

**Conceptualizing and Measuring “Healthy Marriage”
For Empirical Research and Evaluation Studies:**

**A Review of the Literature
and
Annotated Bibliography
(Task Three)**

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Marriage and couple relationships constitute an area of intense interest for researchers as well as policy makers. One of the goals of the Healthy Marriages study is to inform current discussions regarding the **measurement** of aspects of the quality of marital relationships. This literature review and annotated bibliography represent several products of Child Trends' project to review the state of the art in measuring couple relationships. The literature review and bibliography included here provide information on the psychometric properties of existing measures/tools used in current research on couple relationships across a broad range of sub-populations. These populations include: cohabiting couples, stepfamilies and remarried families, families who are co-parenting after the couple relationship has ended, families with children, families in which one or more partners in a couple is in the military, and families in which one or more partners in a couple is incarcerated. We also provide information on the psychometric properties of general measures that have been widely used in the literature, as well as measures that have been used to capture societal norms, values, and attitudes.

The review contains psychometric information on measures of marriage from published papers and studies, most of which were conducted during the past decade. The review is not exhaustive, but rather a broad representation of the type and quality of measures that have been previously used. The review of the psychometric properties of existing measures is intended to be a useful tool for the development of measures of healthy marriage for future research and evaluation.

How This Literature Review and Annotated Bibliography Were Compiled

We selected and located the articles reviewed using a standardized process. First, we used several databases containing marriage research articles to identify relevant articles for the populations of interest. The data bases used included among others PsycINFO, Sociofile, EBSCO, and Web of Science. This literature search allowed us to identify well-known journals and books that contained articles on marriage and marital relationships for the sub-populations of interest. The journals used in this search included, but are not limited to, the *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *Demography*, *Journal of Family Issues*, *Social Forces*, *the American Journal of Sociology*, *the American Sociological Review*, *Military Medicine*, *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, *International Journal of Sociology of the Family*, and *Family Relations*.

What This Literature Review and Annotated Bibliography Contain

The reviews of the literature and annotated bibliography are provided for the following groups:

- Cohabiting and Visiting Couples
- Stepfamilies and Remarried Families
- Families Co-parenting Post Relationship
- Families with Children
- Military Families
- Incarcerated Families

We also provide information on the psychometric properties of:

- General measures of Marriage; and
- Measures of Societal Norms, Values, and Attitudes

For each article reviewed in the annotated bibliography, we provide the following information: the title, author, publication citation, the purpose, focus of the research, the source of data, the research design/sampling frame, the method of data collation, the study population, the measure used, psychometric information (reliability and validity) of the measure, and an additional comment on the findings of the study.

Like many measures in the behavioral and social sciences, some of the measures included here may have stronger reliability and validity, than others. For many measures, very little psychometric information is provided. This is not to imply that these measures are not important, just that more information is needed on their psychometric properties. We also provide a Summary/ Synthesis of all of the articles reviewed for each of the sub-populations of interest.

What Did the Reviews Tell Us About the Status of the Measurement of Marital Relationships among Various Sub-Populations?

Key findings based on our review of the literature for various population groups are summarized below.

Cohabiting and Visiting Couples

Cohabiting couples represent an increasingly common family form, and the research community has begun to devote much attention to cohabiting couples in recent years. Cohabiting couples are distinguished from “visiting” couples, a term made popular by the Fragile Families study. Visiting couples are those who are romantically involved and have a child together, but who do not share a common residence. To date, only a handful of studies have focused on visiting couples, but research on this group is expected to increase given the recent availability of the Fragile Families data. Although cohabiting and visiting couples face challenges that differ from those of married couples, studies generally use the same measures used with married couples. Moreover, studies do not generally conduct separate psychometric analyses for cohabiting, visiting, and married couples. Our review suggests that the measurement of relationship quality for cohabiting and visiting couples could benefit from the following:

Testing the psychometric properties of well-established measures specifically for populations of cohabitators and visitors, rather than for cohabitators or visitors combined with married couples, as this is typically done;

Developing measures that more accurately reflect the unique circumstances that cohabiting and visiting couples face, and that can capture the under-studied dimensions of relationships most salient to these family forms, such as frequency and nature of contact;

Encouraging more quantitative research on the quality and stability of visiting parent relationships, as well as the frequency and nature of visiting parents’ contact with their non-resident children;

Developing qualitative studies that examine how visiting couples’ relationships and parenting differ from cohabiting parents;

Collecting longitudinal data that will allow researchers to measure and track changes in cohabitators’ and visitors’ relationship quality over time; and

Examining subgroup differences in relationship quality, to see if overall quality and the importance of specific dimensions of quality vary by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, presence of children, gender, and age.

Step and Remarried Families.

The defining feature of stepfamilies is the presence of children from a previous union. As found for cohabiting and visiting couples, for the most part, remarriages in which neither partner brings children into the marriage are conceptualized and measured similarly to first marriages. Nevertheless, a key distinguishing feature of studies of stepfamilies in comparison to intact biological families is the role of step-parenting. Also, the role of the ex-spouse or ex-partner can be critical to the current relationship. While the theoretical and substantive understanding of what stepfamilies are like and how they function has increased in recent decades, measures still lag behind in terms of both theory and research findings. With few exceptions, researchers working in this area have not applied the progress of the last two decades to the development of measures that capture issues unique to stepfamilies or that go beyond the stepchild-stepparent relationship. Our review of the literature suggests that the measurement of marital relationships for stepfamilies and remarried families could be further aided by:

- Careful and thorough psychometric analyses of existing measures on nationally representative samples of stepfamilies. It is still unclear whether measures developed for couples in first unions are appropriate for couples in stepfamilies;
- The study of cohabiting stepfamilies, as well as father-stepmother households.
- Inclusion of a life-course perspective, to study couples over time as their relationship evolves.

Couples Co-Parenting After Relationship Dissolution

Co-parenting is a feature of the couple relationship that can occur when both parents are together, and also when they are apart. The nature of the co-parenting relationship has the potential to change over time, as new unions are established and additional children may be born to either partner. Research suggests that those who have positive co-parenting relationships prior to divorce are more likely to be satisfied with their shared physical custody (Hetherington & Stanley-Heven, 1994); and low conflict prior to divorce is also related to co-operative coparenting. Most prior research on couples who are co-parenting after relationship dissolution has focused on divorce and its effects on children. Few studies have specifically addressed the issue of the couple relationship after relationship dissolution. Our review of the literature suggests that the measurement of relationship quality for couples co-parenting after relationship dissolution could benefit from the following:

- Testing of validated and comprehensive measures, such as the Ahrons' Quality of Co-parental Communication Scale, on populations typically subjected to welfare policy;
- Testing of measures that have been validated for divorced couples on couples who have dissolved their *non-marital* union;
- Expansion of theoretical models to consider the pathways by which co-parenting in diverse contexts would influence child well-being (e.g., the dissolution of cohabiting and visiting relationships, or co-parenting when one partner begins a new cohabiting relationship);
- Encouraging qualitative research on whether marital status makes a difference in how 'co-parenting' should be measured for separated couples; and
- Taking into account the age of the child and time since relationship disruption or divorce when considering appropriate co-parenting measures (Kitzmann et al. 2003).

Families with Children

Research on the marital quality of couples with children typically have two purposes: to examine the influence of marital quality on children's well-being or to study the associations between family processes – such as becoming a parent -- and marital quality. Studies of the former category typically focus on the effects of parental conflict on offspring well-being in either childhood or young adulthood, often with the goal of understanding the divorce process. The relationship between parental conflict and child well-being is well-documented; however, the links between other aspects of marital quality and child well-being are not.

Research on measures of relationship quality among couples with children would benefit from:

- Development and validation of constructs such as ‘commitment,’ ‘intimacy’ and communication patterns among couples with children, and in particular, testing whether these constructs are linked to child well-being;
- Development of measures that can be used for unmarried as well as married couples;
- Testing the applicability of measures for race and ethnic subgroups; and
- Testing the applicability of measures for low-income and low-education sub-populations.

Military Families

A large and growing body of research currently exists on marital relationships in military populations, as researchers have examined the issues associated with deployment and family reintegration following prolonged involuntary separation. The most common separation in military populations that is likely to influence marital relationships involves an active duty member leaving a spouse as part of their military duty. Other separations can involve two active duty members of the same family. Recent examples of family separations due to deployment include peacekeeping missions, humanitarian aid missions, and wartime deployments (e.g., the Persian Gulf War). To these families, separation presents stresses to marital relationships in three stages-- preparation, during service, and reunion. Each stage has its own emotions and problems.

There are several strengths associated with the measurement of marriages among military populations. For the most part, available measures of marital relationships in military populations have used readily available measures from available literature on marriage and family relationships. However, in some cases, particular items have been adapted for use with military populations. Many studies have also made efforts to use shortened versions of longer measures in attempts to obtain information from respondents. In addition, some studies have attempted longitudinal analyses to ascertain changes in marital relationships from one time point to another, and in the various stages of preparation, wartime, and reunion.

However, on the other hand, existing measures are not designed to collect marital data on active duty military personnel. In some studies, it is also difficult to determine the validity and reliability of the measure for the military sample because no psychometric data are provided, and in some cases, when these data are provided, the reliability and validity estimates cited are often from a previous test of the measure. Thus, one has to extrapolate to determine how the measure works for the military sample. Based on our review, we suggest that future research on marital relationships in military populations could benefit from the following:

- The development, testing, refinement and use of measures that are specifically tailored for use in military populations and that capture specifically how deployment influences marital relationships;
- Research needs to consider how to modify general purpose measures so they work for military couples;
- The collection of data from more representative samples of military populations as opposed to small select samples from whom generalizations cannot be made. This may be achieved by the use of random sampling of military installations or rosters;
- Additional longitudinal research that enables researchers to determine how marital relationships in this population change over time; and
- Research on how the quality of marital relationships in military families influences child well-being.

Incarcerated Families

The prison population accounts for 1.3 million people at mid-year in 2001 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2002), and incarceration remains one of the leading causes of marital non-cohabitation. To date, research on the marital relations of those incarcerated is limited and inconclusive. The field has been hampered by limited data, and the existing data from which we must glean information on marital and family relationships are fragmented, of unknown reliability, and generally derived from small select samples of inmates in select prison populations. It seems clear that incarceration can have negative consequences for marriages and families. Findings suggest that future research on marital relationships in prison populations could benefit from the following:

- The collection of data from the spouses or “significant others” of prisoners;
- The collection of data and the use of measures that capture offenders’ perceptions of how imprisonment influences marital relationships and specifically about the role of separation, proximity, dwindling social support networks, limited contact, and lack of companionship and interaction;
- The collection of data from varied incarcerated populations that are more representative, as opposed to small select samples of offenders from whom generalizations cannot be made. Useful strategies that would yield more representative prison samples for marital research include recruitment through the use of court or institutional records;
- Testing and refinement of measures of marital relationships that are specifically tailored or augmented for use in prison populations and examination of ways to extend or augment general purpose measures so they reflect the concerns and circumstances of incarcerated persons;
- Longitudinal research that enables researchers to determine how marital relationships in this population change over time;
- In-depth data collection on marital relationships in all of the phases of the criminal justice process, including pre-release, and in the post-release phase; and
- Research on how the quality of marital relationships in prison families influences parent-child relationships and child well-being;

What Did the Reviews Tell Us About the Status of the Measurement of Marriage in General?

As described above, many studies have not distinguished among critical sub-populations, particularly when providing psychometric information. Accordingly, most existing measures and databases have already been described. In this section, we round out our review with a number of general and miscellaneous articles that address additional sub-populations, such as race/ethnicity sub-populations, and that examine constructs that are not typically explored except in studies of married couples, such as commitment and divorce proneness. Most measures continue to be individual report measures completed by a respondent or reported to an interviewer.

Surprisingly, only a small number of studies have been conducted that explicitly examine and compare the psychometrics of marriage measures in varied racial, ethnic and cultural subgroups. Those that exist do not provide evidence that the marriage measures that are being used are inappropriate or useless. However, a broader range of constructs needs to be examined. Moreover, we have found few studies that examine psychometric issues among lower-income or low-education married couples as a separate subgroup.

Another gap in the literature on marriage is the limited work done on the construct of commitment. Important work by Scott Stanley and Howard Markman (1992) and Blaine Fowers (2003) calls attention to this construct, and studies by these researchers provide promising measures; but, as they recognize, there is a need to examine the utility of their measures in more diverse samples.

Accordingly, despite the plethora of research on marriage shared in the sub-population reviews and in this section, several fundamental gaps exist. There is a need for:

- Examination of measures within race, ethnicity and cultural subgroups;
- Testing the applicability of measures for low-income and low-education populations; and
- Qualitative and quantitative work to further develop and examine measures of commitment that can be used in varied populations.

What Did the Reviews Tell Us About Existing Research on the Measurement of Marital Norms, Attitudes and Values for the General Population?

Measures of marital attitudes and values are infrequently used by social scientists conducting marriage research. In a recent review, Fowers (2003) found that other measures, such as marital conflict, are covered widely in the literature, while measures of marital attitudes and values seem to be underrepresented (2003). Our review of the literature suggests the following:

- Recent ethnographic and statistical analytic research by those using Fragile Families data on low-income, urban samples (Edin, 2000; Carlson, McLanahan, & England, 2003) suggests that attitudes are quite important for low-income populations--both in terms of predicting their likelihood to enter into marriages as well as to maintain their marriages. For instance, positive attitudes about marriage and marital expectations (or plans) have also been found to be associated with higher relationship stability among cohabiting couples (Axinn & Thornton, 1993; Clarkberg, Stolzenberg, & Waite, 1995; McGinnis, 2003). Such concepts that predict marital outcomes and should not be missing from studies exploring marriage.
- The collection of social normative beliefs about marriage is important as these beliefs are indicators of how society views the health of marriage as an institution. Furthermore, these social norms may eventually have some effect on social behaviors regarding marriage and divorce in the future.
- Data on the attitudes and values of children regarding marriage are a neglected topic. The perspectives of children and youth may provide important information about patterns and trends that are likely to unfold.

Concluding Comments

The articles reviewed in this phase of our work have nearly all been published in peer-reviewed journals. Accordingly, the measures that are used generally have predictive power and have adequate psychometric properties. Nevertheless, the psychometric information that is provided is quite limited. Authors who report any psychometric information tend to report on the reliability of scales, generally the alpha for the scale. Other criteria are almost never discussed, e.g., the distribution of scores on an item, scale or index, the construct validity of a measure, or particularly the prospective validity of a measure. Implicitly, authors seem to be relying on face validity. Importantly, however, very few articles examine the psychometric properties of the measures that they use for critical subgroups, other than gender and occasionally the major family structure groups, e.g., married versus divorced couples. Thus, there is considerable uncertainty about whether the measures used in these articles are appropriate for other family structure groups, such as visiting couples or cohabiting couples, and whether the measures are appropriate for varied race, ethnicity, and cultural groups or for low-income couples. Face validity among researchers is not a sufficient standard for ensuring that measures are conceptually appropriate and that they are effective across a diverse population.

This review was intentionally organized to identify important population sub-groups because the greatest challenge is developing measures for non-traditional family forms. Hence it is essential to identify whatever studies exist on cohabiting couples, visiting couples, couples with an incarcerated partner or a partner in the military, and couples dealing with co-parenting issues. Such studies would be expected to suggest appropriate measures or items. Unfortunately, we did not find any one measure that has been used successfully across all sub-populations. The Conflict Tactics Scale is widely used when violence is studied, and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale and the Marital Adjustment Test are used in several studies, as are a

handful of additional measures; but there is no evidence that the field has “voted with its feet” by selecting a single measure or a small group of measures.

Nevertheless, for some constructs many of the measures used in these studies are quite similar. For example, varied satisfaction items focus on satisfaction across similar aspects of marriage, such as communication. Thus, the items in current use represent an excellent pool of potential items for new scales and indices.

Several additional limitations of the available research warrant mention. For example, a number of studies describe scales when the construct seems more appropriately conceptualized as an index. Thus, it is not necessarily the case that conflict over in-laws is necessarily expected to predict conflict over children or sex or religion. Accordingly, creating an index might be more appropriate. Also, little explicit attention is given in these studies to examining short versions of scales or to comparing multiple approaches to assessing a given construct. Most measures are survey items that are administered by interviewers or completed by the respondent him or herself.

Despite the limitations, the information derived from this review of published studies will be helpful in the next phase of the project. As noted, a compendium of measures used in existing studies and in the major national surveys was compiled in the initial phase of our work. In addition, in the second phase of our work, researchers working in the area were asked to prepare recommendation memos highlighting the critical conceptual and measurement issues that need to be addressed in our work to define and measure healthy marriage. This literature review provides additional important information on the psychometric properties of available measures and their utility in multivariate, explanatory empirical studies. Based on this work so far, we have prepared a draft paper that provides a perspective on the components of a healthy marriage and on related constructs that are not part of the definition of a healthy marriage (Moore et al., 2003).

Next steps will draw on the information accumulated in the first three tasks to flesh out these components of a healthy marriage. As proposed, the constructs include:

- Marital satisfaction
- Communication
- Marital status
- Conflict / conflict resolution
- Violence
- Fidelity
- Interaction / time together
- Intimacy / emotional support
- Couple commitment
- Commitment to children, and
- Duration

The next task is to prepare potential measures for each of these constructs and explore how these constructs can be aggregated into a summary measure of healthy marriage that works across varied populations. Potential measures have been identified for all of these constructs; however, except for marital satisfaction and communication, psychometric evidence for the measures is generally quite limited. Also, as noted, psychometric information is rarely available for critical subgroups or lower income couples, and information on prospective validity is particularly lacking. Accordingly, while the measures that will be prepared will build on available measures and the experience and advice of those working in the field, they will benefit from being tested further prior to being fielded in critical research or evaluation studies.

Cohabiting and Visiting Couples

Synopsis of Measures Used in Studies of Relationship Quality among Cohabiting and Visiting Couples

Prepared by
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I. Overview of Issues for Cohabiting and Visiting Couples

Cohabiting families represent an increasingly common family form (Bumpass and Lu 2000) and the research community has begun to devote much attention to cohabiting couples in recent years. “Visiting” couples, a term made popular by the Fragile Families study, refers to those who are romantically involved and have a child together, but who do not share a common residence. To date, only a handful of studies have focused on visiting couples, but research on this group is expected to increase given the recent availability of the Fragile Families data.

Defining Cohabitation. Defining a cohabiting relationship may be difficult, as there can be “degrees” of cohabitation, such as part-time versus full-time cohabitation (Knab and McLanahan 2003; Manning and Smock 2003). Part-time cohabitators may include couples who keep separate households but who spend several nights together per week or who keep personal items in both their own household and their partner’s household. Even for full-time cohabitators, though, pinpointing the starting and ending dates of a cohabitation may be a difficult task for couples, as the transition to and from cohabitation is often gradual (Manning and Smock 2003).

Incomplete Institutions. Both cohabiting and visiting couples face challenges that are distinct from those married couples face, due in part to the fact that cohabiting and visiting parent relationships may be considered “incompletely institutionalized.” The concept of an incomplete institution (Cherlin 1992) suggests that, unlike married couples, the roles and responsibilities of cohabiting and visiting parents are not clearly-defined. For example, while married couples are expected to pool financial resources and share expenses, norms of financial management are not as well-established for cohabiting couples and visiting parents.

Lack of Social Supports. Cohabitators and visiting parents may encounter a lack of societal, and perhaps familial, support for their relationships. The potential dearth of community supports, along with a lack of norms surrounding relationship roles, may put stressors on these relationships that are not typically present in marital relationships.

Decisions Regarding Marriage. Another issue cohabiting and visiting couples face that distinguishes them from already-married couples is the decision regarding marriage. Their extent of agreement or disagreement in their attitudes towards and expectations of marriage may strongly influence the level of conflict in and the overall quality of their relationship, with couples who have strong intentions to marry more closely resembling married couples in terms of relationship quality (Osborne 2002).

Lack of Cohabitor- or Visitor-Specific Measures. Despite the unique problems facing cohabiting and visiting couples, studies of relationship quality among these alternate family forms have traditionally borrowed from existing measures used to study married couples. Furthermore, few studies have assessed the psychometric properties of measures of relationship quality specifically for cohabiting or visiting populations. Typically, if psychometric analyses of relationship quality measures are presented, they are shown for samples of married couples or samples that combine cohabiting or visiting couples with married couples; but we have very little evidence to judge whether these same measures are valid and reliable for cohabiting or visiting couples alone. Instead of simply relying upon the well-established measures used in marriage research, researchers of cohabiting and visiting couples need to develop and test appropriate measures that will capture the salient issues for these populations.

Changes Over Time. Lastly, in the past, very little data existed to describe cohabiting, and especially visiting, unions. As a result, researchers have not been able to measure changes in the quality of cohabiting and visiting couple relationships over time.

II. Measures Used in the Literature

In the research studies we reviewed, the most frequently used measures of cohabiting relationship quality represent the following domains:

Relationship happiness. In most of the studies we reviewed, researchers typically used only a single-item measure of happiness, based on a question that asked how happy the respondent was in his/her relationship (Stets 1993; Nock 1995; Brown and Booth 1996; Brown 2000; DeMaris 2001; Watt 2002; Brown 2003; Brown Forthcoming). Skinner et al. (2002) created a three-item scale of happiness, incorporating measures of overall happiness, satisfaction with love received, and satisfaction with understanding.

Relationship conflict and disagreements. Sample items from a commonly used NSFH scale include measures of the extent of disagreements over: household tasks, money, sex, spending time together, in-laws, and having another child (Stets 1993; Nock 1995; Brown and Booth 1996; Brown 2000; DeMaris 2001; Skinner, Bahr et al. 2002; Brown Forthcoming). Stets (1993) created a scale from the first four items listed above and reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.77 for cohabiting respondents compared to 0.81 for married respondents. DeMaris (2001) created a verbal conflict scale using all the items above and reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.74 for cohabitators. Cohan and Kleinbaum (2002) used items from the Marital Problem Inventory. Magdol et al. (Magdol, Moffitt et al. 1998) created a scale from 18 indicators of relationship conflict; example items include those mentioned above, as well as conflict about values, commitment, autonomy, and religion.

Conflict resolution and problem solving strategies. Sample items from the NSFH include the frequency of resolving disagreements by calm discussion, or by arguing or shouting (Brown and Booth 1996; Brown 2000; DeMaris 2001; Brown Forthcoming). DeMaris (2001) reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.49 for cohabitators on a communication style scale. Kurdek (Kurdek 1998) used three subscales of conflict engagement, positive problem solving, and withdrawal, drawn from the *Conflict Resolution Inventory* (see Kurdek 1994). Cohan and Kleinbaum (Cohan and Kleinbaum 2002) used interviewer ratings of problem solving styles.

Couple interactions/shared time. This construct typically measures how often partners spent time alone with each other, talking, or sharing an activity (Stets 1993; Brown and Booth 1996; Magdol, Moffitt et al. 1998; Brown 2000; Skinner, Bahr et al. 2002; Brown 2003; Brown Forthcoming).

Relationship fairness and equality. Fairness and equality has been assessed through items that ask partners about the degree of fairness and equity in their relationship (Nock 1995; Brown and Booth 1996; Kurdek 1998; Magdol, Moffitt et al. 1998; Skinner, Bahr et al. 2002; Brown Forthcoming). Examples include asking about the degree of equality regarding household chores, working for pay, caring for children, spending money, making decisions, giving affection, respect, power, and leadership.

Separation/Separation expectations. Measures assess whether couples have separated or divorced (Watt 2002; Binstock and Thornton 2003) or the expected chances of separating from one's partner (Stets 1993; Brown 2000; DeMaris 2001; Brown 2003; Brown Forthcoming).

Measures that appeared in a moderate number of the studies we reviewed include:

Relationship satisfaction. Cohan and Kleinbaum (2002) measured satisfaction with 6 items from the *Quality Marriage Index* (Norton 1983), while Kurdek (1998) used 3 items from the *Marital Satisfaction Scale* (Schumm, Paff-Bergen et al. 1986) to assess satisfaction with the relationship, one's partner, and one's relationship with the partner. Sprecher et al. (Sprecher, Metts et al. 1995) used measures of overall satisfaction.

Physical aggression. Subscales from the *Conflict Tactics Scale* (Straus 1990) and *Margolin's Domestic Conflict Index* (Margolin, Burman et al. 1990) were used (Cohan and Kleinbaum 2002; Magdol et al. 1998). Sample items range from throwing objects to slapping/hitting to seriously injuring one's partner. Osborne (2003) used a single-item indicator of hitting or slapping, while DeMaris (2001) measured the frequency of hitting, shoving, throwing objects, or causing injury.

Infidelity/sexual satisfaction. While some researchers used measures about how often couples were unfaithful (Treas and Giesen 2000) or argued about infidelity (Osborne 2003), DeMaris (DeMaris 2001) examined frequency of sex, and Sprecher and colleagues (1995) assessed sexual intimacy using 6 items from the *Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships Inventory* (Schaefer and Olson 1981) sexual intimacy sub-scale. For male and female reports of frequency of sex, DeMaris (2001) reported a reliability alpha of 0.72 for cohabitators.

Attitudes towards marriage. Attitudes were assessed about the importance of finding the right person to marry (Clarkberg, Stolzenberg et al. 1995), how respondents expected marriage would change aspects of their life such as standard of living, freedom, relationships with friends and family, and emotional security (McGinnis 2003), and the importance of marriage versus cohabitation for couples and children (Osborne 2003). For Osborne's scale of pro-marriage attitudes, she reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.57 for cohabiting respondents and 0.57 for visiting parents.

Commitment or beliefs about the costs of separation. Commitment is assessed via questions regarding how separation would affect one's standard of living, social life, career, sex life and happiness (Nock 1995), the influence of various factors on the perceived difficulty of separating from one's partner (Kurdek 1998), and the perceived level of commitment to one's partner (Sprecher, Metts et al. 1995).

Marriage expectations. These constructs are typically measured with a single question regarding the expected chances of marrying one's partner (Brown 2000; Manning and Smock 2002; McGinnis 2003; Osborne 2003).

Finally, measures related to the following domains appeared only rarely in the research literature we reviewed:

Communication. Sprecher et al. (1995) used 8 items from the *Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships Inventory* (Schaefer and Olson 1981) intellectual intimacy sub-scale, including questions about how open and respectful communication and listening is between partners.

Intimacy/companionship. Sprecher et al. (1995) used 6 items from the *Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships Inventory* (Schaefer and Olson 1981) recreational intimacy sub-scale to assess intimacy and companionship. Sample items include sharing similar interests, enjoying the outdoors together, and finding time to do fun things together. Kurdek (1998) measured intimacy with a scale that included items such as building an identity as a couple, viewing one's partner as an important part of oneself, thinking in terms of "we" instead of "I", and doing activities together.

Autonomy. Kurdek (1998) was the only study that explicitly examined autonomy, with items such as having interests and close friends outside of the relationship with one's partner, making decisions without consulting one's partner, and believing one could survive on her own without her partner.

Sex-role attitudes. Examples of items used to measure sex-role attitudes include beliefs about traditional male-female roles and working mothers (Clarkberg, Stolzenberg et al. 1995; Osborne 2003). For traditional gender attitudes, Osborne reported a reliability alpha of 0.56 for cohabitators and 0.58 for visitors.

Gender distrust. Osborne (2003) used items to measure gender distrust: dating men aim to take advantage of women, and men cannot be trusted to be faithful. Cohabitators had a reliability alpha for this construct of 0.57 and visitors had an alpha of 0.52.

Father involvement with children. To examine the extent of fathers' involvement with their newborn children, Osborne (2003) used single item measures of whether the father visited the mother in the hospital, and if the parents gave the child the father's surname.

Emotional support. Osborne (2003) created a scale of emotional support from the father that included 3 items: whether the father is fair and willing to compromise, if he expresses affection or love for the mother, and if he encourages the mother or helps with things that are important to the mother. The reliability alpha for the scale is 0.54 for cohabitators and 0.65 for visitors.

Social support and intergenerational relationships. Social support networks are measured via items assessing the relationship with one's father and mother (Nock 1995) and support from spouse when discussing personal concerns (Cohan and Kleinbaum 2002).

Table 1 provides a summary of the studies addressing each domain and whether psychometric properties were provided.

III. Strengths and Weaknesses of Existing Measures

Strengths.

- A wide range of relationship quality constructs have been studied. Rather than focus solely on broad issues such as relationship happiness and satisfaction, many of the studies reviewed for this project delved into more specific dimensions of relationship quality, such as equality, attitudes towards marriage, shared time, intimacy, and infidelity.
- New data, such as the Fragile Families study data, are providing interesting new measures. This survey gives attention to issues that are important for the varied family structures becoming more common in current society. For example, the survey is careful to ask respondents about marriage and separation expectations, about issues of gender distrust (shown by recent work (Edin 2003) to be a very important construct for non-married couples), and about paternal involvement with children.

Weaknesses.

- Only one (Osborne 2003) of the works we reviewed specifically examined the relationship quality of visiting couples, as well as cohabiting couples. Osborne focused on issues of physical abuse, arguments about infidelity, emotional support from the child's father (including visiting the mother in the hospital), marriage expectations, attitudes towards marriage, traditional gender roles attitudes, and gender distrust. Her work represents an important study because it provides psychometric properties separately for cohabiting and visiting couples.
- Although the breadth of measures is noted above as a strength, the field is missing depth within specific constructs. While multiple components of relationship quality are examined across studies, there are some important domains that are given attention in only one or two studies. For example, very few studies give attention to the issues such as communication, intimacy and companionship, infidelity, gender distrust, sex-role attitudes, paternal involvement with children, and social support and intergenerational relationships. The rare studies that have examined these domains of relationship quality have shown them to be important predictors of relationship stability and transitions to marriage, suggesting more researchers should examine these measures so that we can determine if their predictive validity is robust across studies.
- Of greater concern is that it is extremely rare in the existing literature to find psychometric properties of measures provided specifically for cohabitators or visiting parents. Instead, most studies either fail to report psychometrics, or they use samples of cohabitators/visitors combined with married couples, and give the psychometrics for the overall sample, rather than report properties separately for the sub-groups. In the rare cases when separate psychometrics were given for cohabitators or visitors, the measures tended to have low reliability, suggesting that common measures of relationship quality operate differently for cohabitators or visitors than for married couples.
- Very few of the studies we reviewed used "named" scales with well-documented psychometric properties, though we couldn't be certain they would work well anyhow for our subpopulations of interest.

- When psychometric properties are provided, they are not tested on respondents from various racial/ethnic or socioeconomic status groups. Therefore, we do not know if the measures are valid and reliable for minority populations or for low-income couples.

IV. Conceptual Gaps in Existing Research

Several important conceptual gaps exist in the current literature on the measurement of relationship quality in cohabiting and visiting parent populations:

The literature provides virtually nothing on the relationships among visiting parents (see Osborne 2003 for an exception). This is not surprising, however, given the recency of the Fragile Families data – the one survey that has directed attention toward this family form.

Few of the studies on cohabitators' relationship quality distinguish between cohabiting couples with and without children.

There is very little research on how the relationship quality of cohabiting unions influences outcomes for children. Comparatively, there is much more literature available that looks simply at how the structure of living in a cohabiting union affects children, but little research with a focus on the quality of such unions. (See (Osborne, McLanahan et al. 2003) for one exception.)

The research literature to date has not given much attention to how cohabiting relationship quality may differ, or be expected to differ, by racial/ethnic group, by socioeconomic status, or by gender or age of the partners.

V. Discussion and Conclusions

The measurement of relationship quality for cohabiting and visiting couples would benefit from the following:

Developing better measures to allow researchers to distinguish between part-time and full-time cohabitators, to see if relationship quality differs by “degree” of cohabitation.

Encouraging more quantitative research on the quality and stability of visiting parent relationships, as well as the frequency and nature of visiting parents' contact with their non-resident children.

Developing qualitative studies that examine how visiting parents differ from cohabiting parents.

Testing the psychometric properties of well-established measures specifically for populations of cohabitators and visitors, rather than for cohabitators or visitors combined with married couples.

Developing measures that more accurately reflect the unique circumstances that cohabiting and visiting couples face, and that can capture the under-studied dimensions of relationships most salient to these family forms, such as frequency and nature of contact.

Collecting longitudinal data that will allow researchers to measure and track changes in cohabitators' and visitors' relationship quality over time.

Examining subgroup differences in relationship quality, to see if overall quality and the importance of specific dimensions of quality vary by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status gender, and age.

Table 1. Summary of Measures Used in the Study of Cohabitors' and Visitors' Relationship Quality

Construct/Measure (and Sample Items)	Article using measure	Psychometrics
Relationship happiness Example items: level of happiness in relationship, as well as satisfaction with love, and satisfaction with understanding	Brown, forthcoming; Brown, 2003; Brown, 2000; Brown & Booth, 1996; DeMaris, 2001; Nock, 1995; Stets, 1993; Watt, 2000 Skinner et al., 2002	Not applicable (single item measure) Psychometrics provided, but for a sample of marrieds & cohabitators combined
Relationship disagreements/conflict Items typically measure disagreements about household tasks, money, sex, time together, children, etc.	Brown, 2000; Nock, 1995 Brown, forthcoming; Brown & Booth, 1996; Cohan & Kleinbaum, 2002; Magdol et al., 1998; Skinner et al., 2002 DeMaris, 2001; Stets, 1993	Not provided Psychometrics provided, but for a sample of marrieds (or daters) & cohabitators combined Psychometrics <i>are</i> provided specifically for cohabitators (alpha=0.74-0.77)
Conflict resolution/marital problem solving Frequency of resolving problems via calm discussion or arguing; items from the <i>Conflict Resolution Inventory</i>	Brown, 2000 Brown, forthcoming; Brown & Booth, 1996; Cohan & Kleinbaum, 2002; Kurdek, 1998 DeMaris, 2001	Not provided Psychometrics provided, but for a sample of marrieds & cohabitators combined Psychometrics <i>are</i> provided specifically for cohabitators (alpha=0.49)
Relationship interaction/shared time How often partners spend time alone together, talking, or sharing an activity	Brown, forthcoming; Brown, 2003; Brown, 2000; Brown & Booth, 1996; Skinner et al., 2002; Stets, 1993 Magdol et al '98	Not applicable (single item measure) Psychometrics provided, but for a sample of daters & cohabitators combined
Relationship fairness/equality Example items include degree of fairness regarding chores, employment, caring for children, money, decision-making, respect, etc.	Brown, forthcoming; Brown & Booth, 1996; Kurdek, 1998; Magdol et al., 1998; Skinner et al., 2002 Nock '95	Psychometrics provided, but for a sample of marrieds (or daters) & cohabitators combined Not applicable (single item measure)
Separation/ separation expectations Measures of whether actual or expected relationship dissolution	Binstock & Thornton, 2003; Brown, forthcoming; Brown, 2003; Brown, 2000; DeMaris, 2001; Stets, 1993; Watt, 2000	Not applicable (single item measure)
Relationship satisfaction Overall measure of satisfaction; items from <i>Quality Marriage Index</i> and	Cohan & Kleinbaum, 2002; Kurdek, 1998; Sprecher et al., 1995	Psychometrics provided, but for a sample of marrieds & cohabitators combined

<i>Marital Satisfaction Scale</i>		
Physical aggression Subscales from <i>Conflict Tactics Scale</i> and <i>Margolin's Domestic Conflict Index</i> ; frequency of violence; single-item indicator of hitting/slapping	Cohan & Kleinbaum, 2002; Magdol et al., 1998 DeMaris, 2001 Osborne, 2003	Psychometrics provided, but for a sample of marrieds (or daters) & cohabitators combined Not provided Not applicable (single item measure)
Infidelity/Satisfaction with sexual activity Frequency of sex/sexual intimacy, unfaithfulness, or arguments about infidelity; subscale from <i>Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships Inventory</i>	Osborne, 2003; Treas & Giesen, 2000 DeMaris, 2001 Sprecher et al., 1995	Not applicable (single item measure) Psychometrics <i>are</i> provided specifically for cohabitators (alpha=0.72) Psychometrics provided, but for a sample of marrieds & cohabitators combined
Attitudes towards marriage/beliefs about marriage costs & benefits Importance of marriage and of finding the right person to marry; how marriage is expected to change aspects of one's life	Clarkberg et al '95 McGinnis '03 Osborne '03	Not applicable (single item measures) Psychometrics provided, but for a sample of daters & cohabitators combined Psychometrics <i>are</i> provided specifically for cohabitators (alpha=0.57) and visiting parents (alpha=0.57)
Commitment/Beliefs about costs of and barriers to separation Perceived level of commitment to partner ; perceived difficulty of separation and influence of separation on aspects of one's life	Kurdek, 1998; Nock, 1995; Sprecher et al., 1995	Psychometrics provided, but for a sample of marrieds & cohabitators combined
Marriage expectations or intentions Single-item indicator of the expected chances of marrying one's partner	Brown, 2000; Manning & Smock, 2002; McGinnis, 2003; Osborne, 2003	Not applicable (single item measure)
Communication 8-item scale from the intellectual intimacy subscale of the <i>Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships Inventory</i>	Sprecher et al., 1995	Psychometrics provided, but for a sample of marrieds & cohabitators combined
Intimacy/ companionship Measures of couple identity, importance of partner to self, joint activities; 6-item scale	Kurdek, 1998; Sprecher et al., 1995	Psychometrics provided, but for a sample of marrieds & cohabitators combined

from the recreational intimacy subscale of the <i>Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships Inventory</i>		
Relationship autonomy Having interests & friends outside the couple relationship, making autonomous decisions	Kurdek, 1998	Psychometrics provided, but for a sample of marrieds & cohabitators combined
Sex-role attitudes Measures assess beliefs about traditional male-female roles and working mothers	Clarkberg et al., 1995 Osborne, 2003	Psychometrics provided, but for a sample of marrieds & cohabitators combined Psychometrics <i>are</i> provided specifically for cohabitators (alpha=0.56) and visiting parents (alpha=0.58)
Gender distrust Example items include beliefs that men try to take advantage of women and men cannot be trusted to be faithful	Osborne, 2003	Psychometrics <i>are</i> provided specifically for cohabitators (alpha=0.57) and visiting parents (alpha=0.52)
Father involvement with child Father visited mother in hospital; mother gave child father's surname	Osborne, 2003	Not applicable (single item measures)
Emotional support from child's father 3-item scale: whether father is fair/compromising, expresses love or affection, or encourage/helps mother	Osborne, 2003	Psychometrics <i>are</i> provided specifically for cohabitators (alpha=0.54) and visiting parents (alpha=0.65)
Social support/intergenerational relationships Relationship with one's parents; support from spouse regarding personal concerns	Cohan & Kleinbaum, 2002 Nock, 1995	Psychometrics provided, but for a sample of marrieds & cohabitators combined Not applicable (single item measure)

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TITLE: Separations, reconciliations, and living apart in cohabiting and marital unions.

AUTHOR: Georgina Binstock & Arland Thornton.

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PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To track the timing of entries and exits from first unions, both cohabiting and marital.

SOURCE OF DATA: Intergenerational Panel Study of Parents and Children

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: “A panel study of young adults drawn from a probability sample of first-, second-, and fourth-born White children drawn from the July 1961 birth records of the Detroit metropolitan area.”

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Mothers of the sample children were interviewed 8 times between 1962 and 1993. The focal children respondents were interviewed in 1980, 1985, and 1993 (at ages 18, 23 and 31).

STUDY POPULATION: Sample includes 800 R with complete relationship histories, who had been in a first cohabiting or marital relationship by age 31. Of the 800, 423 cohabited (and 226 eventually married their partner) and 377 married without prior cohabitation.

MEASURES:

Separation due to discord – measures whether R ever stopped living together with partner for a period of at least one month because they were not getting along.

PSYCHOMETRICS: None reported.

COMMENTS:

Most separations from cohabiting or marital unions due to discord eventually become permanent dissolutions. Cohabiting R are more likely than marrieds to separate due to discord.

TITLE: Cohabitation versus marriage: A comparison of relationship quality.

AUTHOR: Susan L. Brown & Alan Booth.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (1996). *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 58, 668-678.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine how the relationship quality of cohabiting and married couples differs, and to determine which characteristics distinguish cohabitators in unions that are qualitatively similar to marriages from cohabitators in unions unlike marriages.

SOURCE OF DATA: National Survey of Families and Households

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: A nationally representative, longitudinal study of 13,017 U.S adults living in 9,643 households in 1987-88. Included oversamples of cohabitators, stepfamilies, single-parent families, and minority groups.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Multistage probability sampling. Two waves of data collection – 1987-88 and 1992-93. First selected households, then randomly selected one adult in each household. If the adult had a spouse or cohabiting partner, that partner also filled out a self-administered questionnaire.

STUDY POPULATION: Sample includes 452 cohabitators & 1576 married respondents who are either black or white, less than 48 years old, in relationships that have lasted for no longer than 5 years.

MEASURES: Relationship quality is assessed via 5 dimensions.

Disagreement: 5-item index. Asked how often respondent had disagreements with partner about household tasks, money, spending time together, sex, or having a child.

Fairness: 3-item index. Report degree of fairness regarding household chores, working for pay, and spending money.

Happiness: Single item, based on the question: “Taking all things together, how would you describe your relationship?”

Conflict management: Assesses how couples resolve their disagreements. High values indicate high frequency of shouting or throwing things at each other, and low frequency of calm discussions.

Interaction: Single item question to gauge amount of time spent alone with partner/spouse in the last month.

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Disagreement, fairness, and conflict management indices were constructed from factor analysis, in which each item had a factor loading of at least 0.50. The authors say “the reliability of the indexes was well within respectable limits, given the number of items in each index” (p. 673); however, they do not give the reliability values.

COMMENTS:

They find that relationship quality is poorer among cohabitators than among married individuals. The difference in relationship quality is largely explained by cohabitators’ marriage plans. Cohabitators who say they plan to eventually marry their partner report relationship quality that is not different from that of marriages.

TITLE: Union transitions among cohabitators: The significance of relationship assessments and expectations.

AUTHOR: Susan L. Brown.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (2000). *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62, 833-846.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To determine if cohabitators' relationship assessments and expectations are associated with the transitions to marriage & separation.

SOURCE OF DATA: National Survey of Families and Households

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: A nationally representative, longitudinal study of 13,017 U.S adults living in 9,643 households in 1987-88. Included oversamples of cohabitators, stepfamilies, single-parent families, and minority groups.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Multistage probability sampling. Two waves of data collection – 1987-88 and 1992-93. First selected households, then randomly selected one adult in each household. If the adult had a spouse or cohabiting partner, that partner also filled out a self-administered questionnaire.

STUDY POPULATION: Sample includes 393 cohabiting couples in which the main respondents were interviewed in both waves and their partners participated in the wave 1 interview.

MEASURES: All measures are at the couple-level.

Relationship happiness: Single item, with 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very unhappy) to 7 (very happy). Based on the question: "Taking all things together, how happy are you with your relationship?" Five response categories created:

- 1) both female & male partner very happy
- 2) both female & male partner happy
- 3) only female partner very happy or happy
- 4) only male partner very happy or happy
- 5) neither partner very happy or happy

Relationship interaction: Single item question to gauge amount of time spent together, with responses ranging from 1 (never) to 6 (almost every day). "How often during the past month did you and your spouse/partner spend time alone with each other, talking, or sharing an activity?" Four response categories created:

- 1) both partners reported high levels of interaction
- 2) only female reported high levels of interaction
- 3) only male reported high levels of interaction
- 4) both partners reported low levels of interaction

Relationship disagreements: 5-item index summed for each partner, where each item ranges from 1 (never) to 6 (almost every day). Based on the question: "How often, if at all, in the last year have you had open disagreements about each of the following?"

- 1) household tasks
- 2) money
- 3) spending time together
- 4) sex
- 5) having a(n)other child

Four response categories created:

- 1) both partners reported low levels of disagreement
- 2) only female reported high levels of disagreement
- 3) only male reported high levels of disagreement
- 4) both partners reported high levels of disagreement

Conflict resolution: Low values represent resolving disagreements via calm discussion; high values represent resolving disagreements via arguing, shouting, throwing things or hitting. Four response categories created:

- 1) both partners reported high levels of conflict
- 2) only female reported high levels of conflict
- 3) only male reported high levels of conflict
- 4) both partners reported low levels of conflict

Marriage expectations: Based on single item of whether R reported plans to marry their partner. Four response categories created:

- 1) both partners reported marriage plans
- 2) only female reported marriage plans
- 3) only male reported marriage plans
- 4) neither partner reported marriage plans

Separation expectations: Based on single item of what R thought was the chance he/she would eventually separate from partner. Responses ranged from 1 (very low) to 3 (about even) to 5 (very high). Four response categories created:

- 1) both partners perceived very low chance of separation
- 2) only female perceived even to high chance of separation
- 3) only male perceived even to high chance of separation
- 4) both partners perceived even to high chance of separation

PSYCHOMETRICS: None reported.

COMMENTS: Having positive views of one's relationship was associated with a lower likelihood of separation, but was not related to a higher likelihood of marriage. Negative assessments of the relationship are linked to higher chances of separation (for females), and to lower chances of marriage (for males).

TITLE: Relationship quality dynamics of cohabiting unions.

AUTHOR: Susan L. Brown.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (2003). *Journal of Family Issues*, 24, 583-601.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To compare the dynamics of the relationship quality of cohabitators and married couples, specifically examining differences in the association between relationship quality and duration of the union.

SOURCE OF DATA: National Survey of Families and Households

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: A nationally representative, longitudinal study of 13,007 U.S adults living in 9,643 households in 1987-88. Included oversamples of cohabitators, stepfamilies, single-parent families, and minority groups.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Multistage probability sampling. Two waves of data collection – 1987-88 and 1992-93. First selected households, then randomly selected one adult in each household. If the adult had a spouse or cohabiting partner, that partner also filled out a self-administered questionnaire.

STUDY POPULATION: Sample includes 646 cohabitators and 3,086 married people.

MEASURES:

Relationship happiness: Single item, with 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very unhappy) to 7 (very happy). Based on the question: “Taking all things together, how happy are you with your relationship?”

Relationship interaction: Single item question to gauge amount of time spent together, with responses ranging from 1 (never) to 6 (almost every day). “How often during the past month did you and your spouse/partner spend time alone with each other, talking, or sharing an activity?”

Relationship instability: Based on single item gauging R’s opinion of the chance the relationship would end. Responses ranged from 1 (very low) to 3 (about even) to 5 (very high).

PSYCHOMETRICS: None reported.

COMMENTS: While relationship quality is similar for both cohabitators and marrieds, the influence of relationship duration on relationship quality differs. For cohabitators, there is a significant association between relationship instability and duration of the relationship. This association does not exist for marrieds.

TITLE: Moving from cohabitation to marriage: Effects on relationship quality.

AUTHOR: Susan L. Brown.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (2003). *Social Science Review*, Forthcoming.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To determine if there is an association between marriage and improved relationship quality for cohabitators.

SOURCE OF DATA: National Survey of Families and Households

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: A nationally representative, longitudinal study of 13,007 U.S adults living in 9,643 households in 1987-88. Included oversamples of cohabitators, stepfamilies, single-parent families, and minority groups.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Multistage probability sampling. Two waves of data collection – 1987-88 and 1992-93. First selected households, then randomly selected one adult in each household. If the adult had a spouse or cohabiting partner, that partner also filled out a self-administered questionnaire.

STUDY POPULATION: Sample includes 276 cohabitators in which the respondents were interviewed in both waves and their relationship with partner was still intact at wave 2.

MEASURES:

Relationship happiness: Single item, with 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very unhappy) to 7 (very happy). Based on the question: “Taking all things together, how happy are you with your relationship?”

Relationship interaction: Single item question to gauge amount of time spent together, with responses ranging from 1 (never) to 6 (almost every day). “How often during the past month did you and your spouse/partner spend time alone with each other, talking, or sharing an activity?”

Relationship instability: Based on single item gauging R’s opinion of the chance the relationship would end. Responses ranged from 1 (very low) to 3 (about even) to 5 (very high).

Relationship disagreements: 5-item index where each item ranges from 1 (never) to 6 (almost every day). Based on the question: “How often, if at all, in the last year have you had open disagreements about each of the following?”

- 6) household tasks
- 7) money
- 8) spending time together
- 9) sex

Fairness: 3-item index, measuring perceived level of fairness in

- 1) household chores
- 2) working for pay
- 3) spending money

Conflict resolution: Measures how couples resolve disagreements, with high values representing high frequencies of shouting, throwing things or hitting, and low frequencies of calm discussions.

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Disagreement index: Cronbach's alpha=.72

Fairness index: Cronbach's alpha=.69

Conflict resolution index: Cronbach's alpha=.57

COMMENTS: Findings indicate that cohabitators who marry have report higher levels of happiness, stability, and positive conflict resolution, as well as lower levels of disagreement than those who remain cohabiting. Among those who do not marry, those with *plans* to marry do not differ in relationship quality from those who do marry; it is those with no plans to marry who have lower relationship quality.

TITLE: Attitudes, values, and entrance into cohabitational versus marital unions.

AUTHOR: Marin Clarkberg, Ross M. Stolzenberg, & Linda J. Waite.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (1995). *Social Forces*, 74(2), 609-634.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To determine if attitudes and values concerning marriage, work, leisure time, family, money and sex roles affect the choice between marriage and cohabitation.

