	(1.4)
6	yes, within the last 3 months	23	(3.0)
8	don't know	1	
9	refused	0	

QRQ2C
(IF QMD1 <> 1, then skip)
Have you discussed divorce or separation from your spouse with a close friend?

		Freq	(%)
1	never	654	(86.4)
2	yes, but not within the last 3 years	37	(4.9)
3	yes, within the last 3 years	27	(3.6)
4	yes, within the last year	15	(2.0)
5	yes, within the last 6 months	8	(1.1)
6	yes, within the last 3 months	15	(2.0)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QRQ2D
(IF QMD1 <> 1, then skip)
Have you or your spouse ever seriously suggested the idea of divorce?

		Freq	(%)
1	never	666	(88.2)
2	yes, but not within the last 3 years	34	(4.6)
3	yes, within the last 3 years	24	(3.2)
4	yes, within the last year	11	(1.4)
5	yes, within the last 6 months	7	(0.9)
6	yes, within the last 3 months	13	(1.8)
8	don't know	1	
9	refused	0	

QRQ2E
(IF QMD1 <> 1, then skip)
Have you and your spouse talked about consulting an attorney regarding a possible divorce or separation?

		Freq	(%)
1	never	741	(98.0)
2	yes, but not within the last 3 years	3	(0.4)
3	yes, within the last 3 years	7	(1.0)
4	yes, within the last year	2	(0.3)
5	yes, within the last 6 months	0	(0.0)
6	yes, within the last 3 months	3	(0.3)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QRQ2F
(IF QMD1 <> 1, then skip)
(IF QRQ2B = 1, then skip)
(IF QRQ2B > 7, then skip)
Are you glad you are still together?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes, glad	218	(93.8)
2	unsure/mixed feelings	10	(4.5)
3	no, not glad	4	(1.8)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

Please answer each of the following questions by indicating how strongly you agree or disagree with the idea expressed.

QRQ3A
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
My relationship with my spouse/partner is more important to me than almost anything else in my life. Do you...

		Freq	(%)
1	strongly agree	536	(53.9)
2	agree	369	(37.1)
3	neither agree nor disagree	26	(2.6)
4	disagree	56	(5.6)
5	strongly disagree	9	(0.9)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QRQ3B
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
I may not want to be with my spouse/partner a few years from now. Do you...

		Freq	(%)
1	strongly agree	14	(1.4)
2	agree	63	(6.4)
3	neither agree nor disagree	36	(3.6)
4	disagree	381	(38.3)
5	strongly disagree	498	(50.2)
8	don't know	3	
9	refused	0	

QRQ3C
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
I like to think of my spouse/partner and me more in terms of "us" and "we" than "me" and "him/her."

		Freq	(%)
1	strongly agree	476	(47.8)
2	agree	449	(45.2)
3	neither agree nor disagree	19	(1.9)
4	disagree	49	(5.0)
5	strongly disagree	1	(0.1)
8	don't know	1	
9	refused	0	

QRQ3D
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
I feel trapped in this marriage/relationship but I stay because I have too much to lose if I leave.

		Freq	(%)
1	strongly agree	9	(0.9)
2	agree	62	(6.3)
3	neither agree nor disagree	13	(1.3)
4	disagree	419	(42.1)
5	strongly disagree	492	(49.4)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QRQ3E
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
We regularly have great conversations where we just talk as good friends.

		Freq	(%)
1	strongly agree	391	(39.3)
2	agree	517	(51.9)
3	neither agree nor disagree	16	(1.6)
4	disagree	63	(6.3)
5	strongly disagree	8	(0.8)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

Now I'd like you to tell me how often you and your spouse/partner experience each of the following situations.

QRQ4A
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
Little arguments escalate into ugly fights with accusations, criticisms, name calling, or bringing up past hurts. Is that...

		Freq	(%)
1	never or almost never	717	(72.3)
2	once in a while	238	(24.0)
3	frequently	36	(3.6)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	2	

QRQ4B
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
My spouse/partner criticizes or belittles my opinions, feelings, or desires. Is that...

		Freq	(%)
1	never or almost never	828	(83.5)
2	once in a while	140	(14.2)
3	frequently	23	(2.3)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	2	

QRQ4C
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
My spouse/partner seems to view my words or actions more negatively than I mean them to be. Does that happen...

		Freq	(%)
1	never or almost never	625	(63.2)
2	once in a while	293	(29.6)
3	frequently	71	(7.2)
8	don't know	1	
9	refused	3	

QRQ4D
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
When we argue, one of us withdraws...that is, does not want to talk about it anymore, or leaves the scene. Does that happen...

		Freq	(%)
1	never or almost never	448	(45.3)
2	once in a while	395	(39.9)
3	frequently	146	(14.8)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	3	

QRQ5
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
How long - in weeks - has it been since just the two of you went out on a date?

0 = LESS THAN 1 WEEK
RANGE = 1-85 WEEKS (Round DOWN)
88 = don't know
99 = refused

	# of weeks
Valid n	973
Mean	4.50
Median	1.00
Mode	Less than 1 week
Minimum	Less than 1 week
Maximum	85

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QRQ6
(IF QMD1 <> 1, then skip)
All in all, how satisfied are you with your marriage? Are you...

		Freq	(%)
1	completely satisfied	413	(54.9)
2	very satisfied	287	(38.1)
3	somewhat satisfied	45	(6.0)
4	not very satisfied	5	(0.6)
5	not at all satisfied	3	(0.4)
8	don't know	1	
9	refused	0	

D. FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

QFI1
(IF NUMMAR < 1, then skip)
Some couples feel pretty much on their own to handle the challenges of marriage, and other people feel a good deal of support from others for their relationship. Thinking about your own marriage (current or last one), how much support do you feel from YOUR OWN relatives for keeping your marriage healthy in good times and hard times?

		Freq	(%)
1	no or little support	211	(23.8)
2	some support	213	(24.0)
3	a lot of support	464	(52.3)
8	don't know	1	
9	refused	0	

QFI2
(IF NUMMAR < 1, then skip)
How much support do you feel from your SPOUSE'S relatives for keeping your marriage healthy in good times and hard times?

