

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

EXAMINING THE MARRIAGES OF NONTRADITIONAL WOMEN:
MARITAL PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

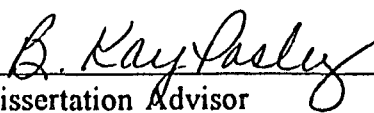
by

J. Lyn Rhoden

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro
1995

Approved by


Dissertation Advisor

UMI Number: 9632150

**UMI Microform 9632150
Copyright 1996, by UMI Company. All rights reserved.**

**This microform edition is protected against unauthorized
copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

UMI
300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Dissertation Advisor B. Kay Parley

Committee Members Ann M. Bush
Raymond L. Anderson
Mary G. Morgan

September 14, 1995
Date of Acceptance by Committee

September 14, 1995
Date of Final Oral Examination

RHODEN, J. LYN., Ph.D. Examining the Marriages of Nontraditional Women: Marital Processes and Outcomes. (1996). Directed by Dr. B. Kay Pasley. 130 pp.

The purpose of this research was to examine the ways marital processes influence marital outcomes in marriages wherein the wife is nontraditional. Selected data from the Marital Stability Over the Life Course Data Set (Booth et al, 1992), an eight-year longitudinal study examining various dimensions of marital quality, was used. A subsample of married women who were defined as nontraditional ($n = 74$) and a comparison group of traditional women ($n = 274$) were selected from the data set according to their occupational status and gender-role orientation. Independent variables included the marital processes of flexibility, cohesion, and communication (Olson, 1991); dependent variables included marital quality and marital stability.

Pearson Product Moment Correlations indicated that in the marriages of nontraditional women, greater emotional closeness and spousal interaction were associated with higher levels of marital quality across time. Some indicators of flexibility were associated with marital quality and marital stability for nontraditional women early in the course of the study. Positive communication patterns were related most consistently to marital outcomes across time for these women.

Results of repeated measures multivariate analyses of covariance indicated greater flexibility in the marriages of nontraditional women. Otherwise, few differences in relationships between marital processes and marital outcomes were found for

nontraditional and traditional women. Regression analyses indicated that prior marital quality was a better predictor of subsequent marital quality than any of the marital processes, and years married and communication were influential to the stability of marriage for both groups of women. Analysis of covariance results indicated that changes over time common to both nontraditional and traditional women included increased feelings of emotional closeness between spouses, less frequent marital interaction, a decrease in marital quality, and an increase, then subsequent decrease in marital stability. Follow-up analyses also revealed change over time in women's classification as nontraditional or traditional, indicating that the two groups became more similar over the course of the study.

Results of this research suggest that even for nontraditional women who may be engaged in the definition of an emergent marital culture, fundamentals of marital interaction may be established early in the relationship, setting the stage for a consistent way of interacting over time.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledgement and appreciation are extended to Dr. Kay Pasley, director of this dissertation, for her commitment to high academic standards, countless readings, and tireless content and editorial feedback; to Drs. Mary Morgan and Peggye Dilworth-Anderson for their challenge to think in critical and inclusive ways about human development; and to Dr. James Benshoff for his support of my efforts to strengthen my understanding of human behavior through counselor education. Particular gratitude is offered to Mark Perkins for his provision of the support that enabled me to realize this achievement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
APPROVAL PAGE	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	vi
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose of the Study	7
Research Questions	8
II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	9
Theoretical Orientation	9
Social Conflict Theory	9
Marital Processes of the Circumplex Model	15
Integration of Marital Processes and Social Conflict Theory	17
Conceptualizing Gender in Marriage	19
Reconceptualizing Gender in Contemporary Marriages	21
Nontraditional and Traditional Women	23
Marital Quality and Marital Stability	31
Research on Marital Processes	45
Summary	48
Critique of the Research	50
Hypotheses	52
III. METHODOLOGY	54
Data Source	54
Current Study	55
Measurement	56
Data Analysis	60

IV.	RESULTS	63
	Hypothesis 1	63
	Hypothesis 2	65
	Hypothesis 3	65
	Hypothesis 4	69
	Hypothesis 5	70
	Hypothesis 6	70
	Patterns and Trends Across Time	78
	Discussion	79
V.	SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	92
	Summary	92
	Conclusions	93
	Limitations	95
	Recommendations	98
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	102
	APPENDIX A. FIGURES	112
	APPENDIX B. TABLES	114

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Demographic Information on Participants by Group	124
Table 2. Results of Multiple Analysis of Covariance for Variables of Interest	126
Table 3. Results of Analysis of Variance on Marital Processes and Marital Outcomes for Nontraditional and Traditional Women, Controlling for Years Married	128
Table 4. Pearson Product Coefficients for Variables of Interest at Time 1, Time 2, and Time 3 for Nontraditional Women	130
Table 5. Pearson Product Coefficients for Variables of Interest at Time 1, Time 2, and Time 3 for Traditional Women	132
Table 6. Regression Coefficients from Analysis of Effects of Variables of Interest on Marital Quality and Marital Stability for Nontraditional Women	134
Table 7. Regression Coefficients from Analysis of Effects of Variables of Interest on Marital Quality and Marital Stability for Traditional Women	136
Table 8. Results of Multiple Analysis of Covariance for Gender-Role Orientation and Wife's Occupation	138
Table 9. Results of Analysis of Variance on Gender-Role Orientation for Nontraditional and Traditional Women, Controlling for Years Married	139

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The roles of women in our culture are in transition. In part, this transition is a function of women's increased participation in the paid labor force. By 1992, 59% of wives had joined the labor force (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1992), up from 14% in 1940 (Thornton & Friedman, 1983). Still about one-third of married women are full-time homemakers (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1991).

Participation in paid labor enables many women in society to sustain themselves individually. As such, they can enter marriages, evaluate their marriages, and choose to remain in or leave their marriages for reasons other than economic dependence. In addition, other equally legitimate lifestyles for women exist, such as singlehood, unmarried single motherhood, or a career-oriented lifestyle. As a result, the spousal role is more discretionary and no longer a requirement for adult status or for independence from one's family of origin (Lye & Biblarz, 1993). As women depart from their historically traditional roles within marriage, they must negotiate new roles and an emergent marital culture. These changes are representative of a broader cultural shift in which women are seeking opportunities within our society for greater equality, fuller development through the fulfillment of individual as well as

relationship needs, and more egalitarian marital relationships. Consequently, the marital paradigm also is in transition.

Periods of transition provide fertile ground for conflict to arise. In fact, some argue that conflict can act as a basic mechanism for change, as has been the case historically in other social movements and social changes (Bernard, 1978; Harloe, 1981; Lauer, 1977; Oberschall, 1978; Walsh, 1978). When modes of thinking from the past do not meet the demands and conditions of the present (e.g., women's thinking about their roles in the social institutions of our culture, including marriage), people begin to think in new ways. These new modes of thinking contribute to corresponding social changes.

Much of women's thinking in new ways about their roles is related to the women's movement. This movement was based on a strong feminist ideology of gender equality that began in the United States in the early 1820's with efforts to include women in the Constitution. It has focused on ameliorating specific problems and impacting the entire social system with regard to gender inequality (Basow, 1992). Structural changes, such as women's equal rights with regard to education, property rights, employment, social status, and societal rights and responsibilities, were brought about by organized efforts. The results were more comprehensive changes with respect to empowering women in our culture. In addition, women's consciousness-raising groups contributed to individual changes about how women think about their lives and their roles in marriage and family as well as in our culture in general.

In the course of changes such as these, contradiction and conflict occur (Lauer, 1977). Historically, the process of social change has involved conflict as a function of "the inevitable encroachments by one group upon the rights and territory of the other" (Lauer, 1979, p. 207). When dominant relations exist, there is an inherent conflict of interests. Challenges to these authority relationships lead to structural changes within our culture, such as cultural values and institutions. In this way, conflict acts as a fundamental social process (Blalock, 1989) and as a means to social and cultural evolution (Lauer, 1977).

In addition to the women's movement, examples of this social process include the industrialization of our society and the development of industrial capitalism in the early 19th century. Problems inherent in the dominance relationship between industrialists and workers resulted in the formation of employees' associations and the labor movement (Harloe, 1981). Workers' unions entered into conflict with management over the excesses of exploitation experienced by laborers in workshops and factories. The result of this conflict was structural changes in industrial organization, such as the redistribution of power or rights between management and workers to determine wages, working conditions, etc. (Baumgartner, Burns, & DeVille, 1978; Harloe, 1981; Lauer, 1977).

Another example of structural changes affected through conflict was the Civil Rights Movement. Protest emerged out of the severe oppression, deprivation, and disenfranchisement experienced by African Americans (Lauer, 1977). Dissent

expressed through protest movements and legal efforts resulted in legislative consequences (e.g., the Civil Rights Acts and Voting Rights Acts of 1965), social, political, and economic gains, and an improved structural position for African Americans (Lauer, 1977; Oberschall, 1978).

In the context of the above examples of social change, conflict is one way structural change occurs when authority relationships (i.e., one party is dominant or has more power than the other) are challenged. This conceptualization of conflict can be applied to the cultural shift occurring in women's roles in our culture in general and in the marital relationship specifically. Typically, the role of wife has been subordinate to that of husband (Altrocchi & Crosby, 1989). Believing that women's and men's roles are distinct and immutable limits opportunities for women's development and so creates a "conflict of interests or needs" (Miller, 1976, p. 126). Bernard (1978) suggests that dealing with real or perceived differences involves processes like bargaining and negotiation. These processes do not create conflict, but rather are an acknowledgement of and attempt at resolution of the conflict of interests and needs that exists in the status quo. In this context, conflict is not necessarily "the dramatic, confrontational kind" (Bernard, 1978, p. 297), but a "basic process of existence" (Miller, 1976, p. 126) that attempts to accommodate differences on a day-to-day basis.

As contemporary women move away from a traditional/ subordinate role, they move toward a more equitable distribution of opportunities and constraints within

marriage (Rapaport, 1974). This shift is perceived as analogous to other social changes wherein conflict served as a vehicle for the redistribution of power in the larger culture. Thus, within periods of transition, whether it be within marriage or society, conflict is inherent.

Other changes in women's roles are even more specific to marriage. These changes relate to affective factors, such as individual well-being and personal fulfillment. Affective factors have become important criteria for evaluating one's marriage beyond financial or social considerations (Kersten, 1990). Contemporary women now seek to negotiate individual well-being, autonomy, and self-fulfillment needs concurrently with relationship and intimacy needs within marriage. Thus, many women think more flexibly about the meaning of being a woman (i.e., gender-role orientation) and about women's roles in marriage (Baber & Allen, 1992).

In spite of changes in gender roles, however, the institution of marriage continues to provide one context for building and maintaining an enduring, committed relationship between women and men (Altrocchi & Crosby, 1989). Estimates suggest that 95% of all women 20-54 had married by 1990. Of those 26% who had ended their first marriage, 63% had remarried (Norton & Miller, 1992). This suggests that the changing contemporary experiences of women in our culture and the potential satisfaction derived from sharing one's life over time in an intimate relationship are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Not only do women continue to seek out marriage, but

they also report that the quality of their marriages results in feelings of satisfaction and overall well-being (Fowers, 1991; Olson, 1983).

The continued importance of the institution of marriage in our culture is reflected by the fact that family research has focused and continues to focus on marital quality. As a result, our understanding of the factors that differentiate marriages of varying quality has grown. Some research has examined the factors that affect marital quality and the ways in which marital quality changes over time (Glenn, 1990). For example, during the last two decades, family research has studied the effects of gender on marital quality to determine how other factors may relate differently to marital quality for men and women (Thompson & Walker, 1989). However, most of this literature is limited to between group comparisons and provides little information about the actual means by which marital quality is sustained over time. Because studies show that gender explains only 5% of the variance in most outcomes (Lott, 1990), examining the differences between groups may have less value to understanding outcomes of interest (in this case, marital quality and stability) than examining within group variations. Thus, it is important to examine the relationship between marital processes and marital outcomes for different kinds of women and men (versus only examining the differences in marriage for women and men), and the ways in which these relationships vary over time.

Recent research also has addressed some of the processes by which the quality and stability of marriages are sustained. The Circumplex Model (Olson, 1983, 1986,

1991) suggests that cohesion, flexibility and communication are key to marital functioning, and findings indicate that these processes are related to marital outcomes (Anderson & Gavazzi, 1990; Greene, Harris, Forte, & Robinson, 1991; Olson, 1983, 1986; Olson, Lavee, & McCubbin, 1988). This research, however, has focused primarily on cohesion and flexibility and their relationship to marital quality (e.g., Anderson & Gavazzi, 1990). Much less emphasis is on communication and marital quality or all three processes and marital stability. Thus we know a good deal about marital quality, but less about marital processes and marital stability. In addition, little or no research has addressed these marital processes for women whose roles are changing

The current study suggests that a more complete understanding of marital quality and marital stability can be gained by examining the relationship between the marital processes of cohesion, flexibility, and communication and these marital outcomes. In addition, because women's roles have shown dramatic change, investigation of within-group differences for women is warranted. Thus, this study addresses the ways in which these marital processes influence marital outcomes differently in the marriages of nontraditional and traditional women.

Purpose

The focus of this study is on the marriages of nontraditional women, or women who have departed from their historically traditional role in both their attitudes (i.e., gender-role orientation) and their behavior (i.e., professions). The purpose of this

study is to explore the unique ways in which the marital processes of cohesion, flexibility, and communication influence marital quality and marital stability in the marriages of these women.

Research Questions

The following questions are of interest in the examination of marital outcomes for nontraditional women: (a) How do the marital processes of cohesion, flexibility, and communication relate to the marital quality and marital stability of nontraditional women? (b) Are the relationships between these marital processes and marital outcomes different for nontraditional and traditional women? (c) Are there changes over time in the relationships between these marital processes and outcomes both for nontraditional and traditional women?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature relevant to this study is examined in 5 sections: (a) theoretical orientation, (b) conceptualizing gender in marriage, (c) reconceptualizing gender in contemporary marriages, (d) nontraditional and traditional women, (d) marital quality and stability, and (e) marital processes contributing to marital quality. This chapter concludes with a critique of the extant research and a summary of the research hypotheses guiding the proposed study.

Theoretical Orientation

This study integrates (a) principles of social conflict theory with (b) the marital processes described in the Circumplex Model (Olson, 1991) of marital and family functioning, which is built on the principles of family systems theory. Here these principles and processes are outlined.

Social Conflict Theory

Social conflict theory (Farrington & Chertok, 1993) has its roots in the works of Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), Charles Darwin (1809-1882), Karl Marx (1818-1883), and Max Weber (1864-1920). Both Machiavelli and Hobbes saw basic human nature and behavior as motivated by pure individualistic self-interest, resulting in an ongoing condition of conflict unless controlled by the state. Darwin proposed that conflict was a function of biological struggle in which only the fittest survive the process of conflict necessary to the evolution of the human

species. Marx formulated and applied principles of conflict to human social development, including the belief that contradiction and conflict are inherent in human existence and relationships, and that conflict can serve as a vehicle for change through the dialectic process. Although in agreement with the assumption that conflict is an inherent component of human relationships, Weber also noted that social order and stability prevailed in many social settings. He proposed that this state of order results from the power of some exerted over others, and so the distribution of power in a social setting can be understood as a critical aspect of human existence and interaction (Farrington & Chertok, 1993).

A conflict perspective sees the family as paradoxical. Processes that generate conflict are inherent in the family (i.e., relationships are typically characterized by longevity, strong emotional bonds, frequency of interaction, and divergent self-interests). Simultaneously, there are mechanisms within the family that regulate and even suppress manifestation of conflict, such as the stratification of power and the availability of resources. In addition, there exists a myth of family consensus and harmony as the "natural state" of the family. The implication of this myth is that conflict is a symptom of pathology within the marriage or family, and that the absence of conflict indicates that the marital or family system is functioning well. Thus, perception of marital quality would depend upon the degree of conflict occurring in the marriage (Farrington & Chertok, 1993). Believing in this myth of harmony also influences how marital partners respond behaviorally when conflict occurs. A belief that conflict is to be avoided may motivate partners to ignore or fail to deal with

conflict when it occurs. On the other hand, believing that conflict is a natural part of the structure and process of marriage may motivate partners to find productive means for dealing with conflict through effective problem-solving and negotiation processes. Perception of marital quality in this case would depend not on the frequency or degree of conflict, but on the marital partners' ability to acknowledge, express, and effectively manage conflict.

Social conflict theory informs the study of the marriages of nontraditional women on two levels: the microlevel and the macrolevel. The microlevel refers to conflict as it relates to the thoughts and actions of the individual marital partners. Within marriage, conflict may be perceived as a consequence of each partner's struggle to pursue his or her self-interests. This pursuit may be in opposition to that of the other spouse. Family-specific norms, which are a function of larger cultural and societal norms, dictate how this conflict is perceived and managed (Farrington & Chertok, 1993). For example, in a marriage that adheres to traditional norms, the interests of the spouse with the most influence and power, typically the husband, likely prevails. In a nontraditional marriage, however, one goal of the resolution of conflict may be finding a way for both spouses to have their needs met through negotiation, problem-solving, and compromise. Ideally, each partner will have equal power in influencing the process of conflict resolution.

At the macrolevel, conflict is understood as a function of structural conditions. The social norms and cultural values of society act as basic mechanisms and processes that produce an unequal distribution of resources. This unequal distribution

of resources supports and protects the interests of those with the most power, typically middle-aged, white males. Thus, structural inequalities are created within society and within social systems that comprise society, including the family. These inequalities result in differential distribution of opportunities in society and in the family (Farrington & Chertok, 1993).

Conflict on the microlevel in marriage can be seen as a function of larger structural constraints on the distribution of power between individuals. For example, there are significant power differentials within a traditional marital system by which men are more able than women to pursue their own interests. This inequality is sanctioned, facilitated, and perpetuated by the norms and values of the larger culture and society. If marital partners attempt to create and maintain a more egalitarian marriage that departs from these norms, they are in conflict with society and may experience sanctions in the form of criticism and disapproval from others outside the marriage. These nontraditional marital partners also may be subject to increased conflict within their marriage as they attempt to negotiate their own set of norms consistent with an egalitarian philosophy that is inconsistent with broader social norms.

Principles of Social Conflict Theory Related to Marriage

There are five basic principles of social conflict theory (Farrington & Chertok, 1993) that can inform our understanding of the marriages of nontraditional women. A discussion of these principles as they relate to the marital system follows.

First, individuals are generally motivated to act in accordance with their individual needs, values, goals, resources and self-interests. Marital partners are not

exempt from the phenomenon of multiple self-interests, so individual partners are not necessarily motivated to act in accordance with the needs of their spouses.

Alternatively, spouses may want the same things, but it may be (or perceived to be) that there is only a limited supply of the desired commodities (e.g., power, time, energy). The potential consequence of multiple self-interests or limited desired resources is marital conflict.