SOURCE OF DATA: The 1986 wave of the National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: Nationally representative of high school seniors in 1972.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: High school seniors were originally interviewed in 1972 and followed up in 1973, '74, '76, '79, and '86. Detailed marriage and cohabitation histories were collected in the 1986 survey.

STUDY POPULATION: Sample includes 12,841 respondents from the 1986 wave, who originally entered the study in 1972 when they were high school seniors (approximately 18 years old).

MEASURES:

Attitudes: Six separate items measure attitudes believed to be related to the choice between marriage and cohabitation. Each item has responses of 1 (not important), 2 (somewhat important) and 3 (very important).

“How important is each of the following to you in your life?”

- 1) finding the right person to marry and having a happy family life
- 2) living close to parents and relatives
- 3) being successful in my line of work
- 4) being able to find steady work
- 5) having lots of money
- 6) having leisure to enjoy my own interests

Sex-role liberalism: Factor analysis of 10 items yielded two dimensions: 1) traditional male-female roles, and 2) views on correcting gender inequality. Items measured in both the 1976 survey and the 1979 survey.

	Loading 1976	Loading 1979
1) a working mother of preschool children can be just as good a mother as the woman who doesn't work	-.3124	-.4011
2) it is usually better for everyone if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home & family	.7119	.7304
3) young men should be encouraged to take jobs that are usually filled by women (nursing, secretarial work, etc)	-.0084	-.0170
4) most women are just not interested in having big & important jobs	.4449	.4403
5) many qualified women can't get good jobs: men with the same skills have less trouble	-.0037	.0128
6) most women are happiest when they are making a home & caring for children	.6706	.6448

7) high school counselors should urge young women to train for jobs which are not held mainly by men	-.0148	-.0498
8) it is more important for a wife to help her husband than to have a career for herself	.6914	.7307
9) schools teach women to want less important jobs	.0198	.0673
10) men should be given first chance at most jobs because they have the primary responsibility for providing for a family	.5959	.6348

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Views of traditional male-female roles:

- In 1976 data, this factor explained 42.8% of the variance & had a Tucker-Lewis reliability coefficient of .92
- In 1979 data, this factor explained 47.7% of the variance & had a Tucker-Lewis reliability coefficient of .93

Predictive Validity: Stronger beliefs in the importance of marriage are associated with a lower likelihood of cohabitation. Higher levels of sex-role liberalism are related to a greater probability that one's first union will be a cohabitation rather than a marriage.

COMMENTS: Attitudes towards and values related to marriage have a significant effect on whether couples choose marriage or cohabitation. Those who do not view marriage as an important life goal are more likely to cohabit, as are those who hold more non-traditional ideas about gender-specific marital roles.

TITLE: Toward a greater understanding of the cohabitation effect: Premarital cohabitation and marital communication.

AUTHOR: Catherine L. Cohan & Stacey Kleinbaum.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (2002). *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64, 180-192.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To determine if marital communication varies by whether or not couples cohabited premaritally.

SOURCE OF DATA: A small study of 92 couples

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: “92 couples recruited from marriage licenses filed from June 1995 through June 1998 in central Pennsylvania” (p. 183)

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Recruitment by mail; screening by telephone; in-home interviews

STUDY POPULATION: Sample includes 92 childless couples from central PA who had been in their 1st marriages for less than 2 years

MEASURES:

Observed Behavior Measures

Marital Problem Solving – used the System for Coding Interactions in Dyads (SCID), a global coding system, to assess 15-minute problem solving conversations between spouses. Within each conversation, 9 separate behaviors were rated on a scale of 1 (very low) to 5 (high).

- 1) Attempts to Control
- 2) Coerciveness
- 3) Negativity and Conflict
- 4) Positive Affect
- 5) Problem Solving Communication
- 6) Verbal Aggression
- 7) Cohesiveness
- 8) Demand/Withdraw pattern (i.e., one spouse presses an issue, the other tries to avoid it)
- 9) Negative Escalation

Social Support - used the Social Support Interaction Coding System (SSICS) to assess 10-minute social support conversations between spouses. In two conversations, spouses discussed personal concerns, taking turns in one of two roles: Help Seeker or Helper. Conversations were coded for both positive and negative behaviors.

- 1) Positive Help Seeking
- 2) Negative Help Seeking
- 3) Positive Helping
- 4) Negative Helping

Self-Report Measures

Marital Satisfaction - used 6 item Quality Marriage Index (QMI). Ranges from 6 to 45. Sample items include “we have a good marriage” and “my relationship with my partner makes me happy.”

Marital Problems – used Marital Problem Inventory (MPI). Took average rating of 19 common sources of marital conflict. Ranges from 1 (not a problem) to 11 (major problem).

Physical Aggression – Summed 9 items from a subscale of the Conflict Tactics Scale. Uses 7-point scale ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (over 20 times) to identify how frequently they engaged in forms of physical aggression (e.g. throwing objects, slapping spouse) in last year.

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Interrater Reliability – for observed behavior measures

Marital Problem Solving (each conversation was independently coded three times by each of 3 trained coders)

	<i>Interrater Reliability</i>
Attempts to Control	0.84
Coerciveness	0.79
Negativity and Conflict	0.90
Positive Affect	0.87
Problem Solving Communication	0.85
Verbal Aggression	0.90
Cohesiveness	0.88
Demand/Withdraw pattern (i.e. one spouse presses an issues, the other tries to avoid it)	0.84
Negative Escalation	0.87

Social Support (each conversation was independently coded three times by each of 2 trained coders)

	<i>Interrater Reliability</i>
Positive Help Seeking	0.87
Negative Help Seeking	0.81
Positive Helping	0.78
Negative Helping	0.88

Cronbach’s alpha – for self-report measures

	<i>Husbands</i>	<i>Wives</i>
<i>Marital satisfaction index</i>	0.94	0.94
<i>Marital problems</i>	0.83	0.85
<i>Physical aggression</i>	0.75	0.83

COMMENTS: Married couples with prior cohabitation experience were poorer communicators than those who had never cohabited. They hypothesize that these poorer communication skills may be a mechanism to explain the greater marital instability among couples who cohabited before marriage.

TITLE: The influence of intimate violence on transitions out of cohabitation.

AUTHOR: Alfred DeMaris.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (2001). *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63, 235-246.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine whether partner violence among cohabitators influences the likelihood of marriage or separation, net of other relationship and partner characteristics.

SOURCE OF DATA: National Survey of Families and Households

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: A nationally representative, longitudinal study of 13,017 U.S adults living in 9,643 households in 1987-88. Included oversamples of cohabitators, stepfamilies, single-parent families, and minority groups.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Multistage probability sampling. Two waves of data collection – 1987-88 and 1992-93. First selected households, then randomly selected one adult in each household. If the adult had a spouse or cohabiting partner, that partner also filled out a self-administered questionnaire.

STUDY POPULATION: Sample includes 411 couples who were cohabiting at wave 1, and who participated in both waves of the survey.

MEASURES:

Cohabitation outcome: Month and year in which separation or marriage occurred.

Physical violence: Based on 3 questions. Separate measures created for male and female violence, based on either partner's report of whether the male (or female) had been violent. If the answer to the first item was "yes" and the answer to the second item was greater than zero, then the dummy variable for violence was coded as 1.

1. "Sometimes arguments between partners become physical. During the last year has this happened in arguments between you and your husband/wife/partner?"
2. How often had you or your partner "hit, shoved, or thrown things at the other person?" Responses ranged from 0 to 4+. Had either partner been "cut, bruised, or seriously injured" during a fight with the other partner? (Note: Although described in the measures section, it does not appear that they used this measure in their analyses.)

Intense male violence: A dummy variable coded as 1 if the male was the only partner who had been violent, or male violence was more frequent than female violence, or the female was the partner who became injured.

Verbal conflict: Based on partners' combined reports of the frequency of disagreements in the past year over household tasks, money, spending time together, sex, in-laws, and children. Responses ranged from 1 (never) to 6 (almost every day). The scale was constructed by multiplying the mean across the items by 6, and then averaging the male and female partners' scale scores.

Communication style: Based on two questions asking about the frequency of discussing disagreements calmly and the frequency of arguing heatedly or shouting. Responses ranged from 1 (never) to 5 (always), with responses reverse coded for the second item. The scale was constructed by summing the responses to the two items, and then averaging the male and female summed scores.

Relationship happiness: Separate measures created for males and females. Specific item(s) not given, but responses ranged from 1 (very unhappy) to 7 (very happy).

Relationship stability: Separate measures created for males and females. Question asked the partners what they thought were the chances that they would separate in the future. Responses ranged from 1 (high or very high) to 4 (very low).

Frequency of sexual activity: An average of the male and female reports of the number of times they had had sex in the past month.

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Cronbach's alpha for:

Verbal conflict = 0.74

Communication style = 0.49

Frequency of sex = 0.72

COMMENTS: They find that intense male violence was associated with a greater likelihood that cohabiting couples would separate, while violence by women was associated with a lower likelihood of transitioning to marriage. They found that "violence exhibited surprisingly little relationship with indicators of relationship quality once other characteristics of couples were held constant" (p. 244).

TITLE: Relationship outcomes and their predictors: Longitudinal evidence from heterosexual married, gay cohabiting, and lesbian cohabiting couples.

AUTHOR: Lawrence A. Kurdek.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (1998). *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 60, 553-568.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To determine if relationship quality and relationship outcomes differ from married couples relative to gay and lesbian couples.

SOURCE OF DATA: Two small longitudinal studies in the Dayton area.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: Married couples were recruited via letter from marriage license information published in a city newspaper between May 1986 and January 1988. Gay and lesbian couples were recruited via advertisements in gay and lesbian magazines, and via referrals from other participants.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: For married couples, researchers sent letters to 7,899 couples whose marriage licenses were published in a Dayton newspaper. 1,407 responded with an interest in the study (18% response rate), but only 538 couples completed and returned a survey (38% response rate). Researchers conducted annual assessments of participants over a 5-year period. For gay and lesbian couples, no response rate could be calculated because of the informal nature of recruitment. All participants completed mail surveys.

STUDY POPULATION: Sample includes married participants in “the fifth through tenth annual assessments of the original sample, referred to here as Year 1 through Year 5” (p. 555). Sample size ranged from 236 married couples in year 1 to 118 in year 5. Gay and lesbian couples were selected from the first wave of data collection. Sample size ranged from 66 gay and 51 lesbian couples in year 1, to 45 gay and 36 lesbian couples in year 5.

MEASURES:

Relationship Quality: 5 measures – intimacy, autonomy, equality, problem solving, and barriers.

Intimacy: Summed responses to 7 items, with responses ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 9 (very true).

1. I spend as much time with my partner as possible.
2. I do as many activities with my partner as possible.
3. My partner and I have built an identity as a couple.
4. I get so close to my partner than I’m not sure where she/he begins and I end.
5. My partner is a very important part of how I see myself.
6. I think in terms of “we” or “us,” instead of “I” or “me.”
7. I can never get too close to my partner.

Autonomy: Summed responses to 6 items, with responses ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 9 (very true).

1. I have major interests of my own outside of the relationship.
2. I have a supportive group of friends separate from my partner.
3. I have a close friend other than my partner.
4. My sense of being an individual is separate from my sense of being part of a couple.
5. I make most decisions on my own without checking with my partner.
6. I maintain the position that, if I had to, I could really make it on my own.

Equality: Summed responses to 8 items, with responses ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 9 (very true).

1. My partner and I have equal power in the relationship.
2. My partner shows as much affection to me as I think I show to him/her.
3. My partner and I invest equal amounts of time and energy in the relationship.
4. My partner and I are equally committed to working out problems that occur in our relationship.
5. All things considered, my partner and I contribute an equal amount to the relationship.
6. My partner and I deal with each other as equals.
7. My partner treats me and respects me as an equal.
8. My partner depends on me as much as I depend on him/her.

Constructive problem solving: Used 3 subscales (conflict engagement, positive problem solving, and withdrawal) drawn from the Conflict Resolution Inventory (see Kurdek, 1994, "Conflict Resolution Styles in Gay , Lesbian, and Heterosexual Couples," *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 56, 705-722). For each scale, participants completed a self-rating and a partner-rating, with both ratings included in the scale (thus, each subscale includes 8 items, instead of just the 4 listed). In addition, they created an aggregate measure of constructive problem solving, using all items. Participants rated how frequently each item occurred in their relationship, with responses ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

A) *conflict engagement*

1. launching personal attacks (reverse coded)
2. exploding and getting out of control (reverse coded)
3. getting carried away and saying things that aren't meant (reverse coded)
4. throwing insults and digs (reverse coded)

B) *positive problem solving*

1. focusing on the problem at hand
2. sitting down & discussing differences constructively
3. finding alternatives that are acceptable to each of us
4. negotiating and compromising

C) *withdrawal*

1. remaining silent for long periods of time (reverse coded)
2. reaching a limit, "shutting down" and refusing to talk any further (reverse coded)
3. tuning the other person out (reverse coded)
4. withdrawing, acting distant, and not interested (reverse coded)

Barriers: Summed responses to 5 items, with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

1. I would find it difficult to ever leave my partner because of my religious beliefs.
2. I would find it difficult to leave my partner because it would hurt those who depend on me.
3. I would find it difficult to leave my partner because of pressure from my family, friends, or community.
4. I would find it difficult to leave my partner because I could not live as well on my own.
5. I would find it difficult to leave my partner because I feel obligated to keep the relationship together.

Relationship Satisfaction: Used Schumm et al.'s 1986 Marital Satisfaction Scale, which summed 3 items assessing how true it was that respondent was satisfied with one's relationship, partner, and relationship with partner. Responses ranged from 1 (not at all true) to 9 (extremely true).

PSYCHOMETRICS:

- Cronbach's alpha:
Intimacy = 0.76
Autonomy = 0.73
Equality = 0.91
Constructive problem solving = 0.90
 a) *Conflict engagement* = 0.87
 b) *Positive problem solving* = 0.78
 c) *Withdrawal* = 0.83
Barriers = 0.67
Relationship satisfaction = 0.97 to 0.98 (across 5 assessments)
- Correlations among conflict engagement, positive problem solving, and withdrawal ranged from 0.45 to 0.57.
- Factor analysis (with varimax rotation) of all the individual relationship quality items produced 5 eigenvalues greater than one, with the items grouping into the 5 dimensions of relationship quality: intimacy (loadings ranged from 0.40 to 0.66), autonomy (loadings ranged from 0.44 to 0.82), equality (loadings ranged from 0.62 to 0.81), problem solving (loadings ranged from 0.75 to 0.78), and barriers (loadings ranged from 0.52 to 0.76). These 5 dimensions accounted for 54% of the total variance.

COMMENTS: Compared to married partners, gay couples were more likely to report high autonomy, to perceive fewer obstacles to dissolution, and to have more frequent breakups. Lesbian couples were more likely than married couples to report greater intimacy, autonomy, equality, and breakups, with fewer perceived obstacles to dissolution. The author found no difference in the strength of the correlation between dimensions of relationship quality and relationship outcomes for married partners compared to gay or lesbian partners.

TITLE: Hitting without a license: Testing explanations for differences in partner abuse between young adult daters and cohabitators.

AUTHOR: Lynn Magdol, Terrie E. Moffitt, Avshalom Caspi, & Phil A. Silva.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (1998). *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 60, 41-55.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To compare differences in partner abuse between 21-year-old cohabitators and daters.

SOURCE OF DATA: Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: A longitudinal study of all children born between April 1, 1972 and March 31, 1973 in Dunedin, New Zealand. (For details, see: Silva, P.A. 1990. "The Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study: A Fifteen-Year Longitudinal Study." *Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology*, 4, 96-127.)

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Data collected at birth of child, at ages 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 18, and 21. Data collection at age 21 included a full day of interviews, as well as a physical exam.

STUDY POPULATION: Sample includes 777 respondents who reported involvement in an intimate relationship lasting at least one month during the year prior to the age 21 follow-up.

MEASURES:

Physical Abuse Scale: Summed responses to 9 unspecified physical violence items from the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS), and 4 items from the Margolin's Domestic Conflict Index (twisting partner's arm, physically forcing sex on partner, shaking partner, and bodily throwing partner).

Relationship duration: Length of relationship in months.

Shared time and activities: Summed responses to 5 items, such as "we spend time together" and "we tend to do more things separately than together". Other 3 items not listed. Responses were 0=never, 1=sometimes, and 2=almost always.

Conflict: Summed responses to 18 items concerning areas of relationship conflict. Did not provide all items, but examples include "conflicts about commitment, autonomy, values, sex, having or raising children, money, and religion" (p. 48). Responses ranged from 0=none to 2=a lot.

Balance of power: Summed responses to 15 items regarding how the partners "handled differences, shared responsibilities, set rules, determined fairness, and considered each other's needs" (p. 48). Examples of items include "we have a good balance of leadership" and "we each have input regarding our major decisions."

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Cronbach's alpha:

Physical abuse scale = 0.76

Shared time & activities = 0.75

Conflict = 0.84

Balance of power = 0.82

COMMENTS: They found that partner abuse was more common and more severe in cohabiting relationships than in dating relationships, net of controls for individual characteristics, elements of relationship quality, and social control factors. While cohabitators report more conflict with partners than do daters, this conflict does not explain the higher rates of partner abuse in cohabiting relationships. Longer-duration cohabiting relationships, however, are associated with more physical violence, and cohabitations generally last longer than dating relationships.

TITLE: First comes cohabitation and then comes marriage? A research note.

AUTHOR: Wendy D. Manning & Pamela J. Smock.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (2002). *Journal of Family Issues*, 23, 1065-1087.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine characteristics related to the marriage expectations of cohabitators. They look specifically at SES & race/ethnicity.

SOURCE OF DATA: 1995 National Survey of Family Growth

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: A nationally representative sample of 10,847 women aged 15-44.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Survey questionnaire.

STUDY POPULATION: Sample includes 715 women cohabiting at the time of the 1995 interview, and who provide information about marriage expectations.

MEASURES: Marriage expectations are assessed via the question "Do you expect to marry your current boyfriend?"

PSYCHOMETRICS: None reported.

COMMENTS: They find that, among cohabitators, Black women are less likely to expect to marry. But, for all race/ethnicities, marriage expectations are conditioned by men's SES.

TITLE: Cohabiting, dating, and perceived costs of marriage: A model of marriage entry.

AUTHOR: Sandra L. McGinnis.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (2003). *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 65, 105-116.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine how cohabiting and non-cohabiting steady dating relationships influence the decision to marry.

SOURCE OF DATA: National Survey of Families and Households

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: A nationally representative, longitudinal study of 13,017 U.S adults living in 9,643 households in 1987-88. Included oversamples of cohabitators, stepfamilies, single-parent families, and minority groups.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Multistage probability sampling. Two waves of data collection – 1987-88 and 1992-93. First selected households, then randomly selected one adult in each household. If the adult had a spouse or cohabiting partner, that partner also filled out a self-administered questionnaire.

STUDY POPULATION: Sample includes 752 non-cohabiting dating R aged 35 or younger, and 416 cohabiting R aged 50 or younger.

MEASURES:

Cost and Benefits of Marriage: R were asked how they expected 9 areas of their life would change if they were married. Ranges from 1 (much worse) to 3 (same) to 5 (much better). For each item, a dichotomous cost measure & a dichotomous benefit measure were created, where responses of 1 or 2 meant the item received a 1 on the cost measure, and responses of 4 or 5 meant the item received a 1 on the benefit measure. The 9 cost measures and 9 benefit measures were then summed to arrive at summary measures called *number of costs* and *number of benefits*.

- 1) standard of living
- 2) economic security
- 3) overall happiness
- 4) freedom to do what you want
- 5) economic independence
- 6) sex life
- 7) friendships with others
- 8) relations with parents
- 9) emotional security

Marriage intentions: Single item, dichotomous measure of whether R reported plans to marry their partner.

Marriage expectations: Single item, dichotomous measure of whether R with no plans to marry their partner thought they would eventually marry their partner.

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Cronbach's alpha:

Number of costs = 0.794

Number of benefits = 0.827

Correlation between the scales = -0.303 (p<0.01)

COMMENTS:

Cohabitation (relative to going steady) is found to be associated with both lower perceived costs and benefits to marriage. Cohabitors also have stronger intentions and expectations for marriage.

TITLE: A comparison of marriages and cohabiting relationships.

AUTHOR: Steven L. Nock,

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (1995). *Journal of Family Issues*, 16(1), 53-76.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To compare the relationship quality of cohabiting relationships and marriages.

SOURCE OF DATA: National Survey of Families and Households, Waves I and II

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: A nationally representative, longitudinal study of 13,017 U.S adults living in 9,643 households in 1987-88. Included oversamples of cohabitators, stepfamilies, single-parent families, and minority groups.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Multistage probability sampling. Two waves of data collection – 1987-88 and 1992-93. First selected households, then randomly selected one adult in each household. If the adult had a spouse or cohabiting partner, that partner also filled out a self-administered questionnaire.

STUDY POPULATION: Sample includes respondents in relationships that lasted for no longer than 10 years. Includes 2,493 couples in marital relationships and 499 couples in cohabiting relationships.

MEASURES:

Commitment/Exit Costs: 5-item additive index, where each item ranges from 1 (much worse) to 5 (much better). Based on the question: “Even though it might be very unlikely, think for a moment about how various areas of your life might be different if you separated. For each of the following areas, how do you think things would change?”

- 1) your standard of living
- 2) your social life
- 3) your career opportunities
- 4) your overall happiness
- 5) your sex life

Intergenerational Relationships: Two separate questions, with responses ranging from 1 (very poor) to 7 (excellent).

- 1) “How would you describe your relationship with your father?”
- 2) “How would you describe your relationship with your mother?”

Relationship Quality: Three distinct measures were used – disagreements, happiness, and perceived fairness.

a) Disagreements: 6-item additive index, where each item ranges from 1 (never) to 6 (almost every day). Based on the question: “How often, if at all, in the last year have you had open disagreements about each of the following?”

- 10) household tasks
- 11) money
- 12) spending time together
- 13) sex
- 14) having a(nother) child
- 15) in-laws

b) Happiness with relationship: Single item, with 7-point likert scale ranging from 1 (very unhappy) to 7 (very happy). Based on the question: “Taking all things together, how would you describe your marriage (or ‘relationship’ for cohabiting individuals)?”

c) Perceived Fairness: Two separate items, each ranging from 1 (very unfair to me) to 5 (very unfair to spouse/partner). Based on the questions: “How do you feel about the fairness in your relationship in each of the following areas?”

- 1) performance of household chores
- 2) caring for the children

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Commitment index: alpha = .797

Fairness: Had tried to create an index or scale from 4 items (household chores, working for pay, spending money and child care), but decided against it because the maximum alpha they could achieve was .51.

COMMENTS: Compared to married people, cohabitators have lower levels of relationship happiness, worse relationships with parents, and lower levels of commitment/smaller exit costs.

TITLE: Do all unmarried parents marry and separate for the same reasons? Union transitions of unmarried parents.

AUTHOR: Cynthia Osborne.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: Presented at 2003 PAA meetings.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To determine if relationship quality, attitudes about marriage & gender, and human capital are associated with the transitions to marriage & separation for both cohabitators and visiting couples.

SOURCE OF DATA: Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: Longitudinal study of 4898 U.S. mothers of newborns; approximately 3500 of the mothers were unmarried at time of the birth. Weights constructed to allow data to be representative of unmarried mothers in large U.S. cities.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Data collected from 20 large U.S. cities (population \leq 200,000) between 1998 and 2000. Mothers were interviewed in the hospital right after gave birth and again 12 months later.

STUDY POPULATION: Sample includes 2724 unmarried mothers who were in a romantic relationship with baby's father at time of the birth, and who participated in the 12-month follow-up interview. 1072 married mothers were used for comparison in the descriptive analyses only.

MEASURES:

Relationship Quality

Physical abuse: Dichotomous measure where 0=no abuse & 1=any abuse, recoded from original response scale of 1 (often) to 3 (never). Based on the question "Does the baby's father hit or slap you?"

Arguments about infidelity: Dichotomous measure where 1=argued often or sometimes about infidelity in month before child's birth, and 0=otherwise.

Emotional support from father: Scale derived from 3 items, with responses ranging from 1 (never) to 3 (often). Based on mean response to these questions:

- a) "Baby's father is fair & willing to compromise"
- b) "Baby's father expresses affection or love for you"
- c) "Baby's father encourages you or helps you do things that are important to you"

Marriage expectations: Dichotomous measure where 0="50-50," little, or no chance of marriage, & 1=good or almost certain chance of marriage. Based on the question "What do you think the chances are that you will marry the baby's father in the future?"

Visiting mother in hospital: Dichotomous measure where 0=no visit & 1=father did visit mother in the hospital after the birth of their child

Giving child father's surname: Dichotomous measure where 0=did not give child father's surname & 1=did give child father's surname

Attitudes

Importance of marriage for couple & child: Pro-marriage attitude scale based on mean response to 3 statements, with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree):

- a) “It is better for a couple to get married than just live together”
- b) “Living together is just the same as being married”
- c) “It is better for children if their parents are married”

Importance of work for a successful marriage: A scale measuring non-traditional attitudes, based on the mean response to 2 questions, with responses ranging from 1 (not very important) to 3 (very important).

- a) “How important do you think the wife having a steady job is for a successful marriage”
- b) “How important do you think the husband having a steady job is for a successful marriage”

Traditional gendered family roles: A scale measuring traditional gender attitudes, based on the mean response to 2 questions, with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

- a) “The important decisions in the family should be made by the man”
- b) “It is better if the husband earns the living and the woman cares for the family”

Gender distrust: A scale based on the mean response to 2 questions, with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

- a) “In dating, a man is largely out to take advantage of a woman”
- b) “Men cannot be trusted to be faithful”

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Cronbach’s alpha for each scale, by subgroup

	<i>Cohabitators</i>	<i>Visitors</i>
<i>Emotional support scale</i>	0.54	0.65
<i>Pro-marriage attitude scale</i>	0.57	0.57
<i>Importance of work scale</i>	0.62	0.67
<i>Traditional gender attitudes scale</i>	0.56	0.58
<i>Gender distrust scale</i>	0.57	0.52

COMMENTS: Relationship quality is a more important predictor of the transition to marriage for cohabitators than for visiting parents. Having a stressful relationship is a stronger predictor of union separation for visiting parents than for cohabitators.

TITLE: Cohabitation, marriage, and remarriage: A comparison of relationship quality over time.

AUTHOR: Kevin B. Skinner, Stephen J. Bahr, D. Russell Crane, & Vaughn R. A. Call.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (2002). *Journal of Family Issues*, 23(1), 74-90.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To compare the relationship quality of long-term cohabiting couples, married couples and remarried couples. They focus on 4 aspects of relationship quality – happiness, communication, fairness, and disagreements. Controlling for relationship quality at wave 1, they observe differences in relationship quality five years later.

SOURCE OF DATA: National Survey of Families and Households, Waves I and II

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: A nationally representative, longitudinal study of U.S adults living in 9,643 households in 1987-88. Included oversamples of cohabitators, stepfamilies, single-parent families, and minority groups. Wave I included 13,008 individuals; Wave II reinterviewed 10,008 of those individuals.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Multistage probability sampling. Two waves of data collection – 1987-88 and 1992-93. First selected households, then randomly selected one adult in each household. If the adult had a spouse or cohabiting partner, that partner also filled out a self-administered questionnaire.

STUDY POPULATION: Sample includes 5,642 respondents who remained in the same cohabiting, married, or remarried relationship at both Wave I and Wave II.

MEASURES:

Happiness: Based on three items, with 7-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (very unhappy) to 7 (very happy). Mean=17.13, SD=3.99

	<u>factor loading</u>
a) satisfaction with love received	.921
b) satisfaction with understanding	.920
c) overall happiness of relationship	.863

Communication: A single-item measure, with responses ranging from 1 (never) to 6 (almost every day). Mean=4.72, SD=1.46

- a) how often during the past month they were alone with each other talking or sharing an activity

Fairness: Three-item scale. Recoded responses into 3 categories: 1=very unfair to me or my partner, 2=somewhat unfair to me or my partner, and 3=fair to both. Mean=8.15, SD=1.17. The mean for females (8.05) was lower than that for males (8.24).

	<u>factor loading</u>
a) perceived fairness in working for pay	.751
b) perceived fairness in spending money	.742
c) perceived fairness with household chores	.693

Disagreements: Three-item scale, with responses ranging from 1 (never) to 6 (almost every day). Mean=5.73, SD=2.70

	<u>factor loading</u>
a) disagreements over time spent together	.836

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| b) disagreements over sex | .817 |
| c) disagreements over money | .740 |

PSYCHOMETRICS: Used factor analysis (with oblimin rotation) of 10 items to create an index for each of 4 dimensions: happiness, communication, fairness, and disagreements. The item for communication did not load on any of the other dimensions, so they dropped it. Created additive scales by summing the raw scores for the items in each construct. Also created scales using the factor score coefficients. Found very high correlations between the additive scales and factor scores scales (happiness=.989, fairness=.990, disagreements=.993), so chose to use additive scales in all analyses.

COMMENTS: Controlling for presence of children, gender, education, duration of the relationship, ethnic status, and relationship happiness or fairness at Wave I, they found happiness and fairness to be lower among long-term cohabiting couples, as compared to 5 other groups (married once, never cohabited [ref group]; married once, cohabited first; married 2+ times, no cohab; married 2+ times, cohabited; cohabited then married). Cohab-then-married were similar to married-never-cohab on all 4 relationship dimensions. Remarried-cohab-first couples had lower happiness and fairness levels than the reference group. Remarried-no-cohab couples had similar levels of all 4 relationship qualities to the ref group.

TITLE: Domains of expressive interaction in intimate relationships: Associations with satisfaction and commitment

AUTHOR: Susan Sprecher, Sandra Metts, Brant Burleson, Elaine Hatfield, & Alicia Thompson.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (1995). *Family Relations*, 44, 203-210.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To predict the relationship satisfaction and commitment of married and engaged/cohabiting couples by examining the relative importance of companionship, sexual expression, and supportive communication.

SOURCE OF DATA: A small study of 94 couples

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: 94 couples recruited from a Midwestern university via newspaper ads, flyers, and class announcements.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Questionnaires administered to each partner in the couple.

STUDY POPULATION: 37 married couples, 36 cohabiting couples, and 21 engaged couples. Most participants were undergraduate or graduate students, and most were Caucasians from middle- or upper middle-class families.

MEASURES: Used items from the Schaefer and Olson (1981) Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships (PAIR) Inventory.

Companionship: based on PAIR recreational intimacy sub-scale, using 6 items:

1. We enjoy the same recreational activities.
2. I share in few of my partner's interests. (reverse coded)
3. We like playing together.
4. We enjoy the out-of-doors together.
5. We seldom find time to do fun things together (reverse coded)
6. I feel we share some of the same interests.

Supportive communication: based on PAIR intellectual intimacy sub-scale, using 8 items:

1. My partner listens to me when I need someone to talk to.
2. My partner helps me clarify my thoughts.
3. I can state my feelings without him/her getting defensive.
4. When it comes to having a serious discussion, it seems we have little in common. (reverse coded)
5. I feel "put-down" in a serious conversation with my partner. (reverse coded)
6. I feel it is useless to discuss some things with my partner. (reverse coded)
7. My partner and I understand each other completely.
8. We have an endless number of things to talk about.

Sexual expression: based on PAIR sexual intimacy sub-scale, using 6 items:

1. I am satisfied with our sex life.
2. I feel our sexual activity is just routine. (reverse coded)
3. I am able to tell my partner when I want sexual intercourse (or other physical affection).
4. I "hold back" my sexual interest because my partner makes me feel uncomfortable. (reverse coded)
5. Sexual expression is an essential part of our relationship.

6. My partner seems disinterested in sex. (reverse coded)

Relationship satisfaction: Based on two items. It appears that they averaged the responses to the two items, though this is not specifically stated.

1. In the event of a breakup “to what extent would you be giving up a very satisfying relationship?” (1=this is not a very satisfying relationship to 9=this is a very satisfying relationship)
2. “Overall, how satisfied are you with the relationship with your partner?” (1=not at all satisfied to 9=completely satisfied)

Commitment: Based on 4 items.

1. “How committed are you to your partner?” (1=extremely uncommitted to 9=extremely committed)
2. “How often have you seriously considered ending your relationship with your partner?” (reverse coded so that 1=several times to 9=never)
3. “How likely is it that you will try to end the relationship with your partner during the next year?” (reverse coded so that 1=extremely likely to 9=extremely unlikely)
4. “How likely is it that you will try to end the relationship with your partner during the next five years?” (reverse coded so that 1=extremely likely to 9=extremely unlikely)

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Cronbach’s alpha for:

Companionship = 0.60 for men and 0.65 for women

Supportive communication = 0.76 for men and 0.78 for women

Sexual expression = 0.81 for men and 0.76 for women

Relationship satisfaction = 0.75 for men and 0.82 for women

Commitment = 0.79 for men and 0.75 for women

Face validity: For the relationship satisfaction index, the authors state that “this two-item index has obvious face validity as a measure of satisfaction” (p. 206).

COMMENTS: They find that all three factors (companionship, sexual expression, and communication) are associated with relationship satisfaction and commitment, but the strongest predictive factor is supportive communication.

TITLE: The link between past and present intimate relationships.

AUTHOR: Jan E. Stets.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (1993). *Journal of Family Issues*, 14(2), 236-260.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine whether past cohabital or marital relationships influence current marital and cohabiting relationships. Four dimensions of relationships are studied: quality, stability, agreements, and involvement.

SOURCE OF DATA: National Survey of Families and Households

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: A nationally representative, longitudinal study of 13,017 U.S adults living in 9,643 households in 1987-88. Included oversamples of cohabitators, stepfamilies, single-parent families, and minority groups.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Multistage probability sampling. Two waves of data collection – 1987-88 and 1992-93. First selected households, then randomly selected one adult in each household. If the adult had a spouse or cohabiting partner, that partner also filled out a self-administered questionnaire.

STUDY POPULATION: Approximately 5,000 respondents who were married or cohabiting at the time of interview and their spouses/partners.

MEASURES:

Relationship quality: Single item, with responses ranging from 1 (very unhappy) to 7 (very happy). “How happy are you in your relationship?”

Relationship stability: Single item, with responses ranging from 1 (very high) to 5 (very low). “What are the chances you and your spouse/partner would eventually divorce/separate?”

Relationship agreements: Four-item additive scale, with responses including 1 (almost every day), 2 (2 or 3 times a week), 3 (about once a week), 4 (2 or 3 times a month), 5 (about once a month), and 6 (never). “How often in the last year did you have open disagreements with your spouse/partner about...?”

- d) Household tasks
- e) money
- f) spending time together
- g) sex

Relationship involvement: Single item, with response ranging from 1 (never) to 6 (almost every day). “How often during the past month did you and your spouse/partner spend time alone with each other, talking, or sharing an activity?”

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Relationship agreements: Reported omega reliability coefficients for 4 subgroups

- 1) cohabiting respondents = .77
- 2) married respondents = .81
- 3) cohabitators’ partners = .83
- 4) marrieds’ spouses = .81

COMMENTS: Involvement in a past cohabiting relationship has a negative effect on current cohabiting relationships as well as on current marital relationships, provided the prior cohabitation was with someone other than the current spouse.

TITLE: Sexual infidelity among married and cohabiting Americans.

AUTHOR: Judith Treas & Deirdre Giesen.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (2000). *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62, 48-60.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To identify what characteristics differentiate people who are sexually faithful from those who have sex with someone other than their partner.

SOURCE OF DATA: 1992 National Health and Social Life Survey (NHSLs)

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: A national probability sample of English-speaking Americans ranging in age from 18 to 59. Interviewed 3,432 people about their sexual behaviors and attitudes.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Face-to-face interviews and self-administered questionnaires.

STUDY POPULATION: Sample includes 2,598 respondents who had ever been married or in a sexual relationship.

MEASURES: Sexual infidelity is operationalized 3 ways: 1) via self-administered survey, asking if they had ever had sex with someone other than spouse while married; 2) via face-to-face interview, asking ever-married and ever-cohabited respondents if they had ever had sex with someone other than their spouse/partner; and 3) via face-to-face interview, asking if respondents married or cohabiting in the past year had been unfaithful during that period.

PSYCHOMETRICS: None reported.

COMMENTS: Because issues of sexual infidelity are sensitive subjects that raise concerns about data quality, the authors used 3 separate measures of infidelity. They find that sexual infidelity is more common among people who report less satisfaction with their relationships.

TITLE: Marital and cohabiting relationships of adult children of alcoholics.

AUTHOR: Toni Terling Watt.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (2002). *Journal of Family Issues*, 23(2), 246-265.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine differences in the marital and cohabiting relationships of adult children of alcoholics (ACOAs) versus non-ACOAs.

SOURCE OF DATA: National Survey of Families and Households

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: A nationally representative, longitudinal study of 13,017 U.S adults living in 9,643 households in 1987-88. Included oversamples of cohabitators, stepfamilies, single-parent families, and minority groups.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Multistage probability sampling. Two waves of data collection – 1987-88 and 1992-93. First selected households, then randomly selected one adult in each household. If the adult had a spouse or cohabiting partner, that partner also filled out a self-administered questionnaire.

STUDY POPULATION: More than 10,000 respondents who completed interviews in both waves of the survey.

MEASURES:

Marital relationship quality: Single item, with responses ranging from 1 (very unhappy) to 7 (very happy). “How happy are you in your relationship?”

Cohabiting relationship quality: Same single item question as for marital relationship quality, with responses ranging from 1 (very unhappy) to 7 (very happy). “How happy are you in your relationship?”

Marital relationship instability: Coded as 1 if couples married at Wave I were divorced by Wave II. Coded 0 if still married at Wave II.

Cohabiting relationship instability: Coded as 1 if couples cohabiting at Wave I were no longer together at Wave II. Coded 0 if still cohabiting or married at Wave II.

PSYCHOMETRICS: No psychometric properties were provided.

COMMENTS: Children who grow up in an alcoholic family are less likely to marry than those who grow up in a non-alcoholic family. If children of alcoholics do marry, they are more likely to report lower marital quality and stability.

Stepfamily and Remarried Populations

Measures Used in the Measurement of Marital Relationships in Stepfamily Populations

Prepared by
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I. Overview of Issues

The defining feature of stepfamilies is the presence of children from a previous union (see Ganong & Coleman 2003; Coleman, Ganong and Fine 2000; Kheshgi-Genevose & Genevose 1997; Walsh 1992; Levin & Trost 2000). For the most part, remarriages in which neither partner brings children into the marriage are conceptualized and measured similarly to first marriages (see below for exceptions) (White & Booth 1985). Consequently, a key distinguishing feature of stepfamilies in comparison to intact biological families is the role of stepparenting (Ganong & Coleman 2003; Coleman, Ganong and Fine 2000; Kheshgi-Genevose & Genevose 1997). While parental and financial responsibilities are assumed for biological parents, they must be defined and negotiated for stepparents (Walsh 1992). Moreover, because stepparenting roles are more ambiguous, the opportunity for conflict is greater (Cherlin 1978; Furstenberg & Cherlin 1991). In addition, adults in stepfamilies, unlike those in first unions, must define or redefine relationships with former spouses and in-laws (Walsh 1992; Golish 2003; Madden-Derdich et al. 1999). In fact, the ex-spouse relationship often plays a salient role in stepfamilies (Golish 2003), and may impact couple relationship quality, in particular during the early years. Unlike members of nuclear intact families, members of stepfamilies do not have a shared family history or kinship system (Ganong & Coleman 1988). Last, couples relationships in stepfamilies and remarriages are informed and shaped by previous unions. For example, remarried women expect and have more shared decision-making than women in first marriages. Financial roles in remarriages also appear to be more egalitarian and the division of household tasks is less traditional (Schultz, Schultz & Olson 1991; Sandin et al. 2001; Deal, Hagan & Anderson 1992).

II. Complexity and Heterogeneity of Stepfamilies

Stepfamilies are formed through a variety of pathways (Coleman, Ganong and Fine 2000; Coleman & Ganong 1990; Levin & Trost 2000): Stepfamilies include relationships in which it is a first marriage for both partners but where one or both partners have had children from a previous union (Bumpass, Raley and Sweet 1995). Stepfamilies also include marriages in which it is a first marriage for one partner but a remarriage for the other partner. In addition, stepfamilies are made up by second or higher order marriages for one or both partners. While divorce (or, in the case of cohabitators, union termination) is now the most common pathway into stepfamilies (Cherlin 1992), stepfamilies are also formed through the death of a spouse. It is unclear whether stepfamilies formed through divorce/separation differ from those formed through widowhood. However, the findings of several studies indicate that more complex stepfamilies (i.e., couples in which both partners have children from a previous union) have lower levels of marital quality and stability and higher levels of conflict than less complex stepfamilies and poorer child outcomes compared with widowed families (see Clingempeel 1981; Vermer et al. 1989; see Martin & Bumpass 1989 and for exception).

Coresidential vs. Visiting Stepfamilies (Vemer et al. 1989): The issues facing stepfamilies differ depending on whether they are non-coresidential or coresidential stepfamilies. For example, among coresidential stepfamilies, the role of stepparent may take on greater salience and importance, while in non-coresidential stepfamilies issues related to the family time or routines may be more central.

Contraction and expansion of households (Furstenberg & Cherlin 1991; Walsh 1992): Unlike intact biological families, stepfamily households often expand and contract as children come to visit or leave to stay with their non-residential parent. This expansion can be seasonal—for example, taking place during

summer vacation—or year-round, as in the case with shared custody arrangements. This contraction and expansion undoubtedly affects the regularity of family routines and time, and may hinder in the development of family rituals.

Presence of mutual children (Ganong & Coleman 1988; Walsh 1992). Stepfamilies with mutual children may differ from stepfamilies without mutual children; for example, family identity may be less ambiguous and more fully developed among stepfamilies with mutual children (see Vikat et al. 1999). Research, however, indicates that the presence of mutual children does not affect marital quality or the stability of remarriages (Ganong & Coleman 1988).

Life-cycle/Family stage issues/ Couple stages (Walsh 1992; Berger 1995; Braithwaite et al. 2001): The issues facing stepfamilies with older children (i.e., teen years) differ from those for couples with young children (i.e., preschool age). For example, there is some evidence to suggest that stepfamilies with very young children resemble intact biological families, with stepparents more likely to assume the roles and responsibilities of a biological parent.

Legal status: Although a quarter of cohabiting couples include children from previous unions (Bumpass, Raley & Sweet 1995), cohabiting stepfamilies are largely understudied.

III. Measures used in the literature

This section summarizes the measures used in the studies reviewed to assess relationship quality in stepfamilies. The majority of these measures were designed for or tested most intensively on couples in first marriages. However, because they tap into issues universal to all marriages (e.g., satisfaction, conflict, and communication) and because they provide a standard yardstick on which to measure and compare relationship quality across various marriage types (i.e., first marriages, remarriages, and stepfamilies), they have been used extensively by researchers. More recently, scholars have developed items that tap into issues specific to stepfamilies (see, for example, Boundary Ambiguity Scale). Table 1 provides a summary of these measures, the studies in which they have appeared, and the available psychometric analysis.

Marital happiness (satisfaction): Measures of marital happiness are typically comprised of several items that assess a respondent's satisfaction with various aspects of his/her marriage including understanding, love and affection, time spent together, agreement with spouse, household tasks, the children, money, and the in-laws. This scale has been used widely, although not uniformly, and has appeared in several large national surveys including the NLSY, NSFH, and the Marital Instability over the Lifecourse Study (MIOLCS).

Marital Conflict: Researchers have measured marital conflict through a variety of measures. One commonly used set of items has appeared in the NLSY, NSFH and MIOLCS. It measures the amount of disagreements over: household tasks, money, sex, spending time together, in-laws, the children and having another child. Other measures tap into the occurrence of physical violence, and the frequency of quarrels.

Marital problems (see Ganong & Coleman 1988): Respondents are asked to indicate which of the following is a major problem in their marriage: no longer love each other, physical abuse, infidelity, financial problems, sexual problems, neglect of children, emotional problems, in-law problems, and difficulties with partner's ex-spouse.

Family environment scales: This is a composite scale measuring family unity and support. Sample items include “our family enjoys doing things together” and “family members are supportive of each other during difficult times” (see Barber & Lyons 1994).

A similar measure capturing Family Cohesion measures satisfaction with family interactions. Sample items include: 1) family has fun together; 2) things are tense; 3) things are stressful; and 4) family works well as a team (see Lansford, Ceballo, Abbey & Stewart 2001).

Family climate: This five item scale taps into the quality and amount of parent-child and family interactions. This item appeared in the NSFH and includes the following items: 1) overall satisfaction with family life; 2) time parent and child spend together in leisure activities away from home; at home working or playing; reading or doing homework; watching TV; and having private talks 3) how many times family ate dinner together.

Incomplete institution/social embeddedness (see Booth & Edwards 1992): Taps into the extent to which spouses interact with each other's social and family network. Sample items include: number of days it has been since last talked to or received a letter from their mother, mother in-law, father, or father in-law; number of relatives respondent feels emotionally close to; and are there people whom you consider very close friends who are not relatives?

Willingness to leave marriage: Several versions of this measure have been developed. Some items directly asks respondents to report whether they are considering terminating their marriage/union; others present respondents with a variety of life domains (i.e., finances, sex life, friendships etc) and ask them to report whether each aspect would be better or worse if they divorced (see NSFH or NLSY).

Boundary Ambiguity between Ex-spouses (see Madden-Derdich et al., 1999): Based on 22 items from the Boss and Pearce-McCall Boundary Ambiguity Scale for divorced adults. The scale measures the degree to which there has been a structural reorganization and family redefinition after a divorce. Sample items include: "I still consider myself a wife/husband to my former spouse," "I still get my former spouse's advice about important personal decisions," "My children and I are able to talk about my former spouse without becoming emotionally upset," and "It feels like a complete family when the children and I are together without my former spouse".

Identify salience, Parental Identity Questionnaire (PIQ) (see DeGarmo and Forgatch 2002). The PIQ contains two sections in which couples are asked to rank three identities: spousal, employee, and parental. "Thinking about social roles that you are involved in, compare each pair below. Shade the circle that best answers the statement "I define myself as more a ____ than I define myself as a ____." For example if the roles were "athlete" or "student" and you thought of yourself as more of an athlete than a student, shade athlete. Respondents are provided with pairs of social roles (e.g., worker/(step)parent, (step)parent/employee etc) and various social situations and asked to report which role they would present first.

Remarriage comparison (see Ganong and Coleman 1988): Respondents are asked to compare their present marriage to their previous marriage.

Remarriage dissatisfaction (see Ganong and Coleman 1988): One item based on a five-point scale where respondents indicate how satisfied they are in their marriage compared to other couples they know.

Remarriage expectations (see Ganong and Coleman 1988): Respondents indicate how their remarriage compares to their expectations for their remarriage.

Past orientations scale (see Berger 1995): Consists of 14 statements that describe how family members relate to matters and people from their past. Sample items include "In our family, family members talk about the first marriage(s)."

ENRICH scale (Enriching and Nurturing Relationship Issues, Communication and Happiness): ENRICH was developed by Olson, Fournier and Druckman (1986) and adapted by Schultz, Schultz and Olson (1991) for their study of stepfamilies. The scale consists of 125 items with 12 sub-scales, each consisting of 10 items and measuring separate domains including: conflict resolution, communication, financial management, leisure activities, former attachments, idealistic distortion, adjustment, personality items, family, friends, roles, and religion and values.

IV. Strengths and Weaknesses of Existing Measures:

Strengths:

- Over the last two decades, researchers in this field have made important strides in increasing our understanding of the demographic makeup of stepfamilies (Cherlin 1992; Bumpass, Sweet & Castro 1990); factors associated with stepparent-stepchild relationships (Marsiglio 1992; MacDonald & Demaris 2002) and the effects of stepfamilies on child outcomes (Zill 1988; Hanson et al. 1996; Rogers 1996). Much less, however, is known about couple relationships within stepfamilies (Ganong & Coleman 2003).
- This field has been, and can continue to be, aided by innovative qualitative studies and small-scale quantitative studies that examine and identify issues unique to stepfamilies. For example, such studies have identified financial arrangements and management systems (see Jacobson 1993; Lown & Dolan 1994; Burgoyne & Morison 1997), the merging of multi-household economic systems (see Cherlin & Furstenberg 1994), family identity and cohesion (Braithwaite et al. 2001), role ambiguity and saliency (DeGarmo & Forgatch 2002) as important to the functioning of stepfamilies; and their findings, in many cases, have provided useful leads for the development of items. However, these promising leads have yet to be translated into items that can be used in large-scale surveys or applied to diverse nationally representative samples.
- While the “one size fits all model”, in which items developed primarily for couples in first marriages are administered to stepfamilies and remarried couples, has meant that issues specific to stepfamilies are often ignored and unmeasured, their use has provided a way for researchers to compare stepfamilies to intact families. Thus, future research should not discard the “one-size fit all” model. Instead, it should be supplemented with items specific to stepfamilies.

Weaknesses:

- Measures of marital quality designed for and mostly tested on couples in first marriages have been used to measure marital quality among couples in stepfamilies and remarriages. The appropriateness of this approach is unclear and understudied.
- Measures developed specifically for stepfamilies tend to focus on stepparent-stepchild relationships and thus less is known about couple relationships outside of parenting roles (Ganong & Coleman 2003). For example, while qualitative studies indicate that financial arrangements among stepfamilies are more complicated than among intact families (Burgoyne & Morison 1997; Jacobson 1993), this literature review did not yield any items on the financial structure of stepfamilies that have been or can be administered in large-scale surveys.
- While some scales or items developed specially for stepfamilies and remarried couples show promise and capture issues central to stepfamilies, most have yet to be tested on large nationally representative samples (Berger 1995; Madden-Derdich et al., 1999; Schultz, Schultz & Olson 1991). Overall, this field has relied heavily on small, unrepresentative, and convenience samples. Last, research on minority and low-income families has been limited.

