

RODRIGUEZ, YULIANA, M.S. Spillover and Crossover Effects of Mexican Immigrant Wives' Acculturative Stress on Marital Satisfaction and Marital Conflict as Moderated by Wives' Marriage Work with Husband and Close Friend. (2011)
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Despite the rapid growth in a population that marries young and has high marriage rates, very little is known about the marital experiences of couples of Mexican origin living the United States. Although couples endorse values that are generally supportive of marriage, scholars have voiced concern that marriages of Mexican origin couples are at risk given unique stressors faced by this group. Using data gathered during home interviews with 110 first-generation, Mexican immigrant legally married and living as married couples, both spillover and crossover links were examined between Mexican-origin wives' acculturative stress and their own and their husbands' reports of marital satisfaction as moderated by marriage work with husband and marriage work with friend. Hierarchical regression analyses showed that the extent to which wives discuss marital concerns with their husbands is (a) linked with greater marital satisfaction for wives and (b) serves to protect husbands' evaluations of their marriage from the effects of wives acculturative stress. These findings represent an important first step in understanding the factors that compromise and protect marital well-being for couples of Mexican origin living in the United States.

SPILOVER AND CROSSOVER EFFECTS OF MEXICAN IMMIGRANT WIVES'
ACCULTURATIVE STRESS ON MARITAL SATISFACTION AND
MARITAL CONFLICT AS A MODERATED BY WIVES'
MARRIAGE WORK WITH HUSBAND
AND CLOSE FRIEND

By

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To my family and friends, thank you for your constant love and support through this journey.

APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Currently, the United States has the largest immigrant population in the world. Latinos represent the largest minority group in the nation with a record 50.5 million residents in the U. S. in 2010 and with those of Mexican origin making up the largest subgroup of immigrants (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). Partly due to high fertility rates and earlier childbearing, Latinos are a young population. Compared to other Latinos and non-Hispanic Whites, Mexican-Americans and native born Mexicans are more likely to be married at younger ages. Whereas only