Second, when there is conflict of self-interests, the person with less power will have fewer opportunities to pursue his or her individual interests. Conflict within marriage may result from an actual power differential as the spouse with less power challenges the authority of the spouse with greater power. The spouse with greater power may exert his or her power to suppress this challenge, thus masking the conflict of interests and preventing or minimizing the expression of conflict behavior in the marriage. Relatedly, one spouse may perceive that his or her partner possesses and is exerting greater power, and this perception may be a source of conflict.

Third, in some cases, members of a group (e.g., marriage) may have common individual self-interests as a result of similar socialization experiences or other influences. For example, marital partners may share an interest in developing and maintaining an egalitarian marriage. However, these spouses may encounter conflict in their day-to-day attempts to achieve this larger shared goal.

Fourth, social groups have inherent tendencies toward both conflict and order. The drive for order motivates us to find the means to deal with conflict. In marriage this tendency toward order can be seen as motivation to keep the marriage intact

and/or to maintain a degree of marital quality sufficient to justify maintaining the marriage.

Finally, conflict can be viewed as functional, in that positive consequences can ensue. Conflict theory emphasizes the processes that restore a sense of order to the marriage through effective conflict management. The goal is not to (a) abolish or suppress existing differences that generate conflict or to (b) find any one "true" solution. Instead the goal is to develop the means by which marital partners can manage conflict in a way that is acceptable to both and that allows the marriage to be mutually fulfilling. In this way, conflict can serve as a vehicle for change and growth by bringing about opportunities for greater equality and fuller development of human potential within marriage. A sense of solidarity can be an additional positive consequence of conflict in marriage. In processing conflict and achieving compromise or consensus, a sense of cohesion can be developed and enhanced in a marriage from the resulting sense of "we-ness" achieved from working through the conflict and strengthening the identity of the marital partners as a couple and the unique identity of their marriage. Even when no resolution is achieved, the expression of conflict can strengthen trust in the marital system and subsequently enhance solidarity (Gottman, 1993).

Conflict can be perceived as a natural part of the day-to-day lives of partners in nontraditional marriages (i.e., marriages wherein marital partners depart from traditional roles) because spouses are co-creating their marital roles by developing their own family norms, which diverge from the larger societal norms. The presence of

conflict as a natural part of nontraditional marriages debunks the myth of the harmonious family. Contrary to perceiving conflict as a symptom of pathology, conflict in nontraditional marriages may be perceived as an opportunity to further define the unique culture of the marriage and to strengthen marital functioning. The marital processes of the Circumplex Model (Olson, 1991) can serve as a framework for understanding the ways in which conflict can be managed so marital quality is enhanced for both spouses and marital quality achieved.

Marital Processes of the Circumplex Model

The Circumplex Model (Olson, 1991) describes a pattern of family interaction at the systemic level. This model identifies three dimensions of marital interaction to explain marital functioning: cohesion, flexibility, and communication.

Cohesion

Cohesion refers to the sense of bonding or engagement that spouses experience with one another (Killorin & Olson, 1984). Cohesion can be thought of as a part of the "glue" that holds couples together while they find a way to manage conflict and to reach order within the marriage following the occurrence of conflict. Indicators representing cohesion within a marriage include the degree of emotional bonding, the nature of internal and external boundaries, the use of time and space, and the nature of interests and recreation (Killorin & Olson, 1984). Dynamics within the marriage that might be investigated as indications of cohesion include: feelings of emotional closeness to one's partner, experiencing reciprocal caring for and responsiveness to one's emotional needs, instrumental affection, sexual intimacy, and self-disclosure as a

means of expressive intimacy. Shared space within the home and shared interest and participation in leisure activity also reflect marital cohesion. In addition, cohesion includes demonstrations of the degree of independence experienced within the marriage, or a sense of freedom to be oneself and to interact with others outside the marriage in work-related and social activity without jeopardizing the fundamental closeness to one's partner. A sense of interdependence and a sense that separate interests are tied to the well-being of the relationship are aspects of the development of attachment and degree of "we-ness" (Perlman & Fehr, 1989).

Flexibility

Flexibility is the product of the feedback loop of family systems theory that informs the system of a need for change (Killorin & Olson, 1984). Basically, flexibility represents the system's inherent ability to effect that change when it is called for as a response to conflict resulting from environmental or situational stress. Flexibility facilitates marital partners' management of conflict by maximizing possible options for change. Change might occur in the power structure of the marital system, in the role content of marital positions, or in the interactional patterns between spouses (Olson, 1991). Indicators of flexibility that may be assessed as representative of each partner's perception of the degree of flexibility within the marriage include assertiveness and control as components of marital power, relationship rules, and negotiation processes and styles. Marital dynamics related to these indicators might include: perception of equitable input into decision-making processes and outcomes, degree of participation in both instrumental and expressive aspects of the marriage as

called for by circumstances, and degree of constraint experienced by one's role as wife or husband.

Communication

Communication is considered to be the facilitating dimension of marital interaction in that it provides the means for partners to share with each other their changing needs with regard to flexibility and cohesion. Positive communication skills permit movement on the other two dimensions. Conflict of self-interests can be acknowledged, expressed, and managed through positive communication skills. These skills include sending clear and congruent messages, expressing empathy, and using reflective listening, supportive comments, and effective problem-solving skills. Negative comments that restrict movement along the continua of cohesion and flexibility include sending incongruent and disqualifying messages, failing to express empathy, using double-binds and paradoxical messages, and using nonsupportive statements or criticism and poor problem-solving skills (Killorin & Olson, 1984).

Integration of Marital Processes and Social Conflict Theory

It has been suggested that the ways in which couples deal with conflict created by incompatibilities or "disturbances" that inevitably arise will affect marital quality (Gottman, 1993). A similar observation is made by Markman, Renick, Floyd, Stanley, and Clements (1993), who noted that one of the most important components of marital success (i.e., marital quality/stability) is the extent to which spouses are able to manage negative emotions and handle conflict using constructive rather than destructive means. Such disturbances, negative emotions, or conflict experienced by

either spouse will call for some manner of change in the marital system. It is during these periods of disturbance and change that the marital paradigm needs to shift (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1993), because assumptions and expectations must become explicit, and conflict-resolution must be negotiated through communication processes. Accordingly, individual realities can be replaced by a new, conjoint reality created through the marital partners' interactions (Deal, Wampler, & Halverson, 1992). In fact, it is assumed that conflict will occur as a developmental aspect of any marriage, and so productive adaptation to conflicts can result in beneficial changes to the marital system.

The particular culture of a marriage, or collection of values, rules, and daily rituals (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1993), does not necessarily imply shared norms. Rather the marital culture may represent an exchange of perceptions, allowing for agreement and disagreement. It is through communication that these perceptions can be shared and negotiated so adaptive change is possible within the marital system. The capacity to manage conflict through change and adaptation and the ability to effectively communicate the need for change and adaptation enable a couple to move along the dimensions of flexibility and cohesion in any direction required by the situation or the marital life cycle stage. Through these processes of communication and negotiation, spouses co-create a unique marital culture allowing for adaptive change. Consequently, marital quality is more likely to be enhanced and marital stability is more likely to be maintained.

Conceptualizing Gender in Marriage

Gender is a primary category by which our social world is organized (Hare-Mustin, 1988). Gender encompasses "structural constraints and opportunities, beliefs and ideology, actual arrangements and activities, meanings and experiences, diversity and change, and interaction and relation" (Thompson & Walker, 1989, p. 846).

Marriage, as a social institution, and our experiences of marriage also are gendered (Hare-Mustin, 1988). Following the Industrial Revolution, there was a shift from an agrarian society wherein both husbands and wives worked at home. Husbands' work moved out of the home into plants, factories, and mills. Home became a place where the needs of family members were met, and work came to be viewed as paid labor accomplished outside the home (Lipman-Blumen, 1984). Concurrent with this shift in the conceptualization of work was the establishment of gender roles. That is, men's work came to be equated with paid labor outside the home that enabled men to provide for their households. Women's work came to be defined in terms of caretaking of home and family members for which women were not paid wages.

The segmentation of work resulted in the separation of spheres for men and women (Hare-Mustin, 1988). The concept of separate spheres suggests a distinction between work accomplished outside the home by men and work done in the home by women. This distinction between spheres of work also subsumes a distinction between the roles assigned to and the meaning of being male and female within marriage.

In the 1950's, Parsons and Bales (1955) reinforced these distinct roles of men and women through a functional analysis of sex roles, emphasizing men as

instrumental or task-oriented and women as expressive or nurturing. This organization of roles around gender was seen as supportive of the institution of marriage, as it eliminated competition between working spouses that could threaten marriage. While role analysis can inform our understanding of the social nature of roles and role socialization (Thompson, 1993), this sex-role perspective also implies that roles are dichotomous and inflexibly fixed (Thorne, 1992). When women take part in both wage work and family work, however, the concept of separate and fixed spheres for women and men is no longer viable (Hare-Mustin, 1988).

Although the division of gender roles into two distinct categories is a customary tool for analysis, studying gender in this way can be confounded by biases wherein there is an inclination to emphasize particular aspects and to ignore others. Hare-Mustin (1988) suggested that two such biases result. Alpha bias exaggerates differences between groups, whereas beta bias minimizes or denies the differences that exist. In studies of gender, alpha bias limits human opportunities for both men and women. For example, classic psychoanalytic theories cast traditional masculinity as the standard norm for human behavior against which female behavior is evaluated. In addition, alpha bias affects the value attached to instrumentality and autonomy in contrast to the value attached to expressiveness and affiliation. Beta bias would be evident when the results of psychological research on male subjects are generalized to women, or when differences in access to resources and power between men and women are ignored.

Cultural and social changes have affected changes in many aspects of marriage, including the ways in which women's roles are enacted in marriage. For example, women's increased participation in the paid labor force and the women's rights movement have contributed to less restrictive attitudes towards women's role in marriage (Altrocchi & Crosby, 1989). Feminist thinking has challenged the functionalist assumption that a traditional organization of roles within marriage around gender is beneficial and inevitable (Boss & Thorne, 1989). Feminism emphasizes the in-depth examination of women's experiences to provide a more complete and critical understanding of the ways in which social institutions influence women's everyday lives (Hartsock, 1979). In addition, feminist thinking concurs with conflict theorists that conflict is functional in effecting positive change and the equalization of power between genders (Boss & Thorne, 1989).

Reconceptualizing Gender in Contemporary Marriages

Contemporary men and women organize their gender relations in marriage in different ways. Traditional marriages typically are hierarchical, male-oriented, and organized around the segmentation of work by gender (Hare-Mustin, 1988). Relatively fixed gender roles are emphasized, obedience and submission are highly valued, and partners tend to say that the authority of God, the church, and/or husbands is paramount (Altrocchi & Crosby, 1989). When comparing traditional and egalitarian married couples, Altrocchi and Crosby (1989) found that traditional couples perceived the husband to be the leader of the family, the one who makes decisions and provides for the family as "breadwinner." In more egalitarian marriages, gender roles were

found to be more flexible and negotiable, communication is open, and equality in partnership is emphasized (Altrocchi, 1988).

This diversity of contemporary marriages suggests the importance of examining old ways of thinking about gender in marriage. Further, reconceptualizing gender becomes important to a more complete understanding of how gender affects marriage (Thompson, 1993). Such reconceptualization would (a) move away from individual and functional explanations (e.g., Parsons & Bales, 1955) and (b) be more relevant to contemporary culture and more conducive to self-development for women as well as men.

When the sex-role approach is emphasized, gender is treated as a passively learned role assigned to men and women by the culture (Thompson & Walker, 1989). Here, similarities between the sexes and diversity within the sexes are ignored. Gender is regarded as an immutable individual characteristic. As a result, the institutional context of gender inequality and the social interaction involved in creating gender are ignored (Thompson, 1993). In contrast, a relational or interactional approach to gender (Risman & Schwartz, 1989) conceptualizes gender in marriage as dynamic and created through spouses' daily interaction with each other. Within the context of this perspective, spouses co-construct the meaning of gender in their marriage and distinguish themselves as women and men in relation to their partners through day-to-day participation and interaction (Thompson & Walker, 1989). Thus, marital partners collaborate in the creation of gender in their marriage.

The creation of gender in a marriage begins with a process where one spouse conveys personal beliefs and expectations about gender through words and actions, and these are interpreted by the partner. The partner responds in a way that either confirms or disconfirms the other's expectations, and it is this response that is interpreted. As asserted by Thompson (1993), "People do not simply conform to cultural scripts about gender. They challenge, resist, and create their own gender strategies...and use their personal innovations and struggles in everyday life to transform culture and society" (p. 567). It is this interactional perspective of the co-creation of gender within marriage that is inherent in this study.

Nontraditional and Traditional Women

Conceptualizing Nontraditional and Traditional Women

Nontraditional and traditional women have been described in a variety of ways. For example, a woman's traditionality may refer to her attitudes and beliefs about gender roles, the nature of her work (i.e., her occupational status or prestige), or her income level. For the purposes of this study, women's traditionality is characterized by two dimensions: occupational status and gender-role beliefs.

Standley and Soule (1974) argued that masculine and feminine careers could be differentiated in terms of the sex ratio in a given profession. Another way to differentiate careers is the nature of the work role and its appropriateness for one gender over the other. The typical activities of the profession would be examined for their association with socially approved "feminine or masculine attitudes, skills, and values" (Standley & Soule, 1974, p. 245). In this study, an occupational status is

considered to be nontraditional for women if males historically have comprised the majority of its workers, while occupational statuses considered traditional have historically been dominated by women.

Here, nontraditional women hold professional or managerial occupational statuses; these statuses typically have been held by men. Traditional women in this study are either unemployed or hold clerical, sales, service, or domestic occupational statuses; these statuses typically have been held by women. In addition, nontraditional women in this study will express nontraditional gender-role beliefs. Here, traditional women will express gender-role beliefs consistent with traditional attitudes regarding men's and women's role behaviors.

Defining the traditionality of women in these ways is consistent with the literature emphasizing the multidimensional nature of gender-role orientation. The concepts of masculinity and femininity are more inclusive than endorsement of particular attitudes and values. As such, masculinity and femininity encompass distinct kinds of gender-related phenomena (Spence, 1984), including areas of role-related behavior such as occupational choice (Archer, 1989). Orlofsky (1981) asserted that traditional assessments of gender roles as unitary dimensions be replaced by measurements that assess gender-role attitudes, interests, traits, and behaviors separately. For example, some individuals who may have the capacity for flexibility in their gender roles (i.e., espouse nontraditional gender-role attitudes or interests) may not always elect to express this flexibility behaviorally (Spence, 1977) due to the influence of norms governing these behaviors (Orlofsky, 1981).

Research Related to Nontraditional and Traditional Women

A review of the extant literature with regard to nontraditional and traditional women reveals two emphases. First, research has examined the hypothesis that there is a corresponding relationship between women's career or occupational choice and gender-role orientation. For example, studies have examined the congruence between male-dominated occupational orientation and stereotypical masculine gender-role orientation. Second, the literature examines the possibility that there are patterns of individual characteristics particular to women in nontraditional professions, traditional occupations, and those who do not participate in the paid labor force. These may include personality characteristics as well as background characteristics.

Occupational Choices of Women and Gender-Role Orientation

It has been suggested that through cognitive processes women develop a "network of associations with regard to conceptions of masculinity and femininity" (Lavalee & Pelletier, 1992, p. 79). These associations guide the ways women organize information about themselves and their perceptions of and interactions with the environment. The degree to which a woman is "sex-typed" (i.e., the degree to which she has internalized a stereotypical masculine or feminine role) will depend on the degree to which she is responsive to the stereotypical masculine and feminine cues in the environment. In a study of traditional and nontraditional female workers ($N = 135$), Lemkau (1983) found that women in traditional professions were more sex-typed than were nontraditional female workers, especially in relation to self-descriptions on the job. Relatedly, Jagacinski (1987) found that female engineers ($N = 1961$)

espoused nontraditional gender-role orientations with regard to marriage and children and were more inclined toward egalitarian marriages. Women who engaged in nontraditional occupations ($N = 63$) also were found to have different gender-schematic profiles on the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Lavalee & Pelletier, 1992). That is, women in nontraditional occupations were more likely to identify themselves as masculine than were women in traditional occupations, suggesting a link for women between involvement in a traditionally male-dominated work environment and identification with masculine gender-role orientation.

The connection between gender beliefs and work also has been examined among female university students. O'Connell, Betz, and Kurth (1989) examined future work plans of female university students in traditional and nontraditional fields of study ($N = 173$). Women with traditional work plans were significantly less "gender liberal" in their perceptions of men's and women's work and family roles than were women with nontraditional work plans. Conversely, the nontraditional women expressed the belief that women have the right to compete with men for jobs traditionally held by men, disagreed that the husband should be the primary provider for the family, and were more committed to a plan for full-time work than women with traditional work plans. Consistent with these findings, Murrell, Hanson-Frieze, and Frost (1991) found that female university students planning careers in male-dominated professions ($N = 631$) expressed less traditional attitudes toward men's and women's gender roles and saw less conflict between combining the roles of work and family than unemployed women or women in female-dominated professions.

Moreover, Curry, Trew, Turner, and Hunter (1994) found that young women planning to enter nontraditional professions ($N = 520$) were less stereotypically feminine than were women planning to enter traditional occupations. These nontraditional women also identified more with their fathers than with their mothers, while women with traditional work plans identified primarily with their mothers. Taken together, these findings suggest that women who choose nontraditional professions experience less conflict in deviating from conventional expectations of women than do women who choose more traditional professions (Lemkau, 1983).

Occupational Choices of Women and Individual Characteristics

Personality characteristics. One area of research on nontraditional and traditional women has explored the possibility that there are individual characteristics common among women who make nontraditional and traditional career choices. For example, Murrell, Hanson-Frieze, and Frost (1991) tested the hypothesis that women who choose typically male-dominated professions have a higher degree of overall achievement motivation than do women who choose traditional female-dominated professions. In studying the occupational plans of female university students, these researchers found that women planning careers in male-dominated professions were motivated by different aspects of achievement. For example, they placed greater emphasis on economic considerations and the intrinsic aspects of work than did women with traditional occupational plans.

In a study of 520 16- to 17-year-old girls and boys beginning a 2-year plan of advanced study, Curry, Trew, Turner, and Hunter (1994) found that girls who were

"careerist" (i.e., committed to work as a central goal or life domain) showed higher levels of self-efficacy and confidence in their ability to obtain the educational requirements for nontraditional professions. In addition, these girls were more autonomous and independent of teachers' judgments. In contrast, "noncareerist" girls spent more time thinking about the age at which to marry and the age at which to start a family, suggesting different cognitions about themselves in relation to marriage, family, and career. These findings are supported by earlier research. For example, Neville and Schleckerd (1988) found that female university students ($N = 120$) who were more willing to engage in nontraditional career activities scored higher in self-efficacy and assertiveness. Women employed in nontraditional professions ($N = 135$) also were found to be more assertive than equally-educated women employed in traditionally female-dominated occupations (Lemkau, 1983). In fact, Lemkau (1983) suggested that higher degrees of assertiveness among nontraditional women may facilitate their negotiation of employment barriers they are likely to encounter in traditionally male-dominated fields.

