Marital Satisfaction as it Related to Agreement on Money Matters and Money Management Competence Among Utah State University Married Students

Carol S. Young

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MARITAL SATISFACTION AS IT RELATED TO AGREEMENT ON MONEY MATTERS AND MONEY MANAGEMENT COMPETENCE AMONG UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY MARRIED STUDENTS

by

Carol S. Young

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

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Home Economics and Consumer Education
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ABSTRACT

Marital Satisfaction as it Related to Agreement on Money Matters and Money Management Competence Among Utah State University Married Students

by

Carol S. Young, Master of Science

Utah State University, 1982

Major Professor: Dr. Joan R. McFadden
Department: Home Economics and Consumer Education

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between marital satisfaction, agreement on money matters, and money management competence among married couples at Utah State University. A sample of 43 student couples responded to a written questionnaire designed to measure the three variables. On all three variables measured, high scores indicated that both spouses rated themselves high on marital satisfaction, agreement on money matters, and money management competence. A positive relationship was found to exist between the four correlations, the strongest for both partners being marital satisfaction with agreement on money matters. The correlation, marital satisfaction with money management competence, though not as strong, was significant for both partners.

(55 pages)
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

As present economic conditions persist in our society, economic anxiety levels seem to surge in the same upward proclivity as inflation rates. According to the October 1974 Index of Consumer Sentiment both expectations about inflation and fear of recession and bad times have greatly increased. With high levels of unemployment, increasing energy costs, and general living costs locked in double digits and still spiraling there are inevitable social-emotional effects on families and marriages. Because of gloomy economic news, often the problems and satisfactions married couples face today are translated into, or are represented by dollars. The relationship between money and personal marital feelings is significant to marriages and families, and consequently is significant to society in general.

Whether money problems are symptoms of other marital conflicts, or are problems in themselves is a point of controversy among family specialists. Because of the complex, interrelated social forces affecting decision making, money problems may in fact be both symptoms of other conflicts and sources of conflicts.

As values differ from individual to individual, disagreement as to how money decisions should be made are bound to occur. The resulting effects on the marital relationship are manifest in widely varying forms, and originate in various sources. Why money is a conspicuous source of
conflict has been explored by Blood and Blood (1978, p. 523) who offer the following explanations:

1) Money is necessary for the goods and services families rely on.

2) In one income families employed partners earn most of the money while nonemployed partners spend most of it, leaving the former to wonder where the money goes.

3) Marriages in the United States are egalitarian enough that both partners feel they should participate in decisions. When discretionary funds are available conflicts often result over the decisions as to its allocation.

4) Unlike child rearing problems, financial conflicts are spread throughout the entire life cycle, taking new forms as circumstances change.

5) Financial problems are more tangible than most other problems.

Whatever the source of conflict, and however the conflicts are manifest, studies find the same thing: money is the chief area of contention among husbands and wives (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Chillman & Meyer, 1966; Graff & Horne, 1973; Landis & Landis, 1973; Landis, 1975; Lansing & Morgan, 1955).

Lansing and Morgan (1955) found that financial satisfaction dropped during the early years of marriage when women dropped out of the labor force and as young children came. Liquid assets dropped sharply, families went into debt, and satisfaction with their standard of living sagged to a low ebb. The larger the number of children and the faster they arrived, the deeper the crisis.
The early years of marriage become even more stressful as one or both marriage partners pursue higher education. In past years married students were often able to provide for themselves economically without outside financial assistance. However, economic conditions have changed sufficiently during the past decade to make this financial independence less feasible. Jobs are less plentiful and inflation has taken a dramatic toll as reflected by the significant increases in costs of food, rent, books and tuition. Students now are more likely to look to family financial assistance, loans, scholarships, and grants for financial aid if they wish to remain in school (Landis & Landis, 1973).

Money and economics are aspects of marriage that effect families in a profound way. Married student couples comprise a uniquely economically stressed population. It is hoped that this study will illustrate the potential of money to strengthen the marital relationship on one hand and on the other to contribute to marital and family problems.

**Purpose**

It is the purpose of this study to investigate the relationship between marital satisfaction, and financial agreement and money management competence of married undergraduate couples at Utah State University. It will attempt to revalidate the positive relationship already found between marital satisfaction and agreement on finances. It will also test the
hypothesized positive relationship between marital satisfaction and money management competence. Data will be gathered via a mailed questionnaire.

Simply stated, this study will explore the following economic questions in student marriages:

1) Does a positive relationship in fact exist between the degree of financial agreement and level of marital happiness in student marriages?

2) Does a positive relationship exist between money management competence and level of marital happiness?

The Assumption

The researcher assumes the questionnaire measures what it is designed to measure.

The Delimitations

The study is limited to married students between the ages of 19 and 25, enrolled at Utah State University during the summer quarter, 1980.

Theoretical Definitions

The following phrases are defined in order to avoid ambiguity in the study:

1) Marital satisfaction (or happiness)—self-rated indicator of how one feels about his or her marriage (Landis, 1975).
2) Financial agreement (or agreement on money matters) -- mutual approval on economic attitudes and actions between marriage partners (Landis & Landis, 1973).