		Freq	(%)
1	no or little support	274	(30.8)
2	some support	192	(21.7)
3	a lot of support	423	(47.6)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QFI3
(IF NUMMAR < 1, then skip)
How much support do you feel from your FRIENDS for keeping your marriage healthy in good times and hard times?

		Freq	(%)
1	no or little support	267	(30.1)
2	some support	188	(21.2)
3	a lot of support	432	(48.8)
8	don't know	2	
9	refused	0	

QF14
(IF NUMMAR < 1, then skip)
How much support do you feel from your FAITH COMMUNITY for keeping your marriage healthy in good times and hard times?

		Freq	(%)
1	no or little support	244	(27.6)
2	some support	144	(16.3)
3	a lot of support	496	(56.1)
8	don't know	4	
9	refused	2	

E. PREVENTIVE EDUCATION

Now I'd like to ask your opinion of pre-marital preparation and divorce prevention services.

QPE1

In your opinion, how important is it for couples to prepare for marriage through educational classes, workshops, or counseling designed to help them get off to a good start? Is it...

		Freq	(%)
1	very important	637	(49.6)
2	somewhat important	547	(42.5)
3	not very important	64	(5.0)
4	not at all important	38	(2.9)
8	don't know	24	
9	refused	2	

QPE2

When a married couple with children in the home is considering a divorce, how good an idea do you think it would be to require marriage counseling or therapy before the divorce is granted? Would that be a...

		Freq	(%)
1	very good idea	907	(69.8)
2	good idea	321	(24.7)
3	bad idea	56	(4.3)
4	very bad idea	17	(1.3)
8	don't know	9	
9	refused	1	

QPE3

(IF NUMDIV < 1, then skip)

Did you seek counseling from a therapist or religious leader before getting divorced?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	104	(48.5)
2	no	110	(51.5)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QPE4
(IF NUMDIV < 1, then skip)
(IF QPE3 <> 1, then skip)
Was this counseling from a marital or mental health therapist OR from a religious leader?

		Freq	(%)
1	marital or mental health therapist	43	(40.8)
2	religious leader	28	(26.9)
3	both	34	(32.3)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QPE5
(IF MARSEP <> 1, then skip)
Have you ever sought counseling from a therapist or religious leader for your marriage?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	163	(21.5)
2	no	595	(78.5)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QPE6
(IF MARSEP <> 1, then skip)
(IF QPE5 <> 1, then skip)
Was this counseling from a marital or mental health therapist OR from a religious leader?

		Freq	(%)
1	marital or mental health therapist	67	(41.4)
2	religious leader	52	(32.2)
3	both	43	(26.4)
8	don't know	1	
9	refused	0	

QPE7
(IF MARSEP <> 1, then skip)
(IF QPE5 <> 1, then skip)
Thinking about the counseling or therapy you received, do you feel like your counselor:

		Freq	(%)
1	wanted to help save your marriage	107	(65.3)
2	was neutral about whether or not to stay together or to get a divorce	35	(21.7)
3	encouraged you to divorce	9	(5.4)
4	other	11	(6.9)
5	mixed – save marriage & divorce	1	(0.7)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QPE8
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
Would you consider using relationship education, such as workshops or classes, to strengthen your relationship?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	722	(74.5)
2	no	248	(25.5)
8	unsure/don't know	19	
9	refused	0	

QPE9
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
Have you used any of the resources developed by the Governor's Commission on Marriage such as conferences, the video for newlyweds, or the website on marriage?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	38	(3.9)
2	no	949	(96.1)
8	unsure/don't know	2	
9	refused	0	

Which resources have you used?

QPE10_1
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
(IF QPE9 <> 1, then skip)
Attended one or more of the Statewide Governor's Conferences on Marriage?

		Freq	(%)
0	no	23	(59.9)
1	yes	15	(40.1)

QPE10_2
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
(IF QPE9 <> 1, then skip)
Attended one or more of the Regional Governor's Conferences on Marriage?

		Freq	(%)
0	no	32	(82.2)
1	yes	7	(17.8)

QPE10_3
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
(IF QPE9 <> 1, then skip)
Accessed the Marriage web site at "Utah Marriage.org"?

		Freq	(%)
0	no	27	(71.0)
1	yes	11	(29.0)

QPE10_4
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
(IF QPE9 <> 1, then skip)
Watched the 2002 video tape created for all newlyweds?

		Freq	(%)
0	no	25	(64.6)
1	yes	14	(35.4)

QPE11
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
(IF QPE9 <> 1, then skip)
How helpful was this resource? Would you say...

		Freq	(%)
1	very helpful	9	(23.5)
2	somewhat helpful	24	(63.4)
3	not very helpful	5	(13.2)
4	not at all helpful	0	(0.0)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

F. RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT

QRI1
What is your religious preference? Is it...

		Freq	(%)
1	Catholic	46	(3.5)
2	Jewish	1	(0.1)
3	Latter Day Saints (Mormon)	937	(71.9)
4	Protestant	82	(6.3)
5	some other religion	37	(2.8)
6	no formal religion	200	(15.4)
8	unsure/don't know	2	
9	refused	5	

QRI2
(IF QRI1 = 1, then skip)
(IF QRI1 = 2, then skip)
(IF QRI1 = 3, then skip)
(IF QRI1 = 6, then skip)
(IF QRI1 = 8, then skip)
(IF QRI1 = 9, then skip)
What specific denomination or religion is that?

(OPEN-ENDED)

(SEE APPENDIX A)

Now, I am going to read some statements about religion. Please tell me if you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree with each one.

QRI3
(IF QRI1 = 6, then skip)
My outlook on life is based on my religion.

		Freq	(%)
1	strongly agree	486	(44.0)
2	agree	415	(37.5)
3	neither agree nor disagree	42	(3.8)
4	disagree	140	(12.6)
5	strongly disagree	22	(2.0)
8	undecided/don't know	0	
9	refused	1	

QRI4
(IF QRI1 = 6, then skip)
Although I believe in my religion, many other things are more important in my life.