- Research to date has focused on measuring conflict, in particular within the stepparent-stepchild relationship, and not the positive. Thus, we know less about the qualities that foster healthy stepfamilies. Recent small-scale studies provide some useful leads for future research. For example, firm boundaries in the relationship between ex-spouses appear to be beneficial for new couple relationships and coparenting (DeGarmo & Forgatch 2002; Madden et al. 1999).
- Few studies have conducted psychometric analyses on items for stepfamilies only. Therefore, it is unclear how well scales developed for couples in first marriages and unions work for couples in stepfamilies.

V. Conceptual Gaps

- Much of the research on stepfamilies has been limited to married biological mother-stepfather coresidential households. Consequently, less is known about visiting stepfamilies (in which stepchildren reside less than half of the year), father-stepmother families, and cohabiting stepfamilies (for exceptions see Schultz, Schultz & Olson 1991).
- Research suggests that the development of family routines and rituals is important for the formation of healthy stepfamilies (Braithwaite et al. 2001). Possible next steps include the development of items that tap into the creation and presence of family routines and rituals. (Some qualitative studies, for example, suggest that taking a family trip is an important symbolic move in the formation of a family identity for stepfamilies.) Items that capture the effect of household contractions and expansions on family time and routine should also be developed.
- Previous studies have considered how the formation, or lack there, of clear boundaries between ex-spouses (e.g., no longer turning to ex-spouse for advice; feeling like a complete family without ex-spouse) is associated with parental satisfaction and individual well-being (Madden et al. 1999), but less is known about how it may impact relationship quality among remarried couples.
- Fertility and fertility expectations in stepfamilies are not well understood or measured. For example, the concept of his, her and their fertility needs to be further studied with a population of stepfamilies (see Vikat, Thomson, & Hoem 1999).
- Items and scales measuring the division of finances and financial management systems in stepfamilies need to be developed. Research in this area would benefit from existing qualitative studies that have identified a wide range of financial issues unique to stepfamilies (e.g., which set of children (his/her) should receive a share of inheritance; sharing of mortgages) and have developed typologies of financial management systems used by couples in stepfamilies (Jacobson 1993; Burgoyne & Morison 1997; Lown & Dolan 1994).

VI. Conclusion:

Our theoretical and substantive understanding of what stepfamilies are like and how they function has increased in recent decades. Yet, measures lag behind both theory and research findings. With few exceptions, researchers working in this area have not applied the progress of the last two decades into the development of measures that capture issues unique to stepfamilies or that go beyond the stepchild-stepparent relationship. The field could also be further aided by careful and thorough psychometric analyses of existing measures on nationally representative samples of stepfamilies. It is still unclear whether measures developed for couples in first unions are appropriate for couples in stepfamilies. Last, this area of research would benefit greatly from the study of cohabiting stepfamilies, as well as father-stepmother households and the inclusion of a life-course perspective.

Table 1: Summary of Measures Used In the Study of Relationship Quality of Couples in Stepfamilies

Construct/Measure and Sample Items	Article Using Measure	Psychometrics
Marital Happiness: How often does couple laugh together, calmly discuss something, and tell each other about their day.	Rogers, 1996	Alpha = .73 based on a sample of married mothers (1 st marriage and remarried).
<p>Marital Problems: Two measures of marital problems were identified in the literature review. The first, “Have you had a problem in your marriage because one of you a) get angry easily, b) has feelings that are easily hurt, c) is jealous, d) is domineering, e) is critical, f) is moody, g) won’t talk to the other, h) has had a sexual relationship with someone else, i) has irritating habits, j) is not home enough, k) spends money foolishly, l) drinks or uses drugs?”</p> <p>The second measure asks respondents to indicate which of the following areas is a major problem in their marriage. Sample items include: no longer love each other, physical abuse, infidelity.</p>	<p>Amato & Rogers, 1997</p> <p>Ganong & Coleman, 1988</p>	<p>None reported.</p> <p>Alpha = .80 (small localized sample of stepfamilies)</p>
Marital Conflict: Consists of a 9-item scale that assesses how often couples argue about household chores, the children, money, showing affection, religion, leisure time, drinking, other women and the wife’s relatives.	<p>Rogers, 1996</p> <p>Hanson et al., 1996</p>	<p>Alpha = .76 based on a sample of married mothers (1st marriage and remarried).</p> <p>Confirmatory factor analysis identified three dimensions of parental conflict (parental disagreement, conflict avoidance, and aggression). Analysis was conducted on sample of intact, step families, and single parent families.</p>
Past connections: In our family, family members talk about the first marriages.”	<p>Berger, 2000</p> <p>Berger 1995</p>	<p>Alpha = .87 for American respondents that included both couples and children. (Study was based on a sample of American and Israeli stepfamilies)</p> <p>Alpha = .89; based on small localized non-representative</p>

<p>Feelings toward ex-spouse: Sample items include: I still love him/her; I don't feel much of anything for him/her. I still consider myself a wife/husband to my former spouse. It feels like a complete family when the children and I are together without my former spouse.</p>	<p>Madden-Derdich et al. 1999</p>	<p>sample of stepfamilies. Alpha = .80.; sample of recently divorced couples</p>
<p>Boundaries scale: Taps into the extent to which couples believe they should share or be similar in various aspects of their lives. Content areas include: finances, family relations, childrearing, etc.</p>	<p>Allen et al. 2001</p>	<p>Alpha = .58 for women and .71 for men (sample of both 1st marriages and remarriages).</p>
<p>Control-outcome scale: Measures who couple believes should have final say in their relationship. Sample items include: Only one of us should have the final say on decision we make about both our families; My partner and I should have equal say about who does each of the chores around the house.</p>	<p>Allen et al. 2001</p>	<p>Alpha = .69 for women and .79 for men (sample of both 1st marriages and remarriages).</p>
<p>Scale of satisfaction: Based on a 14 item 5- point scale (very unsatisfied to very satisfied). Sample item: How satisfied are you with the frequency of arguments between parents in your family?</p>	<p>Berger, 2000</p>	<p>Alpha = .91 for American respondents including both couples and children. Study based on a sample of American and Israeli stepfamilies.</p>
<p>Frequency of disagreements: Respondents report on a 6-point scale the frequency at which they disagree over 21 issues related to stepfamily living. Items include handling finances, and recreational activities.</p>	<p>Ganong & Coleman, 1988</p>	<p>Alpha = .88 (small localized sample of stepfamilies)</p>
<p>Destructive conflict resolution: 5-point scale about how frequently respondents use different ways to resolve arguments. Sample items include: Try to calmly talk it over; Slap or hit your spouse; Drop the issue; Change your mind.</p>	<p>Ganong & Coleman, 1988</p>	<p>Alpha = .56 (small localized sample of stepfamilies)</p>
<p>Communication patterns questionnaire (CPQ): Sample</p>	<p>Allen et al. 2001.</p>	<p>Alpha = .71; Intraclass correlation measuring agreement between</p>

items include: Both members suggest possible solutions and compromises to problems. Both members avoid discussing problems.		couple is .80 for 'mutual constructive communication' and .73 for 'demand-withdraw communication' (based on a sample of both 1 st marriages and remarriages).
Disagreement over children: 10 item asking how often couple disagrees about the kids. Sample items include: children's bedtime; mealtime routines; curfews; and manners.	Ganong & Coleman, 1988	Alpha = .78 (small localized sample of stepfamilies)
Comparisons: Compare present marriage to former marriage on a scale from 1 to 5. How satisfied in current marriage compared to other couples. How remarriage compares to expectations for remarriage.	Ganong & Coleman, 1988	None applicable (one item).
DAS: Dyadic adjustment scale includes 32 items.	Ganong & Coleman, 1988 Allen et al. 2001	Authors report previous findings (DAS highly correlated (.86) with Locke-Wallace Scale.) Internal reliability = .96 and test-retest reliability = .87 (sample of both 1 st marriages and remarriages).
Feelings towards spouse (IFF): 38 item scale. Sample items include: I feel close to this family member. This person has a hard time showing love for me.	Ganong & Coleman, 1988	Has a high temporal reliability (.96 over 2 weeks) and negatively correlated with psychological indices.
Identity salience: "Thinking about social roles that you are involved in, compare each pair below. Shade the circle that best answers the statement "I define myself as more a ____ than I define myself as a ____." For example if the roles were "athlete" or "student" and you thought of yourself as more of an athlete than a student, shade athlete.	DeGarmo & Forgatch, 2002	None reported.
ENRICH-A: (adapted version of ENRICH scale designed specifically for stepfamilies). 125 item questionnaire (see compendium) 12 10-item scales and one 5-item scale for Idealistic distortion. New items include: There are times when I feel left out when my partner and his/her	Schultz et al. 1991	High alphas ranging from .52 to .83 for individual subscales (small unrepresentative sample of Australian stepfamilies).

children are together. I am not satisfied with the way we each handle our responsibilities as parents and stepparents. I am sometimes worried that my partner may have a sexual relationship outside of our marriage.		
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TITLE: A longitudinal study of marital problems and subsequent divorce.

AUTHOR: Paul Amato & Stacy J. Rogers.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (1997). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 59, 612-624.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: Using longitudinal data, the authors examine the extent to which marital problems in the past predict divorce in the future and the extent to which marital problems mediate the effect of demographic and background variables.

SOURCE OF DATA: Panel Study of Marital Instability over the Life Course

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: Panel study that began in 1980; respondents were reinterviewed in 1983, 88 and 94. Used random digit dialing techniques to interview a nationally representative sample of married persons aged 55 and under.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: CATI

STUDY POPULATION: Married persons aged 55 and under for whom data on marital status were available for two or more points in time (86% of the original sample).

MEASURES:

Marital Problems: Have you had a problem in your marriage because one of you: a) gets angry easily, b) has feelings that are easily hurt, c) is jealous, d) is domineering, e) is critical, f) is moody, g) won't talk to the other, h) has had a sexual relationship with someone else, i) has irritating habits, j) is not home enough, k) spends money foolishly, l) drinks or uses drugs? Respondents who indicating having any of the above problems were then asked to indicate whether the problem was caused by themselves, their spouse or by both.

PSYCHOMETRICS: None are reported.

FINDINGS:

Major findings include: Although husbands and wives emphasize different problems that are caused by husbands, they agree on the extent (total number of problems) to which husband's behavior causes problems in their marriage. There is more discrepancy in husbands' and wives' reports of problems caused by wives. Husbands report fewer problems caused by their wives than do wives. In short, husband and wives agree about the number of problems caused by husbands but disagree about the number of problems caused by wives. Both husbands' and wives' reports of problems caused by husbands are good predictors of divorce. Similarly, both husbands' and wives' reports of problems caused by wives are good predictors of divorce. The most consistent predictors of divorce are jealousy, infidelity, spending money foolishly, and drinking or using drugs were, regardless of which spouse caused or reported the behavior. (Infidelity was associated with the largest increase in the odds of divorce.) Last, they find evidence that jealousy and spending money foolishly was followed by divorce most quickly, compared with the other problems.

TITLE: Family processes and adolescent adjustment in intact and remarried families.

AUTHOR: Bonnie Barber and Janice M. Lyons.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (1994). *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 23, 421-436.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: Examines whether family processes that predict positive and negative development outcomes are the same in intact and remarried families.

SOURCE OF DATA: The Michigan Study of Adolescent Life Transition (MSALT)

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: Tenth grade students in 1988 from eight lower and middle-class school districts in South East Michigan. Sample is representative of 10th grade students in these districts.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Students were recruited in 1983. An introductory letter was distributed in their math class. (Unclear how interview was administered.)

STUDY POPULATION: Study includes 758 white children whose parents were married and 95 children living in stepfamilies. (Black and Hispanic students were excluded from this study because of small sample size.)

MEASURES:

Family environment scales: consists of five 7-point Likert scale items. The entire list of items is not provided, but sample items include “our family enjoys doing things together” and “family members are supportive of each other during difficult times”. Alpha = .80

Conflict scale: Consists of four items measuring the frequency of family arguments and parental criticism. Sample items include “I have lots of fights with my parents about rules and decisions for me” and “My parents criticize me a lot more than I deserve.” Alpha = .78.

Permissiveness scale: Consists of two items: “When I do something I’m not supposed to and my parents find out, they often let me get away with it” and “There are rules in the family, but lots of times my parents don’t really care if I live up to them.” Alpha = .53

Democratic Decision Making: Consists of three items about the adolescent’s role in family decisions and perceptions of parental trust. Sample items include “My parents encourage me to give my ideas and opinions even when we disagree” and “My parents trust me to do what they expect without checking”. Alpha = .63

PSYCHOMETRICS: Factor and reliability analysis were conducted but not separately for children living in intact vs. remarried families.

MAJOR FINDINGS: Remarried and intact families do not differ with respect to permissiveness and democratic decision making. However, remarried families appear to be more conflictual and less cohesive than intact families. Conflict has negative effects for children in both intact and remarried families. Similarly, children in both family types benefited from democratic decision making. Last, children from remarried families appear to benefit (higher levels of self-esteem) somewhat from permissiveness. (This result was not replicated among children in intact families.)

TITLE: Three types of stepfamilies.

AUTHOR: Roni Berger.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (1995). In “Understanding Stepfamilies: Their Structure and Dynamics.” Edited by Craig A. Everett. Also published in *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 24, 35-49.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: Based on the starting point that stepfamilies are diverse, the author develops a multidimensional typology of stepfamilies.

SOURCE OF DATA: A group of 63 stepfamily couples that participated in joint in-depth interviews. The sample is not representative of stepfamilies in general.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: It is unclear how the couples were recruited or what the sampling frame would be.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Joint couple in-depth semi-structured face-to-face interviews and self-administered questionnaires.

STUDY POPULATION: The couples in the sample are described as being middle-class, urban, educated, and married for at least two years. All couples include divorced and remarried women, who brought at least one child from the previous marriage into their current marriage. Husbands were either in their first or second marriage; some had children from their previous union.

MEASURES:

1. Past orientations scale: This scale was developed for the study and consists of 14 statements that describe how family members relate to matters and people from their past. Sample items include “In our family, family members talk about the first marriage(s).” Responses ranged from never, seldom, sometimes, often and always. Reliability was .89. A family score on each item was calculated by taking the average of both spouses’ responses.
2. Satisfaction scale: Scale was developed by Olson et al. (1982) as part of the FACES questionnaire. The questionnaire includes 14 items that describe different aspects of family life, including role allocation, rules, boundaries and the like. Sample items include “How satisfied are you with the frequency of arguments between members of your family?” Responses include very unsatisfied, unsatisfied, partly unsatisfied and partly satisfied, satisfied, and very satisfied. Reliability for this is scale is .92 and has test retest reliability of .75 (after 5 weeks).
3. Acceptance/rejection scale: They author also included an acceptance/rejection scale, but did not provide any details about this measure.

PSYCHOMETRICS: See above.

FINDINGS: Three types of stepfamilies were identified—integrated, invented, and imported. Family types differ in terms of both demographic characteristics and relationship dynamics. The three family types, however, were similar in terms of satisfaction and functioning.

Integrated families score above average on past orientation and acceptance of differences, both partners have children from a previous marriage, and the children are either adolescents or young adults. A defining feature of these families is that both partners feel that they are ending their child-rearing phase. The children are

thought of belong to the spouse, not the couple, and parenting decisions are left to the biological parent. Consequently, the focus of the marriage is the couple.

Invented families are families for whom the past is for all intents and purposes erased. The focus of these families is family building and child rearing. The members of the stepfamily are thought of as a 'real' family. Most of these families contain husbands with no children from a previous marriage or husbands who were never married before and wives with one child from a previous marriage. The couple remarried early in the life cycle and when the children were still young. The couple expects to have children of their own, and the husband is expected to assume a parental role for the wives' children. These families score low on past acceptance and acceptance of differences. Couples in these families see no difference between themselves and intact families.

Imported families appear to functioning as an original family unit. They co-parent children from previous marriages, and assume parental responsibilities similar to those for biological children, but the focal point of the marriage is the couple not the family. Roles do not appear to be renegotiated in these marriages; instead members appear to assume roles previously played by the former spouse.

TITLE: Starting over: Why remarriages are more unstable.

AUTHOR: Alan Booth & John N. Edwards.

PUBLICATION CITATION: *Journal of Family Issues*, 13, 179-194.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To determine the extent to which remarried adults have attributes that leave them at risk for poor marital quality and higher levels of marital instability. They compare relationship quality, willingness to leave marriage, and the social integration of couples in first marriage to those in remarriages.

SOURCES OF DATA: The marital instability over the life course study. National sample of 2,033 married persons aged 55 and under in 1980. Study is longitudinal—respondents were reinterviewed in 1983 and 1988.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: National random digit dial sample of married adults aged 55 and under in 1980.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Telephone interviews. One spouse was randomly selected to be interviewed. The 1983 reinterview had a 78% response rate, the 3rd wave had a 66% response rate.

STUDY POPULATION: Two samples: The remarriage attribute analytical sample consisted of 1,210 respondents married over the three waves to the original spouse. The divorce analysis consisted of 1,483 respondents for whom there was reliable information on marital status.

MEASURES:

1. Incomplete institution (measures couple's embeddedness in social/family networks).
 - a. Number of days it has been since last talked to or received a letter from their mother, mother in-law, father, or father in-law.
 - b. Number of relatives they feel emotional close to.
 - c. Are there people whom you consider very close friends who are not relatives?
2. Willingness to leave marriage: The person's willingness to leave their marriage was assessed through two measures (exact wording not provided):
 - a. A four-item Likert scale that reflects whether an individual believes divorce is morally wrong.
 - b. A three-item scale which assesses the extent to which individuals believe they could handle things financially and emotionally if their marriage ended.
3. Marital interaction: a 5-item scale measuring how often respondents reporting doing the following:
 - a. Eating their main meals together
 - b. Shopping
 - c. Visiting friends
 - d. Working on projects around the house
 - e. Going out
4. Marital happiness: a 7-item Likert scale measuring happiness with the following aspect of marriage:
 - a. Extent of understanding
 - b. Amount of love and affection received

- c. Agreement with spouse
- d. Sexual relationship
- e. Spouse as someone with whom to do things
- f. Spouses faithfulness

And 4 global satisfaction items:

- g. Overall happiness of marriage
- h. Rating of own marriage compared to others
- i. Strength of love for spouse
- j. Whether marriage is getting better or worse

5. Marital disagreement: 4 z-scored items about the frequency of disagreements, occurrence of physical violence, frequency of quarrels.

TITLE: “Becoming a family”: Developmental processes represented in blended family discourse.

AUTHOR: Dawn O. Braithwaite, Loreen N. Olson, Tamara D. Golish, Charles Soukup, & Paul Turnman.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (2001). *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 29, 221-247.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: Using qualitative and interpretative methods, the authors develop a model of how blended family members experience the process of becoming a family. Although the article does not have specific measures, it identifies traits, dynamics, and characteristics associated with the development of healthy stepfamilies.

SOURCE OF DATA: Qualitative data—semi-structured interviews with one member from 53 blended families.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample): The sample is non-representative. Participants were recruited through announcements in university classes and offices. The participants represented different perspectives within stepfamilies: 5 biological parents, 15 stepparents and 33 stepchildren.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: In-depth interviews with one member of 53 stepfamilies. Interviews were semi-structured and focused on the participants’ perceptions and experiences in the early years of their blended family life.

STUDY POPULATION: Study is based on 53 members of stepfamilies. The majority of participants were female (n=40), the mean age of parents and stepparents was 41 and the mean age of stepchildren was 20.

MEASURE:

As noted above no measures were developed for this study, but dimension of stepfamily dynamics

were identified that appear to be crucial to the successful functioning of stepfamilies. We

summarize only those constructs identified as important to stepfamily life that are most translatable

to large scale-surveys.

Feeling like a family: Factors that identify blended families that “feel like a family” are: 1) Family members taking on the role comparable to those found in traditional families (calling stepparents “mom/dad” or stepsiblings “sister/brother” or assuming roles typically associated with nuclear family members, this may include attending parent-teacher conferences, going to little league, etc). Although family members are taking on these roles, there is some ambiguity and/or hesitation about the appropriateness or desirability of doing such (as such this may also be important to measure); 2) Adopting family rituals and taking family vacations; 3) New members are comfortable negotiating their relationship with each other without the assistance of the linking family members. For example, the stepchild will talk things over with the stepparent without the biological parent present. Stepparent feels comfortable making decisions (i.e., sleepovers, staying out later, etc) about the stepchild without first consulting the biological parent. 4) Accepting unique qualities of blended families. This may include recognizing that the ex-spouse is still a parent to the stepchild or finding ways to successfully communicate and coparent with the ex-spouse. Recognizing that there are

sub-family systems within their family and that the nuclear intact family model may not work for them. 4) Letting go of or readjusting the (high) expectations that members had early on (e.g., expectation that it will be like the Brady bunch).

TITLE: Money in remarriage: Keeping things simple and separate.
AUTHOR: Carole B. Burgoyne & Victoria Morison.
PUBLICATION CITATION: The Sociological Review, 1997:363-395.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To investigate what financial arrangements among remarried couples look like. Specifically, the purpose is to study whether remarried couples pool or maintain separate their financial resources, tasks, and responsibilities.

SOURCE OF DATA: Semi-structured qualitative interviews with 20 British couples in which one or both partners had been married before.

RESEARCH DESIGN/ SAMPLING: Semi-structured in-person interviews were conducted with 20 British couples who volunteered to take part of the study. Participants recruited from local family organizations, educational courses, local radio broadcasts and through colleagues and friends

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Semi-structured in-person interviews were conducted with 20 British remarried couples. Couples were interviewed separately but simultaneously by two female interviewers. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. A content analysis was carried out and each couple's financial organization was classified according to Pahl's typology.

STUDY POPULATION: A total of 38 adults (20 couples) participated in the study, two husbands refused to participate. The respondents ranged in age from 28 to 83; 15 couples were married, 5 were cohabiting.

MEASURE: Pahl's typology classifies each couple's system of financial organization on the basis of information provided by both spouses about their sources of income, assets (joint and separate), accounts held jointly and separately, and which partner takes responsibility for various categories of expenditure. The goal of the typology system is to assign each couple to one of following financial management systems: 1) Independent; 2) Shared; and 3) Allowance. Although Pahl's typology is not described in detail, couples appear to be classified by whether or not they have joint bank accounts, who does the bill-keeping, how expenses are shared, whether money is seen as belonging to him, her or the family, and whether the couple has joint assets.

A second construct—financial dominance—was developed. Financial dominance was based on the following: differentials in income level between spouses, whether the marital home was owned outright (by one partner not the other), and whether the spouse had business or other assets

PSYCHOMETRICS: No psychometrics were provided for these measures.

MAIN FINDINGS: Findings suggest a great deal of separation in financial matters among remarried couples. At least half of the couples used an independent management system, and the majority kept either or both their income and assets separate. In short, there was little redistribution of resources within these remarriages. Couples in the sample reported low levels of conflict and disagreement over money.

TITLE: Identity salience as a moderator of psychological and marital distress in stepfather families.

AUTHOR: David S. DeGarmo & Marion S. Forgatch.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (2002). *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 65(3), 266-284.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: Tested the hypothesis that identity salience would moderate effects of family interactions on psychological and marital distress.

SOURCE OF DATA: 115 interviews with participating families of the Marriage and Parenting Stepfamilies (MAPS) study.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: Baseline data were collected from participating families (n=115) of the MAPS study. Participants were residents of a Pacific Northwest Metropolitan city and were recruited through media advertisements. Couples were eligible to participate in the study if they were recently married. Overall, stepfamily couples had been married for an average of 15.2 months; no couple had been married for more than 4 years. In addition, to be included in the study, couples had to be living with a participating focal child (biological child of the wife).

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Data were obtained through multiple methods including self-administered questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, and the coding of social interactions. Observational data were obtained for both marital and parent-child interactions. Participating families were asked to take part of structured interaction tasks. The researchers based the procedures for these structured tasks on the behavioral assessment tool of the marital interaction method developed by Patterson and Hops, the adult-confidant interactions and the parent-child interaction method developed by Forgatch and DeGarmo. The couple tasks consisted of two 10-minute problem-solving discussions. Problem solving discussions focused on current conflicts, one regarding the couple's personal relationship and the other regarding parenting practices. Couples had to select a topic from a checklist of common marital and parental conflicts. Couples were instructed to select the topic they rated as the 'hottest' or most problematic.

STUDY POPULATION: Recently formed stepfamilies consisting of at least one biological coresidential child of the wife.

MEASURES:

1. Identify salience: Identity salience was measured by Parental Identity Questionnaire (PIQ). The PIQ contains two sections in which couples are asked to rank three identities: spousal, employee, and parenting (or, for husbands, stepparenting).

Instructions for this section read: "Thinking about social roles that you are involved in, compare each pair below. Shade the circle that best answers the statement "I define myself as more a _____ than I define myself as a _____." For example if the roles were "athlete" or "student" and you thought of yourself as more of an athlete than a student, shade athlete. Respondents were provided with pairs of social roles (e.g., worker/(step)parent, (step)parent/employee, etc). Each role identity was totaled for the number of times it appeared first in each hypothetical comparison.

In the next section, respondents were asked to "think about meeting people for the first time....If you were to think about meeting someone new at work/ telling a news reporter about yourself/ meeting a friend of a close friend/ meeting someone at a party, what would you tell them about

yourself first? What would you tell them second?” Respondents again ranked the three roles (parent, spouse and employee). A composite identity scale was computed for each role by averaging rankings from each scenario.

2. Social interaction: Two dimensions of interaction were measured—negative and positive interaction. Negative engagement was computed by dividing the total frequency of all negative behaviors by the total frequency of all behaviors directed from an initiator to a recipient (e.g., husband to wife, wife to child, etc.). Positive engagement was the proportion of positive behaviors from initiator to recipient. The intraclass correlation coefficients for coder agreement on the computed engagement scores were .74 and .69 for child-to- mother positive behavior and negative engagement, respectively and .70 and .63 for child-to- stepfather positive behavior and negative engagement, respectively. The ICCs for stepfather-to-mother positive behavior and negative engagement were .41 and .57 for family tasks and .79 and .94 for the couple tasks.
3. Psychological and marital distress: Marital distress was measured through the Marital Status Inventory, a 14-item index containing items marking progression towards marital dissolution (Cronbach’s alphas were .77 for mothers and .81 for stepfathers). Marital adjustment was measured through the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Cronbach’s alphas were .92 and .91 for wives and husbands respectively).

PSYCHOMETRICS: See above.

FINDINGS:

Major findings include:

- Mothers ranked their parental identity higher than stepfathers
- Stepfathers ranked their spousal role highest, while mothers ranked their parental role higher than their spousal role.
- For stepfathers, the role of worker ranked as high as the role of stepfather. For mothers, the role of parent ranked first, followed by spouse and then worker.
- Wives were more depressed and had higher levels of marital dissatisfaction than their husbands. Interestingly, stepfathers’ distress predicted wives distress, but the opposite was not true.
- There is evidence that identity salience moderates distress in the marital domain but not in the parental domain. Results from the couple assessment data indicate that negative engagement predicted higher levels of distress for both husbands and wives with high spousal salience.

TITLE: Singlehood, marriage, and remarriage.

AUTHOR: David H. Demo & Alan C. Acock.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (May 1996). *Journal of Family Issues*, 17(3).

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH: Examines three dimensions of mother well-being across four family types (continuously single, first married, remarried, and divorced).

SOURCE OF DATA: National Survey of Families and Households, Wave 1

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: The NSFH is a nationally representative survey of Spanish and English speaking adults aged 19 and over in 1987-88 living in households. Recently married, cohabiting, and remarried couples, as well as Mexican American and African-American households, were oversampled. The total sample size is 13,017 adults.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Self-administered and face-to-face interviewer administered questionnaires.

STUDY POPULATION: 2,781 mothers (primary respondents) living in one of the four family types with at least one biological child under the age of 19 living in the household.

MEASURES: In addition to the measures described below, the authors measure mothers' psychological well-being and self-esteem.

Marital Happiness: One item was used which asked respondents to report how happy they were with their marriage (scale ranged from very unhappy to very happy). Marital happiness reports were collected from both husbands and wives. The correlation between spousal reports was $r = .47$.

Marital Conflict: The measure was based on seven items (the authors do not state which particular items were used). Scale has a Cronbach alpha of .75; spousal reports have a correlation of .47.

Quality of Marriage: Scale measures the extent to which the respondent's life would be different if they were not currently married or if currently divorced, how their current life compares to their previous marriage. The "how current life compares to hypothetical divorce" scale has a Cronbach alpha of .82. The "how divorce compares with previous marriage" scale has a reliability of .81.

PSYCHOMETRICS: The psychometric performed are discussed above. Note that psychometric analysis was not conducted by family type.

NOTES: Demos and Acock find that married mothers' global well-being (including those in first marriages and remarriages) is highly associated to marital happiness. In addition, for first married mothers, marital conflict is also associated with global well-being.

Last, for mothers in stepfamilies high levels of marital happiness appears to be more strongly associated with lower levels of depression than among those in first marriages. In contrast, for first married mothers, marital conflict is more strongly associated with depression than among women in stepfamilies.

TITLE: Do mutual children cement bonds in stepfamilies?

AUTHOR: Lawrence H. Ganong & Marilyn Coleman.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1988). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 50, 687-698.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine whether having mutual children affects the stability and satisfaction of stepfamilies.

SOURCE OF DATA: Qualitative interviews with Missouri remarried couples.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample): Marriage license records from 1973, 1978, and 1983 for a Missouri county served as the sampling frame. All marriages in which one or both partners were remarried were identified and contacted to participate in the study. About 50% of marriage licenses represented a remarriage for one or both partners. However, for only a third of couples was an address found. Of those with addresses, researchers were unable to contact about half of them via phone and of those contacted about ¾'s were no longer eligible for the study. This resulted in about 45 families, of whom 40% agreed to participate. To supplement their sample, the researchers used a snowball technique to recruit additional remarried couples (participants referred other couples at the end of the interview). In addition, media advertisements were posted. A total of 78 referred couples were included in the sample, and 18 couples responded to media advertisements.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Semi-structured interviews with the entire family, the couple and each family member individually.

STUDY POPULATION: Married couples in which: 1) one or both partners was remarried; 2) the wife was 45 or younger at the time of marriage; and 3) one or both partners had at least one child from the previous marriage between the ages of 6 and 18 residing in the household. Final sample consisted of 105 wives, 100 husbands, and 174 children from a total of 105 stepfamilies.

MEASURES:

1. Frequency of disagreements: Married respondents were asked to report how often they disagreed with their spouses on 21 issues (items were adapted from a scale by Pasley and Inhinger-Tallman). Sample items included in this scale are: handling finances, recreational activities, when nonresidential children visit, amount of time with ex-spouse, and vacation time in the household). The scale had an alpha of .88.
2. Destructive conflict resolution: Respondents were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale how frequently they used nine different ways of resolving conflicts (also adapted from the Pasley and Inhinger-Tallman study). Sample items include: "try to calmly talk it over," "change your opinion," "drop the issue," and "slap or hit your spouse." Alpha for this scale was .56.
3. Marital problems: Respondents were asked to indicate which of the nine items was a major problem in their marriage. List included: no longer love each other, physical abuse, infidelity, financial problems, sexual problems, neglect of children, emotional problems, in-law problems, and difficulties with partner's ex-spouse. Alpha for scale was .80.
4. Disagreement over children: On a four-point scale, respondents were asked to indicate how serious disagreements with their spouse were over rules for the children. Included in the list of rules were the following items: children's bedtime, mealtime routines, household tasks, discipline, children's general behavior, allowances, curfews, school performance, religious training, and manners. Alpha was .78.
5. Remarriage comparison: Respondents were asked to compare their present marriage to their previous marriage (only 1 item).

6. Remarriage dissatisfaction: One item based on a five-point scale where respondents indicate how satisfied they are in their marriage compared to other couples they know.
7. Remarriage expectations: Respondents indicate how their remarriage compares to their expectations for their remarriage.
8. Dyadic adjustment: Spanier's DAS.
9. Feelings toward spouse: All respondents completed the Inventory of Family Feelings (IFF), a questionnaire that measures the level of affect between family members. Score can be computed for different family members (i.e., respondent's feelings toward spouse, respondent's feeling towards stepchild, etc.). Sample items include: "This person has a hard time showing love for me," "This person has a hard time showing love for me." The IFF has a high temporal reliability (.96 over 2 weeks) and is negatively related to psychotherapy indices ($r = -.33$).

PSYCHOMETRICS: See above.

MAJOR FINDINGS: Having a mutual child has no effect on the marital quality.

TITLE: Changing parent and spouse relations in the first years of remarriage of divorced fathers.

AUTHOR: Shan Guisinger, Phillip A. Cowan, & David Schuldberg.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (1989). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 51, 445-456.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: Examine the determinants of marital quality for remarried fathers and their new wives.

SOURCE OF DATA: Recently married couples in which the husband was previously married with children.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: Most respondents were recruited from marriage license records of couples married between 1980 and 1983 in the San Francisco Bay area. Other respondents were recruited through referrals, informal contacts, newspapers, and stepparent organizations.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Couples were interviewed in their homes or in the psychology clinic of the University of California, Berkeley. Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires and through semi-structured interviews.

STUDY POPULATION: The study is based on 79 divorced fathers and their spouses. Longitudinal data are available on 17 participants; however, most of the analyses are based on cross-sectional data. Respondents are mostly white, middle class and recently married (39 are in their first two years of marriage). The fathers in the sample represent the range of custody arrangements. A small portion had joint custody, a sizeable number had joint legal custody and others had no legal custody but visitation rights.

MEASURES: In addition to the Locke-Wallace Short Marital Adjustment Test, couples were asked to complete the "Who Does What" questionnaire. This is a questionnaire that was adapted from the original Cowan, Cowan, Coie, and Coie (1978) instrument. Each partner is asked to describe the couples' division of 31 household tasks, family decisions, and childcare when the stepchild (child of the husband) is in their household. They are asked to report on current arrangements (how is it now) and on what they would like things to be like (how I'd like it to be). Three role arrangement scores were computed for household tasks, decisions and childcare. The first—involvement—measures the average of "how it is now" in each of the areas for each of the partners. This is meant to be an indicator of how much partners feel they are doing in comparison to their spouse. The equality of task sharing is the absolute difference of "how it is now" from an equal division. Role satisfaction is the absolute difference between each partners' actual and ideal scores.

Couples were also asked to complete the remarriage questionnaire. This instrument assesses each partner's perceptions of remarriage family life, relationship with children from previous marriages, and ex-wife. Most of the questions are adapted from Abidin (1980) parenting stress index, and others were developed from pilot interviews. The instrument consists of several scales that tap into stepfamily life including "non-resentment of children," "positive relationship with child," and "optimism about stepmothering."

Spouses were also asked to report problem behaviors for the children. A score measuring the discrepancy between partners' reports was computed.

Last, respondents were given the adjective check list (AJC) which consists of 300 adjectives used to describe a person's attributes. Each partner filled out four AJC's one for themselves, their spouse, the child, and the ex-wife. Three subscales of the AJC's were used: favorable adjectives, unfavorable adjectives, and communality.

PSYCHOMETRICS: The only psychometric analysis the authors reported was for the remarriage questionnaire. The “non-resentment of child” scale has a Cronbach alpha of .78 for wives and .71 for husbands; the “positive relationship with child” has a Cronbach alpha of .85 for wives and .84 for husbands; and, the “optimism about stepmothering” has a Cronbach alpha of .67.

NOTES: The children’s mother (i.e., ex-wife) were identified by both partners as the major sources of stress in their marriage. The ACL’s were highly negative for ex-wives. The authors found no significant differences in marital satisfaction by frequency of child visitations. In addition, they found that marital satisfaction was higher among couples that adopted a less traditional division of labor (who does what). Further, wives’ positive relationships with the stepchild was correlated with marital satisfaction.

TITLE: Double jeopardy: Parental conflict and stepfamily outcomes for children.

AUTHOR: Thomas L. Hanson, Sarah S. McLanahan, & Elizabeth Thomson.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 58, 141-154.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: Examines whether intra- and inter-household parental conflict accounts for why children in stepfamilies do less well than children in intact families.

SOURCE OF DATA: National Survey of Families and Households, Wave 1

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: The NSFH is a nationally representative survey of Spanish and English speaking adults aged 19 and over in 1987-88 living in households. Recently married couples, cohabiting, remarried couples, as well as Mexican American and African-American households were oversampled. The total sample size is 13,017 adults. If married, respondents' spouses were interviewed. Cases are weighted to adjust for differential rates of selection, differential rates of nonresponse, and post-stratification of the sample.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Face-to-face standardized interviews were conducted with the main respondent and his/her spouse. Data about a focal child (randomly selected among those aged 19 and younger) were gathered from the main respondent.

STUDY POPULATION: Includes intact two-parent households; single-mother households, and stepfather households in which the focal child is between the age of 5 and 18.

MEASURES:

1. Intra-household parental conflict: Intra-household conflict was measured through 3 sets of items. The first measured the frequency and diversity of couple disagreements. The scale consisted of a set of questions that asked spouses how often they disagreed about household tasks, money, time together, sex, having a child, in-laws, and the children. Response options ranged from never to almost every day. The second set of items—conflict engagement—measured how often couples keep their opinions to themselves, discuss disagreements calmly, argue heatedly or shout at each other, and end up hitting each other when there is a serious disagreement. Response options again ranged from never to almost every day.

The authors conducted confirmatory factor analyses with these sets of measures. The analyses indicated that items measured three correlated dimensions of parental conflict: parental disagreement, conflict avoidance, and aggression. They then constructed a factor score for disagreement and aggression. Conflict avoidance was dropped because it was not related to child well-being. Because disagreement and aggression were highly correlated, they factor analyzed the two scores and used this analysis to create a global measure of parental conflict.

2. Interhousehold conflict was measured by the mother's reports of the level of conflict with the non-resident father in the following areas: where the child lives, how the child is raised, how the resident mother spends money on the child, how the nonresident father spends money on the child, the nonresident father's visits with the child, and the nonresident father's contribution with child support. Responses ranged from none to a great deal. Using the techniques described above, they constructed a standardized factor score for the level of interhousehold conflict.

PSYCHOMETRICS: See above.

FINDINGS: Overall, they find that parental conflict (either intra or inter household) is harmful for children. Parental conflict is associated with lower levels of GPA, higher levels of school problems, externalizing behavior, sociability, initiative and quality of life. In addition, they find that children in stepfamilies are exposed to more parental conflict than children in other family types. Their greater exposure is a result of experiencing conflict from two sources, not because there is greater intra-household conflict. Differences in exposure to conflict, however, do not account for the differences in well-being between children in two-parent intact families and those in stepfamilies. Parental conflict, however, does help to explain some of the differences in well-being for children in single parent families compared to those in stepfamilies.

TITLE: Does family structure matter? A comparison of adoptive, two-parent biological, single-mother, stepfather and stepmother households.

AUTHOR: Jennifer E. Lansford, Rosario Ceballo, Antonia Abbey, & Abigail Stewart.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (August 2001). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 63, 840-851.

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH: To compare the quality of family relationships and well-being across five family structures (adoptive, two parent biological, single-mother, stepfather and stepmother households). More specifically, the authors examine whether family structure matters more for children and parental outcomes (psychological well-being and relationship quality) than family processes.

SOURCE OF DATA: National Survey of Families and Households wave II.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: The NSFH is a nationally representative longitudinal survey of Spanish and English speaking adults aged 19 and over in 1987-88 living in households. Recently married, cohabiting, and remarried couples, as well as Mexican American and African-American households were oversampled. The total sample size is 13,017 adults in wave I. Cases are weighted to adjust for differential rates of selection, differential rates of nonresponse, and post-stratification of the sample.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: The main respondent and their spouse were interviewed separately in face-to-face interviews at wave 1 and 2. In wave 2, a focal child, selected among all eligible children of the main respondent, was interviewed over the phone.

STUDY POPULATION: 799 families who were participants of the 2nd wave of the NSFH included the main respondent's, spouse's and focal child's reports of relationship quality and well-being.

MEASURES:

1. Family relationships were measured from the parents and focal child perspective:
 - a. Family relationships from the parents' perspective were based on three scales: overall satisfaction, happiness with specific various aspects of marriage, and disagreements.
 - i. Parents rated on a 7-point scale the overall quality of their relationship with their spouse.
 - ii. Parents reported their satisfaction with their spouse in each of the following areas: understanding, love and affection, time together, demands, sexual relationship, money, work around the house, and parenthood. Items were averaged to form a scale (alpha = .88, .90; men and women respectively)
 - iii. Parents were asked to report the frequency of disagreements in 6 areas (see also write-up of MacDonald's article). Items were averaged to form a scale (alpha = .79, .80, men and women separately).
 - b. Family relationships from the focal child's perspective was based on reports of the quality of relationship with mother or stepmothers in the household, as well as their father or stepfather.
 - i. Assessments of relationship quality with mother/step-mother and father/stepfather was based on the following items: how often the [PARENT] praises the child, criticizes the child, how likely the child would be to go to [PARENT] if he/she had a major decision to make, and whether the child spent time alone with [PARENT] in the last week. The scale was also based on two additional items which measured how much the child admired the [PARENT]

and the overall quality of the relationship. The overall scale had a Cronbach alpha of .77.

- c. Parents perspective of family climate: Measure was based several items including: 1) an item on overall satisfaction with family life; 2) time CHILD and PARENT spent together in leisure activities away from home, at home working or playing together, having private talks, reading or doing homework and watching television; 3) how many days in last week they ate dinner together as a whole family. Cronbach alpha = .73, .80 for husbands and wives respectively. In addition, to overall satisfaction and time spent together as family, respondents were asked four items about family cohesion. Parents indicated on a 4-point scale whether: 1) their family has fun together, 2) things are tense, 3) stressful in the family; 4) members show concern and love for each other, and 5) whether the family works well as a team (alpha .81, .86 for men and women respectively)

PSYCHOMETRICS: Exploratory factor analysis and reliability test were performed for mothers and fathers separately (see above).

Main FINDINGS: Authors find evidence to suggest that family processes matter more than family structure. Specifically from the father's perspective, father's reports of well-being, children's well-being, children's grades, marital quality, and parent-child relationship did not differ by family structure once family processes were controlled. Similarly, children from the different family structures did not differ in their reports of well-being, problem behaviors, school grades, mother-child relationship quality, or sibling relationship quality net of family processes. Last, mothers' reports of school grades, marital quality, sibling relationships did not differ by family structure.

TITLE: Boundary ambiguity and coparental conflict after divorce: An empirical test of a family systems model of the divorce process.

AUTHOR: Debra A. Madden-Derdich, Stacie A. Leonard, & F. Scott Christopher.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (1999). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61, 588-598.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: Tested a family systems model of the divorce process for divorced mothers and fathers. Specifically, examined whether the failure to establish clear boundaries with the former spouse is a source of coparental conflict after divorce.

SOURCE OF DATA: Study of divorced couples in the metropolitan city in Arizona.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: Residents of a metropolitan city in Arizona who divorced over a 3-month period in 1996. Couples were randomly selected from public divorce records.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Parents were contacted through multiple mailings and where numbers were available phone calls were made. Data were collected through mail surveys. Of the 494 surveys sent, 180 were returned and completed (42% response rate).

STUDY POPULATION: In addition to being divorced during the study's reference period, couples in the study had to have a child under the age of 12 at the time of the divorce decree.

MEASURES:

1. Intensity of feeling towards former spouse: Respondents were asked to select the response that most accurately described their feelings towards their former spouse. The choices included: "I still love him/her. I still like him/her, but I don't love him/her, I don't feel much of anything for him/her, I dislike him/her, I hate him/her, I both love and hate him/her. These items were adapted by a survey instrument of adjustment to separation and divorce developed by Spanier and Thompson. Not feeling much for spouse was coded as 1, liking or disliking spouse as 2 and hating or loving spouse as 3.
2. Financial strain and custody satisfaction: "How much strain do you feel now?" Responses ranged from a lot of strain to no strain at all. How satisfied are you with the custody arrangement." Responses ranged from very dissatisfied to very satisfied.
3. Parenting performance: Scale based on 9 items that assessed parents' satisfaction with the quality of their parenting skills. Sample items include: "I wish I did not become impatient so quickly with my children." "I wish I were more consistent in my parenting behaviors" and "I wish I were a better parent and could do a better job." The 9 items were summed; the reported alpha for the scale is .84.
4. Boundary Ambiguity: Used 22 items from the Boss and Pearce-McCall Boundary Ambiguity Scale for divorced adults. The scale measures the degree to which there has been structural reorganization and family redefinition after the divorce. Sample items include: "I still consider myself a wife/husband to my former spouse," "I still get my former spouse advice about important personal decisions," "My children and I are able to talk about my former spouse without becoming emotionally upset," and "It feels like a complete family when the children and I are together without my former spouse." The scale has an alpha of .80.
5. Parental conflict was measured using Ahron's interparental conflict sub-scale. The scale includes 4 items that measure the extent of hostility, conflict, tension and disagreement that exists when the couples discuss parenting issues.

PSYCHOMETRICS: Other than the reliability scores noted above, no psychometrics were reported.

FINDINGS: Strong emotions towards former spouses are associated with ambiguous relationship boundaries for women. Satisfaction with parental role and financial strain were also good predictors of boundary ambiguity for mothers. For mothers, high levels of ambiguity in relationship boundaries and satisfaction with custody arrangements were associated with coparental conflict. For fathers, only intensity of emotions was a good predictor of relationship boundaries. As with mothers, high levels of boundary ambiguity and dissatisfaction with custody arrangement were significantly associated with coparental conflict.

TITLE: Remarriage, stepchildren and marital conflict: Challenges to the incomplete institutionalization hypothesis.

AUTHOR: William MacDonald & William L. DeMaris.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (May 1995). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 57.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To test whether marital conflict is more common in stepfamilies than in biological intact families.

SOURCE OF DATA: First wave of the NSFH

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample): The NSFH is a nationally representative survey of Spanish and English speaking adults aged 19 and over in 1987-88 living in households. Recently married, cohabiting, and remarried couples, as well as Mexican American and African-American households were oversampled. The total sample size is 13,017 adults. If a respondent was married their spouse was interviewed. Cases are weighted to adjust for differential rates of selection, differential rates of nonresponse, and post-stratification of the sample.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: All wave 1 respondents were interviewed in person. The interviews consisted of two parts—the main interview, which was interviewer administered, and the self-administered modules.

STUDY POPULATION: Study is based on a subsample of 2,655 black and white married couples with children under the age of 18 in the household. (Racially heterogeneous couples were excluded (too small of a sample size).

MEASURES:

Frequency of open disagreements in the past year over the following seven areas: household tasks, money, sex, spending time together, in-laws, the children and having a(nother) child. Response scale ranged from 1 (never) to 6 (almost every day).

(Note: Reports from both R and spouse are available).

PSYCHOMETRICS: Confirmatory factor analyses were performed to determine how items clustered together. They formed a two factor model, one factor for husbands' reports of conflict and the other for wives' reports (CFI=.98, Delta2 =.98m CI=.96).

FINDINGS: Frequency of conflict is greater among couples with only stepchildren than among those with only biological children. However, this is only true for marriages of longer duration. In addition, families with both step and biological children did not differ from families with only biological children in average levels of conflict. In short, there was no consistent pattern to indicate that stepfamilies with children have higher levels of conflict than intact families with children. This finding holds for overall levels of marital conflict, as well as for specific areas of marital conflict. The authors conclude that their study does not provide support for Cherlin's incomplete institution hypothesis.

TITLE: Marital quality, mothers' parenting and children's outcomes: A comparison of mother/father and mother/stepfather families.

AUTHOR: Stacy J. Rogers.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (October 1996). *Sociological Focus*, 29(4).

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH: Compares associations between marital quality, parenting practices, children's behavior problems and self-esteem in mother/father families to those in mother/stepfather families.

SOURCE OF DATA: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1988, Merged Child-Mother data file.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: A national sample of youth aged 14-21 in 1979 (23-30 in 1988). Blacks, Hispanics, and economically disadvantaged white youth were oversampled. Respondents have been reinterviewed every two years. By the 1988 interview, 60% of the original female respondents had become mothers. Beginning in 1986, the children of female respondents were interviewed. Data from children was matched to mother respondents.

STUDY POPULATION: The study's analytical sample included 688 children of original female respondents aged 8-12 in 1988 who resided in either intact biological households or biological mother/stepfather households. Data from the mothers of the children was also included.

MEASURES: The analysis included two scales of marital quality: marital happiness and marital conflict. Factor analysis was conducted for the 12 items included in the NLSY—two factors (marital happiness and marital conflict) were identified. The marital happiness scale was comprised of three items that assess how often the couple: discusses things calmly, laughs together, and tell each other about their day. The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .73. The marital conflict includes 9 items that assess how often the couples argues about household chores, the children, money, showing affection, religion, leisure time, drinking, other women and the wife's relatives. The scale has a Cronbach alpha of .76.

PSYCHOMETRICS: Exploratory factor analysis and reliability tests were performed for the entire sample, but not for mothers in stepfamilies and intact families separately (see above).