3) Money management -- a process whereby marriage partners identify goals and coordinate their economic resources toward achieving them (Mitra, 1977; Troelstrup, 1970).

Operational Definition

For this study, marital satisfaction, agreement on money matters, and money management competence will be equivalent to the scores on the scales. The higher the score, the higher the level of satisfaction, agreement, and competence, respectively.

Rationale

It is hoped that this study will aid in understanding the effects financial agreement and money management competence have on marital satisfaction. To do so, the following procedures were completed:

1) Survey 43 student couples in order to determine ratings on three research variables: marital satisfaction, agreement on money matters, and money management competence.

2) Score and code the ratings obtained in each questionnaire.

3) Determine the strength of relationship for the four correlations.

4) Provide recommendations for further study.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Though it is understood that happiness is a highly subjective quality of marriage, it is also true that studies have shown there are areas of agreement that couples reporting high levels of marital satisfaction have in common. The most commonly reported factor is agreement on finances. When 1,100 wives were asked what they felt were the most important elements in making happy and unhappy marriages, economic and financial problems were first on the list of factors producing unhappiness in marriages, and on the list of factors producing happiness in marriage (Landis, 1975).

In a study of dissolved and existing marriages, existing marriages were characterized by greater convergence over economic variables, and lesser conflict and greater compromise than dissolved marriages. Respondents from dissolved marriages consistently reported a higher level of conflict than did those from existing marriages. Specifically, Scanzoni (1968) found money most frequently to be the source of disagreement among dissolved marriages, and money to be the third most frequent source of disagreement among marriages.

That agreement in finances is common to happy marriages has been further validated in a study conducted in 1977. Of 581 married couples, happy to very happy couples agreed on money 72% of the time, while average
to very unhappy couples agreed on money 50% of the time (Landis & Landis, 1973).

In student marriages, research findings remain consistent with non-student marriages. A study of student marriages showed finances listed as the most frequently occurring problem (Price-Bonham, 1973).

From a 1972 study, the most commonly expressed feelings concerning marital economic conflict, in order of importance are:

1) that the spouse is a disappointment,
2) that their rights are diminished,
3) and that they cannot trust the other person (Palmer, 1972, p. 152).

The origins of these problems are mostly present at the time the marriage is contracted. There are two significant sources of discord for the families studied. The first source occurs when the economic goals of the husband and wife are different, and one of them finds that their financial expectations are not met, usually the wife. The second occurs when the expectation each has about his or her role in the financial decisions of the marriage are not complementary (Palmer, 1972, p. 152). This study points to the significance values have in financial problems. Economic objectives, role expectations and personal rights can all be translated into a "value system" or "orientations regarding marriage... which are part of the larger society, which are strongly held and which help to fashion the basic structure of the family" (Scanzoni, 1968, p. 453). Values are an
important perspective in the relationship between money and marital satisfaction.

Understanding the significance of money in marital relationships requires an overview of earlier established theories and previously collected data. This review of literature will discuss the following four topics pertinent to the study, 1) marital satisfaction and money, 2) values, 3) money management, and 4) married students. The literature covering these topics will provide a foundation for the development of this research.

Marital Satisfaction and Money

Despite some of the highest incomes in the world, Americans appear to quarrel over money more than anything else. When American wives were asked to recall the main disagreements they had ever had, financial conflicts were recalled first 24% of the time from a categorical listing of eight areas of disagreement, and 12% more than the other areas (Blood & Wolfe, 1960).

The following quotations from in-depth interviews conducted by Caplovitz (1979) provide some insight into the financial problems and tensions in marriages:

We're happy with each other. But with all the problems, with bills and all that, we don't see the good qualities in each other. Only about one day a month do we have time to enjoy each other. We argue a lot until we get all the tension out. Then we can enjoy each other.

It [the economy] hasn't really affected us except we now have many more arguments. We had a fight last night about taking a taxi.
I don't think we would have any problems if money wasn't a problem. We are actually very compatible. Money broke us up. We had so many financial arguments. Each of us felt that the other was spending foolishly. We would be arguing about things but the undercurrent would be money... My husband is frustrated. He's not making what he thinks he should be making. (Caplovitz, 1979, pp. 124-125)

Economic pressures are not necessarily confined to low socioeconomic families. Well-to-do families do not always escape marital disputes over finances. In the Caplovitz study, regardless of income level the more families were actually "affected by inflation, the more they suffered from it, and the greater the impact of recession, the more their marriages suffered" (Caplovitz, 1979, p. 125).

Family discord is frequently attributable to a failure to agree on money matters. It has been shown that married couples take longer to work out problems centering around family spending than in any area except sexual relations. Couples married 20 years or more reported that more time was required for reaching adjustment in spending the family income than in any area except sexual relations. This being the case, it is not surprising that 164 divorced people reported that while married they had agreed on money only 23% of the time and disagreed on money 77% of the time, while happy couples agreed on money 72% of the time (Landis & Landis, 1973).