		Freq	(%)
1	strongly agree	39	(3.5)
2	agree	278	(25.3)
3	neither agree nor disagree	47	(4.3)
4	disagree	443	(40.3)
5	strongly disagree	293	(26.6)
8	undecided/don't know	4	
9	refused	3	

QRI5
(IF QRI1 = 6, then skip)
My faith helps me know right from wrong.

		Freq	(%)
1	strongly agree	573	(52.0)
2	agree	457	(41.5)
3	neither agree nor disagree	34	(3.1)
4	disagree	34	(3.1)
5	strongly disagree	4	(0.4)
8	undecided/don't know	2	
9	refused	2	

QR16
How often do you attend religious services? Would you say...

		Freq	(%)
1	never, or almost never	251	(19.2)
2	occasionally, but less than once per month	143	(11.0)
3	one to three times per month	169	(12.9)
4	one or more times per week	743	(56.9)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	1	

QR17
All things considered, how religious would you say that you are?

		Freq	(%)
1	not at all religious	61	(4.6)
2	slightly religious	180	(13.8)
3	moderately religious	354	(27.1)
4	very religious	708	(54.2)
8	unsure/don't know	3	
9	refused	1	

G. MENTAL HEALTH

Now we'd like to ask you a few questions about your health. Have you ever experienced any of the following mental health conditions?

QMH1_1
Anxiety?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	286	(21.9)
2	no	1021	(78.1)
8	unsure/don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMH1_2
Depression?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	420	(32.2)
2	no	884	(67.8)
8	unsure/don't know	3	
9	refused	0	

QMH1_3
Alcohol or drug problems?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	106	(8.1)
2	no	1201	(91.9)
8	unsure/don't know	0	
9	refused	1	

QMH1_4
Other mental health conditions?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	48	(3.7)
2	no	1257	(96.3)
8	unsure/don't know	1	
9	refused	0	

QMH1_4ot
(IF QMH1_4 <> 1, then skip)
What other mental health conditions have you experienced?

(OPEN-ENDED)

(SEE APPENDIX A)

QMH2_1A
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMH1_1 <> 1, then skip)
How often has your anxiety condition affected your marriage/relationship?

		Freq	(%)
1	rarely or never	123	(55.5)
2	occasionally	86	(38.9)
3	most of the time	7	(3.0)
4	all of the time	6	(2.5)
8	unsure/don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMH2_2A
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMH1_2 <> 1, then skip)
How often has your depression condition affected your marriage/relationship?

		Freq	(%)
1	rarely or never	142	(46.7)
2	occasionally	134	(44.1)
3	most of the time	23	(7.5)
4	all of the time	5	(1.8)
8	unsure/don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMH2_3A
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMH1_3 <> 1, then skip)
How often have your drug or alcohol problems affected your marriage/relationship?

		Freq	(%)
1	rarely or never	58	(68.3)
2	occasionally	13	(15.2)
3	most of the time	12	(13.8)
4	all of the time	2	(2.7)
8	unsure/don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMH2_4A
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMH1_4 <> 1, then skip)
How often has your other mental health condition affected your marriage/relationship?

		Freq	(%)
1	rarely or never	16	(59.8)
2	occasionally	5	(18.1)
3	most of the time	4	(15.8)
4	all of the time	2	(6.3)
8	unsure/don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMH2_1B
(IF EVRDIV <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMH1_1 <> 1, then skip)
How often did your anxiety condition affect your previous marriage?

		Freq	(%)
1	rarely or never	43	(59.6)
2	occasionally	14	(19.7)
3	most of the time	10	(14.2)
4	all of the time	5	(6.4)
8	unsure/don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMH2_2B
(IF EVRDIV <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMH1_2 <> 1, then skip)
How often did your depression condition affect your previous marriage?

		Freq	(%)
1	rarely or never	55	(63.7)
2	occasionally	17	(19.3)
3	most of the time	11	(12.1)
4	all of the time	4	(4.8)
8	unsure/don't know	2	
9	refused	0	

QMH2_3B
(IF EVRDIV <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMH1_3 <> 1, then skip)
How often did your drug or alcohol problems affect your previous marriage?

		Freq	(%)
1	rarely or never	11	(57.8)
2	occasionally	2	(10.5)
3	most of the time	4	(22.5)
4	all of the time	2	(9.2)
8	unsure/don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QMH2_4B
(IF EVRDIV <> 1, then skip)
(IF QMH1_4 <> 1, then skip)
How often did your other mental health condition affect your previous marriage?

		Freq	(%)
1	rarely or never	4	(61.5)
2	occasionally	0	(1.5)
3	most of the time	1	(8.4)
4	all of the time	2	(28.5)
8	unsure/don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

H. GOVERNMENT SERVICES

QGS1
Since you turned 18, have you ever received TANF or AFDC assistance for yourself or on behalf of a related child?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	66	(5.1)
2	no	1238	(94.9)
8	unsure/don't know	1	
9	refused	0	

QGS2
(IF QGS1 <> 1, then skip)
Are you currently receiving TANF assistance?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	13	(19.8)
2	no	53	(80.2)
8	unsure/don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QGS3
Since you turned 18, have you ever received Food Stamps for yourself or on behalf of a related child?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	133	(10.2)
2	no	1172	(89.8)
8	unsure/don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QGS4
(IF QGS3 <> 1, then skip)
Are you currently receiving Food Stamps?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	21	(15.5)
2	no	113	(84.5)
8	unsure/don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QGS5
Since you turned 18, have you ever received Medicaid for yourself or on behalf of a related child?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	192	(14.7)
2	no	1114	(85.3)
8	unsure/don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QGS6
(IF QGS5 <> 1, then skip)
Do ANY members of your household, including children, currently receive Medicaid?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	87	(45.2)
2	no	105	(54.8)
8	unsure/don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QGS7
(IF QMD1 = 1, then skip)
(IF QGS2 <> 1, then skip)
(IF QGS4 <> 1. then skip)
(IF QGS6 <> 1, then skip)
Do you think you would lose any of your current benefits if you became married?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	26	(69.4)
2	no	12	(30.6)
8	unsure/don't know	5	
9	refused	0	

QGS8
How do you feel about the idea of a state-wide initiative to promote marriages and reduce divorces? Do you think this would be a...