NOTES: Rogers finds no significant differences in marital quality between mothers in intact families and stepfamilies, nor do mothers in stepfamilies differ from mothers in intact families in their use of punitive discipline. However, she finds differences between intact families and stepfamilies in the ways in which marital quality is associated with children's problem behaviors and self esteem. For example, while among intact families higher levels of marital conflict were associated with more maternal punitive discipline, and higher levels of marital happiness were associated with fewer problem behaviors among children, there were no such observed relationships among stepfamilies.

TITLE: Decision-making power, autonomy, and communication in remarried spouses compared with first-married spouses.

AUTHOR: Elizabeth Sandin Allen, Donald H. Baucom, Charles K. Burnett, Norman Epstein, & Lynn A. Rankin-Esquer.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (2001). *Family Relations*, 50, 326-334.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: Compares communication styles and standards for autonomy between remarried and first married spouses.

SOURCE OF DATA: A small scale study of couples living in the Metro DC and Research Triangle area.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: Commercial mailing lists of married couples in the Maryland/DC and Research Triangle areas were used to draw a stratified random sample of couples. The sample was drawn to match the characteristics of the 1980 US census population in terms of age and education within these two areas.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Self-administered questionnaires.

STUDY POPULATION: The analytical sample was based on 111 spouses in remarriages. A first marriage comparison group was drawn by selecting respondents (n= 111) who were in their first marriage and who matched the remarried sample on age, race, and education. Note that respondents were selected at the individual, not couple, level.

MEASURES:

1. *Inventory of specific relationship standards (ISRS: Baucom et al. 1996):* A 60- item self-report inventory with 5 scales measuring relationship standards (i.e., what respondents think their relationship should be like). This article focuses on the Boundaries and Control-Outcome scales.
 - a. Boundaries scale: Measures the degree to which spouses believe they should share and/or be similar in various aspects of their lives; this indicator is intended to serve as a measure of autonomy. The areas that are inquired about include: household tasks, finances, relations with family, relations with friends, positive physical interaction, religion/philosophy, sexual interaction, job/daily tasks, childrearing, negative communication, positive communication, and leisure.

Sample items include: “My partner and I should take part in our leisure activities (for example, hobbies, recreation, free time with each other).”

“My partner and I should have the same ideas about how we spend our money.” Response options include a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from never to always. High scores represent high levels of autonomy.

- b. Control-outcome scale: This scale measures who spouses believe should have the final say about decisions; it serves as an indicator of decision-making power within the relationship. The scale is based on 12 items tapping into decision making in the areas noted above. As in the boundaries scale, response options are a 5-point Likert scale.

Sample items include: “Only one of us should have the final say on decisions we make about both our families (for example, when to visit, lend money, etc).” “My partner and I should have equal say about who does each of the chores around the house.” Low score indicate greater equality.

2. *Communication patterns questionnaire*: A self-report inventory that assesses spouses' perceptions of communication patterns that emerge during problems. The study focuses on the following areas:
 - a. Mutual constructive communication: Extent to which both spouses engage the issue and problems are discussed in an adaptive manner
 - b. Demand-withdraw: One partner engages in the discussion, but the other withdraws

Sample items include: "Both members suggest possible solutions and compromises." "Both members avoid discussing the problem." "Woman tries to start a discussion whereas Man tries to avoid a discussion."

PSYCHOMETRICS: Reliability scores are reported separately for men and women. In Baucom's original analysis (presumably based on the study's larger sample), the boundaries scale had an alpha of .65 for women and .72 for men. In the subsample, on which this study is based, the alpha for women is .58 and .71 for men. The control-outcome scale in the original sample had an alpha of .69 for women and .77 for men. In the subsample, it had an alpha of .69 for women and .79 for men.

Communication scale: Internal reliabilities for this measure range from .62 to .84 with an average of .71. Intraclass correlations measuring agreement between partners is .80 for mutual constructive communication and .73 for demand/withdraw communication. CPQ has good construct validity, the mutual constructive communication scale correlates with DAS scores at .79 and the demand/withdraw scale correlates at -.55 with the DAS.

MAJOR FINDINGS: Remarried spouses did not differ from first married spouses in their beliefs that decisions should equally reflect the wishes of both spouses. That is, remarried and first-married spouses equally endorsed the notion of shared decision making. No significant differences were found in mutual avoidance, demand-withdraw, or mutual constructive communication between first married and remarried spouses. However, significant differences were found in the extent to which spouses endorse autonomy. First married spouses were more likely to believe in sharing and similarity.

TITLE: Couple strengths and stressors in complex and simple stepfamilies in Australia.

AUTHOR: Noel C. Schultz, Cynthia L. Schultz & David Olson.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (1991). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 53, 555-564.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: Examines whether stepparenting is different in complex stepfamilies (i.e., children from both partners) from stepparenting in simple stepfamilies.

SOURCE OF DATA: Seventy Australian couples in which at least one partner had been previously married before and a residential or visiting step-child was present. In addition, couples could not be in therapy, cohabiting stepfamilies were included, and couples were limited to those in their first decade of marriage/union. Couples were recruited through the radio and newspapers.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Paper and pencil self-administered questionnaires.

MEASURES: The research instrument was adapted from the ENRICH (Enriching and Nurturing Relationship Issues, Communication and Happiness) scale created by Olson, Fournier and Druckman (1986). ENRICH is a 125-item questionnaire with 10 items for the following scales: adjustment, personality items, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationship, children and parenting, family, friends, roles, religion and values, and former attachments. In addition, there is a five-item scale called Idealistic distortion.

Because ENRICH was not designed for stepfamilies and remarried couples, some of the items and scales were adapted. In total, 33 items from the original ENRICH scale were replaced with items that more directly addressed issues specific to stepfamilies. Although, not all of the replacement items are discussed in the paper, the authors include a brief description of such items. For example, the attachment scale measures attitudes towards how relationships from previous unions are handled in the current relationship. A sample item includes “There are times when I feel left out when my partner and his/her children are together.” The children and parenting scale measures the effects of children and stepparenting on the spousal relationship, for example, “I am not satisfied with the way we each handle our responsibilities as parents and step-parent.” Other sample items include: “I am completely satisfied with the amount of affection my partner gives me,” “Our sexual relationship is satisfying and fulfilling to me,” “I am concerned that my partner may not be interested in me sexually,” and “I am sometimes worried that my partner may have a sexual relationship outside of marriage.”

The ENRICH and ENRICH-A is scored in the following manner. Responses for each item are based on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree). In total, four scores were computed: 1) a positive couple agreement score which indicates how much the couple agrees with one another on the 10 items that make up each of the scales—low scores indicate potential strains in an area and high scores indicate strengths; 2) a sum couple score in each of the; 3) a couple disagreement score—total number of items on each scale on which the couple disagree by more than 2 points; and, 4) couple special focus scores which indicate the number of items on each scale on which the couple agree that the item is a problem in their relationship.

PSYCHOMETRICS: The ENRICH instrument has been widely tested. It has test and retest validity and high levels of internal consistency (the Cronbach alphas for both the ENRICH and ENRICH-A scales are included in the table below).

Scale	ENRICH Alpha	ENRICH-A Alpha
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Idealistic distortion	.83	.73
Personality issues	.82	.80
Communication	.82	.75
Conflict resolution	.84	.82
Financial management	.82	.83
Leisure activities	.71	.65
Sexual relationship	.85	.78
Children and marriage	.78	
Children and parenting		.80
Family and Friends	.79	.68
Equalitarian Roles	.68	
Roles		.52
Religious orientation	.84	
Religious values		.81
Marital satisfaction	.86	
Marital cohesion	.75	
Marital adaptability	.70	
Adjustments		.74
Former attachments		.68

In addition, the authors conducted a series of stepwise discriminant analyses. This analysis helps to demonstrate the extent to which the instrument is able to discriminate between complex and simple stepfamilies, and to identify the variables that most distinguish the two groups. The results indicate that the instrument was able to discriminate between simple and complex stepfamilies, in particular in the areas of parenting, communication, personality issues, financial management, and sexual relationships. Moreover, they find that the parenting and children scale is the most prominent scale in that it contributed to each of the four discriminant functions (positive agreement, couple sum score, couple disagreement scores, couple special focus scores).

Couples Co-Parenting after Relationship Dissolution

Synopsis of Measures Used in Studies of Relationship Quality for Couples Co-Parenting after Relationship Dissolution

Prepared by

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I. Overview of Issues for Couples Co-Parenting after Relationship Dissolution

Co-parenting is a feature of the couple relationship that can occur both when parents are together, and also when they are apart. Quality co-parenting has been characterized as low in conflict and high in both cooperation and support and is beneficial to child well-being (Amato 1993). Even in the physical absence of the other parent, the physically present parent can practice positive co-parenting by reinforcing the decisions and/or values of the other parent.

Increasingly, however, co-parenting occurs not only in the physical absence of the other parent, but also in the absence of a stable, committed couple relationship, and perhaps in the absence of *any* relationship with the other parent whatsoever. It is estimated that approximately half of all married couples in first marriages will eventually divorce (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1992). Moreover, children born in cohabiting unions, an increasing proportion of all births, face even higher rates of instability in their parent's union (Graefe and Lichter 1999).

The nature of the coparenting relationship has great potential to change over time. Research shows declining involvement by the non-custodial parent as the time since separation gets longer (Furstenberg 1990). Further, the establishment of new unions is suggestive of commitments to other partners and perhaps additional children, including both step- and biological children.

Despite these potential barriers, recent trends indicate increases in the proportion of shared child-custody settlements, as opposed to primarily mother-custody settlements (Kitzmann 2003). Research has not yet determined whether joint arrangements are superior over sole physical custody in terms of positive child adjustment and parental satisfaction (Hetherington and Stanley-Hagen 1994). However, some factors are related to the relationship between coparents after divorce: those who had positive coparenting relationships prior to divorce are more likely to be satisfied with their shared physical custody (Hetherington and Stanley-Hagen 1994); low conflict prior to divorce is also related to cooperative parenting after divorce. However, even 2 years after a divorce about one-fourth of divorced parents are involved in conflicted parenting (Hetherington and Stanley-Hagen 1994). Even initially cooperative parents can become conflicted or disengaged when one or both parents enter into new relationships.

II. Measures Used in the Literature

Most research designed to examine the relationship between parents after relationship dissolution is essentially an examination of the influence of divorce on children. Conflict between the parents is the primary relationship construct under examination, and conflict is one of the few relationship constructs for which researchers have delineated clear theoretical ties to children's well-being (see Grych and Fincham 1990). It is often the conflict between parents when they are married that is destructive for children, and while there may be less opportunity for conflict after relationship dissolution, the co-parenting relationship, when it exists, may continue to be influenced by negative feelings surrounding the relationship. Naturally, the content of measures often focuses on communication surrounding visitation and custody arrangements. It

seems to be more common in the research on co-parenting after relationship dissolution to develop multi-dimensional constructs, rather than develop specific dimensions of co-parenting.

Conflict. (Madden-Derdich and Leonard 2002; Madden-Derdich and Arditti 1999) use the Interparental Conflict Scale, a subscale of the Coparental Communication Scale developed by Ahrons (1981), described above. This subscale incorporates four, 5-point Likert scale items (ranging from never to always) that measured the degree of hostility, conflict, tension and disagreement that was present when the couple discussed parenting issues, with higher scores indicating a higher degree of conflict. Mullett and Stolberg (1999) also use measures that tap into the hostility between parents, but specifically ask about conflict that is overt in front of children.

In other research, Amato and Rezac (1994) use a measure of conflict that incorporates 6 items relevant to parenting after a separation. The items, derived from the National Survey of Families and Households include conflict over: where the child lives, how (he/she) is raised, how you spend money on (child), how (he/she) spends money on (child), (his/her) visits with (child), and (his/her) contribution to (child's) support. King (1999) uses a question that measures conflict over visitation, specifically.

Coley and Morris also develop an index reflecting conflict over post-divorce parenting issues. Mothers and fathers were asked about the extent to which they disagreed about how to raise their child, how much the father saw the child or how he acted with the child, and the extent of the father's financial support of the child; responses range from 1 (none) to 4 (a lot). It is notable that the alphas for these measures were generally low, below .60., and that this study focuses on a low-income population.

General discord. Maccoby et al. (1990) derive a discord scale (as well as a cooperation scale) from a factor analysis of 8 items about the post-divorce relationship. The items in their discord scale ask about general arguments, tension and problems around visitation with children (both subjective and objective) and whether the other parent makes it difficult for the respondent to parent. The source of these variables is not clear, and the psychometrics were not given.

Triangulation. Triangulation is a concept reflective of family systems theory, as it attempts to capture interactions within the parent-parent-child triad. Mullett and Stolberg (1999) use a measure that solicits adolescent reports of feeling caught between their parents (Cronbach's Alpha=.64). This is the only child-reported item from the studies reviewed here.

The Quality of Coparental Communication Scale. Ahrons' scales (1981), developed with the divorced couple in mind, appear to be the most commonly used constructs of co-parenting in recent research. The Quality of Coparental Communication Scale appears most fitting for the topic at hand; however, Ahrons has developed multiple scales encompassing 30 items and 6 subscales in all to "examine the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of the relationships between divorced parents insofar as they related to the children" (Baum 2003). The constructs covered by these items primarily cover: co-parental interaction, such as the frequency of conversations between parents about the child; coparental conflict such as the frequency, hostility, and tension of arguments about parenting, as well as differences in opinion over childrearing; and coparental support, such as whether both parents are willing to accommodate changes in visitation, and whether both parents are helpful or act as resources to the other parent in raising their children.

The authors of the articles reviewed here varied widely in their use of this scale: some used most or all items as a general index (Baum 2003) and some used specific subscales of the general scale (Madden-Derdich and Arditti 1999; Mullett and Stolberg 1999). Most authors also used selected items or modified the sub-scales to serve their specific research needs (Bronstein et al. 1994; Madden-Derdich and Arditti 1999; Madden-Derdich and Leonard 2002). The Cronbach's alphas across all studies tended to be adequate, at .81 and above. The scales also show evidence of validity, as summarized by Kitzmann, Nicholson and Schum (2003): scales are correlated at about .5 with clinician ratings of interparental conflict and support (Ahrons 1981); they are correlated with similar subscales created by McHale (1997); the Quality of Coparental Communication scale has been shown to predict positively for parents' shared decision making and parent-

child involvement (Ahrns, 1983; Bowman and Ahrns 1985), and for children's well-being after divorce (Dozier, Sollie, Stack and Smith 1993).

Other authors have also developed scales based on similar constructs to those in Ahrns' work. Maccoby et al. (1990) derive a **Cooperative Communication Scale** (as well as a discord scale, mentioned earlier) from a factor analysis of 8 items about the post-divorce relationship. The items in their cooperation scale ask about the frequency that parents discuss their children, whether there is consistency of rules in the different households, and deliberate avoidance of the other parent. The source of these variables is not clear, and the psychometrics were not given. Coley and Morris (2002) use items that also measure the extent of **mutual support** in the coparenting relationship. Also, a number of studies assess **conflict**, as highlighted in the previous section.

Satisfaction with ex-spouse as a parent. While a number of measures have tapped into conflict between ex-spouses, a few assess the relationship with more positive measures. King (1999) uses a single item measuring satisfaction with father's visitation with his child. Madden-Derdich and Leonard (2002) use items that ask each ex-spouse to rate his or her satisfaction with the other's parenting; this measure has high reliability with Cronbach's Alphas of over .90. With measures from each spouse, the researchers are also able to assess the degree to which both spouses are satisfied with the other's parenting. Separate items also ask respondents to assess their satisfaction with their own and their ex-spouse's child-rearing skills (Madden-Derdich and Leonard 2002).

Feelings towards the ex-spouse. Unlike earlier measures that assess conflict and satisfaction, Baum (2003) also uses a general measures of the co-parenting relationship that includes items such as "I have warm feelings towards my ex-spouse."

Structural family interaction. Mullett and Stolberg (1999) include in their study a scale designed to assess patterns of interaction not only between both parents, but also between them and their child. The items were not reported in the article, but they measure patterns such as unhealthy parent-child coalitions, disengagement, and neglect.

The Co-parenting Behavior Questionnaire. This is a child self-report measure that comprises 76 parenting behaviors. The main constructs reflect parental conflict, triangulation, parental communication, parental respect, father's warmth, father-child communication, father's monitoring, father's discipline, mother's warmth, mother-child communication, mother's monitoring, and mother's discipline. The subscales from this measure have good reliability, alphas ranging from .82-.93, and scores on this questionnaire have been shown to account for 15-36% of the variance on many indicators of children's well-being (see Kitzmann et al. 2003 for summary).

III. Strengths and weaknesses of measures

Perhaps due to the extent of use, Ahrns' scales of co-parental communication show promise as a measure of co-parental communication after the disruption of a relationship. In the studies reviewed, the alphas for the various scales created by these items were adequate, mainly in the .8 and higher range. It is clear that the Quality of Co-parental Communication Scale has good confirmatory and predictive validity.

It was not always clear whether authors combined items as directed by Ahrns (1981), or created their own subscales, which makes it difficult to tell whether any particular subscales stand out from the others. The high reliability scores suggest, however, that the items can be used adequately as subscales.

An additional strength of Ahrns' scales is that they tap into both negative (e.g. conflictual) and positive (e.g. supportive) interactions between ex-partners. The Quality of Co-parental Communication Scale, in particular, combines these two dimensions of the coparenting relationship, is a relatively short scale to complete (10 items), and has proven reliability and validity.

The measures used by Amato and Rezac (1994) were derived from questions in the NSFH. These measures have shown adequate reliability in a national survey, and have been shown to predict boys' behavioral problems when his other parent does not live with him. For researchers interested in co-parental conflict, this measure taps into important sources of conflict for separated parents. However, its emphasis on

conflict makes this a less comprehensive measure of coparental relationship quality than those developed by Ahrons.

The measures used by Maccoby et al. (1992) are noteworthy as they, like the Ahrons Quality of Coparental Communication scale, tap into both positive and negative aspects of a post-divorce coparenting relationship. Although the psychometrics were not provided for this measure, the measure shows variability in a large sample of families divorcing in California. Without further testing, it would be difficult to assess how well this measure might compare to Ahrons' scales.

The Co-parenting Behavior Questionnaire (Stolberg 1999) is unique in that it solicits the child's perspective on the behaviors of his/her divorced parents. As such, it offers a way to measure the actions of both parents in one report. It was also reported to have adequate reliability and predictability when tested on community samples. The limitations of this measure are that it is lengthy, seventy-six items in all, and should only be administered to children who are age-appropriate (this age range was not reported).

IV. Conceptual gaps

The family structure, parenting and child outcomes literature has suggested a base for measuring the quality of co-parental relationships following relationship dissolution: low conflict and high cooperation. However, further consideration should be given to contemporary trends related to families who find themselves co-parenting after relationship dissolution. First, there has been a dramatic increase in births to cohabiting partners since Ahrons developed coparenting measures in 1981. Researchers are only beginning to clearly define cohabitation and the quality of existing cohabiting relationships, let alone the quality of coparenting relationships after a cohabiting relationship has dissolved. When these relationships dissolve, they are not sanctioned by legal procedures to the extent that married couple relationships are. It would be fruitful to consider and test whether existing measures work as well for cohabiting relationship 'divorces' as they do for married parents' divorces. Furthermore, it would be important to expand theoretical models on the pathways by which coparenting in these different contexts would influence child well-being; current theoretical models are lacking.

Secondly, the current administration has recommended 'healthy marriages' as a goal for welfare reform. None of these articles discussed reliability or validity of coparenting measures specifically for groups that would be most affected by welfare reform, with the exception of Coley and Morris (1999). This is an important consideration, given that even in the national samples represented in articles reviewed here, African-Americans make up the minority of the sample, whereas African-Americans and low-income parents make up the majority of the population that is directly affected by welfare reform legislation. These measures could be remiss in focusing specifically on the parent-parent relationship, when it is common in African-American populations to depend on an extended network in caring for their children.

V. Recommendations

The measurement of relationship quality for couples coparenting after relationship dissolution would benefit from the following:

- Testing of validated and comprehensive measures, such as the Ahrons' Quality of Coparental Communication Scale among lower income and never-married populations
- Testing of measures that have been validated for divorced couples on couples who have dissolved their *non-marital* union
- Expansion of theoretical models to consider the pathways by which coparenting in diverse contexts would influence child well-being (e.g. the dissolution of cohabiting and visiting relationships, or coparenting when one partner begins a new cohabiting relationship) and developing new measures or items to operationalize these constructs

- Encouraging qualitative research on whether and how marital status makes a difference in how 'co-parenting' should be measured for separated couples
- Taking into account the age of child and time since relationship disruption or divorce when considering appropriate coparenting measures (Kitzmann et al. 2003)

Construct/Measure	Article using measure	Psychometrics
<i>Conflict</i> The amount of overt hostility between parents which occurs in front of the children	Mullett and Stolberg 1999 (derived from O'Leary –Porter Scale)	Cronbach's Alpha: .65; test-retest reliability: .86
<i>Conflict over parenting issues</i> Includes conflict over childrearing behaviors and values, visitation, child support, etc.	Amato and Rezac 1994 Coley and Morris 2002 (sample=low-income) Madden-Derdich and Arditto 1999 (the Ahrons Interparental Conflict Scale, which incorporates the degree of hostility/tension in discussions of parenting issues) Madden-Derdich and Leonard 2002 (the Ahrons Interparental Conflict Scale, which incorporates the degree of hostility/tension in discussions of parenting issues)	Cronbach's Alpha: .76 Alpha, father report: .59 Alpha, mother report: .56 Alpha, combined parent: .52 Cronbach's Alpha: .87 Alpha, mother's reports: .88 Alpha, father's reports: .84
<i>Triangulation</i> (adolescent reports of feeling caught between their parents)	Mullett and Stolberg 1999	Cronbach's Alpha: .64
<i>Conflict over visitation</i>	Amato and Rezac 1994 King 1999	Single item, None provided Single item, None provided
<i>Discord Index</i> (e.g., frequency of arguments, hostility, difficulty with transporting children back and forth, etc.)	Maccoby, Depner, and Mnookin 1990	None provided
Cooperative Communication Scale (e.g., how often the ex-spouses talk with each other about the children, do parents have the same childrearing rules, does either parent limit contact)	Maccoby, Depner, and Mnookin 1990	None provided
Ahrons' Quality of	Baum 2003 (modified version)	Not given

<p>Coparental Communication Scale (a total score including cooperative communication, coparental interaction, mutual support, interparental atmosphere, ex-spouse's evaluation of the other parent, and feelings towards the ex-spouse)</p>	<p>Bronstein et al. 1994 (modified version)</p> <p>Madden-Derdich and Arditti 1999 (modified version)</p> <p>Mullett and Stolberg 1999</p>	<p>Cronbach's Alpha: .86</p> <p>Cronbach's Alpha=.86; factor analysis confirmed that these items represent one underlying dimension</p> <p>Alpha, women: .88 Alpha, men: .89</p>
<p>Ahrons Co-parental Interaction Scale Frequency of co-parental interaction on child-related issues (e.g. a conversation on problems had with the child)</p>	<p>Baum 2003, a sub-scale from Ahrons' Quality of Coparental Communication Scale</p> <p>Madden-Derdich and Leonard 2002, a sub-scale from Ahrons' Quality of Coparental Communication Scale</p>	<p>Cronbach's Alpha: .81-.96</p> <p>Alpha, mother's report: .86 Alpha, father's report: .85</p>
<p><i>Mutual Support</i> (e.g., when you need help in matters concerning the children, do you ask your ex-spouse?)</p>	<p>Baum 2003, Mullet and Stolberg 1999, a sub-scale of Ahrons' Quality of Coparental Communication Scale</p> <p>Also see Coley and Morris 2002 for items</p> <p>Also see Maccoby, Depner and Mnookin 1990 for items</p>	<p>Cronbach's Alpha: .81-.96</p> <p>n/a, single item used in a general father involvement scale</p> <p>n/a, single item used in a general scale</p>
<p>Interparental atmosphere (e.g., how often are your conversations with your ex-spouse tense or pressured?)</p>	<p>Baum 2003, a sub-scale of Ahrons' Quality of Coparental Communication Scale</p> <p>Also see Madden-Derdich and Arditti 1999</p> <p>Also see Mullet and Stolberg 2002</p>	<p>Cronbach's Alpha: .81-.96</p>
<p>Cooperative Communication Scale (e.g., did you talk with your ex-spouse on the phone)</p>	<p>Baum 2003, a sub-scale from Ahrons' Quality of Coparental Communication Scale</p>	<p>Cronbach's Alpha: .81-.96</p>
<p>Ex-spouse's evaluation of the other as a parent</p>	<p>Baum 2003</p>	<p>Cronbach's Alpha: .81-.96</p>
<p>Feelings towards the ex-spouse (e.g., I have warm feelings</p>	<p>Baum 2003</p>	<p>Cronbach's Alpha: .81-.96</p>

towards my ex-spouse)		
Satisfaction with father's visitation with child	King 1999	Single item, none provided
Satisfaction with spouse's parenting	Madden-Derdich and Leonard 2002	Alpha, mothers: .92 Alpha, fathers: .91
Satisfaction with child-rearing skills (respondent reports on both own skills and partner's skills)	Madden-Derdich and Leonard 2002	Not given
Structural Family Interaction Scale (85 items designed to assess patterns such as parent-child coalitions, disengagement, triangulation, and neglect)	Mullett and Stolberg 1999	Not given
The Co-parenting Behavior Questionnaire Child self-report of parenting behaviors post-divorce, including conflict, triangulation, parental communication, parental respect, parental warmth, parent-child communication, parental discipline	Stolberg 1999 (see Kitmann et al. 2003 for summary)	Alphas for subscales range from .82-.93; Scores on this measure have been shown to account for 15-36% of the variance in measures of child behavior problems, self-esteem, anxiety and depression

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TITLE: Contact with nonresident parents, interparental conflict, and children's behavior.

AUTHOR: Amato, Paul R. & Rezac, Sandra J.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1994). *Journal of Family Issues*, 15(2), 191-207.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: Test the hypothesis that "children's contact with nonresident parents decreases children's behavior problems when interparental conflict is low but increases children's behavior problems when interparental conflict is high."

SOURCE OF DATA: National Survey of Families and Households

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample): National Probability data set of 9,643 respondents and an oversample of 3,374 blacks, Hispanics, single-parents, persons with stepchildren, cohabiting persons, and persons who recently married.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Face-to-face survey interview

STUDY POPULATION: 1,285 respondents who had a biological child between the ages of 5 and 18 living in the household whose other biological parent was living elsewhere.

MEASURE:

Conflict is scored as the average score of the following items.

"How much conflict do you and (child's) (father/mother) have over each of the following issues?"

Where (child)lives

How (he/she) is raised

How you spend money on (child)

How (he/she) spends money on (child)

(His/her) visits with (child)

(His/her) contribution to (child's) support.

Response categories: 1=none, 2=some, 3=a great deal.

Cronbach's alpha=.76.

PSYCHOMETRICS: SEE ABOVE

COMMENTS:

Hypothesis not supported in the full sample, but there is **evidence of support for boys from divorced families** (e.g., hypothesis not supported for girls and never-married families).

Factors correlated with post-divorce conflict:

higher parental education + (probably due to increased contact)

divorce vs. never married + (probably due to increased contact)

living with the mother -

Hispanic - (among young boys)

Parental remarriage - (older boys)

Length of time since divorce -

Contact with nonres parent +

TITLE: Divorce process variables and the co-parental relationship and parental role fulfillment of divorced parents.

AUTHOR: Baum, Nehami.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (2003). *Family Process*, 42(1), 117-131.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: Examines the association between a) initiation of and responsibility for divorce and b) difficulty and duration of the legal procedure and divorced spouses' co-parental relationship and parental functioning.

SOURCE OF DATA: see below

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample): 100 divorced parents (50 couples) randomly selected from the registers of the social service departments in Israel (this is not clear... later on authors wrote: "potential subjects were first identified by social workers who conduct custody evaluations for the family courts in Israel"(page 121). Couples had to be formally divorced for at least 1 ½ years, living in Israel, have a child 2-16 years old and child had to be in mother's custody.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Self-administered survey.

STUDY POPULATION: See research design/sampling frame. Subjects aged 27-62, had an average of 13.4 years of schooling, all Jewish.

MEASURE:

Co-parental relationships assessed using an index of all the items (30 items in all) in the six scales designed by Ahrons (1981) to "examine the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of the relationships between divorced parents insofar as they related to the children." See Ahrons (1981) for specific items.

- a) co-parental communication scale.
Respondents were asked whether or not they spoke with the other parent on the phone, face to face, how often, and for how long
- b) Frequency of the co-parental interaction on topics related to the children
5 Response categories for items: always(5) to never(1).
- c) Mutual parental support
5 Response categories for items: always(5) to never(1).
- d) Interparental atmosphere
5 Response categories for items: always(5) to never(1).
- e) Ex-spouse evaluation of the other as a parent
5 Response categories for items: always(5) to never(1).
- f) His or her feelings toward the other parent
5 Response categories for items: always(5) to never(1).

For the present study, scales were translated into Hebrew; two items were removed due to translation issues.

Fulfillment of parental functions was assessed using a parental involvement scale, but I don't discuss these results here.

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Cronbach's alphas ranged from .81-.96 (not clear whether alphas for current sample or reported by Ahrons (1981).

For the sample at hand, Pearson Correlations among the scores on the six scales ranged from .44-.87, and significant, justifying combination into an index based on the means of the z-scored items.

COMMENTS:

More difficult legal proceedings are associated with lower co-parental relationship quality for both mothers and fathers; the length of the legal process reduces the co-parental relationship quality only for dads; divorce initiation and responsibility not significant when controlling for the other divorce process variables and demographic controls.

Correlations with co-parental relationship:

	Mother report	Father report
Divorce initiation	ns	+
Div Responsibility	ns	+
Difficult Legal process	-	-
Duration of legal process	-	-
Parents' age	ns	ns
SES	+	+
Education	ns	ns
No. of children	ns	ns
Years since divorce	+	+

Multi-variate analyses with co-parental relationship as dependent variable:

	Mothers	Fathers
Divorce initiation	ns	ns
Div Responsibility	ns	ns
Difficult Legal process	-	-
Duration of legal process	ns	-
Parents' age	ns	ns
SES	+	+
Education	ns	ns
No. of children	ns	ns
Years since divorce	+	+

TITLE: Fathering after separation or divorce: Factors predicting children's adjustment.

AUTHOR: Bronstein, Phyllis, Miriam Frankel Stoll, JoAnn Clauson, Craig L. Abrams, & Maria Briones.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1994). *Family Relations*, 43(4), 469-480.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To study the ways in which the presence of a fathering figure following the divorce or separation of biological parents is related to preadolescent children's adjustment.

SOURCE OF DATA: Small, convenience sample

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: Fifth grade children and their parents from Northern Vermont.

SAMPLE: 136 fifth-grade children (77 girls and 59 boys) and the parenting adults they lived with. Average age of children was 10.8 years; Seventy-nine of the children lived with both biological parents, 31 lived with only their mother and 24 lived with a biological and a step-parent, and two lived in joint custody households.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Data obtained from survey interviews and teachers, classmates, and school records.

MEASURE:

A modified version of Ahrons' Quality of Coparental Communication Scale (1981), consisting of nine items describing aspects of the coparenting relationship between the custodial and noncustodial parents (e.g. "to make a change in visiting arrangements, do you go out of your way to accommodate?"). Mothers rated on a 5-point scale from never to always, with higher scores indicating higher cooperation. Mothers who had no contact with the father did not fill out the scale.

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Cronbach's alpha =.86.

COMMENTS:

In single mother families (n=20), higher scores on the cooperative co-parenting with ex-partner scale were correlated with fewer psychological problems, higher gpa, better classroom behavior, higher levels of peer popularity and higher levels of family income; in multivariate analyses that included child gender and income, only higher peer popularity remains significant (but don't forget this small n! The small n would might be why this is not-significant).

In stepfamilies (n=29), higher scores are correlated with better self-concept, lower psychological problems, and higher gpa. These remain significant in multivariate analyses that include child gender and income.

TITLE: Comparing father and mother reports of father involvement among low-income minority families.

AUTHOR: Coley, Rebekah Levine, & Jodi Eileen Morris.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (2002). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 64, 982-997.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To use both mothers' and fathers' reports of father involvement to study this construct; past data has been limited by only including mother reports.

SOURCE OF DATA: *Welfare, Children and Families: A Three City Study*.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: A stratified random sample of children and their primary female caregivers in low-income families living in low-income urban neighborhoods in Boston, Chicago, and San Antonio.

SAMPLE: 228 families who have data from the survey interviews, embedded mother interviews and embedded father interviews; sample includes residential and nonresidential fathers. One-third of families were receiving cash welfare at wave one, and 73% had incomes below the federal poverty line; 32% of mothers were married, and 6% were cohabiting; the sample was 53% Hispanic, 41% African American, and 6% non-Hispanic white.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: Cognitive assessments of children administered by interviewer; survey interview with primary female caregiver; interviews with fathers, videotaped assessments, additional questions of mothers, observations of child-care settings and interviews with child-care providers; the third component is an ethnographic study of 215 over 12 months.

MEASURE:

Level of parental conflict over parenting

- Items adapted from the Early Head Start father study
- Mothers and fathers were asked about the extent to which they disagreed about how to raise their child, how much the father saw the child or how he acted with the child, and the extent of the father's financial support of the child; responses range from 1 (none) to 4 (a lot).
- Conflict items were averaged to create a father-report measure, a mother-report measure, and a combined measure.

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Conflict items for each reporter were subjected to a principal components analysis and were found to load on one factor.

Cronbach's alphas were low: father-report ($\alpha=.59$); mother-report ($\alpha=.56$); combined parent report ($\alpha=.52$).

COMMENTS:

Parental conflict predicted larger discrepancies between father and mother reports of father involvement. HLM models control for child age and gender; father age, race, education, employment, and psychological distress; mother education, employment, welfare receipt, and psychological distress; and father residency, time between interviews.

TITLE: Nonresident father visitation, parental conflict, and mother's satisfaction: What's best for child well-being?

AUTHOR: King, Valerie.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1999). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61, 385-396.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine the interrelationship of nonresident father visitation, parental conflict, and the mother's satisfaction with the father's contact. Previous studies based on large national surveys have found little effect of father visitation on child well-being, even after levels of conflict are considered, but these studies have not considered the influence of mother's satisfaction with the father's contact.

SOURCE OF DATA: Data come from the first wave of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH).

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample):

The NSFH is a probability sample of adults in households in the United States in 1987-1988. The full sample includes over 13,000 respondents and had a response rate of approximately 74%. Sample weights are available to compensate for the differential probabilities of sample selection due to the oversampling of several population groups, such as minorities and single parents.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Face-to-face Survey

STUDY POPULATION: The results reported here are from approximately 1,565 cases in which respondents were mothers in households with children younger than 18 years old who had a father living elsewhere. A focal child was randomly selected from all eligible children. The sample includes both children born in and outside marriage. The final set of analyses examining child well-being is limited to children 5 years old and older (approximate n = 1,172).

MEASURE:

Mother's satisfaction: Overall, how satisfied are you with...other parent's contact with child? from 0 (very or somewhat dissatisfied) to 1 (somewhat or very satisfied)

Parental conflict: How much conflict do you and child's father have over his visits with child? from 0 (none) to 1 (some or a great deal)

PSYCHOMETRICS:

None provided

COMMENTS: The percentage of mothers who are satisfied (88%) is greatest in families in which fathers visit most often, although the relationship is not linear. More mothers are satisfied when fathers have no contact (71%) than when fathers have very low levels of contact (e.g., only a few times a year, 59%).

The most common family pattern is one in which fathers have little contact, the mother is satisfied with this arrangement, and there is no conflict over it (33%). The second most common pattern is one of high visitation, mother satisfied, no conflict (25%). The third most common pattern is one of low visitation, mother dissatisfied, no conflict (15%). This third pattern suggests that a post-divorce co-parenting relationship can be unsatisfactory even if it is not marked by high conflict.

Multivariate analyses suggest that children do worst when there is high father visitation accompanied by maternal dissatisfaction over parental contact with his child on outcomes of adjustment, psychological well-being and behavior problems. Conflict does not appear to mediate nor moderate this relationship.

When father contact is high, why are mothers dissatisfied? The results (not shown) indicated that the odds of dissatisfaction are significantly higher when the child was born within marriage and when mothers report that the father has little influence and rarely discusses the child. Thus these fathers are visiting the child but seem to have little interaction with the mother.

This article is a good source for post-divorce coparenting as reasons why father visitation might decline over time.

TITLE: Coparenting in the second year after divorce.

AUTHOR: Eleanor Maccoby, Charlene Depner, & Robert H. Mnookin.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1990). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 52, 141-55.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To compare coparenting in mother-custody, father-custody and dual custody families; and to assess whether pre-divorce conflict affects post-divorce co-parenting.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample): Court records of divorce proceedings from two California counties from 9/1984-3/1985. Families deemed eligible had at least 1 child under age 16, parents not separated more than 13 months. This process yielded 2,000 eligible cases.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Mainly telephone survey; some by mail-in survey.

STUDY POPULATION: Not entirely clear: nearly 1,000 from original sampling frame. Twenty-eight percent had a high school education or less, 41% had some college and 30% had completed college. Mothers earned an average of \$16k at time one; fathers 35k. Majority of respondents were Caucasian, with 11.8% Hispanic and 2.2% black and 4.4% Asian. The mode respondent was in her/his 30's. 47% at time 1 had only 1 child; 41% had 2 children. Longitudinal analyses of coparenting based on 664 families.

MEASURE:

Factor analyses suggest two constructs:

Discord scale: items recoded and combined, range 1-10, mean=4.6, s.d.=2,

1. In general, do you and (other parent) argue these days? (percent reporting sometimes or often)
2. Does it ever happen that either parent refuses to let, or threatens not to let, the other parent to see his/her children when he/she would like? (percent reporting yes)
3. Thinking about how you and other parent reach decisions these days, how would you rate (ex) on his/her desire to avoid emotional outburst? (Where 1 is someone who tries to upset people and 10 is someone who tries not to upset people) (mean on a 10 point scale)
4. [after a number of logistical problems in getting children back and forth between parents has been discussed] How big a problem have these kinds of things been for you? (scale of 1-10, where 1 means no problem at all and 10 means a very serious problem).
5. Your relationship with your children can sometimes be affected by what (other parent) says or does. (I'm thinking about whether the other parent backs you up on discipline, what the other parent says about you to your children, and so on). In your case, would you say that (other parent) makes it easier or harder for you to be the kind of parent you want to be? Use a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 means the other parent makes it very difficult for you, and 10 means that [other parent] makes it very easy.

Cooperative Communication Scale: items recoded and combined, range 2-10, mean=5.3, s.d.=2

6. How often do you and your (ex other parent) talk with each other about the children? (percent of parents who report once a week)
7. Do you and (other parent) try to have the same rules about bedtime, TV, and so on in both households, or do you each decide these things for your own household? (percent who try to coordinate rules)
8. Do either of you deliberately try to limit the amount of contact between the two parents? (% reporting that one or both try to limit contact).

*when both parents were interviewed and the answers differed, the report of the highest conflict was included.

PSYCHOMETRICS: None really provided; see above.

COMMENTS:

*interview 1 was about 6 months after separation; interview 2 was about 18 months after separation. About 1/3 engaged in cooperative co-parenting; about 1/3 were engaged in conflictive co-parenting, and nearly 1/3 were disengaged, and the remaining couples had mixed patterns. Parents who had older children were more likely to be disengaged; those with 3 or more children were more likely to be conflicted.

Parents who chose dual residence talked to each other more frequently and maintained more cooperative co-parenting; however, they did not experience less discord. The ability to cooperate post-divorce was closely tied to the level of hostility and conflict near the time of the break-up—more hostility and less agreement at the break-up is associated with less post-divorce cooperation. Even couples that chose dual residence tried to have as little communication with each other as possible when pre-divorce conflict was high.

Their conclusion: It remains to be seen whether joint custody leads to fewer/lesser psycho-social difficulties than primary custody with one parent.

NOTE: There are many other dynamics of post-divorce family process reported in this article.

TITLE: The ties that bind: Attachment between former spouses.

AUTHOR: Debra A. Madden-Derdich & Joyce A. Arditti

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1999). *Family Relations*, 48(3), 243-249.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: Since preoccupation with an ex-spouse seems to be a barrier to a healthy post-divorce relationship, the purpose of this article is to gain insight into the variables that predict preoccupation in order to inform clinical practice.

SOURCE OF DATA: see below

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample): Custodial mothers from two counties and one city in southwestern Virginia, selected from court divorce records. Mothers had to have been granted a divorce within a specified five-year period and had to have been awarded custody of at least one minor child.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Self-administered mailed survey

STUDY POPULATION: 917 custodial mothers contacted; 399 surveys were returned as undeliverable, leaving 518 potential respondents; of these, a total of 219 surveys were completed and returned, resulting in a response rate of 42% for those successfully contacted, or 24% of the original 917. Participants were 36 years old, on average, had 1.72 children, had been divorced an average of 37 months with marriages lasting 10.43 years on average. Twenty percent were remarried, 87.3% were white, and 11.3% were black. Approximately 75% had some post-high school education, with 36% being college grads. The median income was in the range of \$15,000-20,000.

MEASURE 1: Ahron's (1981) Interparental Conflict Scale, a subscale of the coparental communication scale. The interparental conflict subscale incorporated four, 5-point Likert scale items (ranging from never to always) that measured the degree of hostility, conflict, tension and disagreement that was present when the couple discussed parenting issues, with higher scores indicating a higher degree of conflict.

PSYCHOMETRICS 1: Alpha = .87

MEASURE 2: Coparental relationship quality was measured as a composite variable developed based on definitions of the coparental relationship that encompass childrearing issues, and obligations and quality of the relationship. The variable incorporated 2 items from Ahron's (1981) Coparental Interaction Scale that measured the degree to which the parents discussed major decisions regarding the children's lives; 6 items from Ahron's (1981) mutual support scale, which assesses the degree to which the mother perceived her spouse to be a resource and support to her as a parent; and a global rating of relationship quality that asked the respondent to describe the quality of the relationship they currently had with their former spouse, based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from very good to very bad.

PSYCHOMETRICS 2: Alpha = .86; Correlations between coparental interaction, mutual support and global relationship quality ranged from .47 to .65; Factor analysis confirmed that these items represent one underlying dimension.

COMMENTS:

Coparental support, but not coparental hostility, is associated with higher levels of pre-occupation with the ex-spouse (e.g., thinking about ex-spouse). This is important because past research shows that preoccupation with an ex-spouse interferes with healthy adjustment to divorce.

TITLE: Shared experiences, unique realities: formerly married mothers' and fathers' perceptions of parenting and custody after divorce

AUTHOR: Debra A. Madden-Derdich and Stacie A. Leonard

PUBLICATION CITATION: (2002). *Family Relations*, 51, 37-45.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine divergence in perceptions of post-divorce circumstances as predictors of post-divorce conflict among parents

SOURCE OF DATA: Self-administered mail-in survey.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample):

Study 1: One hundred couples (n=200 individuals) who were randomly selected from public divorce court records from a large metropolitan area in Arizona. All couples had a child under 12 at the time of the divorce decree.

Study 2: A random sample of 247 couples (N=494) who had divorced during a specified 3-month period in 1996 was selected from public divorce court records from a large metropolitan area in Arizona. All couples had a child under 12 at the time of the divorce decree.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Participants asked to complete a survey.

STUDY POPULATION:

Study 1: The participating sample consisted of 21 pairs (or n=42 individuals) where both ex-spouses returned surveys.

Study 2: The participating sample consisted of 35 pairs (or n=70 individuals) where both ex-spouses returned surveys.

MEASURE:

Co-parental Conflict:

Ahrons's interparental conflict scale, a subscale of the Coparental Communication Scale (See Ahrons, C.R. 1981. The continuing coparental relationship between divorced spouses. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 5, 415-428). This subscale included four 5-point Likert-type items ranging from never to always that measured the degree of hostility, conflict, tension and disagreement that was present when the couple discussed parenting issues.

Exact items not given.

Co parental interaction:

Ahrons's Co-parental Interaction Scale. This scale comprises nine items that assess the frequency of interaction between mothers and fathers, specifically focusing on discussions regarding child-rearing issues, including medical problems, child-rearing problems, special events for the children, major decisions regarding the children's lives, and daily decisions regarding the children's lives. Items measured on a five-point Likert-type scale that ranged from never to always.

Satisfaction with former spouse's parenting:

Spouse Support Factor of Guidabaldi and Cleminshaw's Parent Satisfaction Scale. (See Guidabaldi and Cleminshwa, 1985). 10 items; 4-point Likert-type scale. Items were assessed on a 4-point Likert-type scale

that ranged from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Responses were summed, resulting in a final score that ranged from 10 to 40, with higher scores indicating more satisfaction with the spouse's parenting.

Satisfaction with child-rearing skills:

Guidabaldi and Cleminshaw's Parent Satisfaction Scale:

"I am satisfied with my child-rearing skills"

"I am satisfied with my former spouse's child-rearing skills"

(Response categories were 4-points, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree)

Coparental accommodation:

Two items from Ahrons's (1981) Coparental support scale, a subscale of the Coparental Communication Scale.

"If your former spouse has needed to make a change in visiting arrangements, do you go out of your way to accommodate?"

"Does your former spouse go out of the way to accommodate any changes you need to make [in visitation]?"

Both measured on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from *never to always*.

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Coparental conflict:

Cronbach's alpha: Mothers--.88; fathers--.84.

There was no statistically significant difference between mother's and father's perceptions of their coparental conflict, which authors report as different from studies that do not have matched couples.

Co parental interaction

Cronbach's alpha: Mothers--.86 fathers--.85

There was no statistically significant difference between mother's and father's perceptions of their coparental interaction, which authors report as different from studies that do not have matched couples.

Satisfaction with former spouse's parenting:

Cronbach's alpha: mothers --.92; fathers--.91.

Mothers reported significantly less satisfaction with their former spouse's parenting performance than fathers reported of the mother's parenting performance.

Satisfaction with child-rearing skills

Psychometrics not given.

Mothers (M=2.0, SD=.94) were significantly less satisfied than fathers (M=2.9, SD=.67) with fathers' child-rearing skills, $p < .005$.

There were no significant differences between mother's satisfaction with her child-rearing skills and fathers' level of satisfaction with her skills, indicating that they agreed.

Coparental accommodation:

Psychometrics not given.

Fathers reported being significantly more accommodating (M=3.8, SD=1.16) than mothers reported them to be (M=2.7, SD=1.32), $p < .001$. Mothers also perceived themselves to be more accommodating (M=3.8, SD=.97) than fathers perceived mothers to be (M=3.0, SD=1.31), $p < .005$.

FINDINGS:

Multivariate analyses: Among mothers, divergence with regards to satisfaction with fathers' child-rearing skills had the strongest relationship to her reports of coparental conflict: disagreement with fathers'

childrearing skills was related to more coparental conflict (Beta=.46, $p<.001$). Divergent perceptions regarding mother's willingness to accommodate fathers' requests for changes in visitation also emerged as a significant predictor in this model (Beta=.29, $p<.05$). The degree of difference in mothers' and fathers' perceptions of mothers' levels of custody satisfaction also predicted her reports of coparental conflict (B=-.28, $p<.05$), indicating that when fathers overestimate mothers' satisfaction with the current custody arrangement, mothers report more frequent conflict in the coparental relationship.

For the models predicting paternal reports of coparental conflict, Divergence regarding satisfaction with fathers' child-rearing skills had the strongest relationship to coparental conflict (B=.45, $p<.01$), indicating that when mothers were less satisfied than fathers with fathers' child-rearing skills, the level of coparental conflict was more frequent. When fathers perceive mothers to be less accommodating than mothers perceive themselves to be, fathers report more frequent conflict ($p<.05$). In contrast to the mothers' model, when mothers overestimate fathers' levels of satisfaction with their current custody arrangements, fathers report more frequent coparental conflict ($p<.05$).

CONCLUSIONS:

Within-couple agreement regarding fathers' ability to parent is an important focal point for interventions designed to facilitate positive and productive coparental relationships. An additional problem seems to emerge when fathers perceived mothers to be less accommodating than mothers perceived themselves to be.

TITLE: The development of the Co-Parenting Behaviors Questionnaire: An instrument for children of divorce.

AUTHOR: Mullett, Elizabeth K. & Arnold Stolberg.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1999). *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 31(3), 115-137.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To develop a questionnaire that assesses post-divorce family processes

SOURCE OF DATA: see research design

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample): College students recruited from undergraduate psychology classes

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Participants asked to complete a survey.

STUDY POPULATION: 211/214 college students recruited from undergrad psych courses, whose parents had divorced for no less than one year. 65 were male, 154 were female. 58% were Caucasian, 29% African-American, and 4% Asian, 3% Hispanic, and the remainder represent other minority groups. For 56% of the sample, mother had sole custody.

MEASURE:

Not provided.

Conflict adapted from O'Leary-Porter Scale; alpha of items=.65; test-retest reliability=.86; correlates .63 with the Marital Adjustment Test

Triangulation assess feeling 'caught between parents; alpha of items=.64.