In contrast, in a study of achievement and affiliation among women ($N = 120$), Erdwins, Tyer, and Mellinger (1983) found that women who were homemakers ascribed to the traditional feminine sex-role characteristics and described themselves as more self-controlled (i.e., more inhibited and less spontaneous in expression of feelings and ideas) and as having a greater need to affiliate with others in home and family roles than women who were not homemakers and who ascribed to masculine sex-role characteristics. Relatedly, Henderson and Cunningham (1993) found that women ($N =$

190) who were more traditional and less career-oriented expressed a greater degree of emotional dependence on their male partners than did nontraditional, career-oriented women.

Background characteristics. It has been suggested that nontraditional women share certain background characteristics that support achievement (e.g., in careers) and facilitate the development of more liberal sex roles than those developed by traditional women (Lemkau, 1986). This is consistent with the "enrichment hypothesis" (Almquist & Angrist, 1970) that suggests that a background environment rich in experiences that foster a broader conceptualization of gender roles influences women to choose atypical roles, such as nontraditional professions. Some research supports this hypothesis. For example, nontraditional women have been found to be more likely to have mothers who worked full-time (Curry, et al., 1994; Lemkau, 1983; O'Connell et al., 1989) than traditional women. Standley and Soule (1974) also found that women architects, lawyers, physicians, and psychologists ($N = 151$) tended to come from backgrounds where work in general was valued and where mothers' work was approved. As such, maternal employment may contribute to a broader conceptualization of gender roles by presenting women's work outside the home as congruent with the female role (Lemkau, 1983).

In addition, women in nontraditional professions have been found to more frequently mention the influence of their fathers on their career choice (Lemkau, 1983), a finding supportive of early work by Standley and Soule (1974). They found that women in nontraditional professions recalled that during childhood their parents,

especially fathers, emphasized more achievement than social qualities. These findings support the enrichment hypothesis in that support from males may mitigate the notion that being competent in nontraditional areas is threatening to a female's identity. Women who experience paternal support early in life also may continue to seek out relationships with like-minded men who support their nontraditional gender-role orientation.

Another background characteristic was found by Jagacinski (1987). Although this study compared nontraditional women with men and not with traditional women, results indicated that female engineers were more likely to have highly educated and professional parents than were male engineers. This finding was consistent with those of other studies of females in nontraditional fields of study and with nontraditional work plans.

In summary, the literature suggests some areas of commonality among women in nontraditional professions and women who make more traditional occupational choices. A relationship between traditionality of women's occupational choices and traditional gender-role orientation is a common finding. Women who are nontraditional in their professional orientation tend to be less stereotypically feminine in their gender-role orientation than are women who make more traditional occupational choices. Women who choose to enter traditionally male-dominated professions also appear to share other characteristics, including those related to motivation and achievement, self-confidence and self-efficacy, autonomy and independence, and assertiveness. On the other hand, women who enter traditional

occupations or do not enter the paid labor force tend to be more affiliative, more self-controlled (i.e., less assertive), and to express greater emotional dependence on their spouse. However, the direction of influence between these characteristics and occupational choice is unknown. It may be that these characteristics are needed by women to manage the roles they occupy, and so they develop and emphasize these aspects of their characters. On the other hand, it is possible that particular roles are primarily attractive to women who have developed particular characteristics as a result of background factors and experiences. This notion is consistent with the suggestion of Helson and Picano (1990) that people select themselves in and out of roles based on antecedent individual differences in personality. The literature also indicates that women in nontraditional professions and traditional occupations share some general background characteristics that may be influential in their choice of career roles, including degree of education and professional status of parents, maternal employment status, and degree of perceived paternal support.

Marital Quality and Marital Stability

Research on marital quality and marital stability has evolved over the last three decades. This evolution is reflected in changes in the conceptualization and measurement of marital quality and marital stability, as well as in the refinement of related theory.

Early Research

In a review of the literature on marital happiness and stability in the 1960's, Hicks and Platt (1970) noted that the research of the decade both confirmed and

expanded that of earlier findings. Isolated variables, such as higher occupational status, income, and educational level of husbands, similarities between spouses (e.g., socioeconomic status, age, religion, age at marriage) and perceived affectional rewards (e.g., esteem for spouse, sexual enjoyment), continued to be found to be related to higher marital quality.

An important new finding of research in the 1960's was the emergence of the "companionship" marriage as an addition to the more tradition-oriented "institutional" marriage. Unlike the institutional marriage, the companionship marriage emphasized affective aspects of marriage, such as interpersonal interaction and rewarding communication. Thus, an evaluation of marital quality in the companionship marriage would include an assessment of these aspects of the marital relationship.

Several other key findings were evident in the research of the 1960's. Studies supported the importance of congruence in role perceptions, role expectations, and actual performance to marital quality. The role of the husband was found to be more critical to partners' evaluation of marital quality than previously believed. Findings also indicated that children tended to detract from marital happiness rather than contribute to it. Furthermore, the 1960's saw a renewed interest in the life cycle of marriage and patterns of change in marital quality over time. The findings from studies were not consistent, but most indicated a decrease in marital quality over time.

A new perspective on marital outcomes began to develop in the 1960's that saw marital quality and stability as distinct dimensions of the marital relationship (Hicks & Platt, 1970). Researchers noted that stability was not as dependent on marital quality

as previously assumed (Hicks & Platt, 1970). Instead, it was suggested that stability was a function of other factors, such as a lack of attractive alternatives to the marriage and barriers to dissolution of the marriage. Thus, a marriage could be characterized by high quality and low stability or low quality and high stability (Lewis & Spanier, 1979).

Finally, methodological advances in studying marital quality included a reexamination of definitional problems. It was suggested that when there was a lack of consensus on the meaning of terms such as "marital happiness," subjects provided their own interpretations that may have distorted the meaning of results. The need for more precise, specific measurements was advocated to address definitional problems and to facilitate the development of theoretical frameworks that were more comprehensive (Hicks & Platt, 1970).

As family research moved into the 1970's, a paradigm shift occurred in understanding marital outcomes, in that the complexity of the dynamics influencing them was acknowledged (Lewis & Spanier, 1979). Researchers moved beyond studying the influence of single, isolated variables on marital quality and stability and began examining how the interaction of multiple factors and the influence of mediating variables determine marital outcomes. The increased use of multivariate analyses reflected this shift in thinking about the complexity of marriage.

In their review of marital quality research in the 1970's, Spanier and Lewis (1980) noted that one of the most significant developments of the decade was the recognition that the quality of marriage was a multidimensional phenomenon. The

term "marital quality" gained greater use as representing a subjective evaluation of the marital relationship on a range of commonly used dependent variables in marital research, including marital happiness and satisfaction.

Several trends in the research during the 1970's were noted by Spanier and Lewis. Men were more frequently included in studies as interest in sex differences in marital quality and finding ways to look at the marital couple as the unit of analysis increased. Methodology was more sophisticated and included greater attention to measurement and data collection issues, the use of larger samples, the increasing use of multivariate statistics for data analysis more closely reflecting the complex dynamics involved in marital quality, and increased attention to research design, particularly issues related to cross-sectional research. Interest in studying cohabitating couples also increased in the 1970's, either as marriage-like structures or as an extension of courtship.

The greatest amount of interest during this decade was dedicated to two topics: the effects of children on marital quality and marital quality over the marital career. Research continued to confirm the general findings of the 1960's that children detract from marital quality due to the impact of their presence on time, energy, and economic resources. Findings from studies of the relationship between marital quality and stages of the family life cycle generally found a U-shaped curvilinear pattern. That is, marital quality was found to be higher in the early stages of the marriage, to decrease with the birth of children, and to increase in the later stages of marriage (i.e., when children were launched). However, caution regarding this finding included concern

about reliance on cross-sectional data that did not account for cohort and age-related effects and the tendency to report as happy those marriages that survived over time.

Marital quality research in the 1970's also included theoretical contributions. Conceptual clarifications occurred for related terms, such as satisfaction and adjustment, through systematic definition and operationalization. Continued conceptual distinction was made between marital quality and stability. Marital stability was recognized as being more than simply a function of marital quality, but as a related to the comparison between one's best available marital alternatives and one's marital outcome. This conceptualization of marital stability explains why some marriages of relatively low quality remain intact, while other marriages of relatively high quality end in dissolution (Lewis & Spanier, 1979). Greater conceptual clarity provided a stronger foundation for the construction of theories. Development of middle-range theories in the 1970's employed propositions drawn from a number of theoretical frameworks, such as symbolic interactionism and social exchange (Spanier & Lewis, 1980).

Marital Quality and Marital Stability Research Since 1980

Conceptualization of Marital Quality

The lack of definitional agreement in the literature regarding the conceptualization and operationalization of marital quality reflects the complex nature of this construct. Marital quality has been conceptualized as happiness, satisfaction, adjustment, and adaptation (Johnson, White, Edwards, & Booth, 1986). Clarifying the conceptual distinction between these constructs has been a challenge for family

scholars. For example, some efforts have been made to differentiate marital happiness from marital satisfaction. Marital happiness, including the degree of positive and negative feelings about aspects of the marriage as well as global feelings about the marriage, was found to be a component of marital satisfaction (Johnson et al., 1986). However, Glenn (1990) cautioned that marital happiness and satisfaction were not necessarily reflective of marital quality. Although they are both indicators of perceptions about marriage, people tend to attach different meanings to these terms. Also, these constructs relate differently to the same other variables. Because of this, Glenn argued that happiness and satisfaction represent distinct qualities of the marital relationship and should not be used interchangeably.

Regarding marital adjustment and adaptation, greater understanding and use of systems theory has resulted in more adjustment-related constructs. As an indicator of wellness, being adjusted means functioning well and being in a healthy state. In the context of marital and family functioning, adjustment tends to be interpreted as having returned to a "steady state of functioning" after changes have occurred or as the process between these changes and the current state of functioning (Buehler, 1990). Although positive growth may occur as a result of change, marital adjustment implies a level of functioning relative to a previous state, and so may be a dubious indicator of the actual quality of marital functioning. In contrast, adaptation has been characterized as a long-term, enduring response involving more second-order or system-oriented change compared to a more short-term response (adjustment) involving first-order individual change wherein the system structure remains unchanged (McCubbin &

Patterson, 1983). Because there are multiple uses and interpretations of these constructs, Buehler (1990) suggested that they be defined more specifically when used.

In this study, marital quality is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct. This conceptualization includes a subjective evaluation of the marital relationship and an assessment of specific aspects of marital interaction, such as communication and sexual intimacy.

Conceptualization of Marital Stability

In family research, marital stability has been used interchangeably with marital dissolution, divorce, and marital quality. Low marital stability, however, does not necessarily precede dissolution of the marriage, and degree of marital quality does not always correspond to a comparable degree of marital stability (Booth & Johnson, 1983). Marital stability in this study is conceptualized as a distinct construct representing a couple's propensity to divorce or separate, whether or not dissolution or divorce is the final outcome. Consideration of separation or divorce may (a) be a precursor to the dissolution of the relationship, (b) represent the desire for dissolution on the part of couples otherwise constrained to stay in the marriage, or (c) be one stage in a process of resolving marital difficulties (Booth & White, 1980).

Marital stability has been used as a proxy measure for marital quality. Scholars assumed that if the marriage is intact, then it is of higher quality than one that terminates. However, the relationship between marital stability and marital quality is complex (Booth & White, 1980). Research shows (Lewis & Spanier, 1979) that the quality of a marriage is highly correlated with stability, such that the more satisfied

partners are with their marriage, the more likely they are to perceive the benefits of remaining in that marriage and thus less likely to consider the dissolution of the marriage. In a study of 1,364 married persons, Booth and White (1980) found that for both men and women, the strongest predictor of considering divorce (i.e., marital instability) was the perception of low marital quality. Respondents who reported their marriages as only pretty happy or not too happy were significantly more likely to be considering divorce than those who reported their marriages as being very happy.

Consistent with these observations about the relationship between marital stability and marital quality, marital stability typically now is measured as a construct distinct from marital quality (Glenn, 1990). The survival of a marriage is not necessarily an indication of its quality or of the happiness or satisfaction of the spouses, as marital stability is not only a function of marital quality. Many marriages of low quality remain intact, and some marriages of high quality are terminated (Booth & Johnson, 1983). Barriers to divorce and alternatives to the current marriage influence the likelihood that people will consider divorce (Booth & White, 1980). Cole (1985) found that economic dependence, external pressures for the marriage to succeed, or the lack of perceived alternatives keep a marriage intact over time. Relatedly, a small percentage of the married couples studied by Booth and White (1980) reported their marriages to be very happy but were nevertheless considering divorce. These couples tended to report experiencing few barriers to divorce (i.e., moral or financial), were employed, were less religious, had married young, and had not been married long.

Although marital stability has some of the same correlates as marital quality, it also exhibits unique patterns (Booth & White, 1980). One factor that affects marital stability is the length of marriage. The longevity of a marriage serves as a barrier to considering divorce (Booth & White, 1980). Marriages of greater duration were more stable than were shorter marriages. Children also affect marital stability. The marriages of couples with preschoolers were more stable than those with older children or those that were child independent. Booth and White suggested that the presence of young children may serve as a barrier to divorce, but the stress of having young children also may influence thinking about divorce nonetheless. They also found that the marriages of men and women who were employed full-time were less stable. This suggests that economic dependence serves as a barrier to considering dissolution of the marriage, while economic independence offers an alternative facilitating consideration of divorce. Interestingly, Booth and White found that this relationship varied for women in affluent couples, wherein economic rewards may mitigate the stresses of marital difficulties. Finally, these researchers found that the marriages of men and women who reported being strongly religious were more stable. Thus, religiosity, employment, income, marital duration, and the presence of young children are factors that effect marital stability and that may even deter unhappily married couples from considering dissolving their marriage.

Marital Quality and Marital Stability Over Time

What happens to marital quality and stability over the marital career?

Generally, studies have indicated that satisfaction, or indicators of marital quality,

follows the shape of a shallow U-curve (Olson, 1983). Perception of marital quality tends to decline after the first few years of marriage and the birth of the first child. Marital quality typically increases after children are launched (Olson, 1983). Schram (1979) suggested that an increase in satisfaction at this later stage can be attributed to spouses' relaxation of gender roles. However, White and Booth (1991) argued that marital quality may never fully return to its earlier level.

In a study of married couples over an eight-year span ($N = 1,341$), marital quality was found to be a generally stable phenomenon unaffected by duration of marriage or gender of spouse (Johnson, Amoloza, & Booth, 1992). These researchers suggested that once a marital relationship is formed, spouses are likely to continue to relate to one another in a consistent manner, and the quality of that relationship is not likely to change appreciably. In the face of environmental pressures, couples may use that consistency to self-regulate and to make active choices to maintain their level of functioning to reduce the impact of the environmental pressures.

Gottman (1993) proposed that over time couples who are able to negotiate a stable style of adaptation to stressors or incompatibilities with their own comfort level of emotional expression are more likely to maintain a happy marriage. With regard to marital interaction, Gottman noted that the decline in marital quality over time can be predicted by the reciprocity of negative affect between partners during conflict discussion. Relatedly, in a study of factors contributing to sustained marital quality in enduring marriages ($N = 15$), Robinson and Blanton (1993) identified five key characteristics: intimacy; commitment to marriage and spouse; congruent perceptions

of the strengths of the relationship; communication skills enabling couples to solve their problems and, thus, reinforce their commitment; and, for some couples, religious orientation.

In contrast to findings on marital quality over the marital career, marital stability was found to be lowest in the early years of marriage, after which it gradually increased (Booth & White, 1980). White and Booth (1991) proposed that the distribution of barriers and alternatives contributes to an understanding of this pattern. Findings from their longitudinal study of married couples ($N = 1,341$) suggest that because barriers are higher (e.g., duration of marriage) and alternatives are lower (e.g., availability of other potential partners) in longer marriages, partners must consider their marriages to be extremely unhappy in order to consider dissolution of the relationship. Thus, level of marital stability is likely to increase and sustain itself in the later years of a marriage. In contrast, in the earlier years of marriage, barriers were found to be lower, and so couples in marriages of shorter duration were more apt to consider dissolution of their marriage even when their marriages were not very unhappy.

Measuring Marital Quality

Variation in the conceptualization of marital quality has resulted in different ways of measuring the construct. This has resulted in two approaches to measurement: the unidimensional and the multidimensional approach. The unidimensional approach to assessing marital quality involves measurement of each partner's evaluation of the marriage based on his or her global sentiment about the

marriage. This approach includes examination of affective variables, such as each partner's individual self-report of satisfaction or happiness within the marriage. Goodwin (1992) found that the single, general happiness item from the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS: Spanier, 1976) correlated highly with respondents' total scores on the entire DAS scale measuring marital quality. This single item also successfully differentiated between satisfied and distressed couples. Using this approach, marital quality is assessed as an attitudinal variable on a continuum and measured as a property of individual spouses (Olson, 1983). Thus, Goodwin (1992) concluded that a single item such as this one can give a snapshot of the relationship.

A multidimensional measure of marital quality examines the processes that characterize a marriage and that, in turn, influence partners' subjective feelings about that marriage. Various dimensions of the marital relationship are assessed as reflections of overall marital functioning. These include factors such as dyadic consensus, cohesion (Eddy, Heyman, & Weiss, 1991), and communication, interaction, and integration (Lewis & Spanier, 1979). Cole (1985) suggested that marital quality exists along a continuum and that level of marital quality is differentiated by the partners' subjective evaluation of the processual properties of marriage including its attractions (e.g., need fulfillment, intimacy, and affirmation) and its tensions (e.g., conflict, rules, and role strain). A single-item measure of global sentiment regarding the quality of the marriage often is included as an additional dimension of marital quality. When a composite is derived from the various dimensions assessed, the

meaning of results or relationships among those dimensions is obscured (Thompson, 1993).

An integration of the unidimensional and multidimensional approaches to measuring marital quality offers a means by which both a subjective assessment and an assessment of the processes that characterize the marriage (as they affect or are affected by the subjective assessment) can be evaluated. In this way, the important relationships among these dimensions are not obscured. Within this integrative approach, the subjective assessment of the marriage serves as the dependent or outcome variable, while the marital processes and relational characteristics are examined as the independent variables or mediating variables that may correlate in direction and degree with the subjective assessment. Marital quality, in this sense, includes: (a) processual aspects of the relationship, (b) subjective feelings about the relationship, and (c) relationships among these processes and feelings. Thus, quality is conceptualized as a dynamic construct, indicating how good the marriage is perceived to be at any one point in time, as well as a reflection of the cumulative effect of the processual and relational variables to that time. The relationship between the process and outcome aspects of a marriage then can be examined as related dimensions of marital quality, with attention also being given to moderating variables that may impact that relationship. The subjective evaluation of the marriage is conceptually distinct from marital processes that relate to and even predict the subjective evaluation. Measuring them with different scales/items allows examination of distinctions between what constitutes and influences marital quality for men and women.