		Freq	(%)
1	very good idea	485	(38.7)
2	good idea	604	(48.1)
3	bad idea	134	(10.7)
4	very bad idea	32	(2.6)
8	unsure/don't know	49	
9	refused	1	

QGS9
Are you aware of any efforts by churches and synagogues to strengthen marriages and reduce divorces in Utah?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	826	(63.9)
2	no	467	(36.1)
8	unsure/don't know	12	
9	refused	0	

QGS10
Are you aware of any efforts by state agencies to strengthen marriages and reduce divorces in Utah?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	313	(24.3)
2	no	975	(75.7)
8	unsure/don't know	17	
9	refused	0	

I. DEMOGRAPHICS

QDD1
As we conclude the interview, I need to gather some information about you. What is your age?

	Age
Valid n	1298
Mean	38.79
Median	35.00
Mode	19
Minimum	18
Maximum	99

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QZIP
I need to know which county you live in. What is your zip code?

RANGE

99999 = Don't know/Refused

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QDD2
What is the highest grade in school that you finished, and got credit for, or the highest degree you have earned?

		Freq	(%)
1	less than high school graduate (0-11)	122	(9.3)
2	high school graduate (12)	342	(26.2)
3	some college	390	(29.9)
4	trade/technical/vocational training	96	(7.4)
5	college graduate	236	(18.1)
6	postgraduate work/degree	119	(9.1)
8	unsure/don't know	0	
9	refused	1	

QDD3
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
What is the highest grade in school that your spouse/partner finished, and got credit for, or the highest degree they have earned?

		Freq	(%)
1	less than high school graduate (0-11)	65	(6.7)
2	high school graduate (12)	275	(28.1)
3	some college	292	(29.9)
4	trade/technical/vocational training	41	(4.2)
5	college graduate	220	(22.5)
6	postgraduate work/degree	86	(8.8)
8	unsure/don't know	6	
9	refused	0	

QDD4
Last week, what was your work status? Were you...

		Freq	(%)
1	working full-time	615	(47.1)
2	working part-time	242	(18.5)
3	have a job, but OUT due to illness, leave, furlough, or strike	5	(0.4)
4	have seasonal work, but currently not working	3	(0.2)
5	unemployed/laid off/looking for work	83	(6.3)
6	full-time homemaker	148	(11.3)
7	in school only	46	(3.5)
8	retired	140	(10.7)
9	disabled for work (such as SSI)	19	(1.4)
10	other	5	(0.4)
88	don't know	0	
99	refused	0	

QDD5
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
Last week what was your spouse's/partner's work status?

		Freq	(%)
1	working full-time	514	(52.3)
2	working part-time	164	(16.6)
3	have a job, but OUT due to illness, leave, furlough, or strike	4	(0.4)
4	have seasonal work, but currently not working	4	(0.4)
5	unemployed/laid off/looking for work	18	(1.9)
6	full-time homemaker	108	(11.0)
7	in school only	63	(6.4)
8	retired	96	(9.7)
9	disabled for work (such as SSI)	8	(0.8)
10	other	4	(0.5)
88	don't know	2	
99	refused	0	

QDD6A
Are you of Hispanic, Latino(a), or Spanish origin or descent?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	61	(4.7)
2	no	1244	(94.5)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QDD6B
(IF QDD6A <> 1, then skip)
Which of these ethnic groups best describes you?

		Freq	(%)
1	Mexican / Mexican American / Chicano(a)	36	(57.9)
2	Puerto Rican	6	(10.2)
3	Central or South American	16	(26.8)
4	Cuban / Cuban American	0	(0.0)
5	Other	3	(5.2)
7	don't know	0	
8	refused	0	

Which of these racial groups describes you? You can choose one group or more than one.

QDD6C_1
White.

		Freq	(%)
0	no	104	(8.0)
1	yes	1201	(92.0)

QDD6C_2
Black or African American.

		Freq	(%)
0	no	1301	(99.7)
1	yes	4	(0.3)

QDD6C_3
American Indian or Alaska Native.

		Freq	(%)
0	no	1265	(96.9)
1	yes	40	(3.1)

QDD6C_4
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

		Freq	(%)
0	no	1299	(99.5)
1	yes	7	(0.5)

QDD6C_5
Asian.

		Freq	(%)
0	no	1280	(98.1)
1	yes	25	(1.9)

QDD6C_6
Other.

		Freq	(%)
0	no	1295	(99.2)
1	yes	10	(0.8)

QDD6C_7
DON'T KNOW.

		Freq	(%)
0	no	1302	(99.8)
1	yes	3	(0.2)

QDD6C_8
REFUSED.

		Freq	(%)
0	no	1266	(97.0)
1	yes	40	(3.0)

QDD6COTH
Which of these racial groups describes you?

(OPEN-ENDED)

(SEE APPENDIX A)

QDD6D
Which SINGLE ONE of these groups best describes you?

		Freq	(%)
1	White	22	(87.1)
2	Black or African American	1	(2.8)
3	American Indian or Alaska Native	1	(5.6)
4	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	(0.0)
5	Asian	1	(4.5)
6	Other	0	(0.0)
7	Don't know	0	
8	refused	0	

QDD7A
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
Is your spouse/partner of Hispanic, Latino(a), or Spanish origin or descent?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	61	(6.2)
2	no	924	(93.8)
8	don't know	0	
9	refused	0	

QDD7B
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
(IF QDD7A <> 1, then skip)
Which of these ethnic groups best describes him/her?

		Freq	(%)
1	Mexican / Mexican American / Chicano(a)	38	(62.3)
2	Puerto Rican	1	(1.9)
3	Central or South American	17	(28.5)
4	Cuban / Cuban American	0	(0.0)
5	Other	4	(7.3)
7	don't know	1	
8	refused	0	

Which of these racial groups describes your spouse/partner ?

QDD7C_1
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
White.