In a study of couples who have requested counseling from various family service agencies, more than half of the respondents reported severe problems with money (Cutright, 1970). In a similar study of three groups of
couples--a group receiving marriage counseling, a divorced group, and a group of married couples—all three groups listed money in either first or second place as a cause of marital problems (Landis & Landis, 1973).

In research on changing marital patterns over time, money was among the three most significant topics of conflict for couples newly married and those who remained married 1 year later. For both partners money moved from third to first place as a significant source of conflict. Among the same couples after 1 year of marriage, those showing the least agreement in all other areas still ranked money as the most important area of conflict (Sternberg & Beier, 1977).

Another interesting insight into the role of money in marriages is found in the relationship discovered between marital harmony and payday. In a study of low socioeconomic status families in Washington, D. C., Lewis (1965) found couples to be happier immediately after checks were received than at any other time. After payday, however, tension increased as couples argued how money was to be allocated. Then as money was spent, tension decreased until the next payday.

That money and finances are significant to marital satisfaction is a fact common to both marriage counselors and attorneys. As evidenced by the review of literature presented here, this relationship has been established.
Values

In light of the significance of money in marriages, it is important to note Rueben Hill's secondary research findings in his study *Family Development in Three Generations* (Hill, Foote, Aldous, Carlson, & MacDonald, 1970, p. 123).

We have discovered in the course of several studies that respondents tend to be more sensitive about revealing their income and the disposition made of it than they are to talk about their sexual experiences. Indeed, it has been suggested that American men are more ego-involved in the amount of income they earn and the assets they have accumulated than they are in their intimate family relations.

This reticence to divulge financial information is rooted in the fact that how money is used is representative of the value systems of men and women. Struggles about money are of deeper significance than monetary values as such.

Values go far deeper than is evidenced by choices made in the department stores. For example, a young man whose family used discretionary money for good clothes, new cars, or for entertaining may find his own values center around making good impressions on neighbors and friends. His wife's family might have had basic values of education or saving for the future, or owning a home. During courtship she may have been impressed with her husband's willingness to spend money on her. However, after marriage the free spending her husband is accustomed to may be a source of friction. As the wife becomes aware of their income limitations, she will probably feel that they should save money for a home.
or for things that are consistent with her set of values. To her, the financial extravagance they enjoyed during courtship should now be foregone in order to have money for things she considers more lasting, of more permanent value. The husband, being accustomed to thinking of money as a means of providing pleasure, may not be in agreement with what he feels is a sacrifice of present enjoyment for the future. He may find it difficult to understand the wife’s apparent change of attitude following marriage (Landis & Landis, 1973, p. 138). Examples depicting other economically represented values could be used to illustrate just how real the translation from personal values to money is. The values each partner brings to the marriage influence the level of economic conflict within their relationship.

Among the powerful, far-reaching questions that can be raised by money in marriage are the following:

1) Who makes the money?


3) How will we handle our money? Will you give me your paycheck at the end of the pay period and I give you an allowance?

4) How will we divide our money? Will we have a budget?

5) If we both work, do we pool our money? Or do you pay for certain things and I for others?

6) What if we need more money? Do I (the wife) go out and get a job? Do you get an extra job? Do we need more money, or do we want more money?

7) What if we have to borrow? Who from? In-laws? Friends? Bank? Loan company?
8) How many and what kinds of credit cards and charge accounts will we have? (McGinnis & Finnegan, 1976, p. 44)

All of these questions represent personal values and the corresponding value systems of marriage partners.

Money, or economic values have become symbols of countless needs and satisfactions; and because of this, money values are meaningful issues in many areas of husband-wife adjustments. The real difficulty in today's marriages is not just how the money will be earned or how it will be spent, but rather what kinds of values the couple will seek to obtain through its use. Differences in philosophies about the use of money are "symbolic of basic differences in personal values and aspirations," because money has a place in the personal values of everyone, "and the ends the individual pursues with money are symbolic of his total value system" (Landis, 1975).

Money Management

A study of 750 couples experiencing financial problems listed the following specific situations as creating the difficulty. In decreasing order of occurrence they are:

1) inadequate management
2) uncooperativeness
3) one spouse regarding the other as incompetent
4) lack of trust with money
5) selfish spouse (one spouse spending more money primarily
on himself)

6) extravagance

7) major purchases without the spouse's consent

8) husband a poor provider

9) stingy spouse (Rice, 1979).

Note the number one position of inadequate management. This study reinforces the position that it is the allocation of money available rather than the quantity of income, that is the strongest source of marital discord.

In his massive family research, Hill et al. (1970), found that "successful" families exercise management skills in handling their resources--"regardless of how much they had--so as to gain the things in life they wanted most." Hence, Tolstoy's observation, "All happy families resemble one another; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way" (Tolstoy, 1970).