Measuring Marital Stability

Over the last 2 decades, marital stability has been measured in a variety of ways, based on diverse conceptualizations of the construct. Perhaps most common was the notion that a marriage was unstable if it had been dissolved by divorce, while intact marriages were considered to be stable (Booth & Johnson, 1983). A more current conceptualization of marital stability is the proneness to dissolution or divorce, as reflected by expressed feelings, thoughts, and actions related to that end (Booth & White, 1980). This conceptualization accounts for findings that indicate that although a marriage is intact, partners may be considering the dissolution of the marriage but are constrained to stay in the marriage by barriers to dissolution or absence of alternatives to the marriage (Booth & Johnson, 1983; Booth & White, 1980; Cole, 1985).

Marital stability in this study is measured in a manner consistent with a scale developed by Booth and Johnson (1983). The Marital Instability Index was based on a study of married men and women ($N = 2,034$) designed to assess the affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of considering termination of a marriage. These include (a) considering the marriage to be in trouble, (b) talking about marital problems, separation, or divorce to one's spouse or others, and (c) taking related action such as consulting an attorney. Although these feelings, thoughts, and actions may not result in divorce, they measure the propensity toward marital dissolution.

Research on Marital Processes

Research has shown that cohesion and flexibility are related to marital functioning and marital outcomes. Olson (1986) has found a curvilinear relationship between cohesion and flexibility and marital functioning. This finding indicates that couples having moderate scores on the two dimensions are able to function in more positive ways than are couples who score in the extreme range on these processes. A moderate level of cohesion indicates both connectedness and separateness between marital partners, while a moderate level of flexibility indicates both structure and flexibility in the marriage (Anderson, 1986). Thus, too little or too much cohesion or flexibility interferes with marital functioning (Olson, 1986, 1989).

In a later study, Olson, Lavee, and McCubbin (1988) examined cohesion and flexibility in nonclinical families (families not seeking help for therapeutic issues) at all stages of the family life cycle ($N = 1,251$). Couples who reported midrange scores on cohesion and flexibility also reported greater marital satisfaction and lower intrafamily strain than couples who scored in the extreme range on either dimension. These results suggest an interaction effect between cohesion and flexibility with regard to the couple's response to stressor events. It may be that connected, flexible couples do not actually experience fewer stressors, but they perceive and experience stressors as creating less strain due to the effect being connected and flexible has on their management of stressor events. Recent findings (Thomas & Olson, 1993) also supported the curvilinear hypothesis, in that couples who scored in the mid-range of

cohesion and flexibility reported functioning more adequately than did those couples who scored in the extreme range of either dimension.

Other research findings regarding this curvilinear relationship between cohesion and flexibility and marital quality have been mixed. For example, Green and associates (1991) found a linear relationship between cohesion and marital satisfaction in a nonclinical sample of married men ($N = 2,440$). Men who reported the lowest level of cohesion in their marriages (i.e., disengagement) also reported the least marital satisfaction, while men who reported the greatest level of cohesion (i.e., enmeshment) reported the most marital satisfaction. These results supported those from an earlier study (Olson, 1983) of the relationship of cohesion and flexibility to family satisfaction, quality of life, and marital satisfaction ($N = 1,918$). Here, marital satisfaction was strongly and positively correlated with both flexibility and cohesion. In addition, couples in this study who agreed on their level of cohesion and flexibility expressed greater marital satisfaction and greater agreement on their level of satisfaction. The results from a study using a sample of married individuals ($N = 110$) seeking help for a variety of individual, dyadic, and family concerns found a linear relationship between cohesion and flexibility and marital quality (Anderson & Gavazzi, 1990). Even though many of the couples in this study scored in the extreme range on cohesion and flexibility (i.e., scores indicated many couples were disengaged and rigid), findings indicated a linear relationship between cohesion and flexibility and individuals' perceptions of their marital functioning.

The Circumplex Model (Olson, 1983, 1986, 1991) proposes that positive communication skills facilitate movement on the two central dimensions of the model, cohesion and flexibility. Couples who score in the moderate (i.e., more functional) range on cohesion and flexibility are hypothesized to have more positive communication skills, including effective problem-solving skills, sending clear and congruent messages, and empathy and support (Olson, Russell, & Sprenkle, 1983). When this hypothesis was tested among married men and women ($N = 150$), results indicated that communication skills are optimal when cohesion and flexibility are in the moderate ranges (Anderson, 1986).

The importance of communication to marriage, especially to marital stability, also has been noted by Gottman (1993), who identified a negativity cascade proceeding from criticism and complaining to defensiveness, leading to contempt, and finally to stonewalling or withdrawal from the interaction. A distance and isolation cascade also was identified by Gottman that begins with the experience of "flooding." Flooding occurs when a spouse's negative emotions are perceived as being unprovoked and overwhelming. As a result, the partner perceives marital problems as severe and stable, thinks it is better to work out problems alone, and attempts to terminate communicative interactions with the spouse.

Related to the marital processes of cohesion and flexibility, the negative attributional mindset identified by Gottman can interfere with productive communication and, thus, be prohibitive to the management of conflict through movement on the flexibility and cohesion dimensions within the marriage. Escalating

negative affect interferes with the ability to correctly decode a partner's meaning (Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1990; Gottman, 1994). If partners miss each other's meanings in this way, communication is not likely to be reciprocated in an expected or productive manner (Sher & Baucom, 1993). Consequently, partners are not likely to accurately receive messages communicated by their spouse regarding need for system adaptation and change.

In summary, the extant literature on marital processes suggests that cohesion, flexibility, and communication influence marital outcomes. Cohesion and flexibility have been found to relate to spouses' reports of marital functioning, marital satisfaction and level of intrafamily strain. Studies of communication as a marital process in the Circumplex Model have found that marital partners who report a positive relationship between flexibility and cohesion and marital quality also tend to report positive communication skills. In addition, findings of other researchers indicate that communication skills are critical to the expression of needs and management of conflict necessary for greater marital functioning and positive marital outcomes.

Summary

The literature suggests that nontraditional women are engaged in an emergent lifestyle. These women are more invested in their careers and express greater personal autonomy and relationship interdependence than do traditional women. When nontraditional women elect to marry, they must negotiate power sharing, changing needs, and balance between their work and family lives. This means that they face marital roles that likely result in greater ambiguity than is true of more traditional

women. These distinctive characteristics may challenge the marital outcomes of nontraditional women. Consequently, these women may have a greater need for coping mechanisms and conflict management strategies within their marriages to maintain desired levels of quality and stability.

Conversely, for traditional women marital roles are more clearly defined, as these women endorse a traditional gender-role orientation. As a result, roles, rules, and expectations are likely to be less ambiguous and more fixed. Traditional women also are more affiliative, placing greater emphasis on marital and family relationships and expressing less identification with the occupational aspect of their identity. In addition, traditional women tend to express more emotional dependence on their spouses and, as a result, they may have less need for negotiation of marital and work roles to maintain balance.

The literature on marital processes suggests that cohesion, flexibility, and communication affect marital quality and stability. In the marriages of nontraditional women, flexibility can allow the negotiation of emergent roles, while a sense of bonding can serve to stabilize the marriage while negotiation and conflict management occur, resulting in a feeling of marital satisfaction. The literature on marital stability indicates that the presence or absence of barriers and alternatives influence spouses' propensity to consider dissolution of the marriage. For nontraditional women, wives' career status represents the potential for economic independence, and so represents an alternative to staying in the marriage that may not exist in the marriages of traditional women. In addition, women with a nontraditional perspective are likely to see divorce

as more acceptable, thus eliminating a social barrier to serious consideration of divorce. Due to the presence of more alternatives and fewer barriers, nontraditional women are more likely to perceive a higher degree of marital quality as requisite for not considering marital dissolution.

Critique of the Research

Deficits in the research related to this study of nontraditional women stem from a propensity to address the nontraditional career plans and gender-related attitudes of female university students. There may be differences between female students making nontraditional career plans and women who are actually engaged in nontraditional careers. Thus, there is a need for more studies of women actually employed in nontraditional occupational statuses. In addition, when results of gender-role orientation are reported for nontraditional and traditional women, inclusion of detailed information about the measure used is warranted. Different measures ascribe different meanings to masculine and feminine. Before results across studies can be compared, clarification of the meaning of these results is necessary.

Although research has demonstrated the value of the Circumplex Model in examining marital quality, no studies were found that used this model to look at how the processes of cohesion, flexibility, and communication influence marital outcomes in different types of marriages, such as the marriages of nontraditional women. Also, no studies have examined how these processes simultaneously affect marital quality and marital stability or the effects of these processes on marital outcomes across the marital career. A key to understanding the ways in which processes affect marital

outcomes is to examine patterns over time. In this way, our understanding of the developmental dynamics of the marital relationship will be enhanced.

Marital quality and marital stability are complex constructs, and varied conceptualizations appear in current research. It is a positive sign that efforts to clarify terminology are occurring. Strengths in this area include the study of marital quality and marital stability as distinct constructs and specificity in indicating what is being studied (e.g., subjective evaluation of spouse's feelings about the marriage versus relational characteristics of the marriage and intactness of the marriage versus propensity to divorce, respectively).

This study addresses several voids in the extant literature. First, the study includes women in nontraditional and traditional occupational statuses rather than those anticipating their future (i.e., students). Second, the measure of gender-role orientation used in this study addresses attitudes specifically regarding marital and work roles of husbands and wives. Third, the relationship between the marital processes of the Circumplex Model and marital outcomes are examined. In addition, the ways in which these processes simultaneously affect marital quality and marital stability across the marital career is examined. The results of this study will extend the current body of knowledge about the dynamics of marital processes in particular types of marriages, as well as what is known about the influence of these processes on marital stability.

Hypotheses

Pursuant to the literature, this study proposes several hypotheses. These include:

1. Marital processes will differ for nontraditional and traditional women in the following ways:

a. Traditional women will report a higher level of cohesion in their marriages.

b. Nontraditional women will report a higher level of flexibility in their marriages.

c. Nontraditional and traditional women will not differ on the level of communication in their marriages.

2. Nontraditional and traditional women will not differ on their levels of marital quality and marital stability.

3. The marital processes of cohesion, flexibility, and communication will be positively related to marital quality and marital stability for both the nontraditional and traditional women.

4. The ways in which marital processes relate to marital quality and marital stability will differ for nontraditional and traditional women in the following ways:

a. The relationship between flexibility and communication and marital outcomes will be stronger for nontraditional women.

b. The relationship between cohesion and marital outcomes will be stronger for traditional women.

5. The relationship between marital quality and marital stability will be greater for nontraditional women.

6. The stability of marital outcomes (marital quality and marital stability) over time will be explained in part by the relationship between marital processes and marital outcomes.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the design and methodology for the study are presented. Included are information about the original data source, participants in the current study, measurement of independent and dependent variables, and statistical procedures used in data analysis.

Data Source

This study was based on data from the Marital Instability Over the Life Course Study (Booth, Johnson, White, & Edwards, 1992). The major goal of this survey was to examine the relationship of a variety of factors to marital instability or divorce proneness. The survey consists of data from an eight-year longitudinal study conducted in three waves (1980, 1983, and 1988) and focuses on five dimensions of marital quality: divorce proneness, marital problems, marital happiness, marital interaction, and marital disagreements. Numerous measures of these constructs were used, and most were obtained at each wave of data collection. Additional information was obtained that included demographic characteristics, marital/divorce history, pre-marital courtship history, marital behavior, mental and physical health of husband and wife, employment, attitudes about children, satisfaction about various aspects of life,

problem areas in marriage, divorce/separation, and involvement with friends, relatives, and the community.

The sample from Booth and associates (1992) was national in origin and represented households of married individuals 55 years or younger. The sample was identified through a random digit dialing procedure, and telephone interviews were conducted. Among eligible households during Wave I (1980), the response rate was 65%, yielding 2,033 completed cases. The re-interview rate during Wave II (1983) was 78%, yielding 1,592 completed interviews. During Wave III (1988), 1,341 respondents of the original sample completed interviews for a re-interview rate of 66%. The original sample was found to be representative of the nation with regard to age, household size, presence of children, and region. There were no statistically significant differences between respondents who were re-interviewed and those who were not on the dimensions of marital quality.

Current Study

A subsample of traditional ($n = 274$) and nontraditional women ($n = 74$) who were continuously married across all three data waves of the original survey was selected for use in the present study. In addition, criteria for inclusion for the nontraditional group included (a) reporting a nontraditional gender-role orientation (i.e., above the reported median derived from a preconstructed scale) at Time 1 and (b) employment in a professional or managerial occupational status at Time 1. Criteria for inclusion in the traditional group included (a) reporting a traditional gender-role

orientation (i.e., at or below the reported median) and (b) employment in a clerical, sales, service, or private household worker occupational status.

When comparisons were made between the nontraditional and traditional women, similarities and differences were noted (see Table 1). Over 90% of the women in each group are white. The average age in both groups in 1980 was mid-30's, and their spouses were in their late 30's. The average level of education differed with the traditional women having a high school education, while the nontraditional women averaged four years of education beyond high school. Most of the women in both groups were in their first marriage. Traditional women, however, had been married an average of 15 years, while the average years married for nontraditional women was about 12 years. Traditional women also had more children in 1980, as well as in 1988. Another difference noted was that family income in 1980 averaged 30% higher for nontraditional women than for traditional women. Nontraditional women also earned more(than twice as much) in 1980 than did traditional women.

Measurement

The key variables in this study are cohesion, flexibility, and communication as independent variables and marital quality and marital stability as dependent variables. Selection of multiple indicators of marital processes is consistent with the conceptualization of marital quality as a multidimensional construct and supports the notion that an increased understanding of marriage can be achieved through examination of the interactions among marital processes. Selection of marital quality

and marital stability as distinct outcome variables is consistent with the tenet that these variables reflect unique aspects of marital functioning.

All variables were operationalized by using questions from the data base (Booth et al., 1992). The marital processes of cohesion, flexibility, and communication (the independent variables in this study) and marital quality and marital stability (the dependent variables in this study) were measured at all data waves. In the case of the composite formed for communication, different items selected to form this composite were measured on different scales. In order to correct for the different scales of measure, the original variables for these items were first standardized, and the means of the standardized original variables were then used to create the composite variable.

Cohesion. Eight items were selected to measure cohesion. These items reflect emotional bonding, internal boundaries, and external boundaries. Two items measure emotional bonding. Respondents were asked to indicate the strength of feelings of love for their spouse. Responses ranged from not strong at all (1) to extremely strong (5). The second item asked about the degree of missing their spouses when they are away. Responses ranged from hardly at all (1) to a great deal (3). A composite was formed, and higher scores represent a greater degree of emotional bonding. The internal reliability (alpha) was calculated to be .59 (Time 1) and .71 (Time 2). The second item in this composite, degree of missing spouses when away, was not measured during the third data wave, so emotional bonding at Time 3 is measured by the single item regarding strength of love for spouse.

To measure internal boundaries a composite of five items was formed. Respondents were asked about the frequency of doing certain activities together (e.g., eating a main meal, going shopping, visiting friends). Responses ranged from never (1) to almost always (4). Thus, higher scores indicate greater cohesion. The internal reliability (alpha) for this composite was calculated at .65 (Time 1), .69 (Time 2), and .67 (Time 3). The external boundary dimension of cohesion was assessed by a single item asking respondents to report the number of close friends shared with their spouses. Higher scores on this item represent higher cohesion.

Flexibility. The dimensions of flexibility in this study include indicators of leadership, rules, and negotiation. These were assessed by respondents' reports on two items: (a) whether or not they insist on having things their own way, and (c) whether or not one spouse usually has the final word or if spouses compromise. Responses to the first question were true (1) or not true (2). Responses to the second item ranged from I do/spouse does (1) to equal compromise (2). Higher scores on both items represent greater flexibility.

Marital communication. A composite was formed of nine items to measure marital communication skills and patterns. Respondents were asked to indicate who engaged in certain behaviors (e.g., one spouse becomes angry easily, is critical, or does not talk). Responses to these items included yes, both (1), yes, self/yes, spouse (2), and no (3). Frequency of disagreements with spouse also was examined in a single item. Responses ranged from very often (1) to never (5). Respondents also reported whether they argued about doing their fair share of housework and whether

arguments had become physical. Possible responses for both of these items were yes (1) and no (2).

Possible scores on this composite ranged from 9 to 27, with higher scores representing more positive communication skills and patterns. Internal reliability (alpha) for this composite was calculated at .72 (Time 1), .76 (Time 2), and .70 (Time 3).

Marital quality. Marital quality was measured by a pre-constructed composite of 11 items (Booth et al., 1992). These items included questions about the quality of the marriage compared to other marriages and asked respondents to compare their own marriages now to three years prior. Also, items asked about overall marital happiness and happiness with seven dimensions of marriage (e.g., amount of understanding from spouse, amount of love received from spouse, extent of agreement with spouse, sexual relationship with spouse). Possible scores on the marital quality composite ranged from 11 to 33, with higher scores representing greater marital quality. Internal reliability (alpha) on this composite was calculated at .85 (Time 1), .86 (Time 2), and .88 (Time 3). This compares well with the original sample alphas of .87, .84, and .88 respectively.

Marital instability. The 5 items of the revised preconstructed composite (Johnson, White, Edwards, & Booth, 1986) were used to measure marital stability. Respondents were asked about their own and their spouses' thoughts and actions relating to their marriage being in trouble, separation, and divorce. Responses were

yes (1) and no (2). Higher scores represent greater marital stability. Internal reliability (alpha) on this composite was calculated at The reported alphas were .91 (Time 1), .90 (Time 2), and .89 (Time 3).

Data Analysis

This study is designed to identify and describe the processes and patterns associated with marital quality and marital stability in the marriages of nontraditional women. As such, traditional women serve as the comparison group. Although this study employs longitudinal data, for both conceptual and statistical reasons the goal of the study is not to explain the variance or to predict change over time in marital quality and marital stability. For example, no true "beginning point" can be established for subjects' engagement in the marital processes examined, and no manipulation has been employed in this study to establish a "false" beginning point (e.g., Time 1). In addition, the marital processes and marital outcomes examined in this study are constantly interacting, and so the direction of influence cannot be determined. Thus, a causal model is not posited.

Instead, the goal of the study is to illuminate the processes by which these marital outcomes are sustained over time. As such, Hypotheses 1 through 4 examines the information from the three data collection times independently. The statistical analysis used accounts for the relationships among these three points in time, but no direct relationships between times will be examined. Rather, patterns of relationships will be identified and discussed for both nontraditional and traditional women. The final hypothesis examines the relationships between process and outcome variables

across time to determine the relative influence of the process variables on the stability of the marital outcome measures. It is anticipated that the results of this exploratory and descriptive study will generate research questions for further analysis.

To test Hypothesis 1, differences in levels of cohesion, flexibility and communication for nontraditional and traditional women were analyzed using repeated measures multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA). This analysis assumes that these process variables are related, and evaluates mean differences between the two groups on all of the criterion variables simultaneously. This analysis will control for length of marriage as a proxy covariate for marital life cycle stage and cohort effects.

To test Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4, Pearson's product correlation coefficients were calculated. Subsequently, the Test for Difference Between Independent Correlations (Bruning & Kintz, 1968) were computed to determine significant differences in the relationships between marital process variables and marital outcome variables for nontraditional and traditional women.