		Freq	(%)
0	no	59	(6.0)
1	yes	926	(94.0)

QDD7C_2
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
Black or African American.

		Freq	(%)
0	no	980	(99.4)
1	yes	6	(0.6)

QDD7C_3
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
American Indian or Alaska Native.

		Freq	(%)
0	no	969	(98.4)
1	yes	16	(1.6)

QDD7C_4
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

		Freq	(%)
0	no	979	(99.3)
1	yes	6	(0.7)

QDD7C_5
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
Asian

		Freq	(%)
0	no	976	(99.1)
1	yes	9	(0.9)

QDD7C_6
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
Other

		Freq	(%)
0	no	983	(99.8)
1	yes	2	(0.2)

QDD7C_7
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
DON'T KNOW

		Freq	(%)
0	no	981	(99.6)
1	yes	4	(0.4)

QDD7C_8
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
REFUSED

		Freq	(%)
0	no	963	(97.8)
1	yes	22	(2.2)

QDD7COTH
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
Which of these racial groups describes your spouse/partner?

(OPEN-ENDED)

(SEE APPENDIX A)

QDD7D
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
Which SINGLE ONE of these groups best describes him/her?

		Freq	(%)
1	White	5	(97.2)
2	Black or African American	0	(2.8)
3	American Indian or Alaska Native	0	(0.0)
4	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	(0.0)
5	Asian	0	(0.0)
6	Other	0	(0.0)
7	don't know	0	
8	refused	0	

QDD8
Altogether, how many children have you had, including adopted?

RANGE = 0-30 CHILDREN
88 = don't know
99 = refused

	# of children
Valid n	1305
Mean	2.23
Median	2.00
Mode	0
Minimum	0
Maximum	14

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QDD9
How many children under the age of 18 are living with you right now? This includes not only your own children through birth or marriage, but also those who may be living in your home for other reasons such as foster care or other relatives.

RANGE = 0-30 CHILDREN
88 = don't know
99 = refused

	# of children
Valid n	1304
Mean	1.13
Median	0.00
Mode	0
Minimum	0
Maximum	9

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QDD10
IF (QDD9 = 0) SKP
How many of these children are your GRANDchildren?

RANGE = 0-30 GRANDCHILDREN LIVING WITH RESPONDENT
88 = don't know
99 = refused

	# of children
Valid n	594
Mean	0.06
Median	0.00
Mode	0
Minimum	0
Maximum	7

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QDD11
(IF COUPLE <> 1, then skip)
(IF QDD9 = 0. then skip)
How many of these children are your spouse's/partner's children from a previous relationship?

RANGE = 0-30 SPOUSE'S/PARTNER'S CHILDREN LIVING WITH RESPONDENT
88 = don't know
99 = refused

	# of children
Valid n	516
Mean	0.12
Median	0.00
Mode	0
Minimum	0
Maximum	6

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QDD12
(IF QDD8 = 0 SKP)
How old were you when your first child was born (or adopted)?

RANGE = 5-65 YEARS
88 = don't know
99 = refused

	Age
Valid n	829
Mean	23.40
Median	23.00
Mode	22
Minimum	14
Maximum	46

(SEE APPENDIX B FOR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTUAL RESPONSES GIVEN)

QDD13
For purposes of statistical calculations only, we would like to know about how much was your total family income from all sources last year before taxes and other deductions.

		Freq	(%)
1	less than $20,000 per year	249	(20.5)
2	at least $20,000, but less than $40,000	331	(27.2)
3	at least $40,000, but less than $60,000	246	(20.2)
4	at least $60,000, but less than $80,000	180	(14.8)
5	at least $80,000, but less than $100,000	83	(6.8)
6	$100,000 or more	129	(10.6)
8	unsure/don't know	36	
9	refused	52	

QDD14
(IF QDD13 < 7, then skip)
Well, would you say your total family income last year was over $20,000 or under $20,000?

		Freq	(%)
1	over $20,000	29	(87.7)
2	$20,000 or less	4	(12.3)
8	unsure/don't know	21	
9	refused	34	

QDD15
(IF QDD13 < 7, then skip)
(IF QDD14 = 2, then skip)
Well, would you say your total family income last year was over or under $40,000?

		Freq	(%)
1	over $40,000	15	(68.9)
2	$40,000 or less	7	(31.1)
8	unsure/don't know	21	
9	refused	42	

QDD16
IWER: DON'T ASK. Record respondent's gender:

		Freq	(%)
1	male	704	(54.0)
2	female	601	(46.0)
8	unsure/don't know	0	

QDD17
From your viewpoint, did the respondent have to modify his/her answers because the spouse/partner was present?

		Freq	(%)
1	yes	10	(0.8)
2	no (answer "no" if person doesn't have a spouse/partner)	1290	(99.2)
8	unsure/don't know	0	

VITA

V. William Harris

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Education:

2005	Ph.D. College of Education and Human Services – Family, Consumer, and Human Development: Utah State University.
1999	M.S. Family and Human Development: Utah State University.
1992-1993	Graduate Coursework in Education and Counseling: University of Phoenix.
1991-1992	Graduate Coursework in Middle East Studies: University of Utah.
1988	B.S. Psychology: Brigham Young University (Magna Cum Laude).

Languages:

English, German

Professional Experience:

2005-2006 Head of Research and Survey Development: ThinkTroop

Responsibilities: Create and conduct named and unnamed surveys for national and international clients. Monitor survey progress, test Repeto survey instruments and tools, collaborate with clients and colleagues, prepare training manual.

2005-2006 Instructor: FCHD 5540 – Methods of Family Life Education (2 Sections), Utah State University.

Responsibilities: Facilitate theory/diversity driven teaching methodology, philosophy, content, and skills among seniors preparing to embark on a career in family life education. Assist and evaluate student teaching in both individualized classroom and community outreach environments.

2005-2006 Research Assistant: Youth and Families with Promise (YFP), Utah State University Extension.