Cross-generational coalitions, Disengagement: Items from the structural family interaction scale pertaining to children of divorce were used:

parent-child coalition items; internal consistency=.74

disengagement; internal consistency=.71

triangulation; internal consistency=.70

neglect; internal consistency=.25

Coparental communication and cooperation

Content of Co-parental Communications; alpha=.93, based on Ahrons(1980).

Quality of Co-parental communications Scale (Ahrons 1980). Alpha=.88 for women and .89 for men.

Support subscale (Ahrons 1980).

PSYCHOMETRICS:

See Measures

COMMENTS:

The authors derive an index that fits their specific sample; details not given here since results seem to be sample-driven and not necessarily generalizable.

TITLE: Family environment and adolescents' well-being before and after marital disruption.

AUTHOR: Sun, Yongmin.

PUBLICATION CITATION: *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 63(3), 697-713.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine divorce and its influences on children, not as a discrete event, but rather as a process that unfolds from pre-divorce to post-divorce.

SOURCE OF DATA: The National Education Longitudinal Studies

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample): Nationally representative sample of more than 24,000 eighth-grade students in 1988. More than 15,000 students were surveyed in 1990 and 1992 (when they were in 10th and 12th grade), the years that the sample was drawn from.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Parents sent letters introducing research, then telephoned, and screened for eligibility. Family members interviewed individually in the HMO clinic or the research offices.

STUDY POPULATION: 10,888 students interviewed in 1990 and 1992 who were living in families with two biological parents at time 1 (1990) and were not living with their own spouse or partner at time two (1992). 798 of these experienced the divorce of their parents between waves I and II.

MEASURE:

Parent-parent relations: Youth report of whether parents got along with each other with 6 intervals, 0=false, 1=true (? I don't understand this, maybe author means from do not get along with each other at all to get along well?)

PSYCHOMETRICS:

None

COMMENTS:

Disruption status is associated with a lower likelihood of parents getting along prior to disruption.

Higher levels of parents getting along prior to disruption (as perceived by the student) are associated with significantly better levels on academics, student psychological well-being and behavior problems in an equation with demographic controls. When all family environment measures are included (parent-child relations, father and mother educational expectations for student, doing things with parents, attending school events, family income, parental educational attainment, and parental occupational prestige), parents getting along significantly predicts academic readiness, self-concept, locus of control and fewer behavior problems. Disruption status only significantly predicts math and reading scores, and behavior problems.

Pre-disruption discord seems to be most important in accounting for the 'negative' effect of divorce on well-being for the psychological and behavioral outcomes, it seems to be less important than measures of parental involvement and family resources in accounting for pre-disruption differences in test scores and educational achievement.

Overall, most of the negative 'effect' of divorce can be attributed to pre-disruption factors.

Limitation: since youth were about 16 years old at time of disruption, it is not clear whether findings from this study can be generalized to children in households in which the parents' marriage is relatively short-lived.

Families with Children

Synopsis of Measures Used in Studies of Relationship Quality for Couples with Children

Prepared by
Susan M. Jekielek, Ph. D.

Research on the marital quality of couples with children typically have two purposes: to examine the influence of marital quality on children's well-being or to study the associations between family processes – such as becoming a parent -- and marital quality. Studies of the former category typically focus on the effects of parental conflict on offspring well-being in either childhood or young adulthood, often with the goal of understanding the divorce process. Taken together, these studies provide evidence that parental conflict is harmful for child well-being.

This section includes some examples of studies that examine marital relationships and offspring well-being in childhood or later on in young adulthood. Most studies of this nature measure parental conflict. Jekielek (1998) selected items from a widely used set of questions on conflict from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. The self-reported items capture the degree of conflict over topics central to family life, such as chores, children, money, affection, etc. This measure was found to be associated with children's behavior problems. Amato, Spencer and Booth (1995) use a respondent self-reported measure that combines verbal and physical conflict, McNeal and Amato (1998) differentiate between conflict and physical violence. They use respondent reports of couple violence and general conflict to create a typology of couples: violent couples, non-violent high conflict couples, and low-conflict couples; their analyses suggest this is a fruitful distinction. Harrist and Ainslie (1998) measure a similar construct that they term marital discord. They derive this measure by combining a measure of marital arguing-- a 51-item instrument, self-reported by the mother that captures the degree of impact caused by arguments with one's spouse -- and scores on the Consensus Subscale of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, which reflects the degree of interspousal agreement. One limitation is that the measure of arguments is really a perception of whether the arguments had an effect, which would confound the relationship between conflict and possible outcomes resulting from conflict. Another version of marital discord is a question on whether parents got along with each other, reported by youth (Sun 2001). Many other studies, not reviewed here, have used observational measures of parental conflict (but see Grych and Fincham 1990 for examples); these observational measures are often well-suited for research that seeks to illuminate the pathways by which parental conflict is disruptive to child well-being.

Studies of the associations between family processes and marital quality tend to be more diverse in the measures used to capture marital quality than studies predicting to child outcomes. For example, in a study of marital quality after the transition to parenthood, Helms-Erikson (2001) examines not only marital conflict and marital satisfaction among parents, but also a scale of marital love, made up of nine items that both spouses answer. Mulslow et al. (2002) examine the associations between maternal stress and relationship intimacy. Cox, Paley and Burchinal (1999) examine withdrawal from communication during the transition to parenthood. Overall, marital satisfaction is probably the most common measure used to study the effects of parenthood on couples (see Demo and Cox 2000 for a summary).

Many of the measures used to study marital quality in families with children have been described in our report "Conceptualizing and Measuring "Healthy Marriages For Research and Evaluation Studies: A Compendium of Measures." Some common measures used include self-reported survey items on arguments and marital happiness derived from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth and the National Survey of Households and Families, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, and scales on couple communication and the division of household tasks developed by Carolyn Cowan and Philip Cowan. Two reviews in this report, one on cohabiting couples and another focused on the co-parental relationship after relationship dissolution, highlight measures used for unmarried couples; these are sub-populations for which measurement development is needed.

One conclusion from this review is that the relationship between parental conflict and child well-being is well-documented; however, the links between other aspects of marital quality and child well-being are not. While the field of relationship quality has moved towards measuring constructs such as intimacy, patterns of communication (other than conflict) and commitment, and acknowledges the importance of these constructs for couples and marital stability, there is less development linking these constructs to child outcomes. An exception is a study of intergenerational similarity in “love attitudes” between late adolescent/young adult children and their parents (Inman-Amos and Hendrick 1994). This study of a convenience sample of college students and their parents examines whether parents and children have similar attitudes about what love is, and factors that might predict greater similarity. They actually find little intergenerational similarity.

Research on measures of relationship quality among couples with children would benefit from:

- Development and validation of constructs such as ‘commitment’, ‘intimacy’ and communication patterns among couples with children, and in particular, testing whether these constructs are linked to child well-being
- Development of measures that can be used for unmarried as well as married couples
- Testing the applicability of measures for race and ethnic subgroups
- Testing the applicability of measures for low-income and low-education sub-populations

Construct/Measure	Article using measure	Psychometrics
<p>Conflict: Combined verbal/physical conflict. Items include: Frequency of disagreements, conflict over the household division of labor, number of serious quarrels in the past two months, and whether spouses have ever slapped, hit, pushed, kicked, or thrown things at one another in anger.</p> <p>How often couples argue about 8 items such as chores, children and money.</p> <p>The number of serious marital quarrels that occurred in the previous month -and- the frequency with which respondents disagreed with their partners (from 1 (rarely) to 5 (all the time))</p> <p>Five items from the Relationship Questionnaire (Braiker and Kelley 1979), e.g. “how often do you feel angry or resentful toward your partner”</p>	<p>Amato, Spencer Loomis and Booth (1995)</p> <p>Jekielek (1998)</p> <p>McNeal and Amato (1998) combined with violence to create a typology</p> <p>Helms-Erickson (2001)</p>	<p>Cronbach’s Alpha=.54</p> <p>Cronbach’s Alpha=.73</p> <p>None given</p> <p>Alpha, Husbands: .61, wives: .70 Correlation between reports: .39</p>
Marital discord	Harrist and Ainslie (1998)— combination of marital nonconsensus and marital arguing.	None given
Marital nonconsensus- subscale of the DAS which includes the extent to which couples disagree on family finances, recreation, religious matters, friends, conventionality, philosophy of live, ways of dealing with in-laws, goals, amount of time spent together, major decisions, household tasks, leisure time and interests, and career decisions	Harrist and Ainslie (1998)- combined with marital arguing to create a single marital discord scale	Cronbach’s alpha = .84
Marital arguing 51 item measure developed by Sarason, Johnson and Siegal 1978), asking about the impact caused by arguments with spouse.	Harrist and Ainslie (1998)- combined with marital nonconsensus to create a single marital discord scale	None given
Marital violence Single question about whether respondent and spouse has ever slapped, hit, pushed, kicked, or thrown things at one another	McNeal and Amato (1998)	None given
Marital love Nine items from the Braiker and Kelley Relationship scale (1978), e.g., “to what extent do you love your partner at this stage?”	Helms-Erikson (2001)	Alpha, husbands: .91, wives: .92 Correlation between reports: .51
Marital satisfaction	Helms-Erikson (2001)	Alpha, husbands: .86, wives: .88 Correlation between reports: .37

<p>Relationship intimacy 6-item emotional intimacy subscale from the Personal Assessment of Relationships Scale (Schaefer and Olson 1981). Example item: “my spouse/partner can really understand my hurts and joys”, answered on a five-point Likert scale.</p>	<p>Mulsow et al. (2002)</p>	<p>Cronbach alphas range from .80-.83</p>
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- Sun, Y. (2001). Family environment and adolescents' well-being before and after marital disruption. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 63(3), 697-713.

TITLE: Parental divorce, marital conflict, and offspring well-being during early adulthood.

AUTHOR: Paul R. Amato, Laura Spencer Loomis, & Alan Booth

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1995). *Social Forces*, 73(3), 895-915.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: Use a longitudinal design to better specify the relationship between conflict, divorce and offspring well-being. This is an improvement over prior studies by using a longitudinal design, isolating the effects of conflict, and looking at outcomes in adulthood and not childhood.

SOURCE OF DATA: A 12-year Longitudinal Study of Marital Instability Over the Lifecourse (see Booth et al. 1991)

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample):

A national sample of 2,033 married persons (not couples) 55 years of age and under were interviewed by telephone in 1980. The sample was re-interviewed in 1983, 88, and 1992. Sample households were chosen through a clustered random-digit dialing procedure, and the husband or wife was selected using a second random procedure.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S:

Telephone survey

STUDY POPULATION:

471 respondents who had offspring who were 19 years of age or older in 1992 and who had lived in the parental household in 1980, and for whom the authors were able to obtain interviews.

MEASURE:

Marital conflict was based on parents' reports of the severity and amount of verbal and physical conflict. The four items referred to the frequency of disagreements, the conflict over the household division of labor, the number of serious quarrels in the past two months, and whether spouses have ever slapped, hit, pushed, kicked, or thrown things at one another in anger. Scores ranged from 0 to 12

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Cronbach's alpha = .54

COMMENTS:

Results indicate that the respondents with the lowest levels of well-being are those whose parents had low-conflict marriages and who subsequently divorced and those whose parents had high conflict marriages but did not divorce. Further, in all cases parental conflict was only adverse for those children whose parents did not divorce. Outcomes include offspring psychological distress, offspring overall happiness, offspring marital happiness, and offspring social resources. Multivariate analyses include parental and offspring demographic controls (sex, race, age, education of parent, and age and sex of offspring) .

Analyses of three additional measures of parental marital quality were very similar (results not shown): an 11-item measure of marital happiness (alpha=.87), a 5-item measure of marital interaction (alpha=.63), and a 12-item measure of divorce proneness (alpha=.91).

TITLE: Marital discord and child behavior problems: Parent-child relationship quality and child interpersonal awareness as mediators.

AUTHOR: Amanda W. Harrist, & Ricardo C. Ainslie

PUBLICATION CITATION: (March 1998). *Journal of Family Issues*, 19(2), 140-163.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: This research attempts to get at the processes through which marital discord influences children's behavior problems.

SOURCE OF DATA: see below

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample):

Children were recruited from 10 local day care and preschool programs

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S:

STUDY POPULATION:

55 five year old children (26 girls and 29 boys, mean age=63 months) and their mothers were recruited for the present study. This represents 25% of the families who received original letters of invitation. The participants were from intact, primarily middle-to upper middle class families, and all but one parent were Caucasian. Average maternal age=33.9 years; and 50 of the mothers had completed or attended college.

MEASURE:

Marital Discord was computed as the mean of the standardized versions (z scores) of the marital nonconsensus and marital arguing scores. The resulting mean was .01, sd=.81.

Marital nonconsensus was operationalized as the mean score of the 13 items composing the DAS Consensus Scale, and items were reverse-coded. These items include ratings on the extent to which the couple disagrees with regard to the handling of family finances, recreation, religious matters, friends, conventionality, philosophy of life, ways of dealing with in-laws, goals, amount of time spent together, major decisions, household tasks, leisure time interests, and career decisions. Average score for this sample ranged from 1.62 to 4.54 (Mean =3.51, sd=.51).

Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976; and Spanier and Thompson 1982), a 32-item scale completed by the mothers in the study, was the basis for the marital nonconsensus measure. Each item is rated on a 6-point scale for the approximate extent of perceived interspousal agreement or disagreement, from 0 (always disagree) to 5 (always agree).

Marital arguing was measured using a version of the Life Events Survey (Sarason, Johnson and Siegal, 1978), a 51-item questionnaire completed by the mothers in the study. Marital arguing was operationalized as the rating given in response to the item asking about the impact caused by arguments with her spouse. The response scale was recoded as follows: 0 (did not occur), 1 (neutral impact), 2 (some negative impact), 3 (significant negative impact), 4 (extreme negative impact). Mean score=.76, sd=1.36.

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Marital discord –none given.

Marital nonconsensus. Cronbach's alpha = .84 for this sample.

Marital arguing. None.

*The DAS has been widely used, and its four subscales (Consensus, Satisfaction, Cohesion, and Affectional Expression) have been shown to be reliable (Spanier 1976).

COMMENTS: The marital arguing measure seems to confound the event of arguing with the respondent's perception that it had a negative impact. While the authors include it because prior research suggests that parental arguing, and not disagreement over matters, is really what should affect children, it is not a clean measure and the rationale of combining it with disagreements is not clear. The authors also do not give any evidence of whether this was a good decision from a methodological standpoint. However, the DAS scale is worth following up on.

Nonetheless, the authors find that marital discord increases children's social withdrawal by decreasing the parent-child relationship quality and also by influencing child interpersonal awareness. In the case of children's aggression, the effect of marital discord was mediated distally by the parent-child relationship quality, but not by children's interpersonal awareness.

Correlational analyses suggest that discord has a similar relationship to children's behavior problems for boys as it does for girls.

TITLE: Marital quality ten years after the transition to parenthood: Implications of the timing of parenthood and the division of housework.

AUTHOR: Heather Helms-Erikson.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (2001). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 63, 1099-1110.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: Explores how the timing of parenthood and the division of housework are related to husbands' and wives' marital quality during the child rearing years.

SOURCE OF DATA: see below

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample):

All families with a fourth or fifth grade child in 16 school districts in a Northeastern state. Criteria for inclusion: couple had to be married, and the children had to be the biological or adopted offspring of both parents (stepfamilies and blended families were excluded); the eldest child in the family had to be in the fourth or fifth grade; there was at least one additional sibling 1 to 4 years younger. There was also an attempt to include as many dual-earner couples as possible.

203 couples were selected for the study. They were recruited via letters sent home to families in 16 school districts in a Northeastern state. The sample was divided into two cohorts. In 1995, 100 families were recruited to cohort 1; in 1996 103 families were recruited to cohort 2.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Home visits and a series of telephone interviews. Husbands and wives were interviewed separately.

STUDY POPULATION: 180 of the 203 study couples. Sample was a white sample diverse in terms of socioeconomic status. Participants resided primarily small cities, towns, and rural areas.

MEASURE:

Marital love. Husbands and wives completed a subscale from Braiker and Kelley's (1979) relationship Questionnaire. Nine items tapped spouses' perceptions of marital love (e.g. "to what extent do you love your partner at this stage?") (other items not reported).

Marital conflict. Husbands and wives completed a subscale from Braiker and Kelley's (1979) relationship Questionnaire. Five items tapped perceptions of marital conflict (e.g. "how often do you feel angry or resentful toward your partner?") (other items not reported).

Marital satisfaction. The Aspects of Married Life Questionnaire (Huston, McHale, and Crouter, 1986) assessed each spouse's satisfaction with various domains of marriage. Respondents were asked to rate on a 9-point scale (1=very dissatisfied; 9=very satisfied) their satisfaction with seven domains of married life (e.g. marital communication, division of household tasks, and marital decision-making).

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Marital love: Husbands, .91, Wives, .92.

Marital conflict: Husbands, .61, wives, .70.

Marital satisfaction: .86 for husbands and .88 for wives.

Spousal reports correlated significantly at .51 for marital love, .39 for marital conflict., and .37 for marital satisfaction.

COMMENTS:

Analyses are Mancovas with SES, gender attitudes, and years married before the birth of first child as covariates.

Results showed that although a less traditional division of labor results in marital discord for couples who become parents early, this pattern is associated with positive marital outcomes for parents who delay childbearing. In addition, findings revealed similar patterns for husbands and wives.

The author suggests that couples at risk for lower marital quality during the childrearing years were those for whom background, beliefs and behaviors were incongruent. For example, couples that become parents early and divide tasks more equally may find themselves experiencing greater marital conflict.

Wives' gender-role attitudes exerted significant or near significant effects on the outcomes of marital love and marital satisfaction. Husbands' and wives income, education, years married before the birth of their first child and husbands' gender-role attitudes were not significant covariates.

TITLE: Parental conflict, marital disruption and children's well-being.

AUTHOR: Susan M. Jekielek.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1998). *Social Forces*, 76(3), 905-936.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: Are children better off when they remain in two-parent families characterized by high marital conflict, or are they better off when their parents dissolve their marital relationship. This research improves upon past research examining divorce and children's well-being in that it is longitudinal in nature, and explores *changes* in the well-being of children as a result of *changes* in marital status, not just *average* well-being across family status.

SOURCE OF DATA: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1979 cohort.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample): The NLSY is a nationally representative sample of youth who were 14-21 years of age in 1979 and interviewed annually through the study period. Beginning in 1986 the children of the females in this survey were assessed on a number of constructs, including behavior problems, academic problems, and home environment.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Longitudinal Surveys administered in-home by an interviewer, when possible.

STUDY POPULATION: The sample is limited to children whose mothers were not in the original oversample of poor whites, who were living in original two-parent families in 1988, whose biological fathers were living through 1992, and who were aged 6-14 years old in 1992. This yields a sample of 1,640 children who were 6 to 14 in 1992 and whose mothers were 27-34 as of January 1, 1992.

The average age of children in this sample was 9.56 years (sd = 2.40); 55% of the sample was non-black, non-Hispanic, while 20% were black and 25% were Hispanic; 31% of the mothers have more than a high school education; 45% have a high school education; and 25% had less than a high school education.

MEASURE:

Parental Conflict.

The mean of 8 items regarding conflict about a variety of topics central to family life; this mean was only calculated if at least 6 out of 8 items were valid.

How often do you and your (husband/partner) have arguments about...

A. Chores and responsibilities; B. Your children; C. Money; D. Showing affection to each other; F. Leisure or free time; G. Drinking; H. Other women; I. Your relatives.

(An additional category, E. Religion, was not included in this calculation)

PSYCHOMETRICS: Cronbach's alpha = .73

COMMENTS: Parental conflict in 1988 and subsequent divorce are both negatively related to children's anxiety and depression in 1992. But, the main story is that children remaining in high conflict environments exhibit decreased levels of well-being four years later, while children who have experienced high levels of parental conflict but whose parents divorce or separate experience improvements in well-being. It should be noted that children whose parents are in low-conflict marriages but whose parents subsequently divorce also experience decreases in well-being over time.

These multivariate analyses control for child gender, age, mother's race, mother's education and 1987 net family income.

NOTE: The distribution of blacks and Hispanics is higher than would be found in a general sample.

TITLE: Parents' marital violence: Long-term consequences for children.

AUTHOR: Cosandra McNeal, & Paul R. Amato.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (March 1998). *Journal of Family Issues*, 19(2), 123-139.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To study whether marital violence in the family of origin has long-term implications for offspring outcomes in young adulthood. Improves upon past research by using a longitudinal study that has interviews with both parents and offspring; estimating the effects of violence separately from those of non-violent conflict; and controlling for parental self reports of abusive behavior toward children and alcohol/drug problems.

SOURCE OF DATA: The Study of Marital Instability Over the Life Course.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: A national sample of 2,033 married persons (not couples) 55 years of age and under were interviewed by telephone in 1980. The sample was re-interviewed in 1983, 88, and 1992. Sample households were chosen through a clustered random-digit dialing procedure, and the husband or wife was selected using a second random procedure.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Telephone survey

STUDY POPULATION: There were 471 respondents who had offspring who were 19 years of age or older in 1992, who had lived in the parental household in 1980, and for whom the authors were able to obtain interviews. The present analysis is based on 420 offspring who were 19 years old or younger in 1980, the first year of data collection. In 1980 the offspring ranged from 7 to 19 years old, with a median age of 11. In 1992, these offspring ranged in age from 19 to 31, with a median age of 23.

MEASURE:

Violence was measured in 1980 by asking parents the following:

In many households bad feelings and arguments occur from time to time. In many cases people get so angry that they slap, hit, push, kick, or throw things at one another. Has this ever happened between you and your husband/wife?

Similar questions about violence were asked in 1983 and 1988. Overall, 71% of cases reported no violence, 15% reported violence during one time period, and 7% reported violence during two time periods, 7% reported violence during all three time periods.

General marital conflict was measured in two ways. First, parents reported on the number of serious marital quarrels that had occurred in the previous month. Reports of 10 or more quarrels were truncated at 10. Parents were also asked about the frequency with which they disagreed with their partners, from 1 (rarely) to 5 (almost all the time). Both questions were asked in 1980, 1983, and 1988, and the authors created z-score versions of these six variables and added them to the form a measure of conflict.

Combining violence and conflict: The authors classified parents into three groups: violent couples (any reports of violence over the survey period), nonviolent high-conflict couples (they reported no violence, but their conflict levels were equal or higher to the mean level of conflict for violent couples), and low-conflict couples (all others).

PSYCHOMETRICS: none given.

COMMENTS: Control variables include factors that might account for the relationship between violence and offspring well-being in adulthood, such as divorce, abusive behavior toward child, and parental drug/alcohol use; this will help isolate the influence of violence, per se. Other control variables include parents' years of education in 1980 (mean = 13.8, SD = 2.2), parental income in 1980 (mean = \$29,790, sd=\$13,240), sex of child, age of children (mean = 23.9) and offspring race (8% were non-White).

Marital violence was significantly correlated in the expected direction with all variables except gender and race (outcome variables include adult offspring closeness to mother, closeness to father, satisfaction, happiness, self-esteem, distress and violence).

In multivariate equations:

	Dependent Vars		
I	Marital violence	Nonviolent conflict	Divorce
Close to mother	-		-
Close to father		-	-
Satisfaction	-		
Happiness			
Self-esteem	-	-	
Distress	-		

(offspring violence is not included because of the small n)

These results overall suggest that violence has a more pervasive negative effect on offspring well-being in adulthood than does parental high conflict. However, for self-esteem, violence and conflict have independent negative effects. Parental conflict in childhood also reduces closeness to father in adulthood, and this is independent of divorce.

TITLE: Multilevel factors influencing maternal stress during the first three years.

AUTHOR: Mulsow, Miriam, Caldera, Yvonne M., Pursley, Marta, Reifman, Alan, & Huston, Aletha C.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (2002). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 64(4), p. 944.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: Examines the influence of personal, child, and familial factors on a mother's parenting stress during the first 3 years of her infant's life.

SOURCE OF DATA: Kansas site of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample): Families recruited from the hospital at the time of a child's birth in two small cities in Kansas.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S:

Data collected during home visits when infants were 1, 6, 15, 24, and 36 months of age.

STUDY POPULATION: A conditional random sampling technique was used to select a diverse sample of 134 families at the time of their child's birth (69 boys and 65 girls). Despite this technique, the sample was predominantly non-Hispanic white and middle class. The mean age of the mothers was 27.2 (sd=5.5); average education =14.4 years (sd=2.5). See NICHD Early Child Care Research Network (1997) for further details.

MEASURE:

Mothers reported on the intimacy of their relationship with their partner at 1, 6, 15, 24, and 36 months using the 6-item emotional intimacy subscale from the Personal Assessment of Relationships Scale (Schaefer and Olson, 1981). All items were answered on a 5-point Likert scale. (e.g., "my spouse/partner can really understand my hurts and joys").

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Cronbach Alphas ranged from .80-.83.

COMMENTS:

Intimacy with partner at 1 month was greater than intimacy at 6 and 15 months, which in turn was greater than intimacy at 24 and 36 months.

In multivariate models predicting parenting stress and controlling for income-to-needs ratio, maternal psychological characteristics, child characteristics, and general social support, mothers reporting greater intimacy with a partner at 1 and 6 months reported lower levels of parenting stress. Significance of partner intimacy disappeared at 15 and 34 months and returned at 36 months. Intimacy does not significantly predict whether a mother experiences chronic parenting stress vs. decreasing stress overtime; nor does it predict increasing in stress compared to chronically low-stress over time (there were no significant predictors in this latter situation).

General social support is a more important predictor of parenting stress in the child's second year of life than is intimacy with partner.

TITLE: Family environment and adolescents' well-being before and after marital disruption.

AUTHOR: Sun, Yongmin.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (2001). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 63(3), 697-713.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine divorce and its influences on children, not as a discrete event, but rather as a process that unfolds from pre-divorce to post-divorce.

SOURCE OF DATA: The National Education Longitudinal Studies

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample): Nationally representative sample of more than 24,000 eighth-grade students in 1988. More than 15,000 students were surveyed in 1990 and 1992 (when they were in 10th and 12th grade), the years that the sample was drawn from.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Parents sent letters introducing research, then telephoned, and screened for eligibility. Family members interviewed individually in the HMO clinic or the research offices.

STUDY POPULATION: 10,888 students interviewed in 1990 and 1992 who were living in families with two biological parents at time 1 (1990) and were not living with their own spouse or partner at time two (1992). 798 of these experienced the divorce of their parents between waves I and II.

MEASURE:

Parent-parent relations: Youth report of whether "parents got along with each other" with 6 intervals, 0 = false, 5 = true. (Mean = 4.08; SD = 1.19)

PSYCHOMETRICS:

None

COMMENTS:

Disruption status is associated with a lower likelihood of parents getting along prior to disruption.

Higher levels of parents getting along prior to disruption (as perceived by the student) are associated with significantly better levels on academics, student psychological well-being and behavior problems in an equation with demographic controls. When all family environment measures are included (parent-child relations, father and mother educational expectations for student, doing things with parents, attending school events, family income, parental educational attainment, and parental occupational prestige), parents getting along significantly predicts academic readiness, self-concept, locus of control and fewer behavior problems. Disruption status only significantly predicts math and reading scores, and behavior problems.

Pre-disruption discord seems to be most important in accounting for the 'negative' effect of divorce on well being for the psychological and behavioral outcomes. It seems to be less important than measures of parental involvement and family resources in accounting for pre-disruption differences in test scores and educational achievement.

Overall, most of the negative 'effect' of divorce can be attributed to pre-disruption factors.

Limitation: since youth were about 16 years old at time of disruption, it is not clear whether findings from this study can be generalized to children in households in which the parents' marriage is relatively short-lived.

Military Populations

Measures Used in the Measurement of Marital Relationships in Military Populations

Prepared by
Jacinta Bronte-Tinkew, Ph.D.

I. Overview of the Issues Involved in the Measurement of Marital Relationships in Military Populations

A large and growing body of research currently exists on marital relationships in military populations, as researchers have examined the issues associated with deployment and family reintegration following prolonged involuntary separation. Based on a review of twenty articles dealing with the issue of marital relationships in military populations, here, we highlight several issues regarding marriages in military populations.

Deployment and Separation. Marital separations are an intrinsic part of military life. Coolbaugh and Rosenthal (1992) estimate that 90 % of all Army soldiers residing with their wives can expect to be separated from their families for at least one night in a six month period, 58 % for two or more weeks, and about 37% for thirty days or more. At any given time, 8% of Army personnel are separated from their spouses. Deployment often implies separation. With deployment comes concomitant stresses. The most common separation in military populations that is likely to influence marital relationships involves an active duty member leaving a spouse. Other separations are of two active duty members of the same family. Recent examples of family separations due to deployment include peacekeeping missions, humanitarian aid missions, and wartime deployments (e.g., the Persian Gulf War). To these families, separation presents stresses to marital relationships in three stages-- preparation, during service, and reunion. Each stage has its own emotions and problems.

Some studies have shown that spouses of deployed soldiers experience loneliness, depression, anxiety, anger and physical illness as a result of the separation. Separations may also have positive consequences since spouses may use the opportunity to learn new skills and develop a sense of independence since they are asked to take control of all aspects of family life while the soldier is away (Durand, 1992; Segal and Segal, 1993). In a classic study done by Isay (1968), the spouses of submariners were found to develop "reactive depression" as a result of frequent long-term separations. Many of these responses were observed to be a reaction to a feeling of being deserted. This being the case, the length, frequency, and, occurrence in peacetime or wartime of such a separation are important factors that can influence marital relationships. Therefore, contact, and the frequency of communication during deployment become important factors in the marital relationships of military populations.

Deployment and Household Responsibility. Remaining spouses must fill a new role of single parent and must make decisions previously made either by the departed spouse or shared by the two. Relationships with children can also change, with discipline challenged and some children filling parental roles. The remaining spouse may be emotionally torn between wanting to be supportive of the deployed spouse, but also being fearful for his/her safety. In families with troubled marriages, the remaining spouse may be without significant social or emotional support, and following the separation, become even more isolated (Blount, Curry & Lubin, 1992).

Reports from Partners of Active Military Personnel. Data collected on marital relationships in military families often rely on reports of marital relationships by the partners (usually non-deployed) of active military personnel. Such reports may be biased since they may be shaped by fears and anxiety related to family separation, the social supports available, the history of coping, and past experiences with coping. While these reports are important, obtaining data from active military personnel (the soldier's perspective) is also very important since these reports can complement each other to more accurately ascertain couples' goals, values, and perceptions of the relationship. Furthermore, some studies have shown that combat stress reactions and post-traumatic stress disorder are related to impaired marital and family functioning (Solomon, Waysman, Levy, Fried, Mikulincer, Benbenishty, Florian, & Bleich (1992). With reports from just one partner, it is difficult to determine how these can be a factor in determining the quality of marital relationships.

Data and Sample Limitations. Research on marital relationships among military populations has been hampered by limited information, and existing data from which we must glean information on marital relationships are fragmented, of unknown reliability, and are generally derived from small select samples of military personnel. The current use of data that focuses on specific and select military populations has made it difficult to generalize current findings to the entire military and civilian population. Data on couple relationships in the military are also likely to be hampered by the use of military samples that may be biased towards more relatively successful marriages when voluntary samples are used and there is a loss of a sample due to follow-up during data collection (Rosen, Duran, Westhuis, Teitelbaum, 1995). Some researchers have also argued about the selectivity of military samples—the same qualities that propel men toward battle—also make them poor marriage material (Booth & Edwards, 1992; Kitson & Sussman, 1982; Gimbel & Booth, 1994), lead them to select inadequate or inappropriate partners (Booth & Edwards, 1992), marry at an early age, contribute to other problems such as low-occupational status and unemployment (South & Spitze, 1986), and make it difficult (not to get married), but to sustain intimate relationships (Gimbel & Booth, 1994).

Measures of Marriage. While substantive methodological work has generally refined marital relationships in couple relationships for the general population, much less work has been done specifically into refining, creating and assessing measures of marriage in military populations. Few studies have assessed the psychometric properties of measures of marriage that have been used in past research with this population.

Longitudinal Research. There are fewer studies of trends over time in couple relationships in military populations than there are cross-sectional studies.

II. Measures Used in Studies of Marital Relationships in Military Populations

Measures of marriage that have been used in prior research on military populations can be grouped into the following domains (see Table 1 for a summary):

Pre-Deployment Marital Stability. Some studies have incorporated measures of pre-deployment marital stability (Schumm, Bell, Knot, & Rice, 1996). These are single-item measures with a yes or no response category that capture aspects of the marital relationship prior to deployment. Sample items include: before your husband was deployed to X, did you think that your marriage might be in trouble? Did you seriously think of getting a divorce: did you seriously discuss the issue of divorce or separation? In some cases, the psychometrics of the measure for the military sample are provided—alpha of .73 for pre-deployment.

Spousal Support. Prior research has incorporated measures of the support given to a soldier by a spouse. This measure is a single item measure that is rated with response categories that range from “very supportive” to “very unsupportive” (Bell, Schumm, Knott, & Ender, 1999). The psychometric properties of the measure for the military sample are not provided.

Communication and Contact With Soldier. Some studies have examined the means of communication used by spouses to contact soldiers. These include the frequency with which a spouse used several methods (e.g., telephone, international APO mail, mail delivered without postage from/to particular site, radio transmissions, E-mail through the ACS-E-mail system, televised hook-up between site and place of deployment, and Fax) (Bell, Schumm, Knott, & Ender, 1999). Some studies also include measures of the time taken to contact a spouse (e.g., within 24-hours of arrival, a month or more, made no effort) (Bell, Schumm, Knott, & Ender, 1999). These measures are all single item measures and used for descriptive purposes in the studies reviewed.

Marital Stability. Some studies have used measures of marital satisfaction prior to deployment and post deployment to evaluate marital stability (Schumm, Bell, Knott, & Rice, 1996). Sample items include: How satisfied were you with the way your marriage was going prior to deployment to X? How satisfied are you with the way your marriage is going now? These items are scored on a 0 (very satisfied) through 7 (very dissatisfied) scale. In the study reviewed, an alpha coefficient of .78 for marital stability was reported for the military sample.

Relational Satisfaction. *The Relational Assessment Scale (RAS)* (Hendrick, 1998) has been used as a measure of relationship satisfaction in prior research (Medway, Davis, Cafferty, Chappell, & O' Hearn, 1995). This is a seven-item measure that asks subjects to rate the degree to which items describe their current relationships in terms of quality and personal satisfaction. Sample items include: how well does your partner meet your needs? In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?. Response categories range from 1 (low satisfaction) to 5 (high satisfaction). The alpha coefficient for the scale is .85 for military populations.

Marital Conflict. *The Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS)* (Straus, 1979) is a widely used instrument that assesses spousal aggression and asks respondents to indicate the frequency with which they engage in certain behaviors during which they resolve marital conflict (McCarroll, Ursano, Liu, Thayer, Newby, Norwood, & Fullerton, 2000). This is a self-report inventory that assesses the frequency of a variety of functional, verbally abusive, and physically abusive conflict tactics. In the studies reviewed, conflict is divided into two groups: moderate aggression, and severe aggression. Moderate aggression includes such items as throwing something at a partner, grabbing a partner, or slapping a partner. Severe aggression includes such items as choking a partner, using a knife or firing a gun, and beating up a partner. These items are scored on a response scale that ranges from never to 11-20 times in the past year. The psychometrics of the measure are not provided for the military sample in the study reviewed.

Other studies have used a measure of marital conflict comprised of three items to determine whether the relationship is characterized by conflict. Respondents are asked whether the relationship is characterized by openly expressed anger, aggression, and conflict (Solomon, Waysman, Belkin, Levy, Mikulincer, & Enoch, 1992). The response categories range from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very much). The psychometrics of the measure are not provided for the military sample.

Marital Adversity. *The Marital Adversity Index* has been used in prior research to measure marital quality and stability (Gimbel & Booth, 1994). The index includes four items that ask respondents about the frequency of divorce, sexual relations outside of marriage, hitting or throwing things at a partner, and separation. Sample items include: Other than when you were separated just before a divorce, have you and your wife ever separated for a few days or longer because of not getting along? Did you ever hit or throw things at your wife (partner)? The alpha coefficient is reported to be .52 for the military sample.

Marital Quality. Measures of marital quality have also been used in prior research to rate aspects of a marriage such as trust, communication, mutual support, and the ability to handle conflict (Schumm, Bell, & Gade, 2000). The psychometrics of the measure for the military sample are provided with cronbach's alphas that range from .86 to .93.

Marital Satisfaction. *The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale* has been used in several studies as a measure of marital satisfaction for pre and post-deployment marital stability (Schumm, Bell, Knott, & Rice, 1996; Laufer & Gallops, 1985; Bell, Schumm, Knott, & Ender, 1999; Hendrix, Jurich, & Schumm, 1995). Sample items include: How often has the thought of a divorce crossed your mind, with a response category that ranges from 1(never) to 5 (often); and all things considered, how satisfied are you with your marriage? The response categories range from 1 (very unsatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied); taking all things together, how would you describe your relationship? The response categories range from 1 (very unhappy) to 7 (happy); and, how satisfied are you with the way your marriage is going now. The response categories range from 1(very satisfied) to 7 (dissatisfied). The psychometrics of these measures for the military samples are not provided.

Marital Adjustment. *The Dyadic Adjustment Scale* (Spanier, 1976) has been used to determine the extent of agreement and disagreement between partners (Nice 1981) prior to deployment, during deployment, and post-deployment. The psychometrics for the measure are not provided for the military sample.

Marital Happiness. *The Marital Happiness Scale* (Azrin, Naster, & Jones, 1973) has also been used to measure marital happiness (Frankel, Snowden, & Nelson, 1992) on ten dimensions that include household activities, the rearing of children, social activities, money, sex, communication, academic progress, personal independence, general happiness, and spousal independence. The items are scored on a 1 (completely unhappy) to 10 (completely happy) response scale. The psychometrics of the measure for military

populations indicate alpha coefficients of .88 for pre-deployment; .89 for early deployment; and .91 for late deployment.

Separation/Reunion Adjustment/Marital Adjustment. Some studies have used measures of separation and reunion adjustment using qualitative techniques. However, the psychometrics are not provided since these are qualitative reports (Wood, Scarville, and Gravino, 1995).

Marital Intimacy. Measures of marital intimacy have also been widely used in one study (Solomon, Waysman, Belkin, Levy, Mikulincer, & Enoch, 1992) to indicate the extent to which factors such as feelings, social activities, sexual relationships, ideas and intellectual interests, and leisure time activities are a source of sharing and intimacy. The alpha coefficient for the intimacy measure for the military sample is reported at .72.

III. Strengths and Weaknesses of Existing Measures

Strengths. For the most part, available measures of marital relationships in military populations have used readily available measures from available literature on marriage and family relationships. In some cases, particular items have been adapted for use with military populations. Many studies have also made efforts to use shortened versions of longer measures in attempts to obtain information from respondents. In addition, some studies, have attempted longitudinal analyses to ascertain changes in marital relationships from one time point to another, and in the various stages of preparation, wartime, and reunion.

Weaknesses. Existing measures are not designed to collect marital data on active duty military personnel. In some studies it is also difficult to determine the validity and reliability of the measure for the military sample because no psychometric data are provided, and in some cases when these data are provided the reliability and validity estimates cited are often from a previous test of the measure. Thus, one has to extrapolate to determine how the measure works for the military sample.

IV. Conceptual Gaps in Existing Literature

Several conceptual gaps undermine the existing literature on the measurement of marital relationships in military populations:

- There are no measures as yet that have been developed in existing research to measure active military personnel's perceptions of whether and how they believe deployment specifically influences their marital relationship, specifically about how the role of separation, proximity, limited contact, and lack of interaction influence the quality of the marital relationship;
- Existing research has not kept pace with the collection of data from the couple—that is, both the deployed soldier and the partner's perceptions of marital quality during deployment. It is plausible to assume some variance in the reports of spouses and the deployed during wartime;
- There is a clear need to use strategies that would yield more representative samples of military populations, such as random sampling of Army installations or other lists to achieve more representative samples;
- There is a need for additional research on how marital relationships specifically among military populations have implications for child well-being. Most research on children has been done examining how deployment affects children, not how military marital relationships affect child well being among military families.

V. Discussion and Conclusions

Future research on marital relationships in military populations would benefit from the following:

- The development, testing, refinement and use of measures that are specifically tailored for use in military populations and that capture specifically how deployment influences marital relationships;

- The collection of data from more representative samples of military populations as opposed to small select samples from whom generalizations cannot be made. This may be achieved by the use of random sampling of Army installations;
- Additional longitudinal research that enables researchers to determine how marital relationships in this population change over time; and
- Research on how the quality of marital relationships in military families influences child well-being.

Table 1: Summary of Measures Used in the Study of Marital Relationships in Military Populations

Measure	Article Using Measure	Psychometric Data
<p>Pre-deployment Marital Stability</p> <p>Series of items that capture aspects of the marital relationship prior to deployment and scored with a yes/no response category</p>	Schumm, Bell, Knot, & Rice, 1996	Alpha coefficient of .73 for pre-deployment.
<p>Spousal Support</p> <p>Series of items that measure support given to a soldier by a spouse with response categories that range from “very supportive” to “very unsupportive”</p>	Bell, Schumm, Knott, & Ender, 1999	Not provided
<p>Communication and Contact with Soldier</p> <p>Frequency with which spouse uses several methods to contact partner (e.g., telephone, international APO mail);</p> <p>Time taken to contact a spouse (e.g., within 24-hours, a month)</p>	Bell, Schumm, Knott, & Ender, 1999)	Single item measure (not applicable)
<p>Marital Stability</p> <p>Series of items that measure marital satisfaction prior to deployment and post deployment. Sample items include: How satisfied were you with the way your marriage was going prior to deployment to X? How satisfied are you with the way your marriage is going now? Scores range from 0 (very satisfied) through 7 (very dissatisfied).</p>	Schumm, Bell, Knott, & Rice, 1996	Alpha coefficient of .78 for military sample.
<p>Relational Satisfaction</p> <p><i>The Relational Assessment Scale (RAS)</i> (Hendrick, 1998) Seven-item measure that asks subjects to rate the degree to which items describe their current relationships in terms of the quality and personal satisfaction. Sample items include: how well does your partner meet your needs? In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?. Response categories range from 1(low satisfaction) to 5(high satisfaction).</p>	Medway, Diavis, Cafferty, Chappell, & O’Hearn, 1995	Alpha coefficient of .85 for military sample.
<p><i>Relationship Conflict</i></p> <p>(a) <i>The Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS)</i> (Straus, 1979). Self-report inventory that assesses the frequency of a variety of functional, verbally abusive, and physically abusive conflict tactics.</p> <p>(b) Three-item measure of marital conflict to determine whether the relationship is characterized by openly expressed anger, aggression, and conflict. Response categories range from 1(not at all) to 4(very much).</p>	<p>McCarroll, Ursano, Liu, Thayer, Newby, Norwood, & Fullerton, 2000;</p> <p>Solomon, Waysman, Belkin, Levy, Mikulincer, & Enoch, 1992</p>	<p>Not provided</p> <p>Not provided</p>
<p>Marital Happiness</p> <p><i>The Marital Happiness Scale</i> (Azrin, Naster, & Jones, 1973) Measures marital happiness on ten dimensions that include household activities, the rearing of children, social activities, money, sex, communication, academic progress, personal independence, general happiness, and spousal independence. Scores range from 1(completely unhappy) to 10 (completely happy).</p>	Frankel, Snowden, & Nelson, 1992	Alpha coefficient of .88 (pre-deployment); .89 (early deployment); and .91 (late deployment) for military sample.

Table 1: Summary of Measures Used in the Study of Marital Relationships in Military Populations (Cont'd)....

Measure	Article Using Measure	Psychometric Data
<p>Marital Quality Items that rate aspects of a marriage such as trust, communication, mutual support, and the ability to handle conflict.</p>	Schumm, Bell, & Gade, 2000	Alphas range from .86 to .93 for military sample.
<p>Marital Satisfaction The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale Sample items include: -How often has the thought of a divorce crossed your mind? Response categories range from 1(never) to 5 (often); -All things considered, how satisfied are you with your marriage? Response categories range from 1 (very unsatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied); -Taking all things together, how would you describe your relationship? Response categories range from 1(very unhappy) to 7 (happy);</p>	Schumm, Bell, Knott, & Rice, 1996; Laufer & Gallops, 1985; Bell, Schumm, Knott, & Ender, 1999 Hendrix, Jurich, & Schumm, 1995	Psychometrics not provided
<p>Marital Adjustment <i>The Dyadic Adjustment Scale</i> (Spanier, 1976). Measures the extent of agreement and disagreement between partners prior to deployment, during deployment, and post-deployment.</p>	(Nice 1981)	Psychometrics not provided
<p>Marital Intimacy Measures of marital intimacy indicate the extent to which factors such as feelings, social activities, sexual relationships, ideas and intellectual interests, and leisure time activities are a source of sharing and intimacy.</p>	Solomon, Waysman, Belkin, Levy, Mikulincer, & Enoch, 1992	Alpha coefficient of .72 for the military sample
<p>Marital Adversity The Marital Adversity Index <i>Four items that ask respondents about the frequency of divorce, sexual relations outside of marriage, hitting or throwing things at a partner, and separation. Sample items include: Other than when you were separated just before a divorce, have you and your wife ever separated for a few days or longer because of not getting along? Did you ever hit or throw things at your wife (partner)?</i></p>	Gimbel & Booth, 1994	Alpha coefficient of .52 for the military sample.
<p>Separation/Reunion/Marital Adjustment Measured using a series of open-ended questions (qualitative techniques)</p>	Wood, Scarville, & Gravino, 1995	Not provided (Not applicable)

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- Wood, S. Scarville, J., & Gravino, K. (1995). Waiting wives: Separation and reunion among Army wives. *Armed Forces and Society*, 21, 217-236.

TITLE: Family disruption and adult attachment correlates of spouse and child reactions to separation and reunion due to Operation Desert Storm.

AUTHOR: Frederic J. Medway, Keith Davis, Thomas Cafferty, Kelly Chappell, & Robin O'Hearn.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1995). *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 14*(2), 97-118.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To study predictors of distress of families following the departure of soldiers to the Persian Gulf during Operation Desert Storm.

SOURCE OF DATA: 117 women volunteers whose husbands were deployed in the latter part of 1990 during Operation Desert Storm as part of the South Carolina Army, Marine and Air Force National Guard and Reserves.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample): Subjects were drawn from those attending family support meetings held in four cities in various parts of the state of South Carolina (Columbia, Florence, Greenville, and Kingstree). Subjects were promised compensation of \$5.00 for completion of an at-home 30—minute questionnaire. The study was conducted during March and April, 1991, and all were returned at least a month before reunion.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Self-administered questionnaire

STUDY POPULATION: 117 women volunteers whose husbands were deployed in the latter part of 1990 during Operation Desert Storm.

MEASURE: Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, 1988). The RAS is a 7-item scale that asks subjects to rate the degree to which each item describes their current relationship in terms of quality and personal satisfaction.

1. *How well does your partner meet your needs?*
2. *In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?*
3. *How good is your relationship compared to most?*
4. *How often do you wish you hadn't got into this relationship?*
5. *To what extent has your relationship met with your original expectations?*
6. *How much do you love your partner?*
7. *How many problems are there in your relationship?*

Response categories range from 1 (low satisfaction) to 5 (high satisfaction).

PSYCHOMETRICS: The alpha coefficient for the scale is .85.

COMMENTS: Data revealed that separation was correlated with emotional distress for spouses and internalizing behavior problems in children. Spouses' distress was positively correlated with family disruption ratings and negatively correlated with attachment security, whereas children's reactions were primarily determined by mother distress, and to a lesser extent, family disruption. Some caveats to note are that the sample used in this study is selective and not representative of all wives of husbands whose husbands were deployed during Operation Desert Storm.

TITLE: Deployment and the probability of spousal aggression by U.S. Army soldiers.

AUTHOR: McCarroll, J.E., Ursano, R.J., Liu, X., Thayer, L.E., Newby, J.H., Norwood, A.E., & Fullerton, C.S.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (January 2000). *Military Medicine*, 165.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To determine the relationship between the length of soldier deployment, and self-reports of moderate and severe spousal violence.

SOURCE OF DATA: Random sample of deployed and non-deployed married active duty U.S. Army men and women in the 50 United States during the period 1990 to 1994.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample): N/A

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Self report surveys. Needs assessment surveys administered to active duty Army men and women at 47 Army installations in the United States.

STUDY POPULATION: 26,835 deployed and non-deployed married active duty U.S. Army men and women in the 50 United States during the period 1990 to 1994.

MEASURE: *Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS)*. Widely used self-report instrument that asks respondents to indicate the frequency during the past year in which they engaged in various behaviors during attempts to resolve marital conflict.

Moderate Aggression:

Please circle how many times you did each of these things in the past year. How often did this happen?

0. Never 1. Once in the past year 2. Twice in the past year
3. 3-5 times in the past year 4. 6-10 times in the past year 5. 11-20 times in the past year.
1. I threw something at my partner that could hurt.
2. I pushed or shoved my partner.
3. I grabbed my partner.
4. I slapped my partner.

Severe Aggression:

Please circle how many times you did each of these things in the past year. How often did this happen?

0. Never 1. Once in the past year 2. Twice in the past year
3. 3-5 times in the past year 4. 6-10 times in the past year 5. 11-20 times in the past year.
1. I used a gun or knife on my partner.
2. I choked my partner.
3. I beat up my partner.
4. I used a knife or fired a gun.