To test hypothesis 5, a two-step regression analysis was performed separately for Time 2 and Time 3. For Time 2, in the first step, marital outcomes at Time 2 were regressed on outcomes at Time 1. The regression coefficient represents the stability of marital quality and marital stability from Time 1 to Time 2. In the second step, marital outcomes at Time 2 were regressed on marital outcomes at Time 1 and marital processes at Time 1. If the stability of marital outcomes is explained by the marital process variables, the regression coefficients for the marital process variables

will be significant, and the regression coefficients for the Time 1 marital outcome variables will be reduced (i.e., lower than in the prior analyses that did not include marital process variables). The same two-step procedure was repeated for Time 3 data.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

In this chapter, results of the statistical analyses used to test the hypotheses specified in Chapter II are presented. Although no hypotheses for change over time were posited, results relating to patterns and trends of change also are reported and discussed. All analyses controlled for length of marriage.

Results of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: Marital processes will differ for nontraditional and traditional women in the following ways:

- a. Traditional women will report a higher level of cohesion in their marriages.
- b. Nontraditional women will report a higher level of flexibility in their marriages.
- c. Nontraditional and traditional women will not differ on the level of communication in their marriages.

Differences between nontraditional and traditional women on marital processes were tested by repeated measures multivariate analysis of covariance, controlling for years married. The results of this analysis appear in Table 2.

Regarding cohesion (Hypothesis 1a), no difference was found between nontraditional and traditional women on level of bonding, $F(1, 315) = .30, p > .05$; interaction, $F(2, 315) = .31, p > .05$; or friends, $F(1, 247) = .23, p > .05$. However,

there was an effect for time on bonding, $F(2, 315) = .56, p \leq .01$, and interaction, $F(2, 314) = .92, p \leq .01$. Taken together, these results indicate that although both groups changed over time on their reported level of bonding and interaction, there was no difference between nontraditional and traditional women on these measures of cohesion over time. Thus, hypothesis 1a was not supported.

Regarding flexibility (Hypothesis 1b), the results show group differences for both "own way," $F(1, 339) = 4.02, p \leq .05$, and "final word," $F(1, 313) = 11.01, p \leq .01$. Traditional women had higher scores on "own way" at both Time 1 and Time 2 (this measure was not available at Time 3) with means of 1.26 and 1.31. Higher scores indicate that the respondent does not insist on having her own way in marital interactions. Examination of means (see Table 3) indicates that nontraditional women reported higher scores on "final word" at all three times (means = 1.60, 1.64, and 1.68, respectively), reflecting equal compromise. There was no effect for time or difference between groups across time for either "own way", Wilks' lambda (1, 340) = 1.03 , $p = .31$; Wilks' lambda (1, 340) = .06 , $p = .82$, respectively; or "final word", Wilks' lambda (1, 313) = .99 , $p = .22$; Wilks' lambda (2, 313) = 1.00, $p = .88$, respectively.

These results partially support Hypothesis 1b in that there is a difference between the two groups on the measure of flexibility across time. However, nontraditional women were more likely to report compromising than traditional women, and traditional women reported being less insistent on having their own way than did nontraditional women.

Regarding communication (Hypothesis 1c), the results show no difference between nontraditional and traditional women on communication, $F(1, 321) = .06, p = .80$, supporting the hypothesis. These findings indicate nontraditional and traditional women are similar in their reported levels of positive communication patterns in their marriages over time. Also, there was no effect for time or difference between groups of women over time for communication, Wilks' lambda $(2, 321) = 1.00, p = .52$; Wilks' lambda $(2, 321) = .99, p = .38$.

Hypothesis 2: Nontraditional and traditional women will not differ on their levels of marital quality and marital stability.

Differences between nontraditional and traditional women on marital outcomes were tested by repeated measures multivariate analysis of covariance (see Table 2). No difference was found between the two groups of women in reported levels of marital quality, $F(1, 324) = 1.11, p = .29$, or marital stability, $F(1, 314) = .35, p = .56$. Thus, hypothesis 2 was supported.

Hypothesis 3: The marital processes of cohesion, flexibility, and communication will be positively related to marital quality and marital stability for both the nontraditional and traditional women.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficients were calculated to test this hypothesis. The results are reported in Tables 4 and 5. It should be noted that when correlation coefficients are significant, they are typically in the moderate (.40 to .60) rather than low (.20 to .30) range.

Nontraditional women. For nontraditional women, results indicate that at Time 1, Time 2, and Time 3 two measures of cohesion were related to marital quality: bonding ($r = .56, .36$ and $.67$, respectively; $p \leq .01$) and interaction ($r = .44, .46$, and $.47$, respectively; $p \leq .01$). Nontraditional women who reported a higher degree of emotional bonding and more frequent interaction or shared activity with their spouses also reported greater marital quality at all three times. The third measure of cohesion, shared friends, was not related to marital quality for nontraditional women at any of the three times.

Both measures of flexibility, the degree to which the respondent insists on her own way and has the final word, were significantly related to the marital quality of nontraditional women at Time 1 ($r = .35$ and $.37$, respectively). Nontraditional women who reported less insistence upon having their own way and more equal compromise in their marriages also reported greater marital quality in 1980. However, at Time 2 and Time 3, neither measure of flexibility was related to marital quality for these women.

Communication was positively related to marital quality at Time 1, Time 2, and Time 3 ($r = .43, .49$, and $.26$ respectively). That is, nontraditional women who reported more positive communication skills and patterns in their marriages also reported greater marital quality over time.

Regarding marital stability at Time 1, two of the three items measuring cohesion were positively related to marital stability: bonding ($r = .56, .45$, respectively) and interaction ($r = .44, .40$, respectively). Nontraditional women who

reported feeling closer to and shared more activity with their spouses at Time 1 also reported greater marital stability. The third item measuring cohesion, number of shared friends, was not related to marital stability for nontraditional women in 1980 ($r = -.04$). At Time 2, only shared friends as an aspect of cohesion was related to marital stability for nontraditional women ($r = .23$). That is, in 1983 nontraditional women who reported sharing more close friends with their spouses also reported greater marital stability. At Time 3, the only aspect of cohesion related to marital stability was emotional bonding ($r = .42$), suggesting that nontraditional women who felt closer to their spouses were less likely to consider dissolution of the marriage.

Regarding flexibility, results showed that own way was related to marital stability at Time 1 ($r = .37$). That is, nontraditional women who reported less insistence upon having their own way reported greater stability in their marriages in 1980. No measure of flexibility was related to marital stability for nontraditional women at Time 2 ($r = .04, .06$, respectively). Again, neither measure of flexibility was related to marital stability for nontraditional women at this time ($r = .01, -.03$, respectively).

Regarding communication and marital stability, the findings show a positive association between this marital process and marital stability for nontraditional women at Time 1 ($r = .48$) and at Time 3 ($r = .26$). That is, nontraditional women who reported more positive communication patterns in their marriages at these two times (1980 and 1988) also reported greater stability in their marriages. Communication was not related to marital stability for nontraditional women at in 1983 ($r = -.14$)

Traditional women. All three measures of cohesion, emotional bonding, interaction, and shared friends, were positively related to marital quality for traditional women at Time 1 ($r = .59, .54, \text{ and } .22$, respectively). At Times 2 and 3, emotional bonding ($r = .59, .60$) and interaction ($r = .51, .46$) continued to be related to marital quality, but shared friends was no longer associated at either time ($r = .10, .10$). Thus, for the most part, as level of cohesion increased, there was a concomitant increase in marital quality for traditional women.

Only one measure of flexibility was related to marital quality for traditional women. Women reporting more equal compromise in their marriages regarding who had the final say, also reported greater marital quality at Time 1 ($r = .26$), Time 2 ($r = .15$), and Time 3 ($r = .25$). The other measure of flexibility, respondents' insistence upon having their own way in their marriages, was not related to marital quality for traditional women at any time.

Consistent with findings for nontraditional women, communication was related to marital quality for traditional women at all three times ($r = .47, .49, \text{ and } .52$ respectively). That is, traditional women who reported more positive communication patterns in their marriages also reported greater marital quality.

Regarding the marital processes and marital stability, at Times 1 and 3, all three measures of cohesion were related to marital stability for traditional women: emotional bonding ($r = .36, .30$), interaction ($r = .33, .28$), and shared friends ($r = .17, .20$). These findings suggest that traditional women who reported a sense of being connected to their spouses through closeness, shared activity, and mutual friends were

less likely to consider dissolving their marriages. Surprisingly, no measure of cohesion was related to marital quality at Time 2.

Regarding flexibility, at Times 1 and 3, only final word was related to marital stability for traditional women ($r = .21, .14$), suggesting that traditional women who reported more equal compromising in their marriages also reported greater marital stability in 1980 and 1988. At Time 2, however, only "own way" was related to marital stability, and this relationship was negative ($r = -.15$). This indicates that in 1983, traditional women who reported less insistence on having their own way in their marriages also reported lower levels of marital stability.

Results indicate that communication was related to marital stability for traditional women at all three times ($r = .59, -.20, .25$). Traditional women who reported better communication skills and patterns in their marriages also reported more marital stability at Times 1 and 3 and less marital stability at Time 2. Taken together, results partially support hypothesis 3, in that some of the indicators of marital processes were related to marital quality and marital stability for nontraditional and traditional women.

Hypothesis 4: The ways in which marital processes relate to marital quality and marital stability will differ for nontraditional and traditional women in the following ways:

- a. The relationship between flexibility and communication and marital outcomes will be stronger for nontraditional women.

- b. The relationship between cohesion and marital outcomes will be stronger for traditional women.

To test this hypothesis, the Test for Difference Between Independent Correlations (Bruning & Kintz, 1968) was computed to determine significant differences between the associations of marital process variables and marital outcome variables for nontraditional and traditional women. Although not presented in table form, results indicate no differences in the strength of the relationships between marital processes (cohesion, flexibility, and communication) and marital outcomes (marital quality and stability) for either group of women. Thus, hypotheses 4a and 4b were rejected.

Hypothesis 5: The relationship between marital quality and marital stability will be greater for nontraditional women.

To test this hypothesis, again the Test for Difference Between Independent Correlations was computed. The relationship between the two marital outcome measures did not differ significantly for nontraditional and traditional women at any of the three times. These results do not appear in table form. Thus, hypothesis 5 was rejected.

Hypothesis 6: The stability of marital outcomes (marital quality and marital stability) over time will be explained in part by the relationship between marital processes and marital outcomes.

Hypothesis 6 is depicted in Figure 1. Basically, this hypothesis posits that more of the variance in later marital outcomes will be explained by the prior marital processes and marital outcomes than by the prior marital outcomes alone. The results of regression analyses appear in Tables 6 and 7. Separate analyses were performed for nontraditional and traditional women.

Nontraditional women and marital quality. Regarding marital quality for nontraditional women in step 1, marital quality at Time 2 was regressed on years married to determine whether any of the variance in marital quality could be explained by knowing the duration of one's marriage at Time 1 alone. Results indicate that years married was not related to marital quality at Time 2 for this group of women (Beta = .059; $R^2 = .011$). In step 2, marital quality and marital stability at Time 1 were added to the equation predicting marital quality at Time 2. This tested for the amount of variance in marital quality in 1983 that could be explained by knowing the marital quality and marital stability of these women in 1980. Only marital quality at Time 1 was significant in predicting the variance in marital quality at Time 2 (Beta = .386), and the explained variance in marital quality at Time 2 increased from .01 to .23.

In the final step, marital process variables from 1980 were added to the equation to determine the amount of variance in marital quality in 1983 that could be explained. Only final word at Time 1, as a measure of flexibility, was significant in explaining the variance in marital quality in 1983 for nontraditional women (Beta =

-.265, $R^2 = .43$). Higher scores on final word (indicating more frequent equal compromise between spouses versus one spouse having the final word most often) in 1980 predicted lower scores on marital quality in 1983.

Although only one indicator of marital processes at Time 1 was related to marital quality at Time 2, adding marital processes at Time 1 to the equation increased the percent of variance explained in marital quality at Time 2 from .23 to .43. This finding suggests that not all of the variance in marital quality at Time 2 can be explained by the level of marital quality at Time 1 alone. However, only certain processes affected marital quality. Prior flexibility as a marital process helped to explain later marital quality, whereas indicators of cohesion and communication did not contribute to explaining later marital quality.

The same three-step procedure was repeated for marital quality at Time 3. First, marital quality at Time 3 was regressed on years married. The regression coefficient for years married was not significant (Beta = .208). Little of the variance in marital quality in 1988 is accounted for by length of marriage ($R^2 = .029$). Second, marital quality and marital stability at Time 2 were added to the equation. Only marital quality at Time 2 was significant in predicting the variance in marital quality at Time 3 (Beta = .730, $R^2 = .540$). When marital process variables were entered into the equation at step 3, marital quality, marital stability, and shared friends, as a measure of cohesion, in 1985 were significant in explaining the variance in marital quality in 1988 (Betas = .629, -.232, and .253, respectively). Greater marital quality, lower marital stability, and more shared close friends at Time 2 predicted greater

marital quality at Time 3. Prior marital quality was the strongest predictor here. Again, the regression coefficient for marital quality at Time 2 was lower when the marital process variables were introduced into the equation (Beta = from .496 to .374), suggesting that some of the variance in marital quality in Time 3 can be explained by a sole marital process at Time 2 (i.e., shared friends). The total variance explained (R^2) increased slightly when marital process variables were added from .54 to .60. Most of this explained variance, however, is accounted for by marital quality at Time 2.

Nontraditional women and marital stability. This three-step regression analysis was repeated for marital stability. First, marital stability at Time 2 was regressed on years married. Results show that time in marriage significantly predicted marital stability at Time 2 (Beta = .520). Moreover, length of marriage explained a good portion of the variance ($R^2 = .26$) in marital stability.

Second, marital quality and marital stability at Time 1 were added to the equation to determine the amount of variance in marital stability in 1983 that could be explained by knowing the marital quality and marital stability of these women in 1980. Again, length of marriage was the sole significant predictor of marital stability in 1983 (Beta = .517). The total explained variance in marital stability at Time 2 decreased slightly from .26 to .24 when marital stability and marital quality at Time 1 were added to the regression equation.

In the final step, marital process variables at Time 1 were entered into the equation. Years married and shared friends, as a measure of cohesion, were significant

predictors of marital stability in 1983 (Betas = .520, .238 respectively). That is, length of marriage and reports of more close friends shared by spouses predicted higher scores on marital stability, with years married being twice as strong a predictor as shared friends. More than half of the variance in marital stability was accounted for by years married. In fact, when process variables were added to the equation, the total variance explained decreased from .24 to .18. This finding suggests that marital stability at Time 2 was better predicted by years married alone than by length of marriage in conjunction with previous marital quality, marital stability, or marital processes.

Regarding marital stability for nontraditional women at Time 3, when years married was entered in the regression equation alone, it was not a significant predictor of marital stability in 1988 (Beta = .146, $R^2 = .006$); the variance explained by length of marriage was less than 1%. When marital quality and marital stability at Time 2 were added to the equation, only marital quality significantly predicted the variance in marital stability at Time 3 (Beta = .414, $R^2 = .17$).

Finally, when marital processes at Time 2 were added to the equation, only communication was significant in predicting marital stability at Time 3 (Beta = .32). Nontraditional women who reported more positive communication patterns in their marriages at Time 2 also reported greater marital stability at Time 3. Also, when marital process variables were added to the regression equation, the total variance explained in marital stability in 1988 increased from 17% to 24%. These changes

indicate that earlier marital processes (Time 2) in the form of positive communication patterns contributed to the prediction of later marital stability.

Traditional women and marital quality. The same three-step regression analyses were repeated for marital quality and marital stability for traditional women. These results appear in Table 7. First, years married did not contribute to understanding later marital quality (Beta = .050, $R^2 = .002$). Second, when marital quality and marital stability at Time 1 were added to the equation in the second step, marital quality in 1980 significantly predicted marital quality in 1983 (Beta = .614), and the total variance explained increased to 39%.

Last, when marital process variables from 1980 were entered in the equation, emotional bonding (Beta = .140) as a measure of cohesion, own way (Beta = -.118) as a measure of flexibility, and communication (Beta = .195) were significant predictors of marital quality in 1983. These findings indicate that traditional women who reported higher marital quality, more closeness to their spouses, greater insistence on having their own way in marital interactions, and more positive communication skills in 1980 also reported higher marital quality in 1983. However, the total variance explained in marital quality at Time 2 did not increase with the addition of the marital process variables. Thus, earlier marital quality was by far the strongest predictor of later marital quality for traditional women.

When this analysis was calculated for marital quality at Time 3, similar findings were obtained. Again, years married did not significantly predict marital quality in 1988 (Beta = .012, $R^2 = .004$). When marital quality and marital stability at

Time 2 were added to the equation, only marital quality was a significant predictor (Beta = .444), and the total variance explained increased to 18%. In the final step, marital process variables from Time 2 were included. Only prior marital quality remained as a significant predictor, and the total variance explained also decreased ($R^2 = .182$ to $.178$). This finding suggests that marital processes in 1983 did not contribute to explaining marital quality in 1988. As was the case for marital quality in 1983, marital quality in 1988 for traditional women was best explained by marital quality from the previous data collection time.

Traditional women and marital stability. Regarding marital stability at Time 2, length of marriage explained 12% of the variance (Beta = .353). When marital quality and marital stability in 1980 were added to the equation, both years married in 1980 (Beta = .363) and marital stability (Beta = -.292) were significant predictors of marital stability in 1983. That is, traditional women who had been married longer and who reported less stability in 1980 also reported greater stability in 1983. Adding prior levels of marital stability and marital quality resulted in more variance explained in later marital stability ($R^2 = .121$ to $.185$).

In the third step, marital process variables were entered in the regression equation. Years married and marital stability remained significant predictors of marital stability at Time 2 (Beta = .360, -.256). Of the marital processes, only final word, as a measure of flexibility, was a significant predictor (Beta = -.124), albeit much less so than either length of marriage or prior marital stability. That is, lower scores on final word in 1980, indicating that one spouse had the final word most often in marital

interaction, predicted higher scores on later marital stability. The addition of the marital process variables did not contribute to explaining later marital stability in 1983. Instead, these findings suggest that later marital stability (1983) for traditional women is best explained by length of marriage, earlier marital stability, and, to a lesser degree, one spouse having the final word in earlier marital interaction.

When marital stability for traditional women was examined in 1988 (Time 3), again years married was a significant predictor (Beta = .158), explaining only 2% of the variance. When marital quality and marital stability in 1983 were added to the equation, years married remained a significant predictor (Beta = .255), although marital quality (Beta = .337) and marital stability (Beta = -.327) were stronger predictors of marital stability in 1988. Taken together, length of marriage and earlier marital quality and marital stability predicted about 19% of the variance in marital stability at Time 3 for traditional women.