Responsibilities: Assist Utah State University Extension in the construction and facilitation of parent, youth, and mentor surveys using sophisticated technologically based methods for scanning the surveys with barcodes and software that will input the data sets directly into SPSS. Co-author scholarly articles and other materials in preparation for achieving "model status" through ongoing federal funding and outside evaluation.

2005 Teaching Assistant: FCHD 3210 – Family and Cultural Diversity, Utah State University.

Responsibilities: Lecture about diverse families, social change, history, immigration, and how family education can effectively address the needs of specific cultures. Evaluate reports, exams, assignments, and interviews.

2005 Teaching Assistant: FCHD 2400 – Marriage and the Family, Utah State University.

Responsibilities: Team teach students (N = 120) with the FCHD Department Head the principles of marriage and the family. Provide the Department Head with syllabus, lecture notes, and materials, teach every other class, prepare and administer quizzes and exams.

2004-2005 Instructor: FCHD 2400 – Marriage and the Family, Utah State University.

Responsibilities: Teach multiple classes of traditional and distance education students (N = 375) the major theories and principles of marriage and family relations including concepts about choice, the historicity of the family, social context and policy, gender roles and identities, love and emotion, human sexuality, singlehood, cohabitation, commitment, communication, conflict management, power and violence, parenting styles and skills, work and family issues, divorce, remarriage, stepfamilies, aging, cognition, intelligence, stress, crises, family strengths, attachment and spirituality/religiosity, resilience, and diversity.

2003-2005 Research Assistant - College of Education and Human Services Department of Family, Consumer, and Human Development.

Responsibilities: Conduct scholarly research on issues related to marriage and marital quality among newlywed and low-income and non-low-income samples. Review the literature and conduct scholarly research about cohabitation, mental health, gender, age at marriage, income, education, and religiosity and their possible associations with marital quality. Prepare scholarly works to be presented at the National Council on Family Relations and other regional and local venues. Co-author survey assessments for newlywed and marital quality studies. Evaluate the survey assessments for efficacy and scholarly findings.

2003-2005 Research Assistant: Utah State University Extension.

Responsibilities: Provide leadership in evaluating the UtahMarriage.org website under the direction of the Utah Governor's Commission on Marriage, the Department of Workforce Services, and Utah State University Extension. Author of the *Dating and Marriage Preparation* section for UtahMarriage.org. Principle author of *UMET: United Marriage Enhancement Training* – a marriage education curriculum adopted by the Utah Governor's Commission for the state of Utah on 11/22/04. Participant in writing federally funded grants for marriage education and marriage education and adoption proposals. Named as the director and project coordinator for each of these grants respectively.

1986-2005 Instructor: Public Education.

Responsibilities: Teach, research, publish about relationships, values, expectations, communication, conflict resolution, commitment, identity, life skills, teacher curriculum, teaching methodology, child, youth, and adult development – elementary, middle school, high school, alternative high school, university, special education, distance education, and adult education students. Plan, coordinate, and evaluate student life activities, programs, and events.

1989 On-site professional study and research: Italy, Egypt, Israel.

1986 USO Armed Services Travel Study/Performance: Pacific (i.e., Japan, Philippines, Guam, Johnston Island, Diego Garcia, Hawaii, Micronesia).

1984-1985 Travel Study/Performance: Southern/Southeast United States, World's Fair (New Orleans), Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, Greece.

II. CREATIVE ENDEAVOR, RESEARCH, AND SCHOLARSHIP

Research Interests:

Primary Interests: Close relationships (i.e., relationship quality/process/education). *Related Interests:* Individual, group, and societal change, emotion, cognition, multiple intelligences, parent education, adolescence, adolescent protective factor attainment, identity, moral development, teaching methodology, curriculum development, diverse cultures, sociology of religion.

Professional Publications:

A. Professional Articles:

Schramm, D. G., Marshall, J. P., **Harris, V. W.**, & Lee, T. R. (2005). After "I do": The newlywed transition. *Marriage and Family Review*, *38*(1), 45-67.

B. Documents in Submission:

Harris,V.W., Marshall, J.P., Schvaneveldt, J.D. *In the eyes of God: How attachment theory informs historical and contemporary marriage practices among Abrahamic faiths.*

Higginbotham, B.J., **Harris, V.W.**, Marshall, J.P., & Lee, T.R. (2005). *Youth and Families with Promise: A Multi-Component Youth Development Program.*

Marshall, J.P., Higginbotham, B.J., **Harris, V.W.**, Marshall, J.P., & Lee, T.R. (2005). *Assessing program outcomes: Rationale and benefits of posttest-then-retrospective –pretest designs.*

Marshall, J.P., Schramm, D.G., **Harris, V.W.**, & Lee, T.R. *A comparison of premarital cohabiters vs. non-cohabiters during their first year of marriage.*

Schramm, D.G., Marshall, J.P., **Harris, V.W.,** & Lee, T.R., & Higgenbotham, B. *Predictors of marital satisfaction and marital adjustment: An exploratory analysis of newlyweds in first and remarriages.*

Schramm, D.G., Marshall, J.P., **Harris, V.W.,** & Lee, T.R. *The role and influence of religion on newlyweds in first marriages and remarriages.*

C. Documents in Preparation:

Harris,V.W., Lee, T.R. *Marital quality, context, and interaction: A comparison of married individuals across income levels.* (First Place Wes Burr Award Winner at the National Conference on Family Relations, 2005)

Harris, V.W., Lee, T.R. *Marital quality and income: A comparison of married individuals currently receiving government assistance with those who were not.*

Harris, V.W., Skogrand, L. *The qualitative role of friendship, trust, and love in Latino marriages.*

Harris, V.W., Marshall, J.P, Openshaw, K.O. *Adolescent sexual risk-taking and religiosity.*

D. Monographs and Other Scholarly Works:

Harris, V.W. (2005). *Marital quality, context, and interaction: A comparison of individuals across various income levels.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

Schramm, D.G., Marshall, J.P., **Harris, V.W.**, & George, A. (2003). *Marriage in Utah: 2003 baseline statewide survey on marriage and divorce.* Salt Lake City, Utah: Utah Department of Workforce Services.