Hill et al. found that the better managers, those couples who communicate with each other, and plan together, are more satisfied with their consumer expenditures. As the marriages begin, couples have much to learn about each other. But as time goes on couples in touch with each other can risk buying spontaneously because they can guess each other's reactions. High-income couples in Hill's sample planned less than low-income couples because they could afford to make mistakes. These findings suggest that planning and budgeting are most urgent for newly married couples with modest incomes who cannot afford the spontaneity of planless
buying. However, Hill et al. found couples under all circumstances were more satisfied with consumer expenditures the more rational and less impulsive they were. Planning has at least a marginal payoff (Hill et al., 1970).

**Married Students**

During October 1975, there were 9,697,000 students, age 14 to 34 years, enrolled in institutions of higher learning. This number does not include military service personnel who were also enrolled as college students. Of the total enrollment, ages 14 to 34, 19.6% were married--22.6% of the males and 15.5% of the females. If only the group ages 14 to 24 years of age is considered, 11.1% were married--12.3% of the males and 9.4% of the females. Married students have been asked, "Knowing what you know now, would you marry before finishing college?" Three-fourths of married students questioned said they would marry if they had to do it over. However, marriage during college years poses the same financial problems common in non-student marriages (Knox, 1979).

Syracuse University married undergraduates were surveyed to find student satisfaction and dissatisfactions. Money was the most serious problem to a third of the married males in the study (Chillman & Meyer, 1966). In similarly conducted studies, money conflicts have consistently been found to be among the major problems student couples face (Graff & Horne, 1973; Price-Bonham, 1973).
In Graff and Horne's 1973 study of married students, 54% of the undergraduate husbands and 49% of the undergraduate wives reported considerable to moderate concern over financial problems. In spite of this number one position among areas of concern, in the same sample only 7% of the husbands and 4% of the wives surveyed wanted assistance with finances (Graff & Horne, 1973). This seeming inconsistency between concern and desire for assistance could possibly be one reason for continued financial problems throughout the married life. However, it is also true that this finding is consistent with Hill's et al. (1970) secondary research findings concerning the reticence of respondents to divulge financial information.

Typically, the major sources of income for married students are husband and wife full-time employment as listed by one-third of couples in a 1978 study; veterans benefits; husband and wife part-time employment; and loans and savings (Bergen & Bergen, 1978). In this same study quality of marriage in relation to sources of financial support was investigated. The following was found:

Couples who depended on savings tended to disagree more frequently about parents and in-laws, togetherness time, and household tasks. Couples who depended on loans had significantly lower quality of marriage scores. They quarreled and got on each other's nerves more frequently, laughed together less often, and disagreed on handling of finances, philosophy of life and matters of recreation. (Bergen & Bergen, 1978, p. 245)
As represented in the above findings, married students and non-students alike experience problems over finances. Because the use of money is representative of deep-seated values and aspirations, how money is allocated to wants and needs is a complex, highly invested process. The management of money available can either be a source of marital discord or a contributor to marital satisfaction.
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter outlines the research procedures used in the study. It outlines the hypotheses, research design, sampling and data collection procedures, an explanation of the instrument, and the treatment of the data.

Hypotheses

In light of earlier research findings, and in keeping with the purpose of this study, the research questions are stated in the following hypotheses:

1) There will be a positive relationship between agreement on money matters and marital satisfaction for wives and husbands.
2) There will be a positive relationship between money management competence and marital satisfaction for both wives and husbands.

Design

The study investigates the relationship between marital satisfaction, financial agreement, and money management competence by analysis of data secured by means of mailed questionnaires. Married student partners responded to the questionnaires and the survey data was coded and transferred into a mode acceptable to the computer. The strength of the correlations were then analyzed using Pearson's statistic.
Sample

The research sample consisted of undergraduate married students who were enrolled in classes at Utah State University during summer quarter, 1980.

A copy of this research proposal was submitted to the Committee for Research on Human Subjects, Utah State University, School of Graduate Studies, in June of 1980. With their approval, and the permission of the Admissions Office, a computer printout listing of married undergraduate Utah State University students were secured. The subjects were required to meet the following criteria:

1) 19-25 years of age.

2) The main source of income from employment of marriage partners, loans, scholarships or grants. Parent supported couples were not included in this sample.

These requirements evolved from the recognition that married undergraduate students at Utah State University enrolled in university classes have varying income sources. It is the opinion of the researcher that couples receiving substantial financial assistance from parents may not currently experience stress from financial decisions. Also, parents may influence their financial decisions along a continuum from some to extensive. The criteria were established to ensure a relatively homogenous research group in order to avoid excessive variance that could result from a heterogenous sample. To select the sample from the printout, systematic
random sampling (Bailey, 1978) was employed. The printout listed the eligible population by social security number, and every fifth name on the list was selected for the sample.

**Collection Procedures**

Once the original sample group was selected, introductory letters were sent to each couple to explain the study's purpose, to assure confidentiality, and to explain participants' rights. Follow-up phone calls were then made to determine the willingness of couples to cooperate with the researcher. The sampling procedure is summarized in Table 1.