In the final step of the analysis, marital process variables at Time 2 were added to the equation. Both years married and marital stability decreased in their explanatory power but remained significant (Betas = .143, -.236 respectively), and communication was the strongest of the three predictors (Beta = .392). Thus, in addition to length of marriage and marital stability in 1983, positive communication skills and patterns at this time also predicted marital stability in 1988 for traditional women. The regression coefficient for marital stability at Time 2 was reduced (Beta = -.327 to -.236) when marital processes at Time 2 were added to the equation, and the total variance explained in later marital stability increased from 19% to 28%. These

changes suggest that earlier marital communication contributes to explaining later marital stability for traditional women.

Summary

Only selected measures of marital processes helped to explain later marital quality and marital stability for both nontraditional and traditional women. However, in most cases, knowing marital process variables did not make a substantial contribution to explaining the variance in marital outcomes for either group of women. Exceptions to this are the contribution of: (a) final word, as a measure of flexibility, and shared friends, as a measure of cohesion, in explaining marital quality for nontraditional women at Time 2 and Time 3, respectively, and (b) communication in explaining marital stability at Time 3 for nontraditional and traditional women. For both groups of women, previous level of marital quality was the strongest predictor of subsequent marital quality at Times 2 and 3. Length of marriage was the strongest predictor of marital stability at Time 2, while prior communication patterns were the strongest predictor of marital stability at Time 3. These results suggest partial support for hypothesis 6.

Patterns and Trends Across Time

Although no specific hypotheses were posited regarding change across time, patterns and trends were noted for both nontraditional and traditional women. This section summarizes these trends.

Referring again to the results in Table 2, a significant main effect for time was found on two measures of cohesion: emotional bonding, Wilks' lambda (2, 315) = .56,

$p \leq .01$, and spousal interaction, Wilks' lambda (2,314) = .92, $p \leq .01$. This may mean that while there was no significant difference between the two groups in change on these variables over time, changes in cohesion did occur. Both groups of women reported increased levels of emotional bonding from Time 1 to Time 3 (Means = 3.44, 4.32 for nontraditional women; 3.57, 4.25 for traditional women). (These results appear in Table 3). Both groups of women reported a decrease in levels of spousal interaction across time (Means = 3.23, 3.11, 2.98 for nontraditional women; 3.18, 3.07, 2.97 for traditional women).

A significant main effect for time also was found on both outcome measures. For both groups of women, marital quality decreased over time, Wilks' lambda (2, 324) = 8.79, $p \leq .01$. In addition, a strong main effect for time on marital stability was found for both groups, Wilks' lambda (2, 314) = 41.78, $p \leq .01$. Examination of the means (Table 3) reveals that for both nontraditional and traditional women, marital stability increased from Time 1 to Time 2, then decreased between Time 2 and Time 3.

Discussion

This discussion is organized around the three research questions posited by this study: (a) How do the marital processes of cohesion, flexibility, and communication relate to the marital quality and marital stability of nontraditional women? (b) Are the relationships between these marital processes and marital outcomes different for nontraditional and traditional women? (c) Are there changes over time in the

relationships between these marital processes and outcomes both for nontraditional and traditional women?

Marital Processes and Marital Outcomes of Nontraditional Women

Overall, some marital processes were related to marital quality and marital stability for nontraditional women at certain times, whereas others were not. Some of these associations also held across time, whereas other marital processes were related to marital outcomes only at one time.

Several findings regarding cohesion exemplify these relationships. Higher levels of emotional bonding and spousal interaction were associated with higher levels of marital quality across time. In addition, bonding was associated with marital stability at Times 1 and 3, interaction at Time 1, and shared friends at Time 2. However, none of the indicators of cohesion explain either marital quality or marital stability. This finding may suggest that for nontraditional women the sense of "wholeness" (Perlman & Fehr, 1989) and connection from emotional bonding and interaction with one's spouse balances the aspects of their lives that promote separateness, such as work commitments. As such, these marital processes relate to perceptions of higher marital quality and greater marital stability. The importance of shared activity and feelings of emotional closeness to marital quality and marital stability may reflect aspects of cohesion that hold the marriage together at a given time for nontraditional marriages while the ambiguity and conflict inherent in the definition of roles and an emergent marital lifestyle are managed (Killorin & Olson, 1984).

Flexibility, as measured by both own way and final word, was associated with marital quality for nontraditional women at Time 1 and own way was associated with marital stability. Also, only final word was important to explaining later marital quality, and no measure of flexibility explained later marital stability. Taken together, these findings suggest that negotiation and compromise in the marriages of nontraditional women may be more important to marital quality than marital stability, and that importance appears earlier in the marital career. It is earlier in marriage when marital roles are established and the marital culture is defined (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1993), both requiring negotiation and compromise.

The effects of communication are somewhat different. More positive communication was associated with higher marital quality for nontraditional women at all three data collection times and more marital stability at Times 1 and 3. Communication also was the only marital process that affected later marital stability. These findings are consistent with the notion that the marital culture is co-created through interaction of partners (Deal et al., 1992; Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1993) by exchanging perceptions and negotiating differences. It is the way in which these exchanges and negotiations occur that affects marital outcomes (Gottman, 1993). Although communication was associated with marital quality over time, it did not predict the later marital quality of these women. Perhaps current positive communication patterns in marriage make a difference to immediate perceptions of marital quality, and that these current perceptions of marital quality become the key to

explaining later quality. Johnson and colleagues (1992) found that marital quality was a stable phenomenon.

This study conceptualized the marital cultures of nontraditional women as "emergent" in their definition of marital roles and norms. As such, this definition process involves ambiguity and different perceptions between spouses that can create conflict. Even for marriages departing from normative roles and norms, the fundamentals of the marital culture and overall ways spouses relate to each other may be established early in the relationship (Johnson et al., 1992). This early establishment of a marital culture may set the stage for a stable and consistent way of interacting. The consistency may serve as a means for managing conflict around role definition and balancing work and family time. As a result, marital processes over time in these marriages may be less critical to marital outcomes, particularly marital quality, than was posited by this study.

Moreover, conflict theory proposes that marital partners have common individual self-interests that result from similar socialization experiences or other influences. Earlier studies of women in nontraditional professions suggested that they may seek out relationships with like-minded men who support their nontraditional gender-role orientation (Lemkau, 1983; Standley & Soule, 1974). Perhaps marital outcomes are more a reflection of selection of like-minded partners, shared investment in an egalitarian marriage, and a way of relating within marriage established early in the relationship that is maintained over time, and less a function of marital processes per se. On the other hand, perhaps the key to understanding marital quality and

marital stability over time is examining how prior marital outcomes affect the current marital processes. For example, perception of higher marital quality could create feelings of closeness and facilitate spousal interaction and positive communication rather than emotional closeness and positive communication resulting in higher marital quality.

The relationship between other variables and marital stability are of interest. For example, prior and concurrent marital quality and marital stability varied at times. This association supports earlier research indicating that marital quality is highly correlated with stability, in that the partners who are happy with their marriages are more likely to perceive the benefits of remaining in that marriage and less likely to consider dissolution (Booth & White, 1980; Lewis & Spanier, 1979).

Length of marriage was a consistently strong predictor of marital stability in 1983. Previous research (Booth & White, 1980; White & Booth, 1991) suggests that with longevity, barriers to dissolution (e.g., external expectations and pressures for the marriage to succeed) increase and alternatives to the marriage (e.g., availability of other potential partners) decrease. However, previous level of marital quality and positive communication patterns best explained marital stability five years later in 1988. It may be that at this point in their marital careers the nontraditional women in this study were not restricted by perceived barriers (e.g., economic dependence, the presence of young children) or by lack of alternatives (economic self-sufficiency). When barriers to dissolution of the marriage are low and alternatives to the marriage are high, level of stability may depend more on how good the marriage is perceived to

be than on perceived barriers and alternatives. As such, level of marital stability for these women may have depended more directly on the quality of their marriages and less on extraneous circumstances.

However, communication did contribute to explaining marital stability over time. Other scholars (Gottman, 1993) report that positive communication skills and patterns between marital partners can diminish spouses' need to consider dissolving the marriage; and such may be the case for these women. In fact, Gottman proposed that positive communication patterns permits spouses to remain engaged in communicative interactions and, thus, to manage conflict through negotiation versus withdrawing from interaction and trying to solve problems alone. Perhaps in the marriages of nontraditional women, sustaining communication enables couples to see conflict through to some form of resolution, creating a sense of hope that future conflict also can be managed and reducing the need to consider dissolving the marriage.

Differences Between Nontraditional and Traditional Women

The results of this study found few differences between the two groups. For example, cohesion appears equally important to the marriages of both nontraditional and traditional women; however, the importance may be for different reasons. For traditional women, cohesion may represent affiliation (Erdwins et al., 1983) and dependence (Henderson & Cunningham, 1993), whereas for nontraditional women, cohesion may act as a thread sustaining the marital bond while issues related to the definition of a nontraditional marital culture and marital roles are being worked out (Killorin & Olson, 1984). Similarly, communication patterns did not differ by group

and communication contributed little to explaining marital outcomes for either group, with the exception of explaining marital stability for both groups of women at Time 3. Overall, these findings suggest that, although partners in nontraditional marriages may have unique issues about which to communicate (e.g., defining marital roles, balancing work and family), communication as a marital process is not critical to certain marital outcomes. Perhaps marital partners in nontraditional marriages establish a way of dealing with these issues early on in their marriage, so the ongoing negotiation of marital norms and roles through communication is less critical to their perception of marital quality than had been anticipated in this study. These findings are supported by earlier research indicating that marital partners develop cognitions about their spouses' behavior that are difficult to disconfirm, and that it is these established patterns of relating that ultimately predict marital outcomes (Gottman, 1993).

Unlike cohesion and communication, flexibility differed for nontraditional and traditional women. Recall that nontraditional women reported more equal compromise in their marriages than did traditional women, while traditional women reported less insistence on having their own way in their marriage. Higher scores on both of these measures of flexibility were conceptualized as representing greater flexibility. Using this conceptualization traditional women in this study were more flexible on the "own way" measure. Reconsideration of the meaning of the own way item suggests other possibilities. For example, flexibility as a marital process represents a balance in assertiveness, control, and marital power. This balance facilitates equitable input into marital interaction and a maximizing of possible options for adaptive change within

the marriage (Olson, 1991). It may be that for traditional women, not insisting on having their own way in marriage reflects inflexibility. The lack of insistence may reflect greater acquiescence to husbands' traditional dominant role (Altrocchi & Crosby, 1989; Hare-Mustin, 1988). As such, the lower scores of nontraditional respondents on this measure may indicate greater assertiveness (Lemkau, 1983), attempts to obtain more equitable input in marital interaction and, thus, greater flexibility and less traditionality in marital roles. If this reasoning is accurate, then these results show greater flexibility of nontraditional women in their marriages. This reinterpretation supports the idea that flexibility is one dimension of the process of defining an emergent marital lifestyle.

The similarities in the two groups of women in this study may be a function of differences in the way the groups were categorized. Occupational status was used as one criterion for categorizing the groups. Women may be nontraditional in their occupational status (e.g., professional) but traditional in their occupation (e.g., teaching or nursing). Thus, some nontraditional women may have been more like traditional women. Also, women who expressed nontraditional gender-role orientations may be traditional in their marital role behavior. Some women who espouse and support nontraditional gender-role beliefs and attitudes may not choose to enact their nontraditional beliefs in their marriage (Spence, 1977) because of the influence of social norms governing behaviors (Orlofsky, 1981). Similarly, some women in nontraditional occupations may experience more conflict in deviating from conventional expectations for married women than in their occupations (Lemkau,

1983) and so in the context of marital interaction may be more like traditional women.

Using a different means of categorizing the groups could yield different results. For example, traditionality of work status might be better defined according to specific job title (e.g., nurse versus physician) than by occupational status. Also, as noted above, women who espouse nontraditional gender-role orientations may not always enact those beliefs and attitudes in their marriages. As such, traditionality of women's gender role in marriage might be more clearly assessed by reports of actual role-related behavior than by reports of their role-related attitudes and beliefs.

Importantly, the categorization of these women as nontraditional or traditional assumed this status did not change over time. However, if change occurred, then greater similarity between nontraditional and traditional women would be expected. Follow-up analyses (MANCOVA, ANCOVA, and crosstabs) examined this issue. Results show change over time and a difference in the way the two groups changed in both gender-role orientation, Wilks' lambda (2, 323) = .90 for the effect of time alone and Wilks' lambda (2, 323) = .83 for the group by time effect, and occupational status, Wilks' lambda (2, 186) = .81 for the effect of time alone and Wilks' lambda (2, 186) = .95 for the group by time effect. These results appear in Table 8 and 9. Examination of means on gender-role orientation indicates that traditional women became more nontraditional across time (Means = 18.28, 16.50, and 16.06).

Similar results were found with regard to occupational status. From Time 1 to Time 2, 23% of the women who were nontraditional in their occupational statuses changed to traditional statuses, and 11% of the women who were traditional in their

occupational status changed to a nontraditional status. From Time 2 to Time 3, 17% of the women who were nontraditional in their occupational status changed to traditional status, and 18% of the women who were traditional in their occupational status changed to a nontraditional status. The most notable change was that of women classified originally as nontraditional who would have been reclassified as traditional at Time 2. It may be that some of the nontraditional women returned to the home as homemakers/mothers, an interpretation further supported by the increased number of children reported. On the other hand, changes for traditional women may reflect advancement/promotions or women's return to work after having been homemakers/at home mothers. Clearly these changes in both gender-role orientation and occupational status may explain the similarity between nontraditional and traditional women in marital processes and outcomes.

Patterns and Trends Over Time

In examining the patterns over time, four trends are noted. These include change in levels of emotional bonding, spousal interaction, marital quality, and marital stability.

1. Emotional bonding changed over time for both nontraditional and traditional women. While there was not a difference in the way the two groups changed, nontraditional women reported lower levels of emotional bonding at Time 1 followed by a general increase in emotional bonding over time. Being emotionally connected (feelings of love for one's spouse and missing them when they are away) may be important in marriages where women are less "connected" through affiliation and

dependence. Also, feeling emotionally close could help nontraditional women sustain a connection while they negotiate differences and define their emergent lifestyle. For traditional women, the level of emotional bonding was more consistent over time, suggesting that feelings of affiliation may be a more consistently integrated aspect of the relationship across the marital career.

2. Spousal interaction for both nontraditional and traditional women changed over time. Both groups of women showed a trend of decreasing levels of interaction with their spouses over time. This may reflect marital interaction in general, in that over time, partners engage in more separate or parallel activity (Perlman & Fehr, 1989). Alternatively, this decrease in interaction could be a function of a negativity cascade in communication between partners that escalates from criticism to contempt, and finally to stonewalling or withdrawal from interaction (Gottman, 1993). This decrease also may reflect the demands on time and energy incurred by the presence of children in the home.

3. Change occurred over time in the level of marital quality reported by both groups. Marital quality decreased for both nontraditional and traditional women. This trend is consistent with earlier research indicating a general decline or a shallow u-curve in marital quality (Hicks & Plait, 1970; Olson, 1983; Schram, 1979; White & Booth, 1991). Decline in marital quality may be explained by the reciprocity of negative affect between spouses over time during conflict discussion (Gottman, 1993). Again, this trend may also reflect the negative influence the presence of children has on the time, energy, and economic resources available to spouses (Spanier & Lewis, 1980).

4. Marital stability changed over time for both groups. Marital stability increased from 1980 to 1983, and decreased from 1983 to 1988, a trend unique from that of marital quality. Marital quality was related to marital stability for both nontraditional and traditional women at Times 1 and 3, but not at Time 2 when stability was greatest.

Recall that in this study, marital stability is conceptualized as the propensity toward dissolution of the relationship by thinking, talking, and taking action related to this end. Few process variables were significantly related to marital stability at Time 2, when stability was highest. Similarly, marital quality was not significantly related to marital stability at Time 2 for either group of women, whereas it was at the other two times for both groups. In fact, marital quality had begun to decrease and continued to decrease. As such, the finding that the women were not as likely to be considering dissolving their marriages at this time cannot be explained by either their marital processes or marital quality.

However, for both groups of women in this study, the strongest predictor of marital stability at Time 2 was number of years married. Previous research has suggested that length of marriage is related to stability in marriage because with time barriers increase (e.g., expectations for the marriage to remain intact) and alternatives to the current marriage decrease (e.g., fewer available partners). As such, partners in longer marriages are less likely to consider dissolving their relationship (Booth & White, 1980; Cole, 1985). Relatedly, although conflict theory proposes that the potential for conflict is inherent in the marital relationship over time, mechanisms that motivate partners to regulate that conflict, such as unavailability of alternatives also

are present. It may be that for the women in this study length of marriage (and other factors not examined here such as external pressures to stay married, economic dependence, the presence of young children, or religiosity) coupled with few perceived alternatives to their marriages diminished their consideration of leaving.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways marital processes influence marital outcomes in marriages wherein the wife is nontraditional. Selected data from the Marital Stability Over the Life Course Data Set (Booth et al, 1992), an eight-year longitudinal study examining various dimensions of marital quality, was used. A subsample of married women who were defined as nontraditional ($n = 74$) and a comparison group of traditional women ($n = 274$) were selected from the data set according to their occupational status and gender-role orientation. Independent variables included the marital processes of flexibility, cohesion, and communication (Olson, 1991); dependent variables included marital quality and marital stability.

Pearson Product Moment Correlations indicated that in the marriages of nontraditional women, greater emotional closeness and spousal interaction were associated with higher levels of marital quality across time. Some indicators of flexibility were associated with marital quality and marital stability for nontraditional women early in the course of the study. Positive communication patterns were related most consistently to marital outcomes across time for these women.

Results of repeated measures multivariate analyses of covariance indicated greater flexibility in the marriages of nontraditional women. Otherwise, few

differences in relationships between marital processes and marital outcomes were found for nontraditional and traditional women. Regression analyses indicated that prior marital quality was a better predictor of subsequent marital quality than any of the marital processes, and years married and communication were influential to the stability of marriage for both groups of women. Analysis of covariance results indicated that changes over time common to both nontraditional and traditional women included increased feelings of emotional closeness between spouses, less frequent marital interaction, a decrease in marital quality, and an increase, then subsequent decrease in marital stability. Follow-up analyses also revealed change over time in women's classification as nontraditional or traditional, indicating that the two groups became more similar over the course of the study.

Conclusions

Although the marital processes of cohesion, flexibility, and communication were related to the marital outcomes of nontraditional women, they were not as important to understanding the marital quality and marital stability of these women as had been expected. In fact, the best way to know about women's marital quality seems to be to know about their level of marital quality in the past, regardless of whether they are nontraditional or traditional. This finding, which is in line with earlier research regarding the stability of marital quality, may suggest that although partners in any marriage are engaged in the definition of a marital culture, the fundamentals of that culture are established early on through selection of like-minded partners and the early establishment of a way of relating within the marriage.

In general, the marital processes of cohesion and flexibility had stronger and more consistent relationships to marital quality than to marital stability for nontraditional women, while positive communication patterns and length of marriage were more important to the stability of their marriages. Over time, the inclination to dissolve their marriages may decrease for both nontraditional and traditional women due to the increased barriers and fewer alternatives available to spouses in longer marriages, and the developed ability to express and negotiate conflictual issues.