Harris, V.W. (1999). *Adolescent protective factor attainment: An exploratory study of two select populations.* Unpublished thesis. Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

Harris, V.W. (1991-2005). Publish nine books about *Creative Ways to Teach*, twelve lectures about relationships and relationship issues for youth and adults, and multiple book chapters/articles.

E. Refereed Conference Proceedings

Harris, V.W., Lee, T.R., Schramm, D.G., & Marshall, J.P. (2005, November). *Marital quality, context, and interaction.* Paper presented at the National Council on Family Relations, Phoenix, AZ. (This paper received the First Place Wes Burr Award in the Family Science section for the most outstanding paper presented by a graduate student at NCFR)

Lee, T.R., **Harris, V.W.**, Schramm, D.G., & Marshall, J.P. (2005, November). *Marital quality among those who do and do not receive government assistance.* Paper presented at the National Council on Family Relations, Phoenix, AZ.

Schramm, D.G., Marshall, J.P., **Harris, V.W.**, Skogrand, L., & Lee, T.R. (2005, November). *Differences in religiosity and spirituality between spouses in first and remarriages.* Paper presented at the National Council on Family Relations, Phoenix, AZ.

Marshall, J.P., Schramm, D.G., Lee, T.R., Skogrand, L., & **Harris, V.W.** (2005, November). *A comparison of cohabiters vs. non-cohabiters in newlywed relationships*. Paper presented at the National Council on Family Relations, Phoenix, AZ.

Lee, T.R., Schramm, D.G., & **Harris, V.W.** (2004, November). *The role and influence of religion on newlyweds in first and remarriages*. Paper presented at the National Council on Family Relations, Orlando, FL.

Harris, V.W., Schramm, D.G., Marshall, J.P., Skogrand, L., & Lee, T.R. (2004, November). *Marital quality and contextual factors: A comparison of low-income and non-low-income individuals*. Paper presented at the National Council on Family Relations, Orlando, FL.

F. Educational Curricula

Harris, V.W. (2005). *2004-2005 4-H/Mentoring Youth and Families with Promise (YFP) Program Evaluation Report*. Utah State University Extension Services: Logan, Utah.

Harris, V.W., Higgenbotham, B. (2005). *Why Do We Evaluate After-School Programs?* Utah State University Extension Services: Logan, Utah.

Harris, V.W., Higgenbotham, B. (2005). *Why Evaluate 4-H YFP Mentoring Programs?* Utah State University Extension Services: Logan, Utah.

Harris, V.W. (2004-2005). *United Marriage Enhancement Training*. Utah State University Extension Services: Logan, Utah. (Note: This curriculum was adopted by the Utah Governor's Commission as a statewide program on 11/22/04).

Harris, V.W. (2003). *10 Rules for Constructive Conflict*. Utah Governor's Commission on Marriage, the Utah Department of Workforce Services, and Utah State University Extension website: **www.utahmarriage.org**

Harris, V.W. (2003). *Ten Ways to Daily Improve Any Relationship*. Utah Governor's Commission on Marriage, the Utah Department of Workforce Services, and Utah State University Extension website: **www.utahmarriage.org**

Harris, V.W. (2003). *9 Important Skills for Every Relationship*. Utah Governor's Commission on Marriage, the Utah Department of Workforce Services, and Utah State University Extension website: **www.utahmarriage.org**

Harris, V.W. (2003). *Eight Needs of Every Young Man and Woman*. Utah Governor's Commission on Marriage, the Utah Department of Workforce Services, and Utah State University Extension website: **www.utahmarriage.org**

Harris, V.W. (2003). *Happy Talk: Keep Talking Happy Talk.* Utah Governor's Commission on Marriage, the Utah Department of Workforce Services, and Utah State University Extension website: **www.utahmarriage.org**

Harris, V.W. (2003). *Preparation for Dating: A Quick Checklist.* Utah Governor's Commission on Marriage, the Utah Department of Workforce Services, and Utah State University Extension website: **www.utahmarriage.org**

Harris, V.W. (2003). *Preparation for Marriage: 10 Things You'll Wish You Knew.* Utah Governor's Commission on Marriage, the Utah Department of Workforce Services, and Utah State University Extension website: **www.utahmarriage.org**

Harris, V.W. (2003). *The Top 11 Ways Men and Women are Different.* Utah Governor's Commission on Marriage, the Utah Department of Workforce Services, and Utah State University Extension website: **www.utahmarriage.org**

Harris, V.W. (2003). *The Top 8 Ways Men and Women are Alike.* Utah Governor's Commission on Marriage, the Utah Department of Workforce Services, and Utah State University Extension website: **www.utahmarriage.org**

Harris, V.W. (2003). *Triumphing Over Trials and Troubles.* Utah Governor's Commission on Marriage, the Utah Department of Workforce Services, and Utah State University Extension website: **www.utahmarriage.org**

Harris, V.W. (2003). *Understanding Our Emotion Commotion.* Utah Governor's Commission on Marriage, the Utah Department of Workforce Services, and Utah State University Extension website: **www.utahmarriage.org**

Harris, V.W. (2003). *Understanding the Individual within the Couple.* Utah Governor's Commission on Marriage, the Utah Department of Workforce Services, and Utah State University Extension website: **www.utahmarriage.org**

Harris, V.W. (2003). *Dating Tips and Traps: The Top 25 Things to Watch Out For.* Utah Governor's Commission on Marriage, the Utah Department of Workforce Services, and Utah State University Extension website: **www.utahmarriage.org**

G. Video Publication:

Harris, V.W. (2002, April). *Marriage tips and traps.* Brigham Young University Family Expo. BYU Broadcasting: Provo, Utah.

Grant Activity:

Principle investigator with Tom Lee as Co-Investigator, on proposal titled, *UMET: United Marriage Enhancement Training*. Submitted to the Utah Department of Workforce Services for $20,000, funded 2005-2006.

Co-investigator with Scot Allgood as Principal Investigator, on proposal entitled, *Marriage Education and Post-Adoption Services Demonstration Grant.* Submitted to the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau, for $1,098,287.00, July 2004, not funded.