Three part questionnaires were mailed to the participating couples for husbands and wives to complete. Couples were asked to return the completed questionnaires within 5 working days. The couples who did not return the questionnaires within the allotted time were contacted by phone, by which time participants explained their decision to withdraw, or their intent to mail back the completed survey.

**The Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was organized as follows:

1) General information on couple
   a. years and months married
   b. participation in money management course or financial counseling
   c. participation in general marriage counseling
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Original Sample</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Couples unwilling to participate</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31.3</td>
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<td>Sample receiving questionnaires</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>68.7</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>115</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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<td><strong>Sample Receiving Questionnaires</strong></td>
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<td>Questionnaires returned and usable</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>54.4</td>
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<td>Questionnaires returned not applicable</td>
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<td>6.2</td>
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<td>Questionnaires not delivered</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaires not returned</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Couples unwilling to participate after</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>reading questionnaire</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>79</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
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*Total population = 455.*
d. main source of income

e. combined yearly income

f. religious preference

2) Identifying information on spouse

a. sex

b. age

3) Marital satisfaction as defined by satisfaction with (Miller, 1976):

a. finances

b. entertainment or recreation

c. affection

d. chores

e. children

f. sex

g. religion

h. in-laws

4) Agreement on finances in the areas of (Landis, 1976):

a. savings

b. credit cards

c. clothing purchases

d. recreation

e. grocery shopping

f. budgeting
g. loans
h. postponing purchases

5) Money management competence according to occurrence of the following (Troelstrup, 1970):

a. plan ahead
b. income sufficiency
c. coping when broke
d. resist whims
e. save for purchase
f. comparison shop
g. resist impulse buying
h. reconcile checkbook

Three eight-item summated scaled instruments were used to ascertain the three variables: marital satisfaction, economic agreement, and money management competence. The formats and scoring were designed uniformly to ensure testing consistency. The marital satisfaction scale used was an instrument adapted for use by Miller (1976). The scale measuring economic agreement was an original instrument designed from the general format used in studies conducted by Landis (1975). Troelstrup's (1970) self-evaluating instrument designed to measure money management competence was used as content model for the scale measuring money management competence.
A Likert-type rating scale was used on the instrument. The subjects indicated the extent of their agreement by selecting from among scaled category responses such as the following:

1) always disagree
2) usually disagree
3) agree
4) usually agree
5) always agree

A score of 4 or 5 indicated strong agreement, while a lower score of 1 or 2 indicated strong disagreement. In general, the higher the composite scores, the higher the self-rating on the particular variable measured.

The composite variable scores were the summation of the eight items. The highest possible score for each scale was 40 and the lowest possible score was 5. Missing values were coded so that they could be deleted from the data.

Coding

Each couple's data was recorded on a single computer card. Identifying and demographic information occupied the first 20 columns. The test scores followed; first the husband's score, and then the wife's score. This coding process made it possible for each couple to be studied individually as well as part of the total sample.
Analysis of Data

Data from the three scales for marriage partners were transformed into scores ranging from 8 to 40 for each scale. The Pearson's correlation (r) was used to test the strength of relationship for the four sets of variables.
CHAPTER IV
DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter will present the findings by first describing and analyzing the data gathered, and second, by presenting the results and interpretation of the data as they relate to the two hypotheses.

Sample--General information

All subjects met certain pre-established criteria. First, one or both were between the ages of 19 and 25, married with one or both spouses enrolled in classes at Utah State University during the summer of 1980. The mean age of the husband subjects was 23.6, and the mean age of their wives was 22.6, as shown in Table 2.

They had been married an average of 1.3 years. The majority of the subject couples had been married less than 2 years. The maximum length of marriage for any of the subject couples was 6 years. These findings are shown in Table 3.

The second criterion required that the couples’ main source of income be derived from other than family related sources. Over half of the couples’ main source of income came from salaries and wages while 16% came from grants or loans. Three of the couples’ main source of income came from business profits or odd jobs. The remaining couples’ main source of income came from scholarships, grants, and loans (Table 4).
Table 2

Ages of Subjects (N = 43)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Husband Frequency</th>
<th>Wife Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19-20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 or over*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Student's spouse ages were responsible for older subject ages.

Table 3

Number of Years Married (N = 43)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table 5, 67% of the couples’ combined yearly incomes fell between $4,000 and $12,000 a year, while for 26%, their yearly income exceeded $12,000. One subject couple reported an annual income of less than $4,000. The yearly income fell between $10,000 and $12,000. Of the two couples who chose not to respond to this question, one couple wrote that the question was too personal.

When asked if either partner in the couple had taken any type of money management course 37.2% responded yes. Two of the couples reported that they had received general marriage counseling.
Table 5

Combined Yearly Income Amounts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Number of Couples</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to $4,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$4,000 to $6,000</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$6,000 to $8,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$8,000 to $10,000</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000 to $12,000</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$12,000 to $14,000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$14,000 to $16,000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over $16,000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>43</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

The husband-wife subjects responded to the three part questionnaire providing data necessary to test the variables for the correlations. The pairs of variables tested for relationships are listed below:

Husband satisfaction with husband's perception of

1) agreement on money matters

2) money management competence
Wife satisfaction with wife's perception of:

1) agreement on money matters,
2) money management competence.