According to the findings of this study, nontraditional women and traditional women are not very different with regard to their marital processes and marital outcomes. Both groups of women find closeness to their spouses to be important in their marriages. Also, communication appears to be influential to the stability of their marriages over time. This suggests that positive communication patterns between spouses are important to the women regardless of their traditional or nontraditional status. However, it seems that there is more flexibility (i.e., equal compromise and wives' insistence on having their own way more often) in the marriages of nontraditional women, perhaps reflecting more egalitarian negotiation styles.

Nontraditional and traditional women also were alike in the ways they changed over time with regard to marital processes and outcomes. Both groups of women reported greater feelings of closeness to their spouses and less frequent shared activity with their spouses over time. In addition, marital quality decreased over time for both groups and marital stability followed an "increase then decrease" pattern for both groups that was not explained by other factors. These findings suggest commonalities

among both types of marriages that may be more a function of the developmental stages of the marital career and barriers and alternatives not examined here, and less a function of the traditionality of the marital lifestyle or culture.

Limitations

Limitations of this study fall into two major categories: study participants and study design. Regarding participants, sample size and classification of nontraditional and traditional women likely affected the results. Because of the small size of the group of nontraditional women ($n = 74$) and the number of variables included in the analysis, the percentage of variance explained in the marital outcome variables was likely inflated. Thus, marital outcomes for nontraditional women were likely less a function of prior marital quality, stability, and processes than results appeared to indicate.

With regard to participants' classification as nontraditional or traditional, traditionality of occupation was defined by occupational status rather than occupational position. As noted in Chapter 4, some professional occupational statuses may have included traditional female occupations, such as teaching or nursing. As a result, some women classified as nontraditional in their occupations in fact may have been traditional. In addition, the second criterion for classification as nontraditional or traditional was gender-role orientation. This also may constitute a limitation of this study. Women who report nontraditional gender-role beliefs and attitudes may not actually enact these beliefs and attitudes in their marital role behavior. As a result, these women would not be part of an emergent nontraditional marital culture as

suggested. Finally, women's membership in the nontraditional or traditional group changed over time, and these changes obscured possible differences in marital processes and outcomes for nontraditional and traditional women.

The second major category of limitations relates to aspects of the study design. First, participants were in different stages of their marital careers. Although all participants responded to the data collection at the same times (1980, 1983, and 1988), marriages were of different durations. Also, some women were in remarriages, and thus may have been dealing with multiple stages simultaneously. Due to such variation, inferences regarding causal relationships between variables at the three data collection times were not possible. For example, how women participate in the development of a marital culture was of major interest here. However, because respondents were at various stages in their marital careers, understanding how marital processes contribute to the early establishment of a marital culture could not be identified.

This study examined the relationships between marital processes and marital outcomes, but failed to investigate the extraneous factors that may mitigate these relationships. More specifically, barriers to the dissolution of marriage and alternatives to the current marriage, which may influence the importance of the marital processes of cohesion, flexibility, and communication to marital quality and stability, were not measured. Consequently, the relationships between these marital processes and outcomes indicated by the results of this study may have been incomplete. Relatedly, spouses' gender-role attitudes and beliefs, role-related behavior, and perceptions of

marital processes and outcomes were not measured. The level of traditionality espoused and enacted by husbands of nontraditional women may well impact the dynamics of their marriages. This spousal data would have contributed to understanding the influence of husbands' level of traditionality on marital processes and outcomes. In addition, spouses' perceptions of marital processes and outcomes would offer another piece of information about the ways in which these processes are important to the success of nontraditional marriages. The degree of congruence between wives' and husbands' perceptions of marital processes could have been examined for its relationship to the perceived marital quality and stability. Also, gender differences in perceptions of marital processes and outcomes could contribute to a more complete understanding of nontraditional marriages.

Results of this study suggested that the two groups of women were more alike with regard to marital processes and outcomes than had been predicted. However, because the meanings assigned to these processes and outcomes by the two groups of women were beyond these data, they were not examined. Thus, although reported behavioral patterns were similar, there may have been differences which were not ascertained in what these processes and outcomes signify to nontraditional and traditional women in their marriages.

Because this study utilized secondary data sources, means of operationalizing process and outcome variables were limited. More precise and complete indicators of cohesion, flexibility, communication, and marital quality and stability would likely

have yielded a more comprehensive measure of these variables and the relationships among them.

Finally, this study did not examine how perceptions of marital outcomes impact marital processes. It may be that perceived quality and stability in marriage influence the levels of cohesion, flexibility, and positive communication marital partners experience. This could offer insight into the ways in which spouses' evaluative perceptions of their marriages impact their participation in the dynamics (i.e., processes) of their marriages.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Research

Recommendations for further research are based on the results of this study and the limitations noted above. Study results suggest that the marital culture is established early in the marriages of both nontraditional and traditional women. As a result, studying couples in the early stages of their marital careers could generate valuable information about the ways in which the fundamental marital culture is established. Results also support the importance of continuing to examine marital communication, the ways communication patterns are initiated prior to marriage or early in the marital career and develop across time, and the effects of these patterns on marital outcomes, particularly marital stability.

Because of the limitations of this study, future studies need to reconsider how nontraditional status is conceptualized and operationalized. For example, the type of work a woman does (i.e., her job title) should be included as a criterion for her

classification as nontraditional or traditional in addition to the broader classification of occupational status. In addition, assessing women's gender role-related behavior in marriage instead of her gender-related attitudes and beliefs may give a more concise assessment of her nontraditionality in marriage. Ideally, because self-report data may be influenced by factors such as social desirability, actual role-related behavior in marital interaction would be observed and assessed in place of self-report, especially with regard to communication.

To alleviate the ambiguity in results created by women's changing classification of traditionality over time, subsequent research may consider including only women who continue to meet the criteria for nontraditionality or traditionality over the time span of the entire study. Relatedly, an examination of women who do change in their level of traditionality over time and the reasons for these changes could also contribute to our understanding of women's changing roles in relation to marriage. Additionally, knowing about both marital partners' level of gender-role traditionality and perception of marital processes and outcomes would contribute to a more complete understanding of the dynamics of the emergent marital culture of nontraditional marriages. Spousal data would need to be analyzed separately so that differences between husbands' and wives' perceptions would not be obscured.

Future research on marriage using longitudinal data also needs to consider ways to define a baseline for examining marital process variables. In the case of this sample, including married couples who had been married for approximately the same length of time and who were at similar stages of their marital careers would have

contributed to understanding the process of development of the marital culture in nontraditional marriages.

More comprehensive measures of marital processes also are needed. Indicators of cohesion, flexibility, and communication more concisely reflecting the various dimensions of these constructs would include additional indicators of external and internal boundaries for cohesion; measures of role stability and negotiation processes for flexibility; and self-disclosure, clarity, and respect for communication. As a result, indicators would more accurately represent the constructs, internal reliabilities of these measures would be likely to increase, and more complete information about how these processes are important to the marriages of nontraditional women could be assessed.

The results of the current study indicate that marital outcomes are not as clearly a function of marital processes as had been expected. As such, an examination of barriers and alternatives is vital to an understanding of the marriages of nontraditional women. Future research should include those factors (e.g., potential for economic independence, perception of availability of other partners, and religiosity) that are believed to have a critical influence on the ways marital processes affect marital outcomes in nontraditional marriages. Finally, an examination of the influence that marital quality and marital stability have on marital processes could provide an added dimension to our understanding of the dynamics of nontraditional marriages. Investigation of this relationship would yield information about the ways spouses' perceptions of the quality and stability of their marriages determine their attitudes

toward marital processes such as cohesion, flexibility, and positive communication patterns.

Recommendations for Practice

Several implications for practice in clinical work with couples (e.g., marital or premarital psychoeducation or counseling) are indicated by the findings of this study. First, intervention in the form of counseling, psychoeducational training, or premarital programs in the early stages of the marital career is indicated. Supporting couples in finding ways to enhance their feelings of cohesion or emotional closeness also is important to marriages of both nontraditional and traditional women, as is providing education or skills training in effective marital communication. Both of these marital processes were important to the marriages of women. In the marriages of nontraditional women, helping couples find their own means of flexibility within their marriages, especially with regard to compromise and the negotiation of differences, may be particularly important.

Finally, the findings of this study were consistent with earlier research with regard to a general decrease in marital quality over time. This finding indicates the importance of supporting marital partners in identifying ways to sustain earlier levels of marital quality as their marital career proceeds. This recommendation relates to the observation noted above regarding the importance of working with couples early in their marriages. It appears that it is during these early stages of the marital relationship that couples establish ways of relating to each other within their marriages that will have important implications across their marital careers.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Almquist, E. M., & Angrist, S. (1970). Career salience and atypicality of occupational choice among college women. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 32, 242-249.

Altrocchi, J. (1988). Happy traditional and companionship marriages. Social Casework, 69, 434-442.

Altrocchi, J., & Crosby, R. D. (1989). Clarifying and measuring the concept of traditional vs. egalitarian roles in marriages. Sex Roles, 20(11/12), 639-648.

Anderson, S. (1986). Cohesion, adaptability, and communication: A test of an Olson Circumplex Model hypothesis. Family Relations, 35, 289-293.

Anderson, S. A., & Gavazzi, S. M. (1990). A test of the Olson Circumplex model: Examining its curvilinear assumption and the presence of extreme types. Family Process, 29, 309-324.

Archer, J. (1989). The relationship between gender-role measures: A review. British Journal of Social Psychology, 28, 173-184.

Baber, K., & Allen, K. (1992). Women and families: Feminist reconstructions. New York: Guilford Press.

Bernard, J. (1978). Models for the relationship of the world of women and the world of men. In L. Kriesburg (Ed.), Research in social movements, conflict, and change (pp.291-340). Greenwich, CT: Jai Press.

Blalock, H. (1989). Power and Conflict: Toward a general theory. Newbury Park: Sage.

Booth, A., & Johnson, D. (1983). Measuring marital instability. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 45, 387-394.

Booth, A., Johnson, D., White, L., & Edwards, J. (1992). Marital Instability Over the Life Span, 1980-1988. (Data Set 22-24, Muller, K.L., Kaplan, A.S., Hickerson, M., Lang, E.L., & Card, J.J., Archivists) [machine-readable data file and documentation]. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University (Producer). Los Altos, CA: Sociometrics Corporation, American Family Data Archive (Producer & Distributor).

Booth, A., & White, L. (1980). Thinking about divorce. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 42, 605-616.

Boss, P., & Thorne, B. (1989). Family sociology and family therapy: A feminist linkage. In M. McGoldrick, C. Anderson, & F. Walsh (Eds.), Women in families: A framework for family therapy (pp. 78-96). New York: W. W. Norton.

Bruning, J. & Kintz, B. (1968). Computational handbook of statistics. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman & Company.

Buehler, C. (1990). Adjustment. In J. Touliatos, B. Perlmutter, & M. Straus (Eds.), Family Measurement Techniques (pp. 493-594). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Bumgartner, T., Burns, T., & DeVille, P. (1978). Conflict resolution and conflict development: A theory of game transformation with an application to the Lip Factory Conflict. In L. Kriesburg (Ed.), Research in social movements: Conflicts and change (pp. 105-142). Greenwich, CT: Jai Press.

Chusmir, L. (1985). Motivation of managers: Is gender a factor? Psychology of Women Quarterly, 9(1), 153-159.

Cole, C. (1985). Relationship quality in long-term marriages: A comparison of high quality and low quality. Lifestyles: A journal of changing patterns, 17, 248-257.

Curry, C., Trew, K., Turner, I., & Hunter, J. (1994). The effect of life domains on girls' possible selves. Adolescence, 29(113), 133-150.

Deal, J. E., Wampler, K. S., & Halverson, C. F. (1992). The importance of similarity in the marital relationship. Family Process, 31, 369-382.

Eddy, J. M., Heyman, R. E., & Weiss, R. L. (1991). An empirical evaluation of the dyadic adjustment scale: Exploring the differences between marital "satisfaction" and "adjustment." Behavioral Assessment, 13, 199-220.

Erdwins, C., Tyer, Z., Mellinger, J. (1983). A comparison of sex roles and related personality traits in young, middle-aged, and older women. International Journal of Aging and Human Development, 17, 141-152.

Farrington, K., & Chertok, E. (1993). Social conflict theories of the family. In P. Boss, W. Doherty, R. LaRossa, W. Schumm, S. Steinmetz (Eds.), Sourcebook of family theories and methods: A contextual approach. (pp. 357-381). New York: Plenum Press.

Fitzpatrick, M. A., & Ritchie, L. D. (1993). Communication theory and the family. In P. G. Boss, W.J. Doherty, R. LaRossa, W. R. Schumm, & S. K. Steinmetz (Eds.), Sourcebook of family theories and methods: A contextual approach. (pp. 565-585). New York: Plenum Press.

Fowers, B. (1991). His and her marriage: A multivariate study of gender and marital satisfaction. Sex Roles, 24(3/4), 209-221.

Glenn, N. D. (1990). Quantitative research on marital quality in the 1980's: A critical review. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 52, 818-831.

Goodwin, R. (1992). Overall, just how happy are you?: The magical question 31 of the Spanier Dyadic Adjustment Scale. Family Therapy, 19, 273-275.

Gottman, J. (1994). What predicts divorce?: The relationship between marital processes and marital outcomes. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Gottman, J. (1993). A theory of marital dissolution and stability. Journal of Family Psychology, 7, 57-75.

Green, R. G., Harris, R. N., Forte, J. A., & Robinson, M. (1991). Evaluating FACES III and the Circumplex Model: 2,440 families. Family Process, 30, 55-73.

Hare-Mustin, R. (1988). Family changes and gender differences: Implications for theory and practice. Family Relations, 37, 36-41.

Harloe, M. (1981). New perspectives in urban and regional research: Progress and problems. In M. Harloe (Ed.), New perspectives in urban change and conflict (pp.1-26). London: Heinemann Educational Books.

Hartsock, N. (1979). Feminist theory and the development of revolutionary strategy. In M. Pearsall (Ed.), Women and values: Readings in recent feminist philosophy (pp.8-18). Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing.

Helson, R., & Picano, J. (1990). Is the traditional role bad for women? Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 59, 311-320.

Henderson, S., & Cunningham, J. (1993). Women's emotional dependence on men: Scale construction and test of Russianoff's hypothesis. Sex Roles, 28, 317-334.

Hicks, M. W. & Platt, M. (1970). Marital happiness and stability: A review of research in the sixties. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 32, 553-574.

Jagacinski, C. M. (1987). Engineering careers: Women in a male-dominated field. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 11, 97-110.

Johnson, D., Amoloza, T., & Booth, A. (1992). Stability and developmental change in marital quality: A three-wave panel analysis. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 54, 582-594.

Johnson, D., White, L., Edwards, J., & Booth, A. (1986). Dimensions of marital quality: Toward methodological and conceptual refinement. Journal of Family Issues, 7, 31-49.

Kersten, K. K. (1990). The process of marital disaffection: Interventions at various stages. Family Relations, 39, 257-265.

Killorin, E., & Olson, D. (1984). The chaotic flippers in treatment. In E. Kaufman (Ed.), Power to change: Alcoholism (pp. 99-129). NY: Gardner Press.

Lauer, R. (1977). Perspectives on social change. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Lavallee, M., & Pelletier, R. (1992). Ecological value of Bem's gender schema theory explored through females' traditional and nontraditional occupational contexts. Psychological Reports, 70, 79-82.

Lemkau, J. P. (1986). Themes in psychotherapy with women in male-dominated professions. Women and Therapy, 5, 29-39.

Lemkau, J. P. (1983). Women in male-dominated professions: Distinguishing personality and background characteristics. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 8, 144-165.

Lewis, R. A., & Spanier, G. B. (1979). Theorizing about the quality and stability of marriage. In W. Burr, R. Hill, F. Nye, & I. Weiss (Eds.), Contemporary theories about the family: Volume 2 (pp.268-294). New York: Free Press.

Lipman-Blumen, J. (1984). Gender roles and power. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Lott, B. (1990). The dual nature of learned behavior: The challenge to feminist psychology. In R. Hare-Mustin & J. Maracek (Eds.), Making a difference: Psychology and the construction of gender (pp. 65-101). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Lye, D., & Biblarz, T. (1993). The effects of attitudes toward family life and gender roles on marital satisfaction. Journal of Family Issues, 14, 157-188.

Markman, J., Renick, M., Floyd, F., Stanley, S., & Clements, M. (1993). Preventing marital distress through communication and conflict management training: A 4- and 5-year follow-up. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 61, 70-77.

McCubbin, H. & Patterson, J. (1983). The family stress process: The double ABCX model of adjustment and adaptation. Marriage and Family Review, 6, 7-37.

Miller, J. (1976). Toward a new psychology of women. Boston: Beacon Press.

Murrell, A. J., Hanson-Frieze, I. H., & Frost, J. L. (1991). Aspiring to careers in male- and female-dominated professions. Psychology of Women Quarterly, *15*, 103-126.

Neville, D. D., & Schleckerd, D. I. (1988). The relation of self-efficacy and assertiveness to willingness to engage in traditional/nontraditional career activities. Psychology of Women Quarterly, *12*, 91-98.

Noller, P., & Fitzpatrick, M. A. (1990). Marital communication in the eighties. Journal of Marriage and the Family, *52*, 832-843.

Norton, A. & Miller, L. (1992). Marriage, divorce, and remarriage in the 1980's. Current Population Reports (Series P-23, No. 180). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing.

Oberschall, A. (1978). The decline of the 1960s social movements. In L. Kriesburg (Ed.), Research in social movements, conflicts, and change (pp.257-290). Greenwich, CT: Jai Press.

O'Connell, L., Betz, M., & Kurth, S. (1989). Plans for balancing work and family life: Do women pursuing traditional and nontraditional careers differ? Sex Roles, *20*, 35-45.

Olson, D. (1983). Marital and family satisfaction. In D. Olson & H. McCubbin (Eds.), Families: What makes them work (pp. 171-186). Beverly Hills: Sage.

Olson, D. (1986). Circumplex model VII: Validation studies and FACES II. Family Process, *25*, 337-351.

Olson, D. (1991, November). Three-dimensional (3-D) circumplex model: Theoretical and methodological advances. Presented at the meeting of National Council on Family Relations Theory and Research Methodology Workshop, Denver, CO.

Olson, D., Lavee, Y., & McCubbin, H. (1988). Types of families and family response to stress over the family life cycle. In D. Klein & J. Aldous (Eds.), Social stress and family development (pp. 16-43). NY: Guilford Press.

Olson, D., Russell, C. & Sprenkle, D. (1983). Circumplex model of marital and family systems: VI. Theoretical update. Family Process, 22, 69-83.

Orlofsky, J. L. (1981). Relationship between sex role attitudes and personality traits and the Sex Role Behavior Scale-1: A new measure of masculine and feminine role behaviors and interests. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 40, 927-940.

Parsons, T., & Bales, R. F. (1955). Family, socialization, and interaction processes. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Perlman, D., & Fehr, B. (1989). The development of intimate relationships. In D. Perlman & S. Duck (Eds.), Intimate relationships: Development, dynamics, and deterioration (pp. 13-42). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Rapaport, R. Couple symmetry and enjoyment. Journal of marriage and the family, 36, 985-992.