PSYCHOMETRICS: Not provided, although prior research (with samples of college student couples) suggests that reliability ranges from .79 to .95, and there is preliminary evidence of construct validity and discriminant validity. Although the CTS can be scored as a scale, it is usually used as a measure of the presence or absence of aggression.

COMMENTS/FINDINGS: The study finds that deployment has a small but statistically significant effect on self-reported severe spousal aggression by active duty Army men and women and that the probability of severe aggression increased with the length of deployment.

TITLE: Why does military combat experience adversely affect marital relations?

AUTHOR: Cynthia Gimbel, & Alan Booth.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (August 1994). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 56, 691-703.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine the ways in which combat decreases marital quality and stability. Three models are tested a) factors that propel men into combat also make them poor marriage material; b) combat causes problems such as post-traumatic stress symptoms or antisocial behavior that increase marital adversity; and c) combat intensifies pre-military stress and antisocial behavior that then negatively affect marriages.

SOURCE OF DATA: Men who served in the Army between 1965 and 1971. These men were non-officers and served only one term.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample): Selection of subjects for this study occurred in two stages. First a random sample of 17,867 Vietnam-era veterans were selected for telephone interviews. Following the telephone interview, 7,748 veterans were randomly selected from those eligible for the telephone interview for in-person testing and medical examinations. Sixty percent of those selected participated (n=4,462).

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Telephone interviews and from those eligible for the telephone interview, in-person testing and medical examinations.

STUDY POPULATION: Analyses are conducted on 2,101 of the ever-married examination participants who served in Vietnam.

MEASURE: Marital Adversity (Index)

How many times have you done any of the following:

1. *Ever divorced*
_____ *Number of Times*
2. *During (any) marriage did you have sexual relations outside of marriage with at least three different people?*
_____ *Number of Times*
3. *Did you ever hit or throw things at your wife (partner)?*
_____ *Number of Times*
4. *Other than when you were separated just before a divorce, have you and your wife ever separated for a few days or longer because of not getting along?*
_____ *Number of Times*

PSYCHOMETRICS: Alpha coefficient of .52. This measure only uses four items. The scale would have an alpha coefficient of .72 if it were increased to 10 or more items. It may be more appropriated conceptualized as an index.

COMMENTS: The data reveal that the factors that propel men into combat also make them poor marriage material ; combat causes problems such as post-traumatic stress symptoms or antisocial behavior that increases marital adversity; and combat intensifies pre-military stress and antisocial behaviors and then negatively affects marriage. While combat creates stress and antisocial behavior, only antisocial behaviors had direct effects on marriage; all other effects are indirect.

TITLE: The perceived effect of stressors on marital satisfaction among civilian wives of enlisted soldiers deployed to Somalia for Operation Restore Hope.

AUTHOR: Schumm, W.R., Bell, D.B., Knott, B., & Rice, R.E.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (October, 1996). *Military Medicine*, 161.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To assess perceived pre-deployment and post-deployment marital satisfaction for civilian wives of enlisted soldiers who had deployed to Somalia as post of Operation Restore Hope.

DATA: Civilian wives of enlisted personnel from the Tenth Mountain Division, Fort Drum, New York, soldiers who had deployed to Somalia for Operation Restore Hope (December 1992 to July 1993).

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: Half of all Fort Drum units that were stratified by size (small, medium, large) and then randomly selected within strata (4 of the 6 units of 100 or more soldiers; 16 of the 28 units with 50 to 99 soldiers; 26 of the 59 units with fewer than 49 soldiers; and 5 of the 15 units that did not deploy any soldiers).

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Self-report surveys.

STUDY POPULATION: Civilian wives of enlisted personnel from the Tenth Mountain Division, Fort Drum, New York, soldiers who had deployed to Somalia for Operation Restore Hope (December 1992 to July 1993).

MEASURE: Marital Satisfaction.

Pre-deployment Marital Stability:

1. Before your husband was deployed to Somalia did you think that your marriage might be in trouble?
Yes No
2. Did you seriously think of getting a divorce? Yes No
3. Did you seriously discuss the issue of divorce or separation? Yes No

Marital Stability:

1. How satisfied were you with the way your marriage was going before the deployment to Somalia?
0. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7.
Very Satisfied Very Dissatisfied
2. How satisfied with you with the way your marriage is going now?
0. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7.
Very Satisfied Very Dissatisfied

PSYCHOMETRICS: Cronbach's alpha of 0.73 for Pre-deployment Marital Stability and 0.78 for Marital Stability.

COMMENTS: Findings suggest that being stressed during a husband's absence during a deployment is not necessarily enough of a problem to detract from marital satisfaction.

TITLE: Life course effects of Vietnam combat and abusive violence: Marital patterns.

AUTHOR: Laufer, R., & Gallops, M.S.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (November, 1985). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 47(4), 839-853.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine the impact of military service and exposure to war trauma on marital patterns and problems.

STUDY POPULATION: 1,259 men who were of draft-eligible age during the Vietnam War.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample): The sample comprising Vietnam veterans, Vietnam era veterans, and non-veterans was drawn from 10 sites chosen to represent 4 section of the country on matched economic and demographic characteristics and collected the two waves: the Northeast in 1977, and the South, Midwest, and West in 1979.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Random digit dialing techniques were used in each of the 10 locations to screen individuals and collect the sample. If a male who fit an unfilled cell's characteristics lived in the household reached, he was selected for interviewing.

MEASURE: Marital Satisfaction.

Coded: (1) very often

1. How often has the thought of a divorce crossed your mind?
1. Never 2. 3. 4. 5. Often
2. All things considered, how satisfied are you with your marriage?
1. Very unsatisfied 2. 3. 4. 5. Very satisfied

PSYCHOMETRICS: Not provided

COMMENTS/FINDINGS: Exposure to war stress significantly contributes to life event crises such as marital disruption.

TITLE: The desert fax: A research note on calling home from Somalia.

AUTHOR: Bell, B., Schumm, W., Knott, B., & Ender, G.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (Spring 1999). *Armed Forces and Society*, 25(3), 509-521.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine the effects of the soldiers and spouses having a variety of means of electronic communication at their disposal to determine if the availability of such communication would be positive or negative.

SOURCE OF DATA: 700 spouses of soldiers who had deployed to Somalia and over 300 spouses whose soldiers had not deployed from the Tenth Mountain Drum Division, Fort Drum, New York. The questionnaires for spouses was administered in the representative sample of units at Fort Drum during July and August 1993.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Self-administered questionnaire.

MEASURE:

Marital Satisfaction.

How satisfied are you with the way your marriage is going now?

Very satisfied

Dissatisfied

Spousal Support for Soldier Being in the Army

How supportive are you of your spouse being in the Army now?

Very Supportive

Very Unsupportive

Time to Contact Spouse

After your spouse arrived in Somalia, how long did it take before the first direct contact (telephone, radio, electronic exchange, or letter) with your spouse?

1. In contact within 24 hours after Somalia arrival
2. More than a day but less than a week to make contact
3. Between one and two weeks to make contact
4. Between three and four weeks to make contact
5. A month or more to make contact
6. Made no effort to contact each other
7. Unable to make direct contact

PSYCHOMETRICS: Not provided

COMMENTS/FINDINGS: In general communication has a positive effect on several outcomes with the exception of marital satisfaction. Overall, there are mixed rewards and costs of having telecommunications available for soldiers and spouses during overseas deployment.

TITLE: Wives' adjustment to military deployment: An empirical evaluation of a Family Stress Model.

AUTHOR: Frankel, H., Snowden L.R., & Nelson, S.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (Spring 1992). *International Journal of Sociology of the Family*, 22, 93-117

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To investigate the contributions of family vulnerability, family type, family resources, and coping strategies to military wives' adjustment to deployment-related separation.

SOURCE OF DATA: One hundred and twenty six couples who were officers and enlisted personnel in five Navy Patrol Aviation Squadrons deploying to three Pacific sites for a period of six months (couples without children were excluded from the study). Data for analyses focus on selected data from wives during four phases: two months prior to deployment (phase one); two weeks prior to deployment (phase two); two months into deployment (phase three-early deployment); and five months into deployment (phase four-late deployment).

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Not defined

MEASURE: Marital Happiness Scale (Azrin, Naster, & Jones, 1973)

“If my partner continues to act in the future as he/she is acting *today* with respect to this marriage area, how happy will I be *with this area of our marriage?*”

	Completely Unhappy					Completely Happy				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Household responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Rearing of children	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Social activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Money	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sex	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Communication	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Academic (or occupational) progress	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Personal independence	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Spouse independence	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
General happiness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

PSYCHOMETRICS: The alpha reliability scores for the study sample were .88 (pre-deployment); .89 (early deployment); and .91 (late deployment).

COMMENTS/FINDINGS: Dissatisfaction with social support was predictive of decreased marital happiness between pre-deployment and early deployment. Marital satisfaction may deteriorate during the period just prior to deployment. Wives who are most satisfied with social support may be those who have been most successful at making friends and locating other supportive activities. Once the stress of preparing for deployment subsides, these activities may hasten the recovery of marital happiness.

TITLE: Marital relations and combat stress reaction: The wives' perspective.

AUTHOR: Z. Solomon, M. Waysman, R. Belkin, G. Levy, M. Mikulincer, & D. Enoch.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (May 1992). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 54(2), 316-326.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine whether it is possible to identify disruptions in the normative development of the marital relationship as a consequence of one partner's exposure to traumatic combat stress. More specifically the research addresses the question of what changes generally occur over time in the marital relationship, and whether there are differences in marital adjustment before the husbands' participation in war, or whether they develop as a consequence of the soldiers' exposure to traumatic stress.

SOURCE OF DATA: Eighty of 105 wives of combat stress reaction (CSR) and non-CSR combat veterans who underwent extensive clinical interviews during the 1982 Lebanon War. All subjects were (a) married prior to the Lebanon War and (b) still married at the time of the study (six years later). Subjects were divided into a CSR group (49 wives) of CSR veterans of the 1982 Lebanon War, and a comparison group consisting of 31 wives of soldiers who fought in the Lebanon War without being diagnosed or treated for CSR during the war.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Telephone interviews followed by an in-home interview.

MEASURE:

Marital Intimacy

Please indicate the extent to which each of the following is a source of sharing and intimacy:

- a. Feelings
1. Not at all 2. 3. 4. Very much
- b. Social Activities
1. Not at all 2. 3. 4. Very much
- c. Sexual Relations
1. Not at all 2. 3. 4. Very much
- d. Ideas and Intellectual Interests
1. Not at all 2. 3. 4. Very much
- e. Leisure Time Activities
1. Not at all 2. 3. 4. Very much

Marital Conflict

Please indicate the extent to which your relationship is characterized by:

- a. Openly expressed anger
1. Not at all 2. 3. 4. Very Much
- b. Aggression
1. Not at all 2. 3. 4. Very Much
- c. Conflict
1. Not at all 2. 3. 4. Very Much

PSYCHOMETRICS: Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the five intimacy items was .72 indicating acceptable internal consistency. No psychometric information is available for the marital conflict measure.

COMMENTS/FINDINGS: Wives of CSR veterans reported significant reductions in marital cohesion and satisfaction and an increase in conflict during the immediate post-war period. However, these changes in

marital relations were only temporary, and the ratings 6 years after the war on these measures reflect a leveling off to pre-war levels.

TITLE: Waiting wives: Separation and reunion among Army wives.

AUTHOR: Wood, S. Scarville, J., Gravino, K.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1995). *Armed Forces and Society*, 21, 217-236.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine separation and reunion among Battalion wives of Army soldiers deployed to Sinai for six months.

SOURCE OF DATA: 35 Battalion wives of Army soldiers deployed to Sinai for six months.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Qualitative data gathered from interviews at four time points: during, immediately prior to reunion, and six to eight weeks after reunion. These were unstructured interviews 60-90 minutes long. Network members were also interviewed, and these included chaplains, social workers, commander's wives, and psychiatrists.

MEASURE: Separation and Reunion Adjustment
Marital Adjustment

PSYCHOMETRICS: Not applicable since these are qualitative data.

COMMENTS/FINDINGS: Most of those with high separation adjustment also had high reunion adjustment. If wives reported having a good relationship with her husband after reunion, then she was more satisfied with the deployment. Social support networks of family/friends were found to be important to adjust successfully. Participation in family support group were also found to be important to those who adjusted successfully.

TITLE: Long term impact of Vietnam War service on family environment and satisfaction.

AUTHOR: Hendrix, C.C., Jurich, A.P., & Schumm, W.R.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1995). *Families in Society*, 76, 498-506.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine the long-term effect of Vietnam War Service on family environment and satisfaction. Specifically, the study examines how deployment stressors, intensity, family resources and the perceptions of the psychological impact due to war influence family relationships.

SOURCE OF DATA: Vietnam War Veterans (n =47)

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Self-administered questionnaires were administered to 47 Vietnam War Veterans post deployment. Data are collected retrospectively.

MEASURE: *Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (Schumm et al., 1986)*

- 1 = Extremely Dissatisfied
- 2 = Very Dissatisfied
- 3 = Somewhat Dissatisfied
- 4 = Mixed
- 5 = Somewhat Satisfied
- 6 = Very Satisfied
- 7 = Extremely Satisfied

1. How satisfied are you with your marriage?
2. How satisfied are you with your husband as a spouse?
3. How satisfied are you with your relationship with your husband?

PSYCHOMETRICS: Not provided

COMMENTS/FINDINGS: No associations were found between combat exposure and family environment or satisfaction. Family environment was positively related to marital satisfaction, levels of expressiveness, and negatively related to family conflict. Combat exposure was found to be positively correlated with intrusion and avoidance behaviors.

TITLE: Coping with separation: An analysis of outcomes and strategies used by working and non-working wives during routine deployment.

AUTHOR: Nelson, L.S., Marlowe, J., Grandin, D.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1987). Part A, ADA 211052.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To analyze the coping strategies used by working and non-working wives during routine deployment. The study examines levels of dysphoria, depression, marital happiness, health and overall satisfaction.

SOURCE OF DATA: 70 Navy wives of deployed husbands from whom data are collected retrospectively and concurrently.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Self-administered questionnaire administered to working and non-working wives at pre-deployment and during deployment.

MEASURE: Marital Happiness Scale (Jacobson, 1980)

PSYCHOMETRICS: Not provided

COMMENTS/FINDINGS: Working and non-working wives do not differ on stress or satisfaction when their husbands were deployed. Non-working wives evaluate the family coping inventory strategies to be more helpful in coping with separation than working wives. Working wives who value efforts to develop interpersonal relationships and social support indicated that they were significantly less satisfied with overall Navy life. The study did not control for time in the military and for the number of years of marriage.

TITLE: A longitudinal analysis of Navy family separation.

AUTHOR: Nice, D.S.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1981). Navy Personnel Research and Development Center, San Diego, CA. AD 108381.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine the effects of navy separation on self-esteem, loneliness, health opinions, marital adjustment, physical symptoms, and stress for separated and non-separated wives.

SOURCE OF DATA: 65 wives of enlisted Navy personnel. These were broken down in 40 wives of enlisted men preparing to deployment and 25 wives of personnel aboard a ship remaining in port

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Data were collected at three time points: pre-deployment, during deployment, and post-deployment through home interviews.

MEASURE: Marital Adjustment- *The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976)*

Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement and disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list using the response continuum:

0 = Always disagree

1 = Almost always disagree

2 = Frequently disagree

3 = Occasionally disagree

4 = Almost always agree

5 = Always agree

1. Handling family finances
2. Matters of recreation
3. Religious matters
4. Demonstrations of affection
5. Friends
6. Sex relations
7. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)
8. Philosophy of life
9. Ways of dealing with parents or in-laws
10. Aims, goals and things believed important
11. Amount of time spent together
12. Making major decisions
13. Household tasks
14. Leisure time interests and activities
15. Career decisions

Answer the following questions using a 5-point response continuum:

- 0 = All the time
- 1 = Most of the time
- 2 = More often than not
- 3 = Occasionally
- 4 = Rarely
- 5 = Never

- 16. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?
- 17. How often do you or your mate leave the house after a fight?
- 18. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?
- 19. Do you confide in your mate?
- 20. Do you ever regret that you married (or lived together)?
- 21. How often do you and your partner quarrel?
- 22. How often do you and your mate “get on each other’s nerves?”

Answer the following questions using a 5-point response continuum:

- 4 = Every day
- 3 = Almost every day
- 2 = Occasionally
- 1 = Rarely
- 0 = Never

- 23. Do you kiss your mate?

Answer the following questions using the following response continuum:

- 4 = All of them
- 3 = Most of them
- 2 = Some of them
- 1 = Very few of them
- 0 = None of them

- 24. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?

How often would you say the following events occur between you and your mate?

- 0 = Never
- 1 = Less than once a month
- 2 = Once or twice a month
- 3 = Once or twice a week
- 4 = Once a day
- 5 = More often

- 25. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas
- 26. Laugh together
- 27. Calmly discuss something
- 28. Work together on a project

There are some things about which couples sometimes agree and sometimes disagree. Indicate if either item below caused differences of opinions or were problems in your relationship during the past few weeks.

(Check yes or no.)

29. Being too tired for sex.

30. Not showing love.

31. The dots on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, "happy" represents the degree of happiness in most relationships. Please circle the dot which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered of your relationship.

.
Extremely unhappy	Fairly unhappy	A little unhappy	Happy	Very happy	Extremely happy	Perfect

32. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship?

I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and would go to almost any length to see that it does.

I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do all I can to see that it does.

I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do my fair share to see that it does.

It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I can't do much more than I am doing now to help it succeed.

It would be nice if it succeeded, but I refuse to do any more than I am doing now to keep the relationship going.

My relationship can never succeed, and there is no more that I can do to keep the relationship going.

PSYCHOMETRICS: Not provided

COMMENTS/FINDINGS: Navy family separation had no significant effect on measures of self-esteem, loneliness, health opinions, marital adjustment, physical symptoms, and stress for separated and non-separated wives. Family separation had not significant effect on the marital adjustment or stress levels of husbands or wives. A substantial proportion of separated Navy wives believed the separation was more difficult than expected in areas such as spousal relations, parenting, finances, affective problems, and health. The variables that significantly contributed to re-enlistment of the husband were :1) wife's attitude toward her husband enlistment, husband's attitude toward the Navy, and the level of family stress perceived by the husband.

TITLE: A comparison of spousal aggression prevalence rates in U.S. Army and civilian representative samples.

AUTHOR: Richard E. Heyman and Peter H. Neidig.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1999). *Journal of Counseling and Clinical Psychology*, 26(2), 239-242.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH:

To explore whether military service increases the risk for partner violence

SOURCE OF DATA:

1985 National Family Violence Survey (NFVS) and 38 U.S. Army installations in the U.S.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample):

The larger sampling frame of military families at the 38 army sites is not provided. However, the final Army sample was reportedly well-representative of the Army population and included 33,762 married respondents.

Data for the civilian sample were based on the NFVS, which had a sample of 6,002 respondents.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S:

For the military families, married active-duty individuals were randomly sampled from 38 U.S. Army installations in the U.S between 1990 and 1994.

For the civilian sample, married persons were selected from the nationally representative dataset, the 1985 National Family Violence Survey (NFVS).

STUDY POPULATION:

In the army sample, comparative analyses used between 30,426 and 31,157 respondents (due to missing values).

Weighted and standardized data from 3,044 civilians were used from the NFVS.

MEASURE:

The Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, 1979), an 18-item scale with items scored from 0 to 6.

No matter how well a couple gets along, there are times when they disagree on major decisions, get annoyed at something the other person does, or just have spats or fights because they're in a bad mood or tired or for some other reason. They also use many different ways of trying to settle their differences. I'm going to read a list of some things that you and your (husband/partner) might have done when you had a dispute, and would like you to tell me for each one how often you did it in the last year.

Question:	<u>First Questions:</u> Respondents in past year	<u>Second Questions:</u> Partner in last year	<u>Follow Up:</u> Couple ever happened
	<i>Response Code:</i>	<i>0 = Never 1 = Once 2 = Twice 3 = 3-5 times 4 = 6-10 times 5 = 11-20 times 6 = More than 20 times X = Don't know</i>	<i>Response Code:</i> <i>1 = Yes 2 = No X = Don't Know</i>
a. Discussed an issue calmly			
b. Got information to back up (yours/his) side of things			
c. Brought in, or tried to bring in, someone to help settle things			
d. Insulted or swore at the other one			
e. Sulked or refused to talk about an issue			
f. Stomped out of the room or house or yard			
g. Cried			
h. Did or said something to spite the other one			
i. Threatened to hit or throw something at the other one			
j. Threw or smashed or hit or kicked something			
k. Threw something at the other one			
l. Pushed, grabbed, or shoved the other one			
m. Slapped the other one			
n. Kicked, bit, or hit with a fist			
o. Hit or tried to hit with something			
p. Beat up the other one			
q. Threatened with a gun or knife			
r. Choked the other one			
s. Used a knife or gun			

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Alphas for this sample are not reported, however the CTS was found to be highly reliable in the original sample for which it was created (at .87 for husbands and .88 for wives) (Straus, 1979).

COMMENTS/FINDINGS:

Once age and race differences are controlled for, spousal aggression among military families is only slightly, but still significantly, higher than that within the civilian population. In particular, husband-to-wife aggression is about 2-3% higher in the army population as compared to the civilian population in 3 of the 4 comparisons.

However, the authors point out a number of control variables that may need to be included to try to account for pre-enlistment risk factors that may vary. Because the military is a volunteer organization with members selecting themselves into it, individuals who choose to join may differ somewhat from the general U.S. population.

Therefore, it is important to control for a variety of factors.

TITLE: Marital adjustment of army spouses one year after Operation Desert Storm.

AUTHOR: Leora N. Rosen, Doris Durand, David J. Westhuis, & Joel M. Teitelbaum.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1995). *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 25, 677-692.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To understand the marital adjustment of army spouses who were separated during war.

SOURCE OF DATA: 773 female Army spouses from Operation Desert Storm

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S:

Interviews were conducted during site visits in a sample of army installations. A mailed questionnaire was also used. The study was longitudinal (with a one-year follow-up) with an original sample of 1274.

STUDY POPULATION:

773 female Army spouses from Operation Desert Storm (67% of the original sample responded).

MEASURES:

Marital problems

Consideration of divorce prior to deployment

Retrospective assessment of how marriage had been going prior to deployment

Distance

Items included soldier needs time alone; couple became more distant; changes in authority regarding children; soldier feels excluded from the family; mistrust between spouses; resenting wife's new friends.

Alpha=.72

Closeness

Items include soldier's satisfaction with the way finances were handled during deployment; pleased with wife's running of the household; couple became closer; soldier does more chores. Alpha=.32

Role sharing

Items include soldier doing more chores; soldier taking on child caretaking; soldier adopts new roles; wife adopts new roles; new agreements made about control of finances; wife more dependent. Alphas range from .32 to .64

Independent Spouse

Wife is more independent; wife makes more decisions; wife adopts new roles; new agreement made about control of finances. Alphas range from .66 to .74.

Dependent Spouse/Withdrawn Soldier

Soldier needs time alone; wife more dependent; wife resents soldier's new friends

Alphas ranging from .33 to .73

PSYCHOMETRICS:

See measures section above.

COMMENTS:

Findings based on multiple regression analysis showed that most spouses were able to adjust to the deployment of their husbands. Key predictors of the five factors (distance, closeness, role sharing, independent spouse, and dependent spouse/withdrawn soldier) include the following: social support, emotional well-being, prior marital problems and stress.

However, the authors noted a key limitation, positing that the large percentage of non-respondents may have included a disproportionate number of failed marriages, so that the remaining analytic sample may be positively skewed. Another limitation of these data is that information about the marriage is collected only from wives.

Incarcerated Populations

The Measurement of Marital Relationships in Incarcerated Populations

Prepared by
Jacinta Bronte-Tinkew, Ph.D.

I. Overview of the Issues Involved in the Measurement of Marital Relationships in Prison Populations

The prison population in America currently accounts for 1.3 million people at mid-year in 2001 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2002). An additional 631,240 are in jail. Today, incarceration remains one of the leading causes of marital non-cohabitation (Rindfuss & Stephen, 1990). Because marital non-cohabitation has been found to be associated with marital dissolution, many, although not all prisoner's marriages are often considered to be at risk. To date, research on the marital relationships of those in prison populations is limited and inconclusive. Of the seven studies identified for this review, few have provided data and measures of in-depth aspects of prisoners' marital relationship experiences at the different stages of the criminal justice process, including the post-release phase. Despite the fact that the marriages of prisoners represent an opportunity to understand and inform the wider research community about the role of marital cognition when dealing with the stress of physical separation, as well as the features associated with marital strain, several gaps exist in our current understanding of the dynamics associated with marital relationships among the incarcerated.

Incarceration and Marital Separation. Incarceration implies marital separation, limited communication, limited interaction, and an absence of companionship. The marriages of the incarcerated may be stressed by the separation imposed by sentencing. With little opportunity for interaction with one's spouse when incarcerated, cognitions including expectations, are thought to play an instrumental role in relationship well being. Like members of the general population, the marriages of the imprisoned can be a source of hope, despair, concern, frustration, and satisfaction. Communication and contact during incarceration, and the frequency of such contact, are therefore important components of intimate relationships among the incarcerated who are married. For the majority of married inmates, incarceration represents an unwanted and uncontrollable separation from the spouse. This strain can take a negative toll on many, but not all, prisoners' marriages. Segrin and Flora (2001) report that prisoners often describe feelings of increased frustration with trying to keep a relationship with their spouse alive and vital as the years of imprisonment go by. Some prisoners often worry that their spouses may grow discouraged by the strain of separation and may seek new relationships. Some prior research indicates that as time goes by some prisoners may become more dependent on the institution as visits with family and friends may diminish. Aday (1976) refers to the acculturation into the prison community and decrease in ties with the wider community as *prisonization*.

Remaining spouses must fill a new role of single parent and must make decisions previously made either by the departed spouse or shared by the two. The remaining spouse may be emotionally torn between wanting to be supportive of the incarcerated spouse, but also being challenged by having to fulfill new responsibilities. In families with troubled marriages, the remaining spouse may be without significant social or emotional support, and following the separation imposed by incarceration, become even more isolated (Friedman & Rice, 1977). Critical concerns of women being incarcerated revolve around who will take care of children, whether care of the children will be adequate, whether the incarcerated parent will be remembered, forgiven, and whether time can be made up.

Data Limitations. Research on marital relationships in incarcerated populations has had to rely on data that are of unknown quality. Research on marital relationships among prison populations has been hampered by limited data, and existing data from which we must glean information on relationships are fragmented, of unknown reliability, and are generally derived from small select samples of inmates in select prison populations. In many of the studies reviewed, participants are often volunteers, creating self-selection biases into the samples that are ultimately

used for analyses. As the issue of the use of coercion and financial incentives in recruiting study samples are more sensitive among prison populations, an important question for data collection initiatives is what type of prisoner is more likely to participate in a study of marital relationships, and how such respondents differ from other prisoners (Bowden, 1986; Karney et al., 1995).

The current reliance on data that focuses on specific and select incarcerated populations has made it difficult to generalize findings on couple relationships in one prison or jail sample to other prison or jail populations. Without a consistent and reliable body of evidence, the meaning of existing research findings is unclear. As researchers and policy makers pay more attention to prison populations, there have been calls for better sources of data, both at the state and national levels, and recent data collection initiatives such as the *Returning Home: Understanding the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry* project,¹ have begun to collect detailed data on the family relationships of prison populations.

Longitudinal Research. There is a marked absence of longitudinal research that focuses on changes over time in couple relationships in prison populations. Moreover, because several studies have used cross-sectional data in their designs, the direction of causality cannot be definitely established in some studies. It may be that prisoners view their marriages more negatively (Duck & Leatham, 1994). Moreover, the difficulty involved in conducting longitudinal investigations in this population makes this issue a challenge for future work.

Measures of Marriage. While substantive methodological work has generally refined measures of marital relationships in couple relationships in the general population, much less work has gone specifically into creating, refining, and assessing measures of marriage that may be used in prison populations. Moreover, few studies have assessed the psychometric properties of measures of marriage that have been used among the incarcerated.

II. Summary of Measures Used in Studies of Marital Relationships in Prison Populations

Of the seven studies used in this review, the following measures of marriage have been used. These measures can be grouped into several domains. Table 1 provides a summary.

Marital Status. Measures of marital status as reported by the inmate at a particular age have been used in prior research (Nagin & Sampson, 1998; Holt and Miller, 1972). This measure of marital status includes single, married, common law married, separated (legal wife), separated (common law), divorced, and widowed.

Relationship Quality. Measures of relationship quality have been used in a study by Western, Loopoo, & McLanahan (2002) using the Fragile Families data. The measure used consists of five items that asks respondents about the frequency with which there was compromise, hitting or slapping, expressions of affection, criticism, and encouragement in the relationship. The response categories range from 1 (often) through 3 (sometimes). The psychometric properties of the measure are not provided for the incarcerated sample.

In another study by Curtis and Schulman (1984) using experimental data in the State of Texas, a seven-item index is used to ask respondents (the “significant woman” of male ex-offenders) if a financial incentive

¹ *The Returning Home: Understanding the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry* project is a major reentry research initiative being conducted by the Urban Institute. The project documents the pathways of prisoner reintegration, to examine the factors that contribute to successful and unsuccessful reentry experiences. Pre- and post-release interviews are being conducted with the prisoners’ family members and with focus groups of residents in the communities into which prisoners are released. Additional data will be obtained from local indicators of community well being, interviews with community stakeholders, and a review of state laws and policies. Returning Home is currently underway in Illinois, being piloted in Maryland, and scheduled to begin in Ohio and Texas in 2003.

would help them and their partner get along, care for each other, talk with each other, make decisions, spend time together, meet more people, and help one another. The items are scored on a yes, no response category, but the psychometric properties of the index are not provided.

Relational History. *The Oral History Interview (OHI)* (Krokoff, 1984) measures partners' perceptions of relational events and their views of marriage, and contains information on four dimensions: we-ness/separateness, glorifying the struggle, relational disappointment/disillusionment, and chaos (Segrin and Flora, 2001). Psychometric data on these measures for prison populations are provided with inter-coder reliability estimates ranging from .78 to .83 for each of the four dimensions.

Relationship Satisfaction. *The Relational Assessment Scale (RAS)* (Hendrick, 1988) has also been used as a measure of relationship satisfaction (Segrin & Flora, 2001). This is a seven-item scale that contains items that focus exclusively on subjective perceptions of relational quality (e.g., how good do you feel your relationship is compared to most?), and it does not confound perceptions of relational well-being with relational behaviors and activities (Segrin & Flora, 2001). In prior research, this scale has demonstrated moderate to high correlations with measures of marital satisfaction such as the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, as well as good reliability (Hendrick, 1988). The RAS has an alpha coefficient of .87 for the prison sample.

Relationship Commitment. *The Measure of Relational Commitment* (Stafford & Canary, 1991; Rusbult, 1983) has been used in prior research as a measure of relationship commitment (Segrin & Flora, 2001). The five-item measure asks questions about intrinsic motivation to preserve the relationship (e.g., I want this relationship to last as long as possible; there are not others that I would like to be married to). Because all of the items on the instrument reflect internal motivations for preserving the relationship, it could best be described as an index of personal, rather than structural or moral commitment (Segrin & Flora, 2001). The inter-item reliability of this measure is .76.

Attachment to Spouse. This is a composite scale indicating attachment to the relationship and has been used in prior research on trajectories of marriage among offenders (Laub, Nagin, & Sampson, 1998). The psychometrics of the measure are not provided for the prison sample.

Frequency of Contact. Frequency of correspondence (letters) received from the spouse or the female friend, as well as the number of visits per year that inmates receive from a spouse or female friend, have also been used as measures of the frequency of contact (Holt & Miller, 1972). These measures are not scales, and have been used as simple descriptive statistics in past studies.

Shotgun Marriage. This is a measure indicating whether a child is born within seven months of the date of marriage and the birth was not recorded as premature, or if the pregnancy is acknowledged by the couple (Nagin & Sampson, 1998).

Loneliness. The *UCLA Loneliness Scale* (version 3, Russell, 1996), and the *Loneliness Questionnaire* (Rokach & Brock, 2001) have been used in measures of marital relationships among prison populations (Segrin & Flora, 2001; Rokach & Spomenka, 1997). The UCLA Loneliness Scale is a 20-item instrument that assesses respondent's experience of loneliness (Segrin & Flora, 2001). The inter-item reliability of this measure is very good, $\alpha = .88$ for the prison sample.

Two versions of the *Loneliness Questionnaire* have also been used in prior research. The 18-item Loneliness Questionnaire consists of factors that encompass reflection and acceptance, self-development and understanding, religion and faith, social support networks, increased activity, and distancing and denial (Rokach, 1997). This questionnaire is based on the assumption that loneliness is a multi-dimensional set of uniquely subjective experiences. Rather than being a diagnostic tool, the questionnaire provides observations useful for understanding the multi-dimensionality of the loneliness experience. Alphas for the 18-item instrument range from .69 to .87. The 15-item Loneliness Questionnaire consists of factors that include emotional distress, social adequacy and alienation, growth and discovery, interpersonal isolation, and self-alienation. Alphas for the 15-item instrument range from .75 to .87.

Expectations for Intimacy. *The Expectations for Intimacy Measure* (Tornstam, 1992) has been used to assess the degree to which respondents hold unrealistically high expectations for intimacy in their marriage (Segrin & Flora, 2001). Sample items include “You should be able to trust each other completely,” and “You should be really interested in each other’s problems.” The 5-item scale has a high inter-item reliability, with $\alpha = .87$.

III. Strengths and Weaknesses of Existing Measures

Strengths. For the most part, existing measures of marital relationships in incarcerated populations have used measures from existing literature on marriage and family relationships from the general population. In some cases, these items have been adapted and modified for use in incarcerated populations. Some studies have also made efforts to use shortened versions of longer measures during data collection.

Weaknesses. Existing measures are not designed to collect data on the mates/partners of the imprisoned except in one known study that uses experimental data from the “significant other” of offending inmates (Curtis & Schulman, 1984). In the few studies that exist, it is also difficult to determine the validity and reliability of the measure for the prison population because no psychometric data are provided, and in some cases, when these data are provided the reliability and validity estimates cited, are often from a previous test of the measure. Thus, one has to extrapolate to determine how the measure works specifically for the prison sample.

IV. Conceptual Gaps in Existing Literature

Several conceptual gaps exist in existing literature on the measurement of marital relationships in prison populations:

- There are no measures in existing research that have been developed to measure offenders’ perceptions of whether and how they believe imprisonment specifically influences their marital relationship, specifically about how the role of separation, proximity, dwindling social support networks, limited contact, lack of companionship and interaction influence the quality of the marital relationship;
- Existing research has not collected in-depth information on marital relationships in all of the phases of the criminal justice process, and have neglected to measure the quality of marital relationships during imprisonment, in the pre-release stage, and the post-release phase;
- Existing research has not kept pace with the trend toward collection of data from the couple—that is both the imprisoned and the partner’s perceptions of marital quality. It is plausible to assume some variance in the reports of spouses and the imprisoned, although determining the modes of data collection to be used in this process would be challenging;
- There is a clear need to use strategies that would yield more representative samples of the incarcerated population, such as recruitment of samples through marriage licenses or military records or longitudinal studies of large samples of the general population;
- There is an absence of literature on how marital relationships specifically among married prison populations have implications for child well-being;
- There is an absence of studies that examine the distance between family and home for the imprisoned, levels of interaction and marital quality.

V. Discussion and Conclusions

Future research on marital relationships in prison populations would benefit from the following:

- The collection of data from the mates or “significant others” of prisoners;
- The collection of data and the use of measures that capture offenders’ perceptions of how imprisonment influences marital relationships and specifically about the role of separation, proximity, dwindling social support networks, limited contact, lack of companionship and interaction;
- The collection of data from varied prison populations that are more representative as opposed to small select samples of offenders from whom generalizations cannot be made. Useful strategies that would yield more representative prison samples for marital research include recruitment through the use of marriage licenses or military records;
- Testing and refinement of measures of marital relationships that are specifically tailored or augmented for use in prison populations;
- Longitudinal research that enables researchers to determine how marital relationships in this population change over time;
- In-depth data collection on marital relationships in all of the phases of the criminal justice process, including pre-release, and in the post-release phase;
- Research on how the quality of marital relationships in prison families influences child well-being;

Table 1: Summary of Measures Used in Studies of Marital Relationships in Prison Populations

Measure	Article Using Measure	Psychometric Data
Marital Status	Nagin & Sampson, 1998; Holt and Miller, 1972	Not applicable (status measure)
Relationship Quality Series of five items that asks respondents about the frequency with which there was compromise, hitting or slapping, expressions of affection, criticism, and encouragement in the relationship. Response categories range from 1 (often) through 3 (sometimes).	Western Loopoo, & McLanahan, 2002; Curtis & Schulman, 1984	Not provided
Relational History <i>(The Oral History Interview-OHI)</i> (Krokoff, 1984) Measures partners' perceptions of relational events and their views of marriage, and contains information on four dimensions: we-ness/separateness, glorifying the struggle, relational disappointment/disillusionment, and chaos	Segrin & Flora, 2001	Inter-item reliability estimates range from .78 to .83 for the four dimensions for the prison sample
Relationship Satisfaction <i>(The Relational Assessment Scale-RAS)</i> (Hendricks, 1988) Seven-item scale that contains items that focus exclusively on subjective perceptions of relational quality. Sample items include: how good do you feel your relationship is compared to most?	Segrin & Flora, 2001	Inter-tem reliability of .87 for the prison sample
Relationship Commitment <i>(The Measure of Relational Commitment)</i> (Stafford & Canary, 1991; Rusbult, 1983) Five-item measure that asks questions about intrinsic motivation to preserve the relationship. Sample items include: I want this relationship to last as long as possible; there are not others that I would like to be married to.	Segrin & Flora, 2001	Inter-item reliability of .76 for the prison sample
Attachment to Spouse Composite scale indicating attachment to the relationship	Nagin & Sampson, 1998	Not provided
Frequency of Contact Frequency of correspondence (letters) received from the spouse and the female friend; number of visits per year received from a spouse or partner.	Holt & Miller, 1972	Not applicable (descriptive measure)
Shotgun Marriage Child born within seven months of the date of marriage and the birth was not recorded as premature, or if the pregnancy is acknowledged by the couple	Nagin & Sampson, 1998	Not applicable (status measure)
Loneliness <i>(The UCLA Loneliness Scale, version 3)</i> Russell, 1996; 20-item instrument that assesses respondent's experience of loneliness. <i>The Loneliness Questionnaire</i> (Rokach & Brock, 2001) 18-item Loneliness Questionnaire consists of factors that encompass reflection and acceptance, self-development and understanding, religion and faith, social support networks, increased activity, and distancing and denial <i>The Loneliness Questionnaire</i> (Rokach & Brock, 2001) The 15-item Loneliness Questionnaire consists of factors that include emotional distress, social adequacy and alienation, growth and discovery, interpersonal isolation, and self-alienation.	Rokach & Brock, 2001; Rockach, 1997 Rockach, 1997	Inter-item reliability of .88 for the prison sample Inter-item reliability estimates for the 18-item instrument range from .69 to .87 for the prison sample; Inter-item reliability estimates for the 15-item instrument range from .75 to .87 for the prison sample
Expectations for Intimacy <i>(The Expectations for Intimacy Measure)</i> (Tornstam, 1992) 5-item scale used to assess the degree to which respondents hold unrealistically high expectations for intimacy in their marriage. Sample items include: "You should be able to trust each other completely," and "You should be really interested in each other's problems."	Segrin & Flora, 2001	Inter-item reliability estimate of .87 for the prison sample

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Western, B., Lopoo, L., & McLanahan S. (2002). Incarceration and the bonds among parents in fragile families. In M. Patillo, D. Weiman, & B. Western (Eds.) *The Impact of Incarceration on Families and Communities*: Russell Sage Foundation.

TITLE: Incarceration and the bonds among parents in fragile families.

AUTHOR: Bruce Western, Leonard Lopoo, & Sara McLanahan

PUBLICATION CITATION: (2002). In Mary Patillo, David Weiman, & Bruce Western (Eds.) *The Impact of Incarceration on Families and Communities*: Russell Sage Foundation.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine whether involvement in the criminal justice system affects family relationships, and the likelihood of cohabitation and marriage among men who have been to prison or jail among “fragile families.” Fragile families are defined as unmarried parents who are planning to raise their child together.

SOURCE OF DATA: The Fragile Families and Child Well-being Study.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample): This is a nationally representative longitudinal survey of new (mostly unmarried) parents and children. Data were collected in 20 cities, stratified by different labor market conditions and varying welfare and child support policy regimes. The total sample size is approximately 4,900 families including 3,700 unmarried couples and almost 1,200 married couples. The weighted data are representative of all births to parents residing in cities with populations over 200,000.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: New mothers were first interviewed at the hospital within 48 hours of having given birth. About 60% of fathers were also interviewed in the hospital, and another 15% were interviewed soon after the child left the hospital.

STUDY POPULATION: Sub-sample of fathers who had had contact with the criminal justice system

MEASURE:

Thinking about your past/current relationship with [Baby’s Mother], how often would you say that:

Often Sometimes Never

- A. S/he was/is fair and willing to compromise when you had a disagreement would you say often, sometimes or never? 1..... 2..... 3
- B. S/he hit or slapped you when he was was angry? 1..... 2..... 3
- C. S/he expressed affection or love for you? 1..... 2..... 3
- D. S/he insulted or criticized you or your ideas? 1..... 2..... 3
- E. S/he encouraged or helped you to do things that were important to you? 1..... 2..... 3

PSYCHOMETRICS: No psychometrics are provided for this measure because it was used as a control variable in the analyses.

COMMENTS: N/A

TITLE: Ex-offenders, family relations, and economic supports: The “Significant Women” Study of the TARP Project.

AUTHORS: Russel L. Curtis, Jr., & Sam Schulman.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (October, 1984). *Crime and Delinquency*, 30(4), 507-528.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine whether persons released from incarceration have enough support to minimally reestablish themselves-psychologically, relationally, and economically; and to determine whether it is possible to facilitate adjustments through intervention programs which give immediate support and may affect long-term success in terms of lowered recidivism.

SOURCE OF DATA: Data from the Transitional Aid Research Project (TARP) intervention program are used. This is an intervention study of over 2,000 ex-offenders.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample): The experiment was conducted in Texas and Georgia. Four treatment groups were distinguished: three that received money, and one that received economic counseling and job placement. There were two control groups: one in which the ex-offenders were interviewed (a contact group) and one which was followed on the computer.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: In-person home visits and interviews of the “significant women” of male ex-offenders.

STUDY POPULATION: Sample of 198 women from a targeted number of 200 who were designated as the “significant woman” or the most important female in pre-release interviews by a sample of male ex-offenders chosen by TARP officials in Texas and Georgia.

MEASURE:

The following questions were asked of the “significant woman” of the male ex-offenders.

In your opinion would an additional \$300.00 a month help you (and ex-offender) with:

1. *Getting along*
 - a. Yes b. No
2. *Caring for one another*
 - a. Yes b. No
3. *Talking with one another*
 - a. Yes b. No
4. *Making Decisions*
 - a. Yes b. No
5. *Spending Time Together*
 - a. Yes b. No
6. *Meeting more people*
 - a. Yes b. No
7. *Helping one another*
 - a. Yes b. No

PSYCHOMETRICS: This is a descriptive study. No psychometric properties of the measure were provided

COMMENTS: N/A

TITLE: Perceptions of relational histories, marital quality, and loneliness when communication is limited: An examination of married prison inmates.

AUTHOR: Segrin, C., & Flora, J.

PUBLICATION CITATION: *Journal of Family Communication*, 1(3), 151-173.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine married inmates' perceptions of relational histories and marital quality, and their experiences of loneliness. Specifically the study investigates the role of two potential antecedents to the problem of loneliness in married prison inmates, namely perceptions of relational histories and perceived marital quality. These two factors are expected to be instrumental in determining whether the interpersonal stress imposed by restricted communication and separation results in substantial loneliness for the married prison inmate.

SOURCE OF DATA: Participants in this study were 96 married prison inmates who were serving a sentence in either a men's medium security state prison in the Midwest, a women's medium security state prison in the Midwest, or in a federal correctional institution in the Southwest.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Self-administered questionnaires completed at their leisure and returned to a centrally located drop box, or they attended scheduled sessions in groups of 15-20 during which they completed the questionnaire.

MEASURES:

Relational History with Current Spouse.

The Oral History Interview (OHI; Krokoff, 1984). This measure captures partners' perceptions of relational events and their view of the marriage. It asks a series of open-ended questions about the history of a couple's relationship (e.g., please tell us about how and why you decided to get married. Of all the people in the world, what lead you to decide that this was the person you wanted to marry? Was it an easy or difficult decision?). Following each group of questions, participants are given a blank page on which to write their answers. Couples responses are eventually coded along the following dimensions:

1. *We-ness/Separateness*- Distinguishes how a partner sees him or herself as a part of the couple or instead emphasizes separateness and difference.
2. *Glorifying the struggle*- Assesses the extent to which couples have had hard times in their relationship, but made it through them and even grew closer.
3. *Relational disappointment/Disillusionment*- Giving up on or feeling disillusioned by the relationship and not knowing what makes a relationship work.
4. *Chaos*-Feeling little control over one's life and encountering many unexpected problems and hardships within the relationship.

Psychometrics: Intercoder reliability was $\alpha = .78$ for glorifying the struggle; $\alpha = .78$ for we-ness; $\alpha = .82$ for chaos; and $\alpha = .83$ for relational disappointment.

Relational Satisfaction.

The Relational Assessment Scale (RAS) (Hendricks, 1988). Scores could range from 1 (low satisfaction) to 5 (high satisfaction). Items 4 and 7 are reverse coded.

1. How well does your partner meet your needs?
2. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?
3. How good is your relationship compared to most?
4. How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?
5. To what extent has your relationship met with your original expectations?
6. How much do you love your partner?
7. How many problems are there in your relationship?

Psychometrics: Demonstrated moderate to high correlation with measures of marital satisfaction such as the Dyadic Adjustment Scale. The inter-item reliability of the RAS was $\alpha = .87$.

Relational Commitment.

Measure of Relational Commitment- Stafford and Canary (1991), Rusbult (1983). The five-item measure asks questions about intrinsic motivation to preserve the relationship (e.g., I want this relationship to last as long as possible; there are no others that I would like to be married to).

Psychometrics: The inter-item reliability of this measure was $\alpha = .76$.

Loneliness.

UCLA Loneliness Scale (version 3; Russell, 1996). This is a 20-item instrument used as an index of the experience of loneliness.

Psychometrics: The inter-item reliability of this measure was $\alpha = .88$.

Expectations for Intimacy.

Expectations for Intimacy Measure (Tornstam, 1992). Five-item scale that assesses the degree to which participants hold unrealistically high expectations for intimacy in their marriage (e.g., You should be able to trust each other completely; You should be really interested in each other's problems).

Psychometrics: The inter-item reliability of this measure was $\alpha = .87$.

COMMENTS/FINDINGS: The results of this study indicate there is considerable variation in the positivity and negativity of inmates' relational histories. These varied relational histories are consistent with the relatively sizable variation in reports of marital satisfaction and commitment. Married inmates are more lonely than their counterparts in free society, and the longer inmates had been separated from their spouses as a result of imprisonment, the more loneliness they reported. The greater inmates' expectations for intimacy were, the less lonely they felt.

TITLE: Trajectories of change in criminal offending: Good marriage and the desistance process.

AUTHOR: Nagin, D.S., & Sampson, R.J.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (April, 1998). *American Sociological Review*, 63, 225-238.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine multiple periods of behavior that capture not only the cumulative impact of change, but the time path by which change is achieved. The paper also explores the underlying process of social bonding over the life course.

SOURCE OF DATA: The Glueck Prospective Study of the formation and development of criminal careers. Initiated in 1940, this study analyzes the criminal history of 500 delinquent boys who were followed in adulthood through 1965.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: After an initial interview at age 14 (on average), subjects were followed up at ages 25 and 32. The data were collected using a multi-method strategy that included interviews with the subjects and their families and with key informants such as social workers, school teachers, neighbors, employers, and criminal justice officials. Interview data were supplemented by field investigations that gathered information from the records of public and private agencies. These data verified and amplified the case materials collected during interviews.

MEASURES:

Marital Status.

Marital status at age 32.

Shotgun Marriage.

A variable from the age 25 interview indicated whether a child was born within seven months of the date of marriage and the birth was not recorded as premature, or if pregnancy at marriage is acknowledged by the couple.

Attachment to Spouse:

A composite scale derived from interview data indicating the general conjugal relationship during the follow-up period. The details of the measure are not provided.

PSYCHOMETRICS: Not provided.

COMMENTS/FINDINGS: There are distinct trajectories of individual offending that diverge markedly from the aggregate age crime curve. Childhood and juvenile characteristics are insufficient for predicting the patterns of future offending in a high rate group of juvenile offenders. The divergent paths that unfold over time can be predicted by the concurrent events in the transition to young adulthood. Early marriages characterized by social cohesiveness led to a growing preventive effect. The effect of a good marriage takes time to appear, and it grows slowly over time until it inhibits crime.

TITLE: Explorations in inmate-family relationships.

AUTHOR: Holt, N., & Miller, D.