As the mean husband score was 34.72, and the wife mean satisfaction score was 35.4, wives tested appeared to be more satisfied than their husbands with marriage. Wives' perception of agreement on money management scores were also higher (mean of 34.17) than their spouses (mean of 33.32). Though husbands rated their money management competence higher (mean of 31.34) than did the wives (mean score of 30.06), money management scores were lowest overall. The obtained t values were not found to be significant, consequently these paired husband/wife scores were not significantly different. These findings are shown in Table 6.

Table 6
Husband and Wife Scores: Satisfaction, Agreement on Money Matters and Money Management Competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean Scores</th>
<th>t values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>Husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital satisfaction</td>
<td>35.40</td>
<td>34.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement on money matters</td>
<td>34.17</td>
<td>33.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money management competence</td>
<td>30.86</td>
<td>31.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Pearson statistic (r) was used to test the strength of the relationships between the six variables. At the .05 criterion of significance, all correlations were significant. Three of the four correlations were significant above the .05 level, two at the .001 level.

The correlation coefficient for the husband was .56 between agreement on money matters and husband marital satisfaction as shown in Table 7. This correlation shows a stronger relationship than the relationship between other variables in this study. Though the relationship between satisfaction and money management competence was a significant one for husbands and wives, the correlation coefficient indicating the marital satisfaction and agreement on money matters was the strongest relationship found. The correlation coefficient for the wife for satisfaction and agreement on money matters was .45, and the value for satisfaction and money management competence was .43, showing no statistical difference in scores. The husband correlation coefficient for satisfaction with money management competence was .39.

In addition to the use of the correlation (r) to test for significance of the relationship between variables, multiple regression analysis was conducted to explain the sources of the variance. In addition to agreement on money matters, and money management competence, demographic variables including years married, combined yearly income, completion of a
Table 7
Pearson (r) Correlation Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Satisfaction</th>
<th>Agreement on Money Matters</th>
<th>Money Management Competence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N = 43)</td>
<td>(N = 43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P = 0.001</td>
<td>P = 0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N = 43)</td>
<td>(N = 43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P = 0.001</td>
<td>P = 0.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

money management course, and marriage counseling were included in the data submitted to multiple regression analysis.

Almost half the variance in the husband satisfaction scores was explained. For husband satisfaction, agreement on money matters seemed to account for most of that variance. Years married was the second most important factor. Amount of income contributed least to husband's satisfaction.

Almost 60% of the variance in satisfaction in the scores of the wives was explained by the six variables. Years married accounted most significantly for that variance. Shorter marriages reported higher satisfaction levels. Money management competence was the second most important factor, followed by agreement on money matters. Once again, income amount contributed least to explaining the variance.
Table 8

Multiple Regressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>Standard Error B</th>
<th>t values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husband Satisfaction</td>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>17.60</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>3.15*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agreement on money matters</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>3.15*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Years married</td>
<td>-.98</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>2.17*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Money management course</td>
<td>-2.36</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Money management competence</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Income amount</td>
<td>-.38</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Variance explained</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife Satisfaction</td>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>13.67</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>2.29*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agreement on money matters</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>4.0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Years married</td>
<td>-1.76</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>4.0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Money management course</td>
<td>-2.55</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>2.04*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>money management competence</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>2.75*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Income amount</td>
<td>-.35</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marriage counseling</td>
<td>-7.40</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Variance explained</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1Marriage counseling variable excluded from analysis for husband satisfaction.

*Significant at .05 level.
Summary of Findings

The subjects were married student couples enrolled at Utah State University. The mean age of the husbands was 23.6, and mean age for the wives was 22.6. They had been married for an average of 1.3 years.

The main source of income for the majority of the couples came from salaries or weekly pay checks. Almost 70% of the couples' combined yearly incomes fell between $4,000 and $12,000. Nearly 40% of the subject couples had taken a money management course. Two couples had received marriage counseling.

Mean satisfaction scores for both husbands and wives were approximately 5 points below the maximum score of 40. This score indicates that husbands and wives rate themselves "quite" satisfied to "perfectly" satisfied with their marriages. All mean scores were relatively high (above 30) indicating that the couples surveyed generally viewed themselves as "quite" satisfied with their marriages, in agreement on finances and competent money managers.