Co-investigator, with James Marshall as Principal Investigator, and Scott Allgood as Co-Investigator, on proposal titled, *Utah State University Marriage Strengthening Compassion Capital Fund Demonstration Grant.* Submitted to the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Community Services, for $1,423,624.00, May 2004, not funded.

III. TEACHING

Teaching Experience (20 years):

Marriage and family relationships (Certified: UMET, PREP, PREPARE/ENRICH); Child, youth, and adult human development; Dating and marriage preparation/enrichment; Cognition. affect, and intelligence; Ancient manners and customs/sociology of religion/religious texts; Teacher, curriculum development and methodology.

Student/Professor Evaluations of Teaching Effectiveness:

Harris, V.W. (2005). *Graduate Teaching Assistant of the Year*. Department of Family, Consumer, and Human Development. Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

Harris, V.W. (2005). *Graduate Teaching Assistant of the Year*. College of Education and Human Services. Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

Harris, V.W. (2005). *Graduate Teaching Assistant of the Year*. Nominated as one of four individuals for the *Robins Award* – the *Graduate Teaching Assistant of the Year* for Utah State University. Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

Harris, V.W.(1986-Present). Teaching effectiveness ratings – consistently between very good to excellent (see enclosed official evaluations as evidence of most recent teaching effectiveness).

National Professional Presentations:

Harris, V.W., Schramm, D.G., Marshall, J.P., Skogrand, L., & Lee, T.R. (2004, November). *Marital quality and contextual factors: A comparison of low-income and non-low-income individuals*. Paper presented at the National Council on Family Relations, Orlando, FL.

Lee, T.R., Schramm, D.G., & **Harris, V.W.** (2004, November). *The role and influence of religion on newlyweds in first and remarriages*. Paper presented at the National Council on Family Relations, Orlando, FL.

Harris, V.W., Marshall, J.P. (2004, April). *Marital quality and contextual factors: A comparison of low-income and non-low-income individuals*. Poster session presented at the Fifth Annual Public Policy and Education Conference – Families at the Crossroads: Economics, Education, Health Care. Dirksen Senate Office Building: Washington, D.C.

Schramm, D.G., Marshall, J.P., **Harris, V.W.**, Skogrand, L., & Lee, T.R (2003, July). *Marriage in Utah*. Poster session presented at Smart Marriages, Reno, Nevada.

Statewide/Regional Presentations and Trainings (over 250 - see selections below):

Harris, V.W. (2006, February). *UMET Now What? 10 Principles of Happy Marriages*. Presented at the Utah Celebration of Marriage. Salt Lake City, Utah.

Harris, V.W. (2005, April). *UMET: United Marriage Enhancement Training for Extension Agents*. Presented at the Southern Utah Extension Agent Teacher Training. Richfield, Utah.

Harris, V.W. (2005, February). *10 rules for constructive conflict*. Presented at the Governor's Celebration of Marriage. Salt Lake City, Utah.

Harris, V.W. (2005, February). *The faces of marital commitment, love, and intimacy*. Presented at the Governor's Celebration of Marriage. Salt Lake City, Utah.

Harris, V.W. (2004, October). *UMET: United Marriage Enhancement Training*. Presented at the Council of Councils – Utah Department of Workforce Services. Layton, Utah.

Harris, V.W. (2004, July). *Smart Starts and Jump-Starts for Marriages*. Presented to the Utah Governor's Commission. Salt Lake City, Utah.

Harris, V.W. (2004, April). *United Marriage Enhancement Training*. Utah Council of Family Relations. Utah State University: Logan, Utah.

Harris, V.W. (2003, November). *Marriage tips and traps: Nurturing your friendship in marriage*. Presented at the Governor's Northern Utah Marriage Celebration – GIFT. Weber State University, Ogden, Utah.

Harris, V.W. (2002, September). *Emotional intelligence in marriage*. Presented to the Governor's Northern Utah Marriage Celebration – GIFT. Weber State University, Ogden, Utah.

Harris, V.W. (2001, February). Dating tips, trips, and traps. Presented at the Logan Tabernacle, Logan, Utah.

Harris, V.W. (1995, July). *Eight needs of every child.* Presented at the Early Childhood Conference. Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

Harris, V.W. (1995, January). *Eight needs of every spouse, parent, and child.* Presented at the Family Issues Conference. Logan, Utah.

Harris, V.W. (1992-1999). Over 100 lectures and programs presented to youth, young adults, and adults in Washington, Idaho, Colorado, and Utah.

IV. MEMBERSHIPS, AWARDS, RECOGNITION, AND SERVICE

Membership in Academic, Professional and Scholarly Societies:

National Council on Family Relations
Utah Council of Family Relations

Citation in Biographical Work:

National Dean's List, 2004. Award for academic excellence.

Awards and Recognition:

Wes Burr Award in the Family Science section for the most outstanding paper presented by a student at NCFR, 2005 (November).

Graduate Teaching Assistant of the Year. Department of Family, Consumer, and Human Development and the College of Education and Human Services. Utah State University, 2005. Nominated as one of four finalists to represent Utah State University.

Phyllis R. Snow scholarship award. Utah State University, 2004.

Honor Roll. Utah State University, 2003-2004.

Patriotic Service Award for providing entertainment to the Armed Services in the Pacific (i.e., Japan, Philippines, Guam, Johnston Island, Diego Garcia, Hawaii, Micronesia), 1986.

Recognition for providing entertainment at the World's Fair in New Orleans and to the citizens of the United States, Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, and Greece, 1984-85.

Leadership and Volunteerism:

Harris, V.W. Provide leadership and volunteer service to assist with humanitarian aid to national and international families and individuals.

Harris, V.W. Provide leadership in coaching tennis to over 200 youth, young adults, and adults.

Harris, V.W. Provide leadership and volunteer service in coaching basketball and soccer to over 75 youth and young adults.

Harris, V.W. Provide leadership and volunteer service to over 150 people in youth and adult development organizations.

Harris, V.W. Provide weekly volunteer assistance at PETsMart, Inc. to care for abandoned/homeless domesticated animals.

V. REFERENCES

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