Risman, B. J., & Schwartz, P. (1989). Gender in intimate relationships: A microstructural approach. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Robinson, L., & Blanton, P. (1993). Marital strengths in enduring marriages. Family Relations, 42, 38-45.

Schram, R. (1979). Marital satisfaction over the family life cycle: A critique and proposal. Journal of Marriage and Family, 41, 7-12.

Sher, T. G., & Baucom, D. H. (1993). Marital communication: Differences among maritally distressed, depressed, and nondistressed-nondepressed couples. Journal of Family Psychology, 7, 148-153.

Spanier, G. (1976). Measuring dyadic adjustment: New scales for assessing the quality of marriages and similar dyads. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 38, 15-28.

Spanier, G. B., & Lewis, R. A. (1980). Marital quality: A review of the seventies. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 42, 825-839.

Spence, J. T. (1984). Masculinity, femininity, and gender-related traits: A conceptual analysis and critique of current research. In B. Maher & W. Maher (Eds.), Progress in experimental personality research (pp. 2-91). Orlando, FLA: Academic Press.

Spence, J. T. (1977). Traits, roles, and the concept of androgyny. Paper presented at the Conference on Perspectives on the Psychology of Women, Michigan State University.

Standley, K., & Soule, B. (1974). Women in male-dominated professions: Contrasts in their personal and vocational histories. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 4, 245-258.

Thompson, L. (1993). Conceptualizing gender in marriage: The case of marital care. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 55, 557-569.

Thompson, L. (1991). Family work: Women's sense of fairness. Journal of Family Issues, 12, 181-190.

Thompson, L., & Walker, A. (1989). Gender in families: Women and men in marriage, work, and parenthood. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 51, 845-871.

Thorne, B. (1992). Rethinking the family: Some feminist questions. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Thornton, A., & Friedman, D. (1983). The changing American family. Population Bulletin 38. Washington D.C.: Population Reference Bureau.

U.S. Bureau of Census. (1991). Statistical abstract of the U.S. 1991, 111th ed. Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (1992). Employment and earning characteristics of families: First quarter 1992. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor.

Walsh, E. (1978). Mobilization theory vis-a-vis a mobilization process: The case of the United Farm Workers' movement. In L. Kriesburg (Ed.), Research in social movements, conflicts, and change (pp.143-154). Greenwich, CT: Jai Press.

White, L., & Booth, A. Divorce over the life course: The role of marital happiness. Journal of Family Issues, 12(1), 5-21.

APPENDIX A. FIGURES.

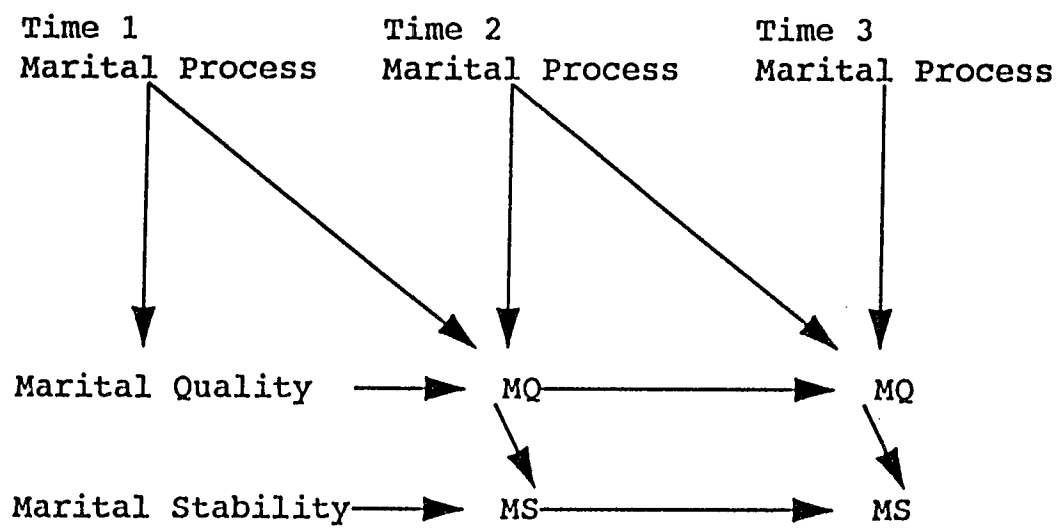


Figure A1. Variance in marital outcomes as explained by marital processes and prior marital outcomes.

APPENDIX B. TABLES.

Table 1

Demographic Information on Participants by Group

Demographic Information	Group ^a	
	Nontraditional	Traditional
Race		
White	67.0 (91%)	252.0 (92%)
Hispanic, African American	7.0 (9%)	22.0 (92%)
χ^2 (2,348)	0.52	
Age		
Range	21-50	19-55
<u>M</u>	34.22	36.44
<u>SD</u>	8.10	9.62
<u>F</u> (1,346)	3.32	
Age of Spouse		
Range	23-53	21-55
<u>M</u>	36.38	38.49
<u>SD</u>	8.21	9.84
<u>F</u> (1,346)	2.86	
Years of Education		
Range	12-24	3-20
<u>M</u>	16.16	12.43
<u>SD</u>	2.23	1.72
<u>F</u> (1,346)	237.68**	
Number of Marriages		
Range	1-3	1-3
<u>M</u>	1.07	1.15
<u>SD</u>	0.34	0.41
<u>F</u> (1,346)	2.29	

(table continues)

Table 1 - continued

Demographic Information	Group ^a	
	Nontraditional	Traditional
Years Married		
Range	0-29	0-34
<u>M</u>	11.51	14.90
<u>SD</u>	8.70	9.67
<u>F</u> (1,346)	7.40*	
Number of Children, 1980		
Range	0-5	0-8
<u>M</u>	1.34	2.23
<u>SD</u>	1.26	1.60
<u>F</u> (1,293)	10.59**	
Number of Children, 1988		
Range	1-5	1-8
<u>M</u>	2.26	2.80
<u>SD</u>	1.26	1.60
<u>F</u> (1,293)	8.61*	
Family Income, 1980		
Range	\$75,000+	\$2,500+
<u>M</u>	\$34,400	\$26,800
<u>SD</u>	\$15,000	\$15,300
<u>F</u> (1,293)	28.06*	
Wife's Income, 1980		
Range	\$7,500+	0-\$27,500
<u>M</u>	\$12,100	\$4,680
<u>SD</u>	\$7,400	\$5,230
<u>F</u> (1,293)	86.48*	

^a Group sizes include nontraditional women ($n = 74$), traditional women ($n = 274$)

* $p \leq .01$. ** $p \leq .001$.

Table 2

Results of Multiple Analysis of Covariance for the Variables of Interest

Source of variance	F-value	df	p
Cohesion			
Bonding			
Group	0.30	(1,315)	0.59
Time	0.56	(2,315)	0.00**
Group x time	0.99	(2,315)	0.10
Interaction			
Group	0.31	(1,314)	0.58
Time	0.92	(2,314)	0.00**
Group x time	1.00	(2,314)	0.95
Friends			
Group	0.23	(1,247)	0.64
Time	0.99	(2,247)	0.25
Group x time	0.98	(2,247)	0.06
Flexibility			
Own Way			
Group	4.02	(1,339)	0.05*
Time	1.03	(1,340)	0.31
Group x time	0.06	(1,340)	0.82
Final Word			
Group	11.01	(1,313)	0.00**
Time	0.99	(1,313)	0.22
Group x time	1.00	(2,313)	0.88
(table continues)			
Communication			
Group	0.06	(1,321)	0.80
Time	1.00	(2,321)	0.52
Group x time	0.99	(2,321)	0.38
Marital Quality			
Group	1.11	(1,324)	0.29
Time	8.79	(2,324)	0.00**
Group x time	1.20	(2,324)	0.30

Table 2 - continued

Source of variance	F-value	df	p
<hr/>			
Marital Stability			
Group	0.35	(1,314)	0.56
Time	41.78	(2,314)	0.00**
Group x time	2.77	(2,314)	0.06

* $p \leq .05$ ** $p \leq .01$

Table 3

Results of Analysis of Variance on Marital Processes and Marital Outcomes for Nontraditional and Traditional Women^a, Controlling for Years Married

Measure	Time 1		Time 2		Time 3	
	Mean	<u>SD</u>	Mean	<u>SD</u>	Mean	<u>SD</u>
Cohesion						
Bonding						
Nontraditional women	3.44	0.533	3.45	0.62	4.32	0.84
Traditional women	3.57	0.59	3.45	0.67	4.25	0.89
<u>F-value</u>	5.04*		0.17		0.42	
Interaction						
NonTraditional Women	3.23	0.50	3.11	0.56	2.98	0.57
Traditional Women	3.18	0.60	3.07	0.63	2.97	0.64
<u>F-value</u>	0.15		0.26		0.22	
Friends						
NonTraditional Women	3.69	2.84	3.68	2.85	3.99	12.13
Traditional Women	5.38	5.25	4.81	5.18	2.87	4.57
<u>F-value</u>	3.91*		1.46		1.78	
Flexibility						
Own Way						
NonTraditional Women	1.16	0.37	1.19	0.40		
Traditional Women	1.26	0.44	1.31	0.46		
<u>F-value</u>	2.11		2.97			
Final Word						
NonTraditional Women	1.60	0.49	1.64	0.48	1.68	0.47
Traditional Women	1.46	0.50	1.45	0.50	1.51	0.50
<u>F-value</u>	3.85*		7.68**		5.98*	

(table continues)

Table 3 - continued

Measure	Time 1		Time 2		Time 3	
	Mean	<u>SD</u>	Mean	<u>SD</u>	Mean	<u>SD</u>
Communication						
NonTraditional Women	2.49	0.29	2.45	0.32	2.73	0.27
Traditional Women	2.47	0.31	2.48	0.31	4.92	13.23
<u>F-value</u>	0.37		0.06		1.21	
Marital Quality						
NonTraditional Women	2.57	0.30	2.51	0.40	2.52	0.37
Traditional Women	2.57	0.36	2.46	0.40	2.45	0.44
<u>F-value</u>	0.00		1.06		2.17	
Marital Stability						
NonTraditional Women	1.66	0.31	2.70	1.70	1.53	0.32
Traditional Women	1.70	0.31	2.68	1.95	1.66	0.34
<u>F-value</u>	0.36		1.34		5.86*	

^a Group sizes include nontraditional women (n=74), traditional women (n=274)

* $p \leq .05$ ** $p \leq .01$

Table 4

Pearson Product Coefficients for Variables of Interest at Time1, Time2, and
Time3 for Nontraditional Women

Measure	Time 1		Time 2		Time 3	
	Marital Quality	Marital Stability	Marital Quality	Marital Stability	Marital Quality	Marital Stability
Time 1 Measure						
Cohesion						
Bonding	0.56**	0.45**				
Interaction	0.44**	0.40**				
Friends	0.07	-0.04				
Flexibility						
Own Way	0.35**	0.37**				
Final Word	0.22*	0.10				
Communication	0.45**	0.47**				
Marital Quality		0.45**				
Time 2 Measure						
Cohesion						
Bonding			0.36**	-0.20		
Interaction			0.46**	-0.04		
Friends			0.19	0.23*		

(table continues)

Table 4 - continued

Measure	Time 1		Time 2		Time 3	
	Marital Quality	Marital Stability	Marital Quality	Marital Stability	Marital Quality	Marital Stability
Time 2 Measure						
Flexibility						
Own Way			0.07	0.04		
Final Word			0.04	-0.06		
Communication			0.49**	-0.14		
Marital Quality				0.19		
Time 3 Measure						
Cohesion						
Bonding					0.67**	0.42**
Interaction					0.47**	0.19
Friends					0.03	-0.11
Flexibility						
Own Way						
Final Word					0.01	-0.03
Communication					0.49**	0.48**
Marital Quality						0.50**

* $p \leq .05$ ** $p \leq .01$

Table 5

Pearson Product Coefficients for Variables of Interest at Time1, Time2, and
Time3 for Traditional Women

Measure	Time 1		Time 2		Time 3	
	Marital Quality	Marital Stability	Marital Quality	Marital Stability	Marital Quality	Marital Stability
Time 1 Measure						
Cohesion						
Bonding	0.59**	0.36**				
Interaction	0.54**	0.33**				
Friends	0.22**	0.17**				
Flexibility						
Own Way	0.05	0.08				
Final Word	0.26**	0.21**				
Communication	0.47**	0.53**				
Marital Quality		0.46**				
Time 2 Measure						
Cohesion						
Bonding			0.59**	0.01		
Interaction			0.51**	0.04		
Friends			0.10	-0.10		

(table continues)

Table 5 - continued

Measure	Time 1		Time 2		Time 3	
	Marital Quality	Marital Stability	Marital Quality	Marital Stability	Marital Quality	Marital Stability
Time 2 Measure						
Flexibility						
	Own Way			0.00		-0.15**
	Final Word			0.15*		0.01
Communication			0.49**	-0.15**		
Marital Quality				0.09		
Time 3 Measure						
Cohesion						
	Bonding				0.60**	0.30**
	Interaction				0.46**	0.28**
	Friends				0.10	0.20**
Flexibility						
	Own Way					
	Final Word				0.25**	0.14**
Communication					0.52**	0.52**
Marital Quality						0.52**

* $p \leq .05$ ** $p \leq .01$

Table 6

Regression Coefficients From Analyses of Effects of Variables of Interest on Marital Quality and Marital Stability for Nontraditional Women

Variables	Time1 to Time2		Time2 to Time3	
	b	β	b	β
Marital Quality				
Step 1:				
Years Married	0.003	0.059	0.009	0.208
	R ² =-0.011		R ² =0.029	
Step 2:				
Years Married	0.002	0.050	0.008	0.196*
Marital Quality	0.496	0.386**	0.783	0.730**
Marital Stability	0.249	0.195	-0.043	-0.182
	R ² =0.227		R ² =0.540	
Step 3:				
Years Married	0.005	0.112	0.008	0.190
Marital Quality	0.374	0.291	0.674	0.629**
Marital Stability	0.231	0.181	-0.055	-0.232**
Cohesion				
Bonding	0.055	0.074	0.019	0.031
Interaction	0.110	0.137	0.077	0.107
Friends	0.027	0.190	0.032	0.253**
Flexibility				
Own Way	-0.096	-0.089	0.009	0.010
Final Word	-0.214	-0.265*	0.063	0.084
Communication	0.078	0.105	0.0003	0.001
	R ² =0.43		R ² =0.60	

(table continues)

Table 6 - continued

Variables	Time1 to Time2		Time2 to Time3	
	b	β	b	β
Marital Stability				
Step 1:				
Years Married	0.093	0.520**	0.005	0.146
	R ² =0.259		R ² =-0.006	
Step 2:				
Years Married	0.092	0.517**	0.008	0.210
Marital Quality	-0.143	-0.029	0.387	0.414**
Marital Stability	-0.263	-0.055	-0.050	-0.242
	R ² =0.241		R ² =0.173	
Step 3:				
Years Married	0.093	0.520**	0.004	0.096
Marital Quality	-0.014	-0.003	0.211	0.226
Marital Stability	0.024	0.005	-0.037	-0.182
Cohesion				
Bonding	-0.245	-0.086	0.067	0.125
Interaction	-0.151	-0.049	0.020	0.032
Friends	0.127	0.238*	-0.004	-0.036
Flexibility				
Own Way	-0.773	-0.188	0.118	0.146
Final Word	0.269	0.087	0.067	0.104
Communication	0.352	0.124	0.170	0.322*
	R ² =0.183		R ² =0.238	

* $p \leq .05$ ** $p \leq .01$

Table 7

Regression Coefficients From Analyses of Effects of Variables of Interest on
Marital Quality and Marital Stability for Traditional Women

Variables	Time1 to Time2		Time2 to Time3	
	b	β	b	β
Marital Quality				
Step 1:				
Years Married	0.002	0.050	0.001	0.012
	$R^2=-0.002$		$R^2=-0.004$	
Step 2:				
Years Married	0.002	0.061	0.001	0.003
Marital Quality	0.672	0.614**	0.535	0.444**
Marital Stability	0.033	0.027	-0.012	-0.051
	$R^2=0.389$		$R^2=0.182$	
Step 3:				
Years Married	0.002	0.049	-0.001	-0.020
Marital Quality	0.489	0.446**	0.380	0.316**
Marital Stability	-0.085	-0.068	-0.004	-0.017
Cohesion				
Bonding	0.093	0.140*	0.082	0.122
Interaction	0.039	0.058	0.017	0.024
Friends	-0.001	-0.014	-0.001	-0.008
Flexibility				
Own Way	-0.105	-0.118*	0.017	0.019
Final Word	0.033	0.043	-0.031	-0.035
Communication	0.136	0.195**	0.071	0.093
	$R^2=0.39$		$R^2=0.178$	

(table continues)

Table 7 - continued

Variables	Time1 to Time2		Time2 to Time3	
	b	β	b	β
Marital Stability				
Step 1:				
Years Married	0.069	0.353**	0.006	0.158*
	R ² =0.121		R ² =0.021	
Step 2:				
Years Married	0.071	0.363**	0.009	0.255**
Marital Quality	0.330	0.062	0.318	0.337**
Marital Stability	-1.743	-0.292**	-0.062	-0.327**
	R ² =0.185		R ² =0.188	
Step 3:				
Years Married	0.070	0.360**	0.005	0.143*
Marital Quality	0.703	0.133	0.085	0.090
Marital Stability	-1.528	-0.256**	-0.045	-0.236*
Cohesion				
Bonding	-0.196	-0.061	0.013	0.025
Interaction	0.076	0.024	0.040	0.073
Friends	-0.014	-0.038	0.001	0.021
Flexibility				
Own Way	0.143	0.034	-0.047	-0.065
Final Word	-0.461	-0.124*	0.005	0.008
Communication	-0.164	-0.049	0.232	0.392**
	R ² =0.183		R ² =0.280	

* $p \leq .05$ ** $p \leq .01$

Table 8

Results of Multiple Analysis of Covariance for Gender Role Orientation and
Wife's Occupation

Source of variance	F-value	df	p
Gender-role orientation			
Group	276.95	(1,323)	0.00
Time	0.899	(2,323)	0.00
Group x time	0.833	(2,323)	0.00
Occupational Status			
Group	10.00	(1,186)	0.002
Time	0.81	(2,186)	0.00
Group x time	0.952	(2,186)	0.01

Table 9

Results of Analysis of Variance on Marital Processes and Marital Outcomes
for Nontraditional and Traditional Women^a, Controlling for Years Married

Measure	Time 1		Time 2		Time 3	
	Mean	<u>SD</u>	Mean	<u>SD</u>	Mean	<u>SD</u>
Gender-Role Orientation						
NonTraditional Women	12.28	1.86	12.65	2.63	12.47	2.47
Traditional Women	18.28	2.09	16.50	2.42	16.06	2.92
F-value	2266**		5698**		3493**	

^a Group sizes include nontraditional women (n=74), traditional women (n=274)

* $p \leq .05$ ** $p \leq .01$