The hypothesized positive relationship between marital satisfaction and agreement on money matters and money management competence for husbands and wives was tested by means of the Pearson statistic (r). The stronger relationship among both husbands and wives was between satisfaction and agreement on money matters. Wife money management scores were more highly correlated to wife satisfaction than husband money management competence to husband satisfaction. Multiple regression analysis
identified years married to be a significant contributor to variance. For husband satisfaction, agreement on money matters accounted for most of the variance.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

Many studies have validated the fact that money is a chief source of contention among husbands and wives. During difficult economic conditions, this source of conflict imposes an even greater pressure on the marriage relationship. This researcher sought to investigate the relationship between marital satisfaction, and agreement on money matters and money management competence in order to determine the extent of the role that agreement and competence play in marriages. To assure a relatively homogenous research group, the study was limited to married students, ages 19-25, who received their main source of income from other than family-related sources. A list of all students who met the criteria established for this research project was supplied by the Admissions Office at Utah State University for the summer quarter 1980. A systematic sampling procedure was employed and the subjects were contacted. Forty-three married couples, or 37.4% of the original 115 couples, participated in this research project.

Data were collected by means of a mailed questionnaire. In addition to asking for personal, descriptive data, the questionnaire sought to elicit representative scores for marital satisfaction, agreement on money matters and money management competence from both the husbands and wives.
These scores were coded and tabulated in order to ascertain the strength of the relationship among the correlations.

The mean age of the husband subjects was 23.6 years of age and the mean age of their wives was 22.6. They had been married an average of 1.3 years. Over half of the couples' main source of income came from salary and wages. Sixty-seven percent of the couples' combined yearly incomes fell within $4,000 and $12,000 a year.

Conclusions

All of the subjects' mean scores for the three variables, marital satisfaction, agreement on money matters and money management competence were relatively high. Satisfaction scores ranked highest, followed by agreement on money matters, and money management competence. Wives were more satisfied than their husbands with marriage. Wives also perceived greater agreement on money matters than their husbands. However, husbands rated their money management competence higher than wives rated theirs.

Both hypotheses were accepted in the study. The relationship tested yielded correlations that were significant. The strongest correlations throughout the study were between marital satisfaction and agreement on money matters, however, money management competence with marital satisfaction also indicated a strong correlation.
Through multiple regression analysis it was determined that six variables (1. agreement on money matters, 2. money management competence, 3. years married, 4. yearly income, 5. participation in a money management course, and/or 6. marriage counseling) explained about half of the variance in satisfaction levels. It was found that agreement on money matters accounted for about half of that variance for husbands, and years married accounted for about one-third of the variance for wives. Years married was the second most important factor in that variance for husbands, and money management competence and agreement on money matters were respectively the second and third most important factors for wives. Income amount contributed least to the variance in the correlations.

Limitations

Though the conclusions from this study have supported the proposed hypotheses, limitations of the research were evident. By nature of the complexity of the marriage relationship, the variables (marital satisfaction, agreement on money matters, and money management) were not easily isolated variables. Consequently this study's findings can only be applicable to the variables as they are defined within the context of this study. Additionally, generalizations to the married population as a whole should be carefully drawn as the sample was restricted by the sampling criteria.

The finding that married students were "quite satisfied" to "perfectly satisfied" was reassuring. However, in light of current high
divorce rates this finding may warrant explanation. One possible explanation may be that only satisfied couples participated in the study, while dissatisfied couples, not wanting to respond to questions dealing with marital satisfaction, chose not to participate. The group unwilling to participate either at the introductory level of the study after receiving a letter explaining the study, or after receiving the questionnaires comprised 40% of the original 115 selected participants. Another possible explanation may be that marriages were of too short a duration for dissatisfaction to be evident.

Implications

This study has implications for aiding married students to establish and/or maintain higher levels of satisfaction within marital relationships through increasing the awareness of the significance the roles agreement in money matters, and money management competence play in marital satisfaction. That agreement in money matters is indeed a significant factor in marital satisfaction has been revalidated, and the significance the role money management competence plays in marital satisfaction has been shown.

These findings imply the need for increased attention of marriage partners to money matters in terms of agreement and in terms of the attention paid to money management skills. Couples responding to these findings through improved financial planning and through increased discussion of money within the context of their personal relationships will increase the likelihood of finding satisfaction within marriage.
Recommendations

In order to obtain a higher percentage of return in questionnaire response, it is recommended that yearly income amounts be excluded from similar research. Though such information is useful, it is not necessarily fundamental to the study; and more importantly, it is the opinion of this researcher that this information is considered by subjects to be most personal, and consequently the greatest deterrent to subject participation.

Of the two variables (agreement on money matters and money management competence), the money management competence variable as it affects marital satisfaction requires more insightful study. That money management does play a significant role in marital satisfaction has been shown in this study. However, by nature of the ambiguity in the definition of money management competence, without further study into the specific effects of money management practices on marriage, strong implications cannot be made. Consequently, studies investigating the detailed effects of money management are called for. Because more insight into the study of marital satisfaction can be gained through detailed interview studies than through questionnaire surveys such as this, interview research is recommended.
REFERENCES


APPENDIXES
Appendix I: Introductory Letter to Sample
Hello,

I am a graduate student conducting a study of young married couples at Utah State University. If one or both of you are currently enrolled in classes at Utah State, and are not receiving your main source of income from your parents, I would like to ask for your assistance in a study this summer.