PUBLICATION CITATION: *Research Report No.46*. California Department of Corrections, Research Division, Sacramento, California, January 1972.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To explore the prevalence of various types of prisoner-family relationships, and their impact on inmate behavior, both inside prison and later on parole in California.

SOURCE OF DATA: 843 inmates who appeared before the Adult Authority parole board at the Southern Conservation Center from July 1968 to 1969. The inmate, after he becomes legally eligible for parole has a hearing before the board once each year until a parole date is granted. Data developed for the first appearance is used for these analyses.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Data were collected from reports of each inmate's caseworker about a month prior to his parole hearing. The caseworkers compile data from the inmate's visiting and correspondence card, on which each letter and visit is logged in. The caseworker lists each person contacting the inmate and tallies the number of visits of letters received since the inmate's last board appearance and then roughly divides these by months or weeks to get an overall average.

MEASURES:

Marital Status. Marital status at the time of reception as reported by the inmate. Marriage is defined to include formal legal marriages, and "common-law" marriages at least one year in duration. Marital status includes single, married, common law married, separated (legal wife), separated (common law), divorced, and widowed.

Frequency of Contact. Frequency of correspondence (letters) received from spouse and female friend. Number of visits per year inmates received from spouse or female friend.

PSYCHOMETRICS: These measures are not scales and so simple descriptive statistics are provided on each variable.

COMMENTS/FINDINGS: When black inmates maintain contact with a spouse, she is likely to visit 3 or 4 times per year. Among white inmates, emphasis is placed on visits from the conjugal family and friends. When wives of white inmates visit, they visit two or three time more frequently than wives from other groups as do female friends. If the inmate's marriage is intact on admission, he maintains many other important relationships. Conversely, the single individual at admission is likely to be relatively isolated in other respects as well as having less frequent contacts with friends and relatives. The less binding nature of the common-law relationship compared to the legal marriage is reflected in the patterns of contact in prison, for only a small minority of the common law marriages lead to sustained corresponding or visiting.

TITLE: Loneliness in jail: Coping strategies.

AUTHOR: Rokach, Ami.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1997). *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 41(3), 260-271.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To explore the various strategies that criminals employ in their attempts to cope with loneliness, and identify those that were reported to be the most beneficial.

SOURCE OF DATA: Two hundred fifty-seven participants (145 male offenders and 112 men from the general population) were invited on a voluntary basis to answer the loneliness questionnaire. Participants from the general population included university students, attendees at community centers, and those from specialized groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA,) and Parents Without Partners. Offenders were incarcerated criminals recruited from a provincial jail in Ontario, Canada, which houses men who were sentenced to a period of up to 2 years less one day.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Data were collected from participants using a self-administered questionnaire. Participants took approximately 5 minutes to complete the questionnaire, which was administered during a testing period (for incoming inmates) or in various group meetings in which participants from the general population enrolled. Participants endorsed the items that described the strategies that they successfully utilized to cope with loneliness.

MEASURES:

The Loneliness Questionnaire, (Rokach & Brock, 2001). This is an 18-item questionnaire comprised of five factors. Participants are asked to indicate whether their experiences of loneliness include any of the descriptors. The scores for each factor range between 0 and 3. The five factors include:

- (1) *Reflection and Acceptance*- being by one's self to become acquainted with one's fears, wishes and needs, and consequently accepting one's loneliness and the resultant pain;
- (2) *Self-Development and Understanding*- the increased self-intimacy, renewal, and growth that are often the result of active participation in organized focus groups or of receiving professional help and support;
- (3) *Religion and Faith*- the need to connect to and worship a divine entity; through affiliation with a religious group and practicing its faith, one can gain strength and inner peace.
- (4) *Social Support Network*- the re-establishing of social support networks that can help one feel connected to and valued by others;
- (5) *Increased Activity*- active pursuit of daily responsibilities as well as fulfilling solitary or group activities, thus maximizing one's social contacts;
- (6) *Distancing and Denial*- denial of the experience of pain and loneliness by alcoholism, drug abuse, and other deviant behaviors.

PSYCHOMETRICS: Factor 1 (alpha =.87); Factor 2 (alpha =.74); Factor 3 (alpha = .76); Factor 4 (alpha =.81); Factor 5 (alpha =.83); Factor 6 (alpha= .69).

COMMENTS/FINDINGS: Marital status and whether offenders felt lonely or just recalled that experience while answering the questionnaire significantly affect their coping with loneliness. Married offenders scored highest on reflection and acceptance, and social support networks. Having a social support network, which varies from attending interpersonal social events to being involved in deeply personal relationships, provides the feeling that one belongs and is loved and valued.

TITLE: Loneliness in jail: A study of the loneliness of incarcerated men.

AUTHOR: Rokach, Ami, & Koleding, Spomenka.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1997). *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 41(2), 168-179.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To explore the differences in how loneliness is experienced and described while the individual is actually in its throes, compared to when it is later recalled.

SOURCE OF DATA: Two hundred fifty seven participants (145 male offenders and 112 men from the general population) were invited on a voluntary basis to answer the loneliness questionnaire. Participants from the general population included university students, attendees at community centers, and those from specialized groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), and Parents Without Partners. Offenders were incarcerated criminals recruited from a provincial jail in Ontario Canada, which houses men that were sentenced to a period of up to 2 years less one day.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Data were collected from participants using a self-administered questionnaire. Participants took approximately 5 minutes to complete the questionnaire, which was administered during testing period (for incoming inmates) or in various group meetings in which participants from the general population enrolled. Participants endorsed the items that described the strategies that they successfully utilized to cope with loneliness.

MEASURES:

The Loneliness Questionnaire (Rokach & Brock, 2001). This is an 15-item questionnaire comprised of six factors. Participants are asked to indicate whether there experiences of loneliness include any of the descriptors. The scores for each factor range between 0 and 3. The six factors include:

- (1) *Emotional Distress*-the intense pain, inner turmoil, hopelessness, and feelings of emptiness, associated with loneliness.
- (2) *Social Inadequacy and Alienation*-the perception and concomitant self-generated social detachment that is reported as part of the loneliness experience;
- (3) *Growth and Discovery*- the positive growth enhancing, and enriching aspects of the loneliness experience and increased feelings of inner strength and self-reliance that follow;
- (4) *Interpersonal Isolation*- feelings of alienation, abandonment, and rejection reported as related to a general lack of close relationships and/or absence of a primary romantic relationship.
- (5) *Self-Alienation*-a detachment from one's self that is characterized by numbness, immobilization, and denial.

PSYCHOMETRICS: Factor 1 (alpha =.86); Factor 2 (alpha =.87); Factor 3 (alpha = .86); Factor 4 (alpha =.82); Factor 5 (alpha =.75).

COMMENTS/FINDINGS: Offenders experience loneliness differently based on their marital status, and these differences are concentrated in two factors-Emotional Distress, and Interpersonal Isolation. Separated/divorced/widowed had the highest mean score on emotional distress, and singles scored highest on interpersonal isolation. Married offenders had scores in the middle range on both of these factors.

General Populations

Measures Used in the Measurement of Marital Relationships in General Populations

*Prepared by
Kristin A. Moore, Ph.D.*

I. Overview of Issues

Most research on marriage has focused on married couples who live together, and a modest number of scales are used quite widely in these studies, for example, the Marital Adjustment Test developed by Locke and Wallace, which was developed in 1959, but which continues to be widely used. In addition, a large number of studies rely on the survey measures of marital satisfaction, communication and conflict that have been included in large, nationally representative data bases, such as the National Survey of Families and Households. Because these measures are widely used with all types of couples, most of the studies have already been described in previous sections. In addition, measures included in the major national surveys have already been summarized for this project in Part I of the Compendium of Measures.

In this section, we share several annotated bibliographies that address additional sub-populations, such as race/ethnicity sub-populations, and that examine constructs that are not typically explored except in studies of married couples, such as commitment and divorce proneness.

II. Measures Used in the Literature

Measures included in this section range widely from "graphs of commitment" that are completed by members of a couple with the interviewer and updated at each visit, to quantitative measures of marital "survival" time measured in months. Most measures, however, continue to be individual report measures completed by a respondent or reported to an interviewer.

III. Conceptual Gaps in the Existing Literature

Of concern in this literature is the small number of studies conducted that explicitly examine the psychometrics of marriage measures in varied racial, ethnic and cultural subgroups. Most studies include at least some minority group members; but they tend to be few in number or they are not examined as a separate sub-group. Those studies that exist do not provide evidence that the marriage measures that are being used are inappropriate or useless. However, few studies are focused on providing psychometric or other empirical evidence about the appropriateness of the measures for racial, ethnic or cultural subpopulations and such analyses still need to be conducted. Moreover, we have found few studies that examine psychometric issues among low-income or low-education married couples as a separate subgroup, to see whether the same constructs and measures used with general samples or advantaged samples are appropriate and effective for these populations. Many of the participants in these marriage studies are volunteers, live in university towns, are well educated, and/or are middle-income. Accordingly, even though the measures may work for these married couples, it is not certain that the measures that work for these more advantaged married study participants will work equally well with less advantaged couples.

Another gap in the literature on marriage is the limited work done on the construct of commitment. Important work by Scott Stanley, Howard Markman, and Blaine Fowers calls attention to this construct, and studies by these researchers provide promising measures; but, as they recognize, there is a need to examine the utility of their measures in more diverse samples.

IV. Conclusions

Accordingly, despite the plethora of research on marriage shared in the sub-population reviews and in this section, several fundamental gaps exist. There is a need for:

- Examination of measures within race, ethnicity and cultural subgroups;
- Testing the applicability of measures for low-income and low-education populations; and
- Qualitative and quantitative work to further develop and examine measures of commitment that can be used in varied populations.

Construct/Measure	Article using measure	Psychometrics
<p>Marital Conflict</p> <p>Index including frequency of disagreements during the pervious year, frequency of arguing and hitting, and the frequency of calm discussions (reverse coded)</p> <p>Four-item scale on the amount and the seriousness of conflict between the spouses, ranging from general disagreements, to serious quarrels and physical aggression.</p>	<p>Buehler & Gerard (2002)</p> <p>Kamp Dush et al. (2003)</p>	<p>Cronbach's alpha: .77.</p> <p>Cronbach's alpha: .54</p>
<p>General marital quality</p> <p>Sample items include: How happy are you with the amount of understanding you receive from your spouse? With the amount of love and affection you receive? With your sexual relationship? With your marriage overall? (1 = not too happy; 2 = pretty happy; 3 = very happy)</p> <p>Combination of marital conflict and marital happiness (see under these labels)</p> <p>ENRICH, short-version, This is a ten-item Likert-type scale that address ten dimensions of the perceived quality of each person's marriage, including the personal traits of their husband or wife, communication, parenting, conflict resolution, leisure activities, sexuality, relationships with their extended family, leisure activities, religious practices, division of labor in the household, and management of finances</p> <p>Marital Adjustment Test (Locke and Wallace (1959)</p>	<p>Amato et al. (2003)</p> <p>Kamp Dush et al. (2003)</p> <p>Lavee and Katz (2002)</p> <p>Stanley (unpublished manuscript)</p>	<p>None given</p> <p>None given for overall index</p> <p>Cronbach's Alpha: .84</p>

Construct/Measure	Article using measure	Psychometrics
		None given
<p>Marital well-being Index of 5 indicators: 1: marital happiness, 2: marital certainty, 3: marital stability, 4: marital satisfaction, and 5: thoughts of marital dissolution</p>	Goodwin (2003)	Alpha, African-American wives:.92 Alpha, European American wives:.86
<p>Marital happiness Based on 11 survey questions, e.g., the amount of understanding received from the spouse, the spouse as a companion, their sexual relationship, and how happy people felt about their marriage overall. 1 = not too happy; 2 = pretty happy, and 3 = very happy, with higher scores indicating greater happiness.</p>	Kamp Dush et al. (2003) Previtii and Amato (2003)	Cronbach's alpha: .89 Cronbach's alpha: .87
<p>Commitment to marry (Collected at multiple timepoints: see summary for a description)</p>	Umana-Taylor and Fine (2003)	None given
<p>Perceived likelihood of marriage Single item, ranging from 0 (not at all likely to 3 (has current plans made to marry current partner)</p>	Bulcroft and Bulcroft (1993)	None given
<p>Attitudes toward marriage Adapted by Kinnaird and Gerrard (1986) Sample items include: How difficult would it be for you to adjust to married life? Items were scored on a five-point Likert scale, going from "Not at all difficult" to "Very difficult." Respondents were asked to rate</p>	Umana-Taylor and Fine (2003)	Alpha, Hispanics: .89, Alpha, Anglos: .85

Construct/Measure	Article using measure	Psychometrics
how their life might be different if they were married in terms of 10-items, e.g. standard of living, happiness, etc. Range of response: 1, much worse to 5, much better.	Bulcroft and Bulcroft (1993)	Cronbach's Alpha: .84; Factor analysis distinguished an economic scale (alpha=.84) from a social-emotional scale (alpha=.77)
Importance of traditional mate selection values Respondents asked how willing they were to marry someone who was older, younger, previously married, etc.	Bulcroft and Bulcroft (1993)	Factor analysis distinguished two scales: economic-focused willingness to marry nontraditional mate (alpha=.73) and a willingness to marry someone who was already married or had children (alpha=.81)
Economic factors in marital timing Assessment of the importance of 4-items, e.g. having enough money saved, finishing schooling, etc.	Bulcroft and Bulcroft (1993)	Cronbach's Alpha: .84
Equity e.g., "respondents who they felt benefited most from the marital relationship: self, spouse or both benefit equally".	Goodwin (2003)	None given
Trust Respondents asked whether their spouse could be trusted, responses range from 1-10.	Goodwin (2003)	None given
Divorce proneness 13-item scale, e.g., thinking that one's marriage is in trouble or thinking about divorce	Previtii and Amato (2003)	Cronbach's Alpha: .91
Barriers to divorce 8-item scale, e.g., factors that were "important to keeping your marriage together"	Previtii and Amato (2003)	Cronbach's Alpha: .72
Commitment 6-item Couple Identity subscale of Stanley and Markman's Commitment Inventory which asks partners whether they see	Stanley (unpublished manuscript)	Cronbach's Alpha: .68 (alpha for females: .53)

Construct/Measure	Article using measure	Psychometrics
Tested the Multidimensional Assessment of Interparental Conflict (MAIC) among Mexican American and White HMO families and found moderate inter-rater agreement	Tschann, Flora, Pasch, and Marin (1999)	MAIC-P related to the parents' global marital satisfaction and the adolescent's self-perceptions Most alphas are above .90

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- Umana-Taylor, A.J., & Fine, M. (2003). Predicting commitment to wed among Hispanic and Anglo partners. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 65, 117-139.

TITLE: Union formation among men in the U.S.: Does having prior children matter?

AUTHOR: Susan Stewart, Wendy Manning, & Pamela Smock.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (February 2003). *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 65, 90-104.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: to examine the influence of resident versus nonresident children on men's probability of entering a new marriage or a cohabiting relationship, though involvement with nonresident children (visiting) is the variable that is found to increase the probability that a new union will be entered

SOURCE OF DATA: NSFH 1 and 2

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: National probability sample

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Survey interview

STUDY POPULATION: 1,226 single men in the sample, of whom 594 (48%) formed a union between the two waves of the NSFH; 200 married and 394 entered a cohabiting union. There were 160 nonresident fathers in the sample, of whom 15 married and 86 entered a cohabiting relationship.

MEASURE: Respondents reported the month and year that they entered any marriages or cohabiting unions since the time of the initial interview, and the date when the union dissolved, if it did. This information was used to calculate survival time in months, and the dependent variable is the hazard or risk of entering cohabitation or marriage.

COMMENTS: Not applicable

TITLE: Marital conflict, ineffective parenting, and children's and adolescents' maladjustment.

AUTHOR: Cheryl Buehler & Jean M. Gerard

PUBLICATION CITATION: (February 2002). *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64, 78-92.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine the relationships between marital conflict and maladjustment among children and adolescents, specifically to examine the role of ineffective parenting as a mediator. They find parents' use of harsh discipline and low parental involvement to be significant mediators

SOURCE OF DATA: 1988 National Survey of Families and Households

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: Married, biological parents (step-families were excluded).

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: National survey administered by interviewers in the home.

STUDY POPULATION: 2,541 married parents with a child ages 2-18 living in the household.

MEASURE: Nine items in total were used. Six of the items asked the respondents to report on the frequency of disagreements during the pervious year. Two additional items assessed the frequency of arguing and hitting, and the final item assessed the frequency of calm discussions; this last item was reverse coded. Because of differing response formats, the items were standardized. Cronbach's alpha was reported to be .77.

COMMENTS/FINDINGS: Marital conflict was found to be correlated with maladjustment for children and adolescents, as well as with harsh discipline and conflict between parents and adolescent children.

TITLE: Continuity and change in marital quality between 1980 and 2000.

AUTHOR: Paul R. Amato, David R. Johnson, Alan Booth, & Stacy J. Rogers.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (February 2003). *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 65, 1-22.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine how three dimensions of marital quality changed during the time period between 1980 and 2000. These are: marital happiness, divorce proneness and marital interaction. Offsetting changes have resulted in no net change in marital happiness or divorce proneness; but marital interactions have declined, for reasons that are not clear.

SOURCES OF DATA: 1980 Marital Instability over the Life Course Study and 2000 Survey of Marriage and Family Life

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: Both surveys are national random digit dial telephone surveys.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Interviewers conducted telephone interviews.

STUDY POPULATION: Married couples, with both spouses present, aged 55 or younger, in households with a telephone. Either the husband or the wife was randomly selected for the interview.

MEASURES: Marital quality is measured with a 10-item scale. Sample items are provided in the journal article, including: How happy are you with the amount of understanding you receive from your spouse? With the amount of love and affection you receive? With your sexual relationship? With your marriage overall? Response were scored in the direction of greater happiness (1 = not too happy; 2 = pretty happy; 3 = very happy)

COMMENTS: Not applicable

TITLE: The relationship between cohabitation and marital quality and stability: Change across cohorts?

AUTHOR: Claire M. Kamp Dush, Catherine L. Cohan, & Paul R. Amato.

PUBLICATION/CITATION : (August 2003). *The Journal of Marriage and Family*, 65, 539-549.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To compare the implications of cohabitation prior to marriage on marital stability and marital quality, measured as marital happiness and marital conflict, across two cohorts. They find cohabitation increases marital dissolution and reduces marital quality in both cohorts. Also, controlling for measured selection factors reduces but does not eliminate the effect, suggesting that cohabitation may have a causal effect in reducing marital quality and increasing dissolution. They note that the two perspectives are not mutually exclusive.

SOURCE OF DATA: Marital Instability Over the Life Course Study

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: A random digit dial telephone survey was conducted with a national sample of 2,034 married individuals 55 years old or younger in 1980. The 1964-1980 marriage cohort was drawn from this sample. In 1992 and 1997, 691 adult offspring from the original sample were interviewed. The 1981-1997 marriage cohort was created from this sample. Children of respondents in the original cohort were not included in the second cohort.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Telephone interviews

STUDY POPULATION: The analysis sample was aged 19-40 in the year of the interview and married.

MEASURE: Marital quality was defined as a function of two measures: marital happiness and marital conflict. Marital happiness was based on 11 surveys questions that assessed how happy people feel about aspects of their marriage. Sample questions include the amount of understanding received from the spouse, the spouse as a companion, their sexual relationship, and how happy people felt about their marriage overall. Responses were coded on a three-point scale: 1 = not too happy; 2 = pretty happy, and 3 = very happy, with higher scores indicating greater happiness. The reliability alpha for this scale was .89.

Marital conflict was assessed with a four-item scale on the amount and the seriousness of conflict between the spouses, ranging from general disagreements, to serious quarrels and physical aggression. The alpha for this scale was .54. [This might be better conceptualized as an index.] Higher scores on this scale indicate greater conflict.

Details on these scales can be found in Johnson, White, Edwards and Booth, 1986. *Dimensions of Marital Quality: Toward Methodological and Conceptual Refinement*. *Journal of Family Issues*, 7, 31-49.

COMMENTS: Not applicable.

TITLE: Predicting commitment to wed among Hispanic and Anglo partners.

AUTHOR: Adriana J. Umana-Taylor & Mark Fine.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (February 2003). *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 65, 117-139.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: to examine ethnic differences in commitment to marry by comparing Anglo and Hispanic men.

SOURCE OF DATA: Panel data were obtained

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: An initial random digit dial procedure in a Southwestern city recruited a sample of 464 individuals, for a 27% response rate among the eligible population.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Three phases of face-to-face interviews were conducted over a nine-month period. Phase I obtained background information and constructed the graph assessing "commitment to marry." Phase 2 was comprised of seven interviews lasting 15-20 minutes each, to update changes in their relationships and their graphs of commitment. The final interview was Phase 3, and the graph of commitment was completed and other information was also obtained.

STUDY POPULATION: Single and never-married, between 19 and 35 years of age, English speaking and currently dating someone of the opposite sex.

MEASURE: The graph of commitment was originally developed by: T.L. Huston, C Surra, N Fiszgerald, and R Cate (1981) *From Courtship to Marriage: Mate selection as an interpersonal process*. In Personal Relationships 2: Developing personal relationships, pages 53-88. New York: Academic Press. In this graph, commitment to marry is operationalized as the percentage chance of marriage, which is recorded on the y-axis of a graph. The graph ranges from 0 to 100% in 5% increments. On the x-axis, time in month is graphed. In the initial interview, the respondent was asked to give the date that the relationship began and the current date, and to assess the probability of marriage on both of those dates. Having marked those points, respondents were asked to identify "when they first noticed that the chance of marriage was different from what it had been at the beginning of the relationship," (page 121) and to provide an estimate for the probability of marriage on that date. Respondents were then asked to draw a line connecting the dots on the graph and to tell the interviewers as specifically as they could what happened to alter the probability of marriage. This procedure was continued through to the date of the interview, and the graph was drawn at each of the monthly interviews during Phase 2.

Also, a 14-item scale assessing attitudes toward marriage, adapted by Kinnaird and Gerrard 1986 was included. Sample items include: How difficult would it be for you to adjust to married life? Items were scored on a five-point Likert scale, going from "Not at all difficult" to "Very difficult." The Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .89 for Hispanics and .85 for Anglos.

COMMENTS: Not applicable.

TITLE: African American and European American women's marital well-being.

AUTHOR: Paula Y. Goodwin.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (August 2003). *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 65, 550-560.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To explore differences in the sources of marital well-being for African American as compared with European American women. She finds that emotional health, trust for one's spouse, and feeling underbenefited affect marital well-being for both groups, while physical health and relationships with in-laws are more important for African American than for European American wives.

SOURCE OF DATA: The Early Years of Marriage Study, by the Institute for Survey Research at the University of Michigan

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: A sample of 574 couples applying for marriage licenses drawn from Wayne County, Michigan, in 1986, including 199 African American and 174 European American couples, who were interviewed in a panel study.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Respondents were interviewed separately using structured questions. Then the couples together "constructed narratives, rated the importance of marital ideals, and were asked to resolve the difference regarding marital ideals" (page. 553).

STUDY POPULATION: Data for these analyses were drawn from the third year of the study. The sample included couples that had not separated or divorced in the initial years of the study, including 115 African American and 132 European American couples.

MEASURE: Marital well-being was assessed with a scale developed by S.E. Crohan and J. Verhoff, 1989. See: *Dimensions of Marital Well-being Among White and Black Newlyweds*. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 51, 373-383. This scale included five indicators: 1: marital happiness (e.g., taking all things together, how would you describe your marriage?), 2: marital certainty (e.g., how certain are you that you will be married in 5 years), 3: marital stability (e.g., How stable do you feel your marriage is?), 4: marital satisfaction (e.g., all in all, how satisfied are you with your marriage?), 5: thoughts of marital dissolution (e.g., in the last few months, how often have you considered leaving your husband/wife?) The average of the respondent's scores on all items was taken, with higher scores indicating higher well-being. Cronbach's alpha was .92 for African American wives and .86 for European American wives.

Based on work by Lewis and Spanier, 1979, the article uses an ecological perspective on marriage, that distinguishes individual resources, interpersonal resources, and social and economic resources. To examine interpersonal resources, measures of trust and equity were used. The measure of perceived equity asked "respondents who they felt benefited most from the marital relationship: self, spouse or both benefit equally" (page 554). Responses were coded into categories of underbenefiting, overbenefiting and equal benefits. Trust was measured "by asking respondents whether their spouses could be trusted" (page 554), with answers ranging from one to ten, with higher scores indicating more trust in the spouse. Details are available in Lewis, R.S. and G. B. Spanier. 1979. *Theorizing About the Quality and Stability of Marriage*. In W.R. Burr, R. Hill, F.I. Nye and I. L. Reiss Editors, *Contemporary Theories About the Family*, pages 268-294. New York: Macmillan.

COMMENTS : Not applicable.

TITLE: Division of labor, perceived fairness, and marital quality: The effect of gender ideology.

AUTHORS: Yoav Lavee & Ruth Katz.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (February 2002). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 64, 27-39.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To assess the association between the division of household labor, perceived fairness of and marital quality, in a population viewed as in transition

SOURCE OF DATA: Respondents were interviewed in their homes by research assistants in their own language.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: A diverse but not representative sample. All respondents were married and had at least one child living at home.

STUDY POPULATION: Israeli sample, including 214 Christian Arabs, 450 Moslems, and 460 Jewish married adults, including both men and women.

MEASURES: Marital quality was measured with the short version of ENRICH, Enriching Relationship Issues, Communication and Happiness (Fowers and Olson 1992). This is a ten-item Likert-type scale that address ten dimensions of the perceived quality of each person's marriage, including the personal traits of their husband or wife, communication, parenting, conflict resolution, leisure activities, sexuality, relationships with their extended family, leisure activities, religious practices, division of labor in the household, and management of finances. Cronbach's alpha was .84, and the researchers note that this scale has been used extensively by researchers in Israel, in both Hebrew and Arabic versions. The researchers removed the division of labor item from the scale, in order to use it as a separate variable. In descriptive analyses, they find no significant differences in marital quality for men in the three religious/ethnic groups; but significant group differences for the women, with Christian women reporting a significantly lower level of marital quality than either the Moslem or the Jewish women.

TITLE: Why stay married? Rewards, barriers, and marital stability.

AUTHOR: Denise Previtii & Paul R. Amato.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (August 2003). *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 65, 561-573.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: This is an analysis of responses to an open-ended question, "What are the most important factors keeping your marriage together?" Results indicate that rewards (such as love, respect, friendship and communication) were more frequently mentioned than barriers. Alternatives were rarely mentioned. Unhappily married people tended to view their marriages mainly in terms of barriers, while happily married people tended to view their marriages primarily in terms of rewards. Those who described their marriages primarily in terms of barriers in response to the open-ended question were, over time, particularly likely to divorce. This differed from people who identified a large number of barriers in response to closed-ended questions, who were actually less likely to divorce.

SOURCE OF DATA: The data are from the Marital Instability Over the Life Course study, a 17-year longitudinal study of 2,034 married individuals under age 55.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: This is a telephone survey conducted in households with a telephone that began in 1980. Just 17 percent could not be reached after 20 telephone calls. Of those contacted, 78 percent completed the interview.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Interviewers transcribed as many comments as the respondents provided to the question about the most important factors keeping their marriage together. The number of factors given ranged from one to six. These responses were coded into rewards, barriers, and alternatives.

STUDY POPULATION: Married couples in the United States in which both partners are age 55 or younger.

MEASURE: A single open-ended question was asked of respondents: "What are the most important factors keeping your marriage together?" Responses to this question were arrayed against an 11-item scale that assessed marital happiness in 1983. This scale included items such as, "How happy are you with the amount of understanding you receive from your spouse? With the amount of love and affection you receive from your spouse? With the extent to which you and your spouse agree about things?" Response categories were 1 = not too happy; 2 = pretty happy; and 3 = very happy. This scale had an alpha of .87.

A second scale included 13 items and assessed divorce proneness, and included items such as thinking that one's marriage is in trouble or thinking about divorce, discussing divorce with the spouse, or discussing divorce with family and friends. The alpha for this scale was .91.

Barriers to divorce were measured by eight items that assessed factors that were "important to keeping your marriage together." These items were rated as 1 = not very important; 2 = somewhat important; and 3 = very important. An alpha of .72 was found. Items included barriers such as financial security, religious beliefs, dependence on the spouse or the spouse on the respondent, disapproval, concern about children or about losing their children, and not wanting to leave the family's home.

TITLE: “If I help my partner, will it hurt me?” Perceptions of sacrifice in romantic relationships.

AUTHOR: Article provided by Scott Stanley.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: Unpublished manuscript.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: This study examine the associations among commitment to a relationship, perceptions of sacrifice made for the relationship, and the well-being of the individual and the relationship. Results indicate gender differences, with females being willing to sacrifice for their partner independent of a long-term commitment. However, males seem most willing to sacrifice for females without resentment when a relationship clearly involves a long-term commitment. The authors note that cohabitation may particularly place women in circumstances where sacrifice is not symmetrical.

SOURCE OF DATA: The authors collected data for this study

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: The sample included ten couples where one partner was a graduate student in psychology, 66 couples who were in a relationship enrichment program, and another 69 couples who answered a newspaper ad in Denver, for a total of 290 people or 145 couples. Data are cross-sectional.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Participants were given a packet with the questionnaire and instructions. Partners were told to complete the measures separately and not to share answers and to return it.

STUDY POPULATION: The sample is almost entirely Caucasian, generally in their thirties and forties, and college-educated.

MEASURE: The Couple Identity Subscale of Stanley and Markman’s (1992) Commitment Inventory was used. This is a 6-item subscale asking partners whether they see their relationship as a team, etc. Alpha in this study was .68, which is lower than in the original study, primarily because the alpha for females was quite low (.53).

Overall commitment was measured with a single item, “All things considered, how committed would you say you are to your partner?”

The Relationship Agenda Subscale assessed partner’s long-term perspective of their relationship and how much they want it to continue, using six statements on a seven-point Likert scale. An alpha of .78 was obtained.

Satisfaction with Sacrifice was also used from Stanley and Markman’s Commitment Inventory. It is comprised of statements assessing how satisfied partners feel with sacrificing for their partner or relationship. A new scale measuring Perceptions of Sacrifice as Harmful was included. It sums the ratings of perceptions divided by the number of behaviors that had been performed at least once to produce a mean value. The final eleven –item version had an alpha of .87.

The study measured relationship quality with the Marital Adjustment Test developed by Locke and Wallace (1959).

TITLE: Assessing commitment in personal relationships.

AUTHOR: Scott Stanley & Howard J. Markman.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (August 1992). *The Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 54, 595-608.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: The authors provide a conceptual model of relationship commitment and a measure that corresponds to the model. The conceptual commitment as comprised of two constructs: personal dedicating and constraint commitment. The authors develop a commitment inventory measure which they test in an initial pilot sample and then in a larger sample to explore internal reliability, concurrent validity, and construct validity. Analyses examining coefficient alphas, factor analyses, and correlations between the commitment inventory and other measures (e.g., commitment varied depending upon whether couples were dating, engaged or married) indicate that the inventory works well, though it needs to be tested in more diverse samples. No gender differences were found. The presence of children was found associated with great constraint commitment. Relationship satisfaction was found to have different patterns than commitment, indicating that the two constructs are distinct.

SOURCE OF DATA: Students and other subjects were asked to participate in the initial phase of the work to develop subscales. Those who were willing were given packets to complete and return. Subjects for the second study, to examine internal consistency and validity, were recruited from varied religious groups, classes, and a marital research project.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: Since the purpose of these two studies was to develop and then use a new measure of commitment, convenience samples were used. These samples include few low income or minority participants, though the samples did vary in terms of marital status, age, religion and education.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: The authors and their associates developed 16 items for each of the dimensions, half worded positively and half negatively. Likert response scales were used, with a seven-point range going from strong agree to strongly disagree. Items were chosen so that each subscale would have an alpha of .70 or higher. Also, individual items were required to correlate more highly with the specific subscale than with the other subscales. All ten subscales met these criteria.

STUDY POPULATION: The study is based on a convenience sample from church groups, graduate students in psychology, and undergraduate psychology classes, plus contacts in the community. Nearly half of the sample was married, while others were dating, exclusive dating, or engaged.

MEASURE: Stanley and Markman conceptualize commitment as comprised of two interdependent constructs, Personal Dedication and Constraint, each of which has multiple components.

Personal Dedication encompasses a desire for the relationship to continue over the long run (Relationship Agenda), the priority of the relationship in the person's activities (Primacy of Relationship), the degree to which an individual thinks of the relationship as a team rather than separate individuals (Couple Identity), partner's satisfaction with doing things for the primary benefit of their partner (Satisfaction with Sacrifice), scanning for potential new partners (Alternative Monitoring), and one's general level of commitments (Meta-commitment).

They conceptualize Constraint Commitment as including constraints due to being intertwined in possessions and money (Structural Investments), to pressures from others to sustain the relationship (Social Pressure), the difficulty of the steps necessary to end a relationship (Termination Procedures), feelings about the kinds of life changes that might occur if the relationship ended, e.g., losing a house or economic security (Unattractiveness of Alternatives), perceptions of the availability of new partners (Availability of Partners), and feelings about the moral appropriateness of divorce (Morality of Divorce).

A factor analysis found three factors, one corresponding to constraint, and one dominated by items from the Morality of Divorce subscale and some items from the Satisfaction with Sacrifice subscale. Evidence of concurrent validity is also provided. For example, a single item asking how long the person wants the relationship to last is correlated with both dedication and constraint, but particularly dedication. Gender differences were not found. Constraint Dedication increased with relationship stage and the presence of children.

COMMENTS: This is a critical paper for the marriage measurement field.

TITLE: Race differences in attitudinal and motivational factors in the decision to marry.

AUTHOR: Richard A. Bulcroft & Kris A Bulcroft.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1993). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 55, 338-355.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To explore the role of marital attitudes in explaining racial differences in marriage.

SOURCE OF DATA: National Survey of Families and Households

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME:

Unmarried black and white respondents under age 35 were asked about their feelings about marriage.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S:

STUDY POPULATION:

Unweighted sample size of 1,434.

MEASURES:

Perceived likelihood of marriage

Single 4-item scale ranging from 0 (not at all likely), 1 (will marry someday), 2 (will marry current partner), 3 (has current plans made to marry current partner).

Attitudes about perceived emotional and economic benefits of marriage

“Never-married respondents were asked, ‘Please circle how you think your life might be different if you were married now.’”

Respondents were asked to rate the following categories from 1, much worse to 5, much better:

Sample categories-

- a.) Standard of living
- b.) Economic security
- c.) Overall happiness
- d.) Personal freedom
- e.) Economic independence
- f.) Sex life
- g.) Friendships
- h.) Relations with parents
- i.) Emotional security

(Cronbach’s alpha=.84)

Used factor analysis to distinguish between ratings of economic and social emotional benefits of marriage.

Economic scale was made up of: standard of living, economic security, and economic independence. (alpha reliability=.84)

Social emotional scale was made up of: overall happiness, sex life, friendships, parent relations, and emotional security (alpha reliability=.77)

Importance of traditional mate selection criteria

Respondents asked how willing they were to marry someone with the following characteristics with responses ranging from 1 (not at all willing) to 7 (very willing):

- 1.) Older by 5 years or more
- 2.) Younger by 5 years or more
- 3.) Previously married

- 4.) Already had children
- 5.) Not likely to hold a steady job
- 6.) Different religion
- 7.) Different race
- 8.) Would earn much less
- 9.) Would earn much more
- 10.) More educated
- 11.) Less educated

Based on factor analysis of these items, two scales were distinguished. An economic-focused willingness to marry nontraditional mate (differing by gender and summing responses on gender, income, and education—and excluding age) scale was created with an alpha reliability of .73.

A marital family dimension of nontraditional mate choice (willingness to marry someone who had been married before and someone who already had children) scale was created with an alpha reliability of .81.

Economic factors in marital timing

Sample of items measuring how economic support factors into marital timing rated from 1 (not at all important) to 7 (very important):

- 1.) Having enough money saved
- 2.) Finishing planned schooling
- 3.) Being established in a job
- 4.) Having one's spouse finished with planned school
- 5.) Having one's spouse established in a job

This scale had an alpha reliability of .84.

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Reported with measures above.

COMMENTS:

Analyses seem to be cross-sectional. Based on Wave I data (1987-1988).

Hypothesis that blacks desire marriage less was an explanation for difference in lower marriage rate was not supported.

In fact, black females had the highest marital expectations, though this expectation decreased over time (remained higher than other groups across marriageable age groups). Black women were also more likely to see marriage as a preferable state.

Though the relationship was found to be nonsignificant after controlling for other factors, black males had slightly lower expectations to marry than white men.

However, blacks were found to have more restrictive marriage requirements (traditional marriage norms—black women's high expectations for mates-- that may be hard to meet in the marriage market) that may decrease their likelihood of marriage. For instance:

Blacks were more likely to emphasize the importance of having economic supports in place before marrying. Blacks were more likely to be unwilling to marry someone who was previously married or who already has a child.

TITLE: Attitudes, values, and entrance into cohabitational versus marital unions.

AUTHOR: Marin Clarkberg, Ross M. Stolzenberg, & Linda J. Waite.

PUBLICATION/CITATION: (1995). *Social Forces*, 74(2), 609-634.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To determine if attitudes and values concerning marriage, work, leisure time, family, money and sex roles affect the choice between marriage and cohabitation.

SOURCE OF DATA: The 1986 wave of the National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: Nationally representative of high school seniors in 1972.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS: High school seniors were originally interviewed in 1972 and followed up in 1973, '74, '76, '79, and '86. Detailed marriage and cohabitation histories were collected in the 1986 survey.

STUDY POPULATION: Sample includes 12,841 respondents from the 1986 wave, who originally entered the study in 1972 when they were high school seniors (approximately 18 years old).

MEASURES:

Attitudes: Six separate items measure attitudes believed to be related to the choice between marriage and cohabitation. Each item has responses of 1 (not important), 2 (somewhat important) and 3 (very important).

“How important is each of the following to you in your life?”

- 7) finding the right person to marry and having a happy family life
- 8) living close to parents and relatives
- 9) being successful in my line of work
- 10) being able to find steady work
- 11) having lots of money
- 12) having leisure to enjoy my own interests

Sex-role liberalism: Factor analysis of 10 items yielded two dimensions: 1) traditional male-female roles, and 2) views on correcting gender inequality. Items measured in both the 1976 survey and the 1979 survey.

	Loading 1976	Loading 1979
1) a working mother of preschool children can be just as good a mother as the woman who doesn't work	-.3124	-.4011
2) it is usually better for everyone if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home & family	.7119	.7304
3) young men should be encouraged to take jobs that are usually filled by women (nursing, secretarial work, etc)	-.0084	-.0170
4) most women are just not interested in having big & important jobs	.4449	.4403
5) many qualified women can't get good jobs: men with the same skills have less trouble	-.0037	.0128
6) most women are happiest when they are making a home & caring for children	.6706	.6448
7) high school counselors should urge young women to train for jobs which are not held mainly by men	-.0148	-.0498

8) it is more important for a wife to help her husband than to have a career for herself	.6914	.7307
9) schools teach women to want less important jobs	.0198	.0673
10) men should be given first chance at most jobs because they have the primary responsibility for providing for a family	.5959	.6348

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Views of traditional male-female roles:

- In 1976 data, this factor explained 42.8% of the variance & had a Tucker-Lewis reliability coefficient of .92
- In 1979 data, this factor explained 47.7% of the variance & had a Tucker-Lewis reliability coefficient of .93

Predictive Validity: Stronger beliefs in the importance of marriage are associated with a lower likelihood of cohabitation. Higher levels of sex-role liberalism are related to a greater probability that one’s first union will be a cohabitation rather than a marriage.

COMMENTS: Attitudes towards and values related to marriage have a significant effect on whether couples choose marriage or cohabitation. Those who do not view marriage as an important life goal are more likely to cohabit, as are those who hold more non-traditional ideas about gender-specific marital roles.

TITLE: A generic measure of relationship satisfaction.

AUTHOR: Hendrick, Susan S.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1988). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 50, 1, 93-98.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To widen the focus of the Marital Assessment Questionnaire to romantic relationships in general, to explore the psychometric characteristics of the revised measure, and to provide initial information on the scale's validity and potential utility.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Self administered questionnaire administered to groups of students who received course credit for participation.

STUDY POPULATION: Sample 1: 125 undergraduate students enrolled in psychology courses at a large southwestern university in the fall of 1986 who reported themselves to be "in love." Sample 2: 57 couples in ongoing relationships

MEASURE: *The Relational Assessment Scale (RAS)* (Hendricks, 1988). Scores could range from 1 (low satisfaction) to 5 (high satisfaction). Items 4 and 7 are reverse coded.

8. How well does your partner meet your needs?
9. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?
10. How good is your relationship compared to most?
11. How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?
12. To what extent has your relationship met with your original expectations?
13. How much do you love your partner?
14. How many problems are there in your relationship?

PSYCHOMETRICS: In sample 1, analyses revealed a unifactorial scale structure, and moderate inter-correlations among the items. In sample 2, the analyses supported a single factor, alpha reliability of .86, and correlations with relevant relationship measures. The scale correlated .80 with a longer criterion measure, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976), and both scales were effective (with a sub-sample) in discriminating couples who stayed together from couples who broke up. In sum, this is a psychometrically sound, generic measure of relationship satisfaction.

COMMENTS: N/A

TITLE: Assessing inter-parental conflict: Reports of parents and adolescents in European American and Mexican-American families.

AUTHOR: Jeanne M. Tscahnn, Elena Flores, Lauri A. Pasch, and Barbara VanOss Marin.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1999). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61, 269-283.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: 1) To develop and test the Multidimensional Assessment of Inter-parental Conflict (MAIC) Scale and assess its utility for the measurement of inter-parental conflict in European American and Mexican American populations.

SOURCE OF DATA: Members of a large Health Maintenance Organization

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: Random selection of a sample of adolescents and their parents from the membership list of a large health maintenance organization (name not provided). Families eligible for participation in research if they had adolescents between ages of 12 and 15 years, if the parents of adolescents were married or living together, and if all three family members were either U.S.-born European Americans or Mexican Americans.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Parents sent letters introducing research, then telephoned, and screened for eligibility. Family members interviewed individually in the HMO clinic or the research offices.

STUDY POPULATION: Adolescents age 12-15 and their parents who are married or living together who are U.S.-born European Americans or Mexican Americans with no severe learning disabilities.

MEASURE: Multidimensional Assessment of Inter-parental Conflict (MAIC) Scale
(* Items should be reverse-scored).

Conflict behavior:

These questions are about how people typically deal with problems in their relationships with their spouses. Please think about the times you feel like there is some problem in your relationship or something is bothering you or you want something different from what your spouse wants. For each question, circle the number that best shows how often you, yourself, do this.

When you are aware that there is a problem in the relationship, how often do you:

1. try to discuss the problem?*
2. discuss topics that you know might lead to conflict?*
3. avoid discussing the problem?
4. bring up a problem as soon as it bothers you?*
5. put off talking about an issue about which you disagree?
6. watch TV or do something else instead of discussing the problem?

Frequency.

For all couples, no matter how well they get along, there are times when they disagree, get annoyed with the other person, or just have spats or fights because they're in a bad mood or tired or for some other reason. People have a lot of different ways of dealing with problems in their relationships. Remember that questions about "your child" refer to the child participating in the research.

1. How often do you and your spouse have an unpleasant disagreement?

Content.

2. How often do you and your spouse have an unpleasant disagreement that is about your child in some way?
3. How many times in the past 30 days have you had an argument about your child, such as discipline, homework or school problems, friends, going out, or anything else having to do with this child?

Behavior during conflict (Demand, Withdraw, Express feelings, Dominate)

These questions are about various things husbands and wives sometimes do when they are having an argument with each other. For each question, please circle the number that shows how often you, yourself, do this.

During an argument, how often do you:

Demand

- 2. blame your spouse?
- 9. criticize your spouse?
- 13. demand that your spouse change?

Withdraw

- 3. withdraw from your spouse?
- 6. become silent?
- 10. refuse to discuss the topic?
- 12. refuse to discuss the problem further?
- 15. ask to be left alone?

Express feelings

- 1. express your feelings to your spouse?
- 5. tell your spouse that you feel hurt or sad?
- 8. tell your spouse that you feel angry or frustrated?

Dominate

- 4. interrupt your spouse?
- 7. talk louder than your spouse so he or she can't interrupt you?
- 11. dominate the discussion?
- 14. try to have the last word?

Child Involvement

These questions are about things children sometimes do when parents are having an argument. For each question, please circle the number that shows how often this happens when you and your spouse are having an argument. Remember that questions about “your child” refer to the child participating in the research.

During an argument with your spouse, how often:

- 1. does your child get involved in the argument?
- 2. does your child try to protect one parent from the other?
- 3. does your child tell one parent that he or she is wrong?
- 4. does your child side with one parent against the other?
- 5. does your child argue with one parent?

Conflict resolution (Parent Perception)

Now please think about how things are after an argument with your spouse is over. There is a list of things people sometimes feel or do after an argument with their husband or wife. For each question, please circle the number that shows how often you, yourself, feel or do this.

After an argument with your spouse, how often do you:

- 1. still feel angry at your spouse?*
- 2. remember what your spouse did for a long time?*
- 3. soon find yourself arguing again with your spouse about the same thing?*
- 4. stay mad for a long time?*
- 5. still feel bothered by the problem?*

Conflict resolution (Adolescent Perception)

This is a list of things kids sometimes think or feel once an argument between their parents is over. For each question, circle the number that best describes how you feel when an argument between your parents is over.

When an argument between my parents is over:

- 1. I feel like things are back to normal.

2. I think that my parents are just pretending everything is okay.*
3. I feel that things are tense around the house.*
4. I feel I have to be careful so one of my parents doesn't get mad at me.*
5. I feel like I want to get out of the house.*
6. I worry that one of my parents will get mad at me.*

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Factor Structure: The MAIC dimensions have good scale properties. For European Americans, all but 4 of the 32 Comparative Fit Indices (CFI) coefficients were above .90. For Mexican Americans, all but 5 of the 32 CFI coefficients were above .90. For both ethnic groups the same items loaded on each scale.

Internal Consistency: The MAIC dimensions have good internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the inter-parental conflict dimensions, separate for each ethnic group and each family member are listed below. (Abbreviations for raters' alphas are EA=European American, MA=Mexican American, m=mother, f=father, a=adolescent. Items shown are for parents. For adolescents, items were revised slightly to refer to parents, mother, or father, as appropriate).

Conflict behavior:

Conflict avoidance (alphas: EAm=.85, EAf=.86, MAm=.70, MAf=.67)

Content.

(alphas: EAm=.70, EAf=.69, MAm=.64, MAf=.52, MAa=.66)

Behavior during conflict.

Demand (alphas: mother demand: EAm=.72, EAf=.85, EAa=.76, MAm=.60, MAf=.72, MAa=.67; father demand: EAm=.80, EAf=.69, EAa=.81, MAm=.73, MAf=.61, MAa=.72)

Withdraw (alphas: mother withdraw: EAm=.77, EAf=.89, EAa=.72, MAm=.58, MAf=.68, MAa=.53; father withdraw: EAm=.89, EAf=.85, EAa=.60, MAm=.73, MAf=.61, MAa=.72)

Express feelings (alphas: mother express: EAm=.75, EAf=.73, EAa=.70, MAm=.69, MAf=.64, MAa=.58; father express: EAm=.83, EAf=.69, EAa=.70, MAm=.63, MAf=.61, MAa=.64)

Dominate (alphas: mother dominate: EAm=.76, EAf=.83, EAa=.66, MAm=.75, MAf=.74, MAa=.71; father express: EAm=.86, EAf=.73, EAa=.81, MAm=.79, MAf=.68, MAa=.76)

Child Involvement

(alphas: EAm=.85, EAf=.86, EAa=.81, MAm=.83, MAf=.80, MAa=.79)

Conflict resolution (Parent Perception)

(alphas: EAm=.80, EAf=.84, MAm=.84, MAf=.80)

Conflict resolution (Adolescent Perception)

(alphas: EAa=.86, MAa=.79)

Interrater Agreement: In general, family members showed moderate agreement with one another on the inter-parental conflict dimensions. Agreement between parents was significantly higher for European American parents than Mexican-American parents on mothers' verbal aggression ($rs=.53, .24, p<.01$), fathers' verbal aggression ($rs=.48, .26, p<.05$), and fathers' demand ($rs=.38, .14, p<.05$). Agreement between mothers and adolescents was higher for European Americans than for Mexican American on fathers' demands ($rs=.47, .21, p<.05$) and fathers' dominate ($rs=.41, .20, p<.05$).

Validity: (Parents). Evidence of validity is derived through significant relations between MAIC-P and global marital satisfaction by parent. All but one dimension of inter-parental conflict associated with marital satisfaction. Only mothers' expression of feelings unrelated to marital satisfaction for fathers. Generally parents reporting poorer conflict resolution had especially low marital satisfaction.

(Adolescents). To test the validity of the MAIC for adolescents, correlations between inter-parental conflict and adolescent self-perceptions of scholastic competence, behavioral conduct, and global self-worth were computed. For adolescent ratings of inter-parental conflict, each conflict dimension was related to one or more self-perceptions.