This past school year I have been working with the College of Family Life in conjunction with Utah State University Cooperative Extension Service in designing and carrying out research dealing specifically with marriage and the family. My particular interest in consumer issues as they affect and are effected by the family. My hope is to be able to continue my studies in the area of Consumer Economics on the Doctoral level.

Studies have repeatedly validated the fact that finances rate in first or second place in marital problems. The significance of finances in marriage, in combination with the current instability of our economy make this study especially meaningful. The information you provide will help marriage and financial counselors as they guide couples to solve their financial problems.

If you agree to help, I will send questionnaires to your address for each of you to respond to. The study will be used strictly for statistical research. Your names will not be used in any way.

I will call you in a few days to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Carol S. Young
Appendix II: Consent Letter and Questionnaire
Dear Participating Couple:

I am enclosing the questionnaires you agreed to complete. This research project focuses on marital satisfaction as it relates to financial agreement and money management. As I am interested in your separate responses as husband and wife, please fill the questionnaires out separately without discussing your answers.

Please return the completed forms within five days in the enclosed postage paid envelope. If for some reason you are unable to do so, I will make arrangements to pick them up at your home.

If you are willing to participate fully in the study as it has been outlined to you, would you please sign your names in the following blanks for your approval and consent:

_____________________________________________________________________

May I once again assure you of your right to withdraw from the study at any time if you choose to do so.

Please read the questions carefully and complete all questions on the forms. The section labeled General Information may be completed by either marriage partner, while the questionnaires themselves should be answered separately by both if you. If you have any questions about the survey please feel free to contact me. I would be more than happy to talk to you again.

Thank you once again for your cooperation and assistance.

Sincerely,

Carol S. Young
home phone - 753-2961
office phone - 750-1536
GENERAL INFORMATION FORM

1. Number of years and months married: ___ years, ___ months

CHECK ONE IN THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

2. Have either of you taken a money management course, or received financial counseling?
   Yes ___ 1   No ___ 2

3. Have you sought marriage counseling at any time?
   Yes ___ 1   No ___ 2

4. The main source of your income is:
   Salary, commissions, monthly checks ___ 1
   Weekly checks, hourly wages, piece work ___ 2
   Profits and fees from a business or profession ___ 3
   Savings and investments ___ 4
   Odd jobs and seasonal work ___ 5
   Scholarships ___ 6
   Grants ___ 7
   Loans ___ 8
   Inherited savings and investments ___ 9

5. Your combined yearly income before taxes is:
   up to $2,000 ___ 1
   $2,000 to $4,000 ___ 2
   $4,000 to $6,000 ___ 3
   $6,000 to $8,000 ___ 4
   $8,000 to $10,000 ___ 5
   $10,000 to $12,000 ___ 6
   $12,000 to $14,000 ___ 7
   $14,000 to $16,000 ___ 8
   over $16,000 ___ 9

6. Religious preference:
   Catholic ___ 1   LDS ___ 3   Other ___ 5
   Jewish ___ 2   Protestant ___ 4
**QUESTIONNAIRE**

PLEASE CHECK AND FILL IN THE FOLLOWING IDENTIFICATION:

- Husband: 1
- Wife: 2
- Age: ___

FOR NUMBERS 1–24 CIRCLE THE NUMBER THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR RESPONSE:

How satisfied are you currently with:

1. the way money is handled in your marriage ......... 1 2 3 4 5
2. the things you and your (husband/wife) do together when you go out visiting or for entertainment or recreation ......... 1 2 3 4 5
3. the amount of affection in your marriage ......... 1 2 3 4 5
4. the way chores around the house are performed ......... 1 2 3 4 5
5. the way you and your (husband/wife) have raised your children ......... 1 2 3 4 5
6. sexual relations in your marriage ......... 1 2 3 4 5
7. religious beliefs and activities in your marriage ......... 1 2 3 4 5
8. the way you and your (husband/wife) deal with in-laws in your marriage ......... 1 2 3 4 5

How often do you think you and your spouse agree on the following:

9. the amount of money designated as savings ......... 1 2 3 4 5
10. the number of credit card purchases you make ......... 1 2 3 4 5
11. the amount of money spent on clothing ......... 1 2 3 4 5
12. the use of money for recreation activities and equipment ......... 1 2 3 4 5
13. grocery shopping choices ......... 1 2 3 4 5
14. the manner by which money is budgeted ......... 1 2 3 4 5
15. the use of bank or student loans ......... 1 2 3 4 5
16. postponing purchasing something you really want until some future time ......... 1 2 3 4 5
How often do you do the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>never</th>
<th>almost never</th>
<th>usually</th>
<th>nearly always</th>
<th>always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17. make a rough plan for large expenses for several months ahead</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. find that the income is sufficient to last from payday to payday</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. when &quot;broke&quot; get along as best I can until income is received</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. resist the spending of money according to my whims</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. save ahead for something I want very much such as a new suit, or personal big ticket purchase</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. make it a habit to go to more than one store to compare price and quality before deciding on a big purchase</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. plan for purchases in advance and not &quot;impulse&quot; buy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. reconcile my checkbook with the bank statement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>