COMMENTS: Sample selective of European American and Mexican-American populations in two-parent families with adolescents between ages 12 and 15 drawn from HMO membership list. Applicability to other

populations such as blended families or clinic-based samples still needs to be examined. Although dimensions of the MAIC contain same items for both ethnic groups, cannot conclude that scale meanings are the same for the two groups. For example, withdrawal from conflict may mean one thing for Mexican Americans and another for European Americans.

Attitudes, Norms, and Values in Healthy Marriages

Synopsis of the Measurement of Attitudes, Norms, and Values in Healthy Marriages

Prepared by
Zakia Redd, M.P.P.

I. Overview and Definitions

Certain measures of marital quality, including most measures of marital attitudes and values, are infrequently used by social scientists conducting marriage research. Blaine Fowers (2003), in a recent review of the literature, found that commitment and trust, which are arguably two crucial components of a healthy marriage, are commonly left out of most studies examining the quality of marriages. In his review, Fowers found that other measures, such as marital conflict, are covered widely in the literature, while measures of marital attitudes and values seem to be underrepresented (2003). This section focuses on studies that used the related constructs of attitudes about marriage, personal values regarding marriage, and social norms about the institution of marriage. Below are definitions of these constructs based on how they are operationalized in the studies reviewed.

Attitudes

For the purposes of this report, we define attitudes towards marriage as a person's individual beliefs about marriage, such as their beliefs about what is important in a marriage. In some cases, attitudes towards marriage are reported as an individual's negative or positive orientation towards marriage. Marital expectations and marital preferences are also sometimes placed into the category of marital attitudes.

Values

We distinguish this from values regarding marriage, which are defined as personal judgments or internalized beliefs about what one finds to be acceptable behavior within or outside of marriage. A person's gender role attitudes may represent one's beliefs about roles that a person believes it is important that a husband and wife play and what they expect for themselves, and these beliefs are likely to be driven by their personal values about traditional gender roles. Marital values may also represent one's personal views about the importance of the institution of marriage. Marital values, as defined here, are fundamental beliefs that are able to influence an individual's personal behavior.

Social norms

Social norms, on the other hand, are broad-based societal beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors. As social norms change, they tend to influence behavior over time. However, this relationship isn't unidirectional, as changes in group behavior may influence social normative beliefs as well. For instance, cohabitation and nonmarital childbearing are demographic behaviors that have increased substantially over the past several decades, while at the same time becoming more socially accepted. It's also possible that as these behaviors became more socially accepted, they affect individuals' beliefs or values and influence their behaviors. Social norms, at the measure level, may be the same as those designed to measure individuals' values, normative beliefs, and attitudes about marriage and divorce, but they are reported at the aggregate level as social indicators. Alternatively, these measures sometimes try to capture social beliefs about marriage by asking broad questions such as whether marriage is undervalued in society or whether divorce is too common. A study measuring social norms might report on whether teenagers' aspirations for getting married and starting a family have changed over time.

II. Measures of Attitudes, Norms, and Values used in the Literature

A large and diverse set of measures has been identified measuring marital attitudes, norms, and values. Some measures, such as those on marital attitudes and gender role attitudes (which seems to be the most commonly measured of the marital attitudes), are used widely. As noted earlier, other seemingly important attitudinal constructs, such as measures of commitment or trust, appear in only a few studies.

Questions about marital attitudes and expectations and personal values about the institution of marriage are covered in small-scale as well as in large-scale surveys. Sample items for these measures are reported below.

Gender role attitudes.

Gender role attitudes are the most common outcome measured in all the studies reviewed.

Sample items from gender role attitudes scales include: woman's most important task is being a mother; husband should earn a larger salary than his wife; husband should share equally in household chores if wife works full time.

Attitudes about divorce.

Sample items of attitudes about divorce include: couples are able to get divorced too easily today; it is okay for people to get married, thinking that if it does not work out, they can always get a divorce; the personal happiness of an individual is more important than putting up with a bad marriage; marriage is for life, even if the couple is unhappy

Traditional sex values.

Sample items for the Sexual Permissiveness With Attachment Scale include: full sexual relations are acceptable for a man before marriage if he feels strong affection for his partner; full sexual relations are acceptable for a woman before marriage if she is engaged to the man.

Family traditionalism beliefs.

Sample items from the Traditional Family Concepts Scale include: in my marriage, I want the wife to be first of all a mother and homemaker; in my marriage, I want the husband to be the chief breadwinner for the family.

Romanticism scale.

Sample items for the Romanticism Scale include: to be truly in love is to be in love forever; there is only one real love for a person.

Attitudes about the purpose of marriage.

Sample items tapping attitudes about the purpose of marriage (ranked by level of personal importance) include: a respected place in the community; healthy and happy children; companionship; personality development; amount of love and affection; economic security.

Attitudes about perceived emotional and economic benefits of marriage.

Sample response categories from this questionnaire included the following: (Respondents rated the following categories from 1, much worse to 5, much better): standard of living; economic security; overall happiness; personal freedom; emotional security

Expectations to marry.

Sample items about marital expectations include: not at all likely; will marry current partner; has current plans made to marry current partner.

Commitment.

Sample categories include personal commitment (couple identity); moral commitment (values about marriage); and structural commitment (divorce is a burden; hard for kids).

Gender distrust.

This measure was used in the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study. Items include: how much you trust your partner to remain sexually faithful; general belief that men (or women) cannot be trusted to be faithful; and in a dating relationship, a man (woman) is largely out to take advantage of a woman (man) (Carlson, McLanahan, & England, 2003).

Trust.

Sample items from The Dyadic Trust Scale include: there are times when my partner cannot be trusted; I feel that my partner can be counted on to help me.

Social norms.

Social norms are usually covered in large-scale state or national surveys. Studies collecting such measures are able to capture the views of a given population regarding marriage, divorce, or their expectations about marriage. Below are samples of questions from selected national datasets.

- Gallup Poll: includes information on expectations to marry sometime; beliefs about whether divorced couples tried hard to save marriages; and beliefs about the importance of parenthood.

Monitoring the Future: includes information on those who expect to get married in the long run; beliefs that good marriage and family life are important; likelihood that they will be in a lifelong marriage; believe in monogamous relationships; feelings that they would be a good spouse; beliefs about whether one sees so few good or happy marriages that one questions it as a way of life.

III. Strengths and Weaknesses of Existing Measures of Attitudes, Norms, and Values

The measures of attitudes, norms, and values regarding marriage for which psychometric properties were reported in the studies included in this review were strong. A number of measures have only been tested on specific populations and need to be tested on larger groups in order to ensure that they work well for different groups (e.g., people from different income levels, racial and ethnic backgrounds, locations).

The Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from .63 to .93 across the set of studies reviewed here. While these measures were strong, the scales sometimes seem to be less strong than some of the other marital scales included in the studies, such as certain measures of couple communication and conflict, though they are still fairly high.

IV. Conceptual Gaps in the Existing Research on Marital Attitudes, Norms, and Values

For the purposes of the current project, it seems important to explore why marital expectations and aspirations among some groups do not always lead to marriage. For instance, longitudinal studies looking at different racial and ethnic groups find that black women have high aspirations to marry and have a positive orientation towards marriage, yet they are much less likely to marry than white women.

In addition, some studies have shown that African American women have higher expectations for their mates regarding economic viability and prior family history. For instance, they report being less tolerant of men who are not as economically self-sufficient (or who are not more economically self-sufficient) than themselves, of men who were previously married, or of men who have children from a prior marital or nonmarital relationship. Such expectations for potential mates may also limit marital prospects.

In general, it may be important to examine how these attitudes and reported values match actual behaviors.

There is also a need for congruence studies that try to capture attitudes or values symmetry among spouses, as these may also be important for how these attitudes can affect marital quality and outcomes.

In terms of social norms, more research is needed to understand how they predict to individuals' marital attitudes and behaviors.

V. Discussion and Conclusion about Marital Attitudes, Norms, and Values

As stated earlier, marital attitudes and values seem to be underrepresented in the marriage literature. As relatively little research on healthy marriages has been conducted using these measures, a number of gaps remain. Based on the few studies that have included measures of trust or gender mistrust, more broadly, these are concepts that predict marital outcomes and should not be missing from studies exploring marriage. Recent ethnographic and statistical analyses by those using Fragile Families data on low-income, urban samples (Edin, 2000; Carlson, McLanahan, & England, 2003) suggests that these attitudes are quite important for low-income populations--both in terms of predicting their likelihood to enter into marriages as well as to maintain their marriages. For instance, positive attitudes about marriage and marital expectations (or plans) have also been found to associated with higher relationship stability among cohabiting couples (Axinn & Thornton, 1993; Clarkberg, Stolzenberg, & Waite, 1995; McGinnis, 2003).

The collection of social normative beliefs about marriage is important, as these attitudes are indicators of how society views the health of marriage as an institution. Furthermore, these social norms among children and youth may eventually affect social behaviors regarding marriage and divorce in the future.

Measure	Article Using Measure	Psychometric Data
Attitudes about perceived emotional and economic benefits (or costs) of marriage	Richard A. Bulcroft and Kris A Bulcroft, 1993	Alpha of .84 for attitudes about perceived emotional and economic benefits of marriage measures.
	Barbara Dafoe Whitehead and David Popenoe, 1999	Not provided.
	John Schulenberg, Jerald G. Bachman, Lloyd D. Johnston, and Patrick M. O'Malley, 1994	Not provided.
	Susan G. Timmer and Terri L. Orbuch, 2001	Not provided.
	Arland Thornton & Linda Young-DeMarco, 2001	Not provided.
	Sandra L. McGinnis, 2003	Alpha coefficient of .794 for costs and .827 for benefits
Attitudes and Preferences about Future Family	John Schulenberg, Jerald G. Bachman, Lloyd D. Johnston, and Patrick M. O'Malley, 1994	Not provided.
	Barbara Dafoe Whitehead and David Popenoe, 1999	Not provided.
	Arland Thornton & Linda Young-DeMarco, 2001	Not provided.
Commitment	Michael P. Johnson, John P. Caughlin, and Ted L. Huston, 1999	Alpha coefficient of .80 for the commitment index.
	Steven L. Nock, 1995	
	Susan Sprecher, Sandra Metts, Brant Burleson, Elaine Hatfield,	Alpha coefficient for commitment was .79 for men and

Measure	Article Using Measure	Psychometric Data
	and Alicia Thompson, 1995	.75 for women.
Feelings about amount of time needed before ready to marry	Jeffry H. Larson, Mark J. Benson, Stephan M. Wilson, and Nilufer Medora, 1998 John Schulenberg, Jerald G. Bachman, Lloyd D. Johnston, and Patrick M. O'Malley, 1994	Not provided. Not provided.
Feelings about marriage	Jeffry H. Larson, Mark J. Benson, Stephan M. Wilson, and Nilufer Medora, 1998	Alpha coefficient of .81 for four-item scale measuring feelings about marriage.
Future Events Questionnaire	Kristen McCabe and Douglas Barnett, 2000	Positive Relationship Events subscale (3 items, alpha=.62) Positive Career Events subscale (9 items, alpha=.71).
Future Orientation Interview	Kristen McCabe and Douglas Barnett, 2000	Interviewers and coders were trained until an acceptable interrater reliability was achieved. "The correlation coefficients ranged from .46 for coding of detail for family to 1.0 for codings for realism for career, with an average reliability coefficient of .81." (p. 66) All cases were rated by both coders with consensus discussions occurring in cases of disagreement.
Gender Role Attitudes (Traditionalism vs. Egalitarianism)	Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth., 1995 Sharon Sassler and Robert Schoen, 1999 John Schulenberg, Jerald G. Bachman, Lloyd D. Johnston, and Patrick M. O'Malley, 1994	Alpha coefficient of .65 for gender role attitudes. Not provided. Not provided.

Measure	Article Using Measure	Psychometric Data
	<p>Rachel Roseman Barich and Denise D. Bielby, 1996</p> <p>Barbara Dafoe Whitehead and David Popenoe, 1999</p> <p>Jane G. Mauldon, Rebecca A. London, David A. Fein, and Steven J. Bliss, 2002</p> <p>Arland Thornton & Linda Young-DeMarco, 2001</p> <p>Marin Clarkberg, Ross M. Stolzenberg, & Linda J. Waite, 1995</p> <p>Marcia Carlson, Sara McLanahan, & Paula England, 2003</p>	<p>Not provided for the traditional family concepts scale or the feminism scale</p> <p>Not provided.</p> <p>Not provided.</p> <p>Not provided.</p> <p>Reliability coefficient of .92 and .93 for data on high school seniors from the 1970s.</p> <p>Alpha coefficient for traditional gender role beliefs were .56 for mothers and .51 for fathers).</p>
Marital Attitudes Scale	<p>Jeffrey H. Larson, Mark J. Benson, Stephan M. Wilson, and Nilufer Medora, 1998</p> <p>Rachel Roseman Barich and Denise D. Bielby, 1996</p> <p>Marcia Carlson, Sara McLanahan, & Paula England, 2003</p>	<p>Alpha coefficient of .80 for the Marital Attitudes Scale (introduced by Wallin, 1954; termed by Greenberg & Nay, 1982)</p> <p>Not provided.</p> <p>Alpha coefficient of .57 for mothers and fathers.</p>
Marriage expectations	<p>Rachel Roseman Barich and Denise D. Bielby, 1996</p> <p>Jane G. Mauldon, Rebecca A. London, David A. Fein, and Steven J. Bliss, 2002</p> <p>Susan L. Brown, 2000</p>	<p>Not provided.</p> <p>Not provided.</p> <p>Not provided.</p>

Measure	Article Using Measure	Psychometric Data
	Wendy D. Manning & Pamela J. Smock, 2002	Not provided.
	Sandra L. McGinnis, 2003	Not provided.
Meaning of marriage	Susan G. Timmer and Terri L. Orbuch	Not provided.
Partner's readiness for marriage scale	Sharon Sassler and Robert Schoen	Alpha coefficient of .73 for perceptions of partner's readiness for marriage scale
Perceived likelihood of marriage	Richard A. Bulcroft and Kris A. Bulcroft, 1993	Alpha coefficient of .84 for attitudes about perceived emotional and economic benefits of marriage measures.
Prodivorce attitudes	Paul R. Amato and Stacy Rogers, 1999	Alpha reliability for prodivorce attitudes scale was .63 in 1980.
Readiness for Marriage subscale (measure is a part of PREP-M)	Jeffrey H. Larson, Mark J. Benson, Stephan M. Wilson, and Nilufer Medora, 1998	Alpha coefficient of .87, citing findings from another study (Holman et al., 1994).
Romanticism scale	Rachel Roseman Barich and Denise D. Bielby, 1996	Not provided.
Sexual permissiveness with (or with no) attachment scale	Rachel Roseman Barich and Denise D. Bielby, 1996	Not provided.
Trust	Larzelere & Huston, 1980	Alpha coefficient of .93. for the dyadic trust scale (Not highly correlated with generalized trust scale).
	Marcia Carlson, Sara McLanahan, & Paula England, 2003	Alpha coefficients for the parental distrust scale was .58 for mothers and .64 for fathers.

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TITLE: Changes in gender role attitudes and perceived marital quality.

AUTHOR: Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1995). *American Sociological Review*, 60, 1, 58-66.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: 1) To understand the process through which gender role attitudes affect the perceived marital quality.

SOURCE OF DATA:

Data are from the Study of Marital Instability Over the Life Course. Background information for this study is available in Booth, Johnson, White, and Edwards, 1991.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample): National randomized sample

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Sample houses were selected through random-digit-dialing. National random sample of 2,033 married individuals (not couples) were initially interviewed. This study reports on those who remained married through the 8-year follow-up (1980 to 1988).

STUDY POPULATION: 1,043 respondents who remained married during the 8-year study period were included in the study.

MEASURE:

Marital Happiness

(Asked respondents if they were happy with 10 aspects of their marital relationship)

Sample items:

Amount of understanding received

Amount of love and affection they receive

Their sexual relationship

Spouse takes care of things around home

Marital Interaction

(Asked respondents how often they engaged in five activities jointly)

Sample items:

Main meal of the day

Shopping

Visiting friends

Working on projects around the house

Going out (e.g., playing cards, bowling, movies)

Marital Disagreement

(Asks respondents about amount and severity of conflict in marital relationship)

Sample items:

Division of labor (4 items)

Frequency of disagreements

Frequency of serious arguments in past 2 months

Whether spouses got so angry they became violent (slapped, hit, punched, kicked, or threw things at one another) in past three years

Marital Problems

(Asks respondents about marital problems resulting from either partner's behavior or attitude, using 13 items)

Sample items (about either partner):

Gets angry easily
Is jealous
Is domineering
Is not at home enough
Spends money foolishly
Drinks or uses drugs

Divorce Proneness

(Measure comprised of 12 items designed to tap propensity to divorce, including cognitive and action components)

Sample items:

Thinking marriage is in trouble
Considering idea of getting a divorce
Talking to friends or spouse about the possibility of getting a divorce
Consulting with clergy, counselor, or an attorney
Separating from the spouse

Gender Role Attitudes

(Respondents asked if they agreed with statements reflecting men and women's work and family roles using 7 item scale-egalitarian versus more traditional gender role beliefs)

Sample items:

Woman's most important task is being a mother
Husband should earn a larger salary than his wife
Husband should share equally in household chores if wife works full time
A woman should not be employed if her husband can support her

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Marital Happiness (alpha=.87)

Marital Interaction (alpha=.63)

Marital Disagreement (alpha=.54)

Marital Problems (alpha=.76)

Divorce Proneness (alpha=.91)

Gender Role Attitudes (alpha=.65)

COMMENTS:

Due to sample attrition (about 66% of sample were re-interviewed at the 8-year follow-up, 1,341 respondents), the third wave (8-year follow-up data collected in 1988) are slightly unrepresentative of the national racial and ethnic population, young respondents, renters, and those without a college education.

TITLE: Do attitudes toward divorce affect marital quality?

AUTHOR: Paul R. Amato and Stacy Rogers.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1999). *Journal of Family Issues*, 20, 1, 69-86.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between attitudes towards divorce and marital quality. Specifically, the study tests two hypotheses: The first is that attitudes towards divorce become more favorable after marital quality declines (based on the cognitive dissonance theory); and the second is that people with more favorable attitudes towards divorce devote fewer resources to their marriages, which, in turn, causes marital quality to depreciate (based in the exchange theory).

SOURCE OF DATA: Study of Marital Instability Over the Life Course (Booth, Johnson, White, & Edwards, 1991).

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample):

National sample of 2,033 married people age 55 or younger who were interviewed by telephone in 1980, 1983, and 1988.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: The study used clustered random digit-dialing.

STUDY POPULATION:

1,592 (78% of original sample) persons in their first marriages who were interviewed in both 1980 and 1983. Respondents were married individuals under age 56. Analyses from 1988 were excluded to maximize sample size and the various subgroups. Both the second and third waves were less representative of African Americans, Hispanics, renters, low-educated, and younger respondents.

MEASURE:

Marital Quality

Marital happiness

Respondents asked to rate how happy they were with 10 aspects of marriage.

Sample items:

Amount of understanding received

Amount of love and affection received

Sexual relationship

Spouse someone who takes care of things around home

Marital interaction

Respondents were asked to report they engaged jointly in five activities with spouses:

Eating main meal of the day

Shopping

Visiting friends

Working on projects around the house

Going out for leisure activities

Marital conflict

Respondents were asked to report on:

Fights over division of labor

Frequency of disagreements in general

Frequency of serious quarrels in past 2 months

Violent behavior resulting from angry fight (slapped, hit, punched, kicked, or threw things at each other) in past 3 years.

Divorce Attitudes

- 1.) Couples are able to get divorced too easily today
 - 2.) It is okay for people to get married, thinking that if it does not work out, they can always get a divorce
 - 3.) The personal happiness of an individual is more important than putting up with a bad marriage
 - 4.) If one spouse becomes mentally or physically disabled, the other person should stay in the marriage regardless of his or her own happiness
 - 5.) Marriage is for life, even if the couple is unhappy
 - 6.) In marriages where parents fight a lot, children are better off if their parents divorce or separate
- (Four-point response category ranging from 1=disagree strongly to 4 agree strongly, with items all coded so that high scores signified more accepting attitude toward divorce)

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Alpha reliability coefficients for marital happiness was .87 in 1980 and .84 in 1983; For marital interaction, alpha was .63 in 1980 and 1983; and for marital conflict was .54 in 1980 and .52 in 1983.

Alpha reliability for predivorce attitudes scale was .63 in 1980.

COMMENTS:

Structural equation models were used to test the two main hypotheses.

Limited evidence supports the cognitive dissonance theory, but only with regard to marital happiness. When marital happiness changes over time, prodivorce attitudes change in the expected direction over time.

Stronger support was found for the hypothesis based on the exchange theory. They find that changes in prodivorce attitudes affect marital quality in the anticipated direction.

TITLE: Rethinking marriage: Change and stability in expectations, 1967-1994.

AUTHOR: Rachel Roseman Barich and Denise D. Bielby.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1996). *Journal of Family Issues*, 17, 2, 139-169.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To explore the relationship between changes over time in institutionalized (or societal) views about marriage and individuals' marital expectations.

SOURCE OF DATA: Early data collected by Charles Spaulding of the University of California, Santa Barbara (Spaulding, 1982). 1994 data collected at University of California, Santa Barbara to match 1967 sample characteristics.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: The study employs a repeated cross-section design. A survey questionnaire was administered to 4,000 California college students in English courses in 1967 and in 1994. Around 300 of the questionnaires were randomly selected from the full set of complete questionnaires.

STUDY POPULATION:

Two cross-sectional samples from the University of California, Santa Barbara:
Sample 1 from 1967 and sample 2 from 1994.

MEASURE:

Marriage expectations

A respected place in the community
Healthy and happy children
Companionship
Personality development
Amount of love and affection
Economic security
Satisfactory sexual relations
Emotional security
Moral and religious unity
Common interests and activities
Maintenance of home

Attitudes scale

Please rank the following in order of importance from the most important to the least important about marriage:

A respected place in the community
Healthy and happy children
Companionship
Personality development
Amount of love and affection
Economic security
Satisfactory sexual relations
Emotional security
Moral and religious unity
Common interests and activities
Maintenance of a home

ROMS: Romanticism scale

To be truly in love is to be in love forever.

Love is an “all or nothing” feeling; there is no in-between.

When one is in love, the person whom s/he loves becomes the only goal of his/her life. One lives almost solely for the other.

There is only one real love for a person.

True love is known at once by the people involved.

SEXAS sexual permissiveness with attachment scale

Full sexual relations are acceptable for a man before marriage if he feels strong affection for his partner.

Full sexual relations are acceptable for a woman before marriage if she is engaged to the man.

Full sexual relations are acceptable for a man before marriage if he is engaged to the woman.

Full sexual relations are acceptable for the woman before marriage if she feels strong affection for her partner.

SEXNS (sexual permissiveness with no attachment scale)

Fooling around is acceptable for a man before marriage even if he does not feel particularly affectionate toward his partner.

Full sexual relations are acceptable for a woman before marriage even if she does not feel particularly affectionate toward her partner.

Fooling around is acceptable for a woman before marriage even if she does not feel particularly affectionate toward her partner.

Full sexual relations are acceptable for a man before marriage even if he does not feel particularly affectionate toward his partner.

TFCS (traditional family concepts scale)

In my marriage, I want the wife to be first of all a mother and homemaker.

In my marriage, I want the husband to be the chief breadwinner for the family.

FEMS (feminism scale)

In my marriage, I want the wife to be primarily a career woman.

In my marriage, I want the wife to budget and supervise the spending of the family income.

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Not provided.

COMMENTS:

There were cultural shifts in how different marital expectations and beliefs were ranked. However, there was stability in those ranked highly, including expectations that marriage should provide love and affection, healthy and happy children, emotional security, and companionship.

The study reports gender differences in some of the rankings of the various measures of marital expectations and beliefs.

TITLE: Race differences in attitudinal and motivational factors in the decision to marry.

AUTHOR: Richard A. Bulcroft and Kris A Bulcroft.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1993). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 55, 338-355.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To explore the role of marital attitudes in explaining racial differences in marriage.

SOURCE OF DATA: National Survey of Families and Households

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample):

Unmarried Black and White respondents under age 35 were asked about their feelings about marriage.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Multistage probability sampling. First selected households, then randomly selected one adult in each household. If the adult had a spouse or cohabiting partner, that partner also filled out a self-administered questionnaire.

STUDY POPULATION:

Unweighted sample size of 1,434.

MEASURES:

Perceived likelihood of marriage

Single 4-item scale ranging from 0 (not at all likely), 1 (will marry someday), 2 (will marry current partner), 3 (has current plans made to marry current partner).

Attitudes about perceived emotional and economic benefits of marriage

“Never-married respondents were asked, ‘Please circle how you think your life might be different if you were married now.’”

Respondents were asked to rate the following categories from 1 = much worse, to 5 = much better:

Sample categories-

- j.) Standard of living
- k.) Economic security
- l.) Overall happiness
- m.) Personal freedom
- n.) Economic independence
- o.) Sex life
- p.) Friendships
- q.) Relations with parents
- r.) Emotional security

(Cronbach’s alpha=.84)

Used factor analysis to distinguish between ratings of economic and social emotional benefits of marriage.

Economic scale was made up of: standard of living, economic security, and economic independence. (alpha reliability=.84)

Social emotional scale was made up of: overall happiness, sex life, friendships, parent relations, and emotional security (alpha reliability=.77)

Importance of traditional mate selection criteria

Respondents were asked how willing they were to marry someone with the following characteristics with responses ranging from 1 (not at all willing) to 7 (very willing):

- 12.) Older by 5 years or more
- 13.) Younger by 5 years or more
- 14.) Previously married
- 15.) Already had children
- 16.) Not likely to hold a steady job
- 17.) Different religion
- 18.) Different race
- 19.) Would earn much less
- 20.) Would earn much more
- 21.) More educated
- 22.) Less educated

Based on factor analysis of these items, two scales were distinguished. An economic-focused willingness to marry nontraditional mate (differing by gender and summing responses on gender, income, and education—and excluding age) scale was created with an alpha reliability of .73.

A marital family dimension of nontraditional mate choice (willingness to marry someone who had been married before and someone who already had children) scale was created with an alpha reliability of .81.

Economic factors in marital timing

Sample of items measuring how economic support factors into marital timing rated from 1 (not at all important) to 7 (very important):

- 6.) Having enough money saved
- 7.) Finishing planned schooling
- 8.) Being established in a job
- 9.) Having one's spouse finished with planned school
- 10.) Having one's spouse established in a job

This scale had an alpha reliability of .84.

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Reported with measures above.

COMMENTS:

Analyses seem to be cross-sectional. Based on Wave I data (1987-1988).

Hypothesis that blacks desire marriage less was an explanation for difference in lower marriage rate was not supported. In fact, black females had the highest marital expectations, though this expectation decreased over time (remained higher than other groups across marriageable age groups). Black women were also more likely to see marriage as a preferable state.

Though the relationship was found to be nonsignificant after controlling for other factors, black males had slightly lower expectations to marry than white men.

However, blacks were found to have more restrictive marriage requirements (traditional marriage norms—black women's high expectations for mates-- that may be hard to meet in the marriage market) that may decrease their likelihood of marriage. For instance:

Blacks were more likely to emphasize the importance of having economic supports in place before marrying.

Blacks were more likely to be unwilling to marry someone who was previously married or who already has a child.

TITLE: Union formation and dissolution in fragile families.

AUTHOR: Marcia Carlson, Sara McLanahan, and Paula England.

PUBLICATION CITATION: Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study Working Paper. April 2003.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: 1) To assess the viability of Johnson's commitment framework.

SOURCE OF DATA: Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample): National longitudinal study of unmarried parents representing cities with populations greater than 200,000. The study follows a birth cohort of 3,700 children.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Baseline data were collected by in-person interviews in the hospital soon after the child's birth and follow-up interviews for which data were available to be included in this study were conducted one year afterwards.

STUDY POPULATION: The study sample is made up of 3,279 unmarried couples who shared a child (89% of mothers and 79% of fathers interviewed at baseline).

MEASURE:

Attitudes towards marriage.

Respondents' scores were averaged based on their responses to the three following statements:

(response categories ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree)

It is better for children if their parents are married

Living together is just the same as being married (coding reversed)

It is better for a couple to get married than to just live together.

Gender role attitudes.

Scores were based on the following two items:

(response categories ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree)

The important decisions in the family should be made by the man of the house.

It is much better for everyone if the man earns the main living and the woman takes care of the home and family.

Distrust of the opposite sex index.

Scores were averaged based on the response to the following two items:

(response categories ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree)

1.) Men (women) cannot be trusted to be faithful

2.) In a dating relationship, a man (woman) is largely out to take advantage of a woman (man).

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Cronbach's alpha for the attitudes towards marriage scale was .57 for men and women.

Cronbach's alpha for the gender role attitudes scales were .51 for men and .56 for women.

Cronbach's alpha for the distrust of the opposite sex scale is .58 for women and .64 for men.

COMMENTS:

Positive attitudes towards marriage (by mothers or fathers) was found to encourage marriage.

Traditional gender role attitudes were not found to be related to marriage or cohabitation entry, but did encourage romantic involvement.

Women's high gender distrust is strongly related to decreased likelihood of marital entry.

TITLE: The tripartite nature of marital commitment: Personal, moral, and structural reasons to stay married.

AUTHOR: Michael P. Johnson, John P. Caughlin, & Ted L. Huston

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1999). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61, 160-177.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: 1) To assess the viability of Johnson's commitment framework.

SOURCE OF DATA: Data were adapted from other datasets

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: 187 individuals (including 91 couples) who were part of a larger longitudinal study were surveyed in their 13th year of marriage.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Data were collected mostly by phone interviews. They were sent questionnaires (scales) in the mail beforehand to refer to for answering questions. Some mailed questionnaires were used as well.

STUDY POPULATION: 187 individuals (including 91 couples) living in four counties in central Pennsylvania

MEASURE:

Measurement of components of commitment:

Personal commitment:

Love (2 items)

Marital satisfaction (2 items)

Couple identity (3 items)

Moral commitment

Divorce attitudes (5 items)

Partner contract (4 items)

Consistency values (4 items)

Structural commitment

Alternatives (miss companionship, help, income, etc.)

Social pressure (lose standing in community, etc.)

Termination procedures (burden of divorce, handling kids, etc.)

Investment (lost money, effort, etc.)

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Not available in this study.

COMMENTS:

TITLE: Family of origin influences on marital attitudes and readiness for marriage in late adolescents.

AUTHOR: Jeffrey H. Larson, Mark J. Benson, Stephan M. Wilson, and Nilufer Medora.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1998). *Journal of Family Issues*, 19, 6, 750-768.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To explore the relationships between family of origin processes, adolescent attitudes and feelings about marriage, and readiness for marriage.

SOURCE OF DATA: Study participants were selected from introductory behavioral science classes at four major universities.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: 977 participants from four major universities.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Self-administered questionnaire.

STUDY POPULATION: 977 never married young people between the ages of 17 and 21 (56% female). Most of the sample came from two-parent families (82%) and were white (89%). 5% were Asian American, 2% were black, 2% were Hispanic American, and 2% were another racial or ethnic group. The mean family income was higher than average (\$50,000), but participants from low, middle, and high income families were all represented.

MEASURE:

Marital Attitudes Scale (introduced by Wallin, 1954; termed by Greenberg & Nay, 1982)

Sample items:

Potential difficulties

- 1.) Adjusting to marriage
- 2.) Yielding personal freedom
- 3.) Maintaining an exclusive relationship
- 4.) Relinquishing single life

Set of questions asking respondents' beliefs or expectations about the potential for success, happiness, and enjoyment in marriage (expands Wallin's original dichotomous choices into 4-point choices). In discussion, it is described in terms of positive attitudes.

Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) was .80.

Four-item scale measuring feelings about marriage

Respondents were asked to mark the point on a seven-point scale that best reflected how they felt about marriage for four pairs of differential feelings including:

- 1.) Happy or tense
- 2.) Agreeable or quarrelsome
- 3.) Satisfying or frustrating
- 4.) Comfortable or uncomfortable.

Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) was .81.

(In discussion, it is described in terms of positive attitudes).

Readiness for Marriage subscale (measure is a part of PREP-M)

Six-item scale tapping overall feeling of readiness for marriage (sample items):

- 1.) Financial readiness
- 2.) Emotional readiness
- 3.) Sexual readiness
- 4.) Readiness for the marital role

Responses range from 1 (never) to 5 (very often)

“The readiness subscale has face validity and internal consistency reliability of .87 (Cronbach’s alpha) (Holman et al., 1994).”

The study also collected data about the feelings about amount of time needed before ready to marry.

“Waiting age” calculated by subtracting current age from age that they report they should be ready to get married.

PSYCHOMETRICS:

See section above.

COMMENTS:

TITLE: What do they think? Welfare recipients' attitudes toward marriage and childbearing.

AUTHOR: Jane G. Mauldon, Rebecca A. London, David A. Fein, and Steven J. Bliss.

PUBLICATION CITATION: Research Brief #2, (November 2002), Bethesda, MD: Abt Associates.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: Using national and welfare studies conducted by Abt Associates, this brief reports concurrent attitudes of welfare recipients about marriage and family values.

SOURCE OF DATA: This article references the following as sources of data:

1997 National Survey of America's Families

1995 National Survey of Family Growth

Delaware's A Better Chance program

Indiana's Welfare Reform Program

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S:

Article references national studies using random sample design and welfare studies using random assignment designs.

STUDY POPULATION: Varies across studies. National samples and welfare samples within the states of Indiana and Delaware.

MEASURES:

NSAF and NSFG:

Family values, marriage expectations, and childbearing desires

People who want children ought to marry

Single moms are less effective than two parents

I expect to marry

I want (more) children

IWRF and ABC (Indiana and Delaware welfare studies):

Welfare reform made me think more seriously that I would like to get married

Welfare reform made me want to postpone or stop childbearing

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Not provided.

COMMENTS:

Most respondents believe that parents (or people who want children) should get married. And most respondents expected that they would get married. Among the Delaware's A Better Chance welfare sample, by the second interview, women who expected to get married were twice as likely to get married as women who did not expect to get married (14 vs. 6 percent).

TITLE: First comes work, then comes marriage: Future orientation among African American young adolescents.

AUTHOR: Kristen McCabe & Douglas Barnett.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (2000). *Family Relations*, 49, 63-70.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To explore the future orientation (expectations or aspirations) of a group of low-income African American youth towards careers, family relationships, and romantic relationships.

SOURCE OF DATA: The Future Orientation Questionnaire (Trommsdorff, 1983) and the Future Events Questionnaire (Eccles & Barber, 1993).

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: Quantitative and qualitative. Students were recruited from a group of 116 students from an inner-city Detroit charter middle school.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Participants were individually interviewed by college and graduate psychology students in 30-minute sessions using the Future Orientation Questionnaire (which contains both open-ended and closed-ended questions).

Participants received the Future Events Questionnaire, which they completed themselves in groups of ten at a location in the school building.

STUDY POPULATION: 72 mostly low income, African American 6th graders from an inner city Detroit middle school.

The mean age was 12 and 56.6% of the group was female.

MEASURE:

Future Orientation Interview (covering domains of career, family, and romantic relationships).

Sample questions:

“When you think about your own future, what kinds of things come to mind?”

“What do you think your own future will be like?”

“What thoughts do you have about future careers for yourself?”

“What do you expect your romantic relationships will be like in the future?”

“How likely do you think it is that you will reach your career goals?”

“How worried are you that your family relationships will not turn out as you hope?”

“What are your fears about your future romantic relationships?”

“What things do you worry might block your career goals or interfere with them?”

“To what extent do you feel that you yourself will determine whether or not you will have the kind of family for which you are hoping?”

The responses to each of the questions were further categorized and coded as falling under one of the following dimensions:

Detail, self-attributed optimism, implicit optimism, self-attributed pessimism, implicit pessimism, realism, and control beliefs.

The Future Events Questionnaire assesses the probability of the occurrence of a variety of specific events (Items not relevant to relationships or career were not counted).

Sample questions:

“How likely is it that you will get married within two years after high school?”

Responses ranged from Very Likely to Very Unlikely on a five-point Likert scale.

The items were further coded to reflect the positive future events.

A Positive Relationship Events subscale and a Positive Career Events subscale were created from the relevant items.

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Future Orientation Interview:

Interviewers and coders were trained until an acceptable interrater reliability was achieved.

“The correlation coefficients ranged from .46 for coding of detail for family to 1.0 for codings for realism for career, with an average reliability coefficient of .81.” (p. 66)

All cases were rated by both coders with consensus discussions occurring in cases of disagreement.

Future Events Questionnaire:

Positive Relationship Events subscale (3 items, alpha=.62)

Positive Career Events subscale (9 items, alpha=.71)

COMMENTS:

Students were more optimistic about their future career than their family and romantic relationship prospects. For instance, 15% of the study participants fell into the most optimistic category for career, while only 4-5% fell into this category for romantic relationships and for family. On the other hand, 14% reported no positive expectations for family, and 21% reported no positive expectations for romantic relationships.

Analyses showed this group of students to be representative of African American youth throughout the city, based on sample characteristics; however, they were charter public school students, which may reflect some (positive or negative) bias in their responses.

TITLE: Have changes in gender relations affected marital quality?

AUTHOR: Stacy J. Rogers and Paul R. Amato.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (2000). *Social Forces* 79, 2, 731-753.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: 1) To understand the relationship between gender role attitudes and behaviors and changes in marital quality over time (comparing two cohorts).

SOURCE OF DATA:

Marital Instability over the Life Course Study (Booth et al., 1993).

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME:

A national random sample of 2,033 married people were interviewed.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S:

Telephone interviews were conducted using random digit dialing methods.

STUDY POPULATION:

1,592 (78%) of the sample were reinterviewed in 1983 and 1,047 of the original respondents (52%) completed the final interview in 1997.

Two cohorts were created using the available data: the first marriage cohort included 1,119 individuals married between 1964 and 1980; the second marriage cohort included 312 individuals married by 1997 (from the offspring sample. 151 were excluded as their parents were in the first cohort).

MEASURE:

Gender role attitudes:

Measured using a seven-item scale, with responses rated from disagree strongly to agree strongly.

Selected items include:

- 1.) A woman's most important task in life should be taking care of her children
- 2.) If jobs are scarce, a woman whose husband can support her ought not to have a job

Marital power:

Measured based on a single item:

- 1.) Overall, considering all the kinds of decisions you two make, does your spouse more often have the final word or do you? (responses coded as to whether wife or husband had final word)

Marital happiness:

Measured using an eleven-item scale, with responses rated from not very happy to very happy.

A sample item is:

- 1.) How happy are you with the amount of love and affection you receive from your spouse?

Marital interaction scale:

Measured frequency couples engaged in the following five activities together, with responses rated from never to almost always:

- eating the main meal
- shopping
- visiting friends
- working on household projects

going out for recreation

Marital conflict scale:

Measured frequency of disagreements, serious quarrels, and whether there was any violence in the past three years.

Marital problems scale:

Measured whether there were any reports of 14 specific problems in the marriage, with responses coded as yes/no and the sum of “yes” responses used as the measure of presence of marital problems.

Divorce proneness scale:

Measures cognitive and behavioral indicators of marital instability using a 12-item scale, with responses coded as yes/no.

Sample items include:

Thinking marriage is in trouble

Talking to friends about possibility of divorce

Talking to family members, friends, clergy, counselors, or social workers about problems in your marriage

PSYCHOMETRICS:

The Cronbach’s alpha for the gender role attitudes scale was .67.

The Cronbach’s alpha for the marital happiness scale was .87.

The Cronbach’s alpha for the marital interaction scale was .67.

The Cronbach’s alpha for the marital conflict scale was .45.

The Cronbach’s alpha for the marital problems scale was .72.

The Cronbach’s alpha for the divorce proneness scale was .92.

COMMENTS:

Due to attrition rates, the later waves of data are less representative of Hispanics, African Americans, younger respondents, less educated respondents, and respondents who rented.

The authors report that nontraditional gender role attitudes are related to higher levels of marital discord among that group. However, differences in gender relations between the two cohorts (including attitudinal measures, as well as factors such as household labor and husband-wife income ratio) did not significantly contribute to the higher level of marital discord of the younger marriage cohort.

TITLE: The effect of attitudes and economic activity on marriage.

AUTHOR: Sharon Sassler and Robert Schoen.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1999). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61, 147-159.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To investigate the role of attitudes toward marriage, cohabitation, and family formation on marriage odds (marriage delay). To explore the role of attitudes toward marriage in racial differences in marriage rates. They also explore within-gender differences across racial groups in marital attitudes (particularly between white and black men).

SOURCE OF DATA: National Survey of Families and Households (Waves I and II)

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample): A nationally representative, longitudinal study of 13,017 U.S adults living in 9,643 households in 1987-88. Included oversamples of cohabitators, stepfamilies, single-parent families, and minority groups.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Multistage probability sampling. Two waves of data collection – 1987-88 and 1992-93. First selected households, then randomly selected one adult in each household. If the adult had a spouse or cohabiting partner, that partner also filled out a self-administered questionnaire.

STUDY POPULATION: The final sample includes 1,432 people interviewed in Waves I and II.

MEASURE:

Study respondents asked the extent to which they agreed with the following statements:

Gender roles

- 1.) It is much better for everyone if the man earns the main living and the woman takes care of the home and family.

Preference for marriage

- 2.) It's better for a person to get married than to go through life being single.

(Likert-type response scale)

Three scales are examined.

Attitudes about emotional and economic benefits of marriage

“Never-married respondents were asked, ‘Please circle how you think your life might be different if you were married now.’”

Responses to the following categories ranged from 0 to 5, much better:

- s.) Standard of living
- t.) Economic security
- u.) Overall happiness
- v.) Emotional security

(Cronbach's alpha=.84)

Partner's readiness for marriage scale

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of certain attributes for a partner to on a 1 to 7 scale.

Sample items designed to understand considerations involved when deciding to marry:

- 1.) Partner has finished all planned schooling
- 2.) Partner is established in their job

(Cronbach's alpha=.73)

A third scale assesses the respondents' career orientation or attitude about their own work (strength of opinion; satisfaction; positivity). (Cronbach's $\alpha=.87$)

PSYCHOMETRICS:

See above

COMMENTS:

Measurement of attitudes collected at Wave I. This study does not explore changes over time in attitudes.

Various differences in marital attitudes were found across gender.

Some differences were found across race (some attitudes were more positive and others could be viewed as more restrictive—greater expectations of mate).

Fewer differences were found among black women and men than among white women and men.

Controlling for differences in attitudes about marriage across racial and ethnic groups only explained a small amount of the lower marriage rate for blacks, as compared with whites.

For instance, black women express some attitudes about marriage that are significantly more positive than those of their white counterparts (that their lives would be greatly improved if they were to marry), however they are much less likely to have married than white women by the second interview (which occurred about 5 years later).

Blacks (both sexes) are more likely than whites to place greater emphasis on their partner being financially established before marriage.

TITLE: Historical trends in attitudes and preferences regarding family, work, and the future among American adolescents: National data from 1976 through 1992.

AUTHOR: John Schulenberg, Jerald G. Bachman, Lloyd D. Johnston, & Patrick M. O'Malley.

PUBLICATION CITATION: Monitoring the Future Occasional Paper 37, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1994.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To describe historical trends in American adolescents' attitudes and preferences towards the future regarding family and work.

SOURCES OF DATA:

Monitoring the Future.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: Each consecutive year since 1976, a national sample of high school seniors is randomly selected (not the longitudinal sample). Thus, there are different groups of high school seniors across annual cohorts. Each year, approximately 16,000 to 18,000 high school seniors are surveyed. A three-stage probability sample is used to gain a representative sample across 135 public and private high schools across the 48 coterminous states. After schools are selected, up to 400 students are selected within each school.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Self-administered questionnaires are administered each spring during a regularly scheduled class period.

STUDY POPULATION: Due to response rates (of 83 percent), the limited sample who were given this form each year (about 2600 to 3600), and missing data, about 2,000 to 3,000 cases of high school seniors are used in the present study.

MEASURES:

Attitudes and Preferences about Future Family were rated using Likert and other response scales.

Marriage:

Importance of marriage in general

Most people have fuller and happier lives if they choose marriage over staying single or simply living with someone

Importance of marriage for respondent

Importance of having a good marriage and family life

Cohabitation

It is usually a good idea to live together before marriage

Fidelity

Having a close intimate relationship with only one partner is too restrictive for the average person

Timing and Size of Future Family:

Desired timing of marriage

If it were up to you, what would be the ideal time for you to get married?
(within the next year to over five years from now)

Desired number of children

If you could have exactly the number of children you want, how many would you choose to have?
(none to six or more)

Gender roles: Division of labor in the family:

Preferences about women in work force

It is usually better for everyone involved if the man works outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and the family

Desired working arrangements without children

Imagine you are married and have no children; how would you feel if both you and your spouse worked full-time?

Desired working arrangements with preschool children

Imagine you are married and have one or more pre-school children; how would you feel if both you and your spouse worked full-time?

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Not reported in this paper.

COMMENTS:

TITLE: The links between premarital parenthood, meanings of marriage, and marital outcomes.

AUTHOR: Susan G. Timmer & Terri L. Orbuch.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (2001). *Family Relations*, 50, 178-185.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: To examine the relationship between premarital parenthood, meaning of marriage (or beliefs about the purpose or value of marriage; behavioral expectations; perceived instrumentality of marriage), and marital outcomes (divorce risk).

SOURCE OF DATA: Early Years of Marriage Study. Data collected by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan.

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME (Larger Sample):

Couples entering their first marriage in Wayne County who filed for marriage certificates during a 3-month period were asked to participate in the study. 373 (199 black and 174 white).

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S:

Data were collected at the University of Michigan Survey Research Center.

In-person home interviews and telephone interviews were collected during the 4-year study period.

In-person interviews were conducted by same-race interviewers.

STUDY POPULATION: In year 1, 357 black and white couples included in analyses. About 78% of original study group remained in the study throughout its 4-year duration.

MEASURE: Meanings of marriage

Two open-ended questions:

- 1.) Thinking about your own marriage, what would you say are nice things about it?
- 2.) Every marriage has its good and bad points. What would you say are not quite as nice as you would like them to be?

(Information coded by content by survey researchers)

Based on this, 22 content categories were used to code answers to first questions.

17 of these content codes were further coded dichotomously:

- 1.) Whether marriage expressed in terms of positive affect (e.g., love)
- 2.) Whether marriage described in terms of practical advantages (e.g., financial, good parent)
- 3.) Dyadic rewards (e.g., companionship, common interests)

Also, 22 content codes were used to code answers to the second question with 18 of these codes collapsed further into three dichotomous variables:

negative affect or conflict (lack of love, disagreements about children)

negative practical issues (financial problems)

negative aspects about dyad (no common interests, lack of communication and cooperation)

PSYCHOMETRICS:

The article does not provide psychometrics for the measures used.

COMMENTS:

22% moved and could not be found to be included throughout the full study.

The attrition rate of premarital parents was higher (30%) than that of couples who were not (17%).

Attrition did not differ by other important measurable background factors, such as race or income level, although premarital parents in year 1 were more likely to be high school dropouts, have lower income, and to be black.

There is a concern that just because something wasn't mentioned, it doesn't mean it isn't true or central to the relationship or to how the person thinks—since the question was open-ended. Lack of correlation across types—could it relate to what came to mind at that time, which may or may not reflect all the things they may regard as important for their relationship. Also, certain groups were less likely to have responses falling in certain categories. This may be related to something about the groups. This is of particular concern given that psychometric information about the measures used are not provided.

Also, these (with the exception of practicality of marriage) seem to be their perceptions about their marriages more so than their beliefs about what is important in a marriage.

TITLE: Changes in teen attitudes toward marriage, cohabitation and children: 1975-1995.

AUTHOR: Barbara Dafoe Whitehead and David Popenoe.

PUBLICATION CITATION: (1999). National Marriage Project, Rutgers University.

PURPOSE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH: 1) Review of studies examined to document trends in teenagers' views on marriage. The focus is on measures collected across multiple national surveys.

SOURCES OF DATA:

Various data sources are referenced, including the following:

Monitoring the Future (conducted annually since 1975) by the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center.

The American Freshman (survey of the nation's college freshmen)

National Survey of Children (1987)

Gallup Poll (1992; 1994)

National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experience of Youth (1979)

RESEARCH DESIGN/SAMPLING FRAME: Reviews of studies conducted between 1975 and 1995 that used a nationally randomly selected sample of adolescents and young adults.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD/S: Not provided. Need to refer to studies.

STUDY POPULATION: Adolescents and young adults

MEASURE:

Gallup:

Proportion expecting to marry sometime

Believe divorced couples tried hard to save marriages

Importance of parenthood

Monitoring the Future:

Proportion reporting that they will choose to get married in the long run

Good marriage and family life are important

Likelihood that they will be in a lifelong marriage

Believe in monogamous relationships

Feel they would be a good spouse

One sees so few good or happy marriages that one questions it as a way of life

Believe having a job takes away from woman's relationship with husband

Believe it is a good idea to live together before getting married

Believe most people "will have fuller and happier lives if they choose legal marriage rather than staying single, or just living with someone

Other attitudes about cohabitation reflecting poor values

Importance of parenthood

Views on out-of-wedlock childbearing and teenage parenthood

National Survey of Children:

Living together before getting married "makes a lot of sense."

The American Freshman:

Raising a family is important.

PSYCHOMETRICS:

Not provided.

COMMENTS: Articles using various surveys were referenced in this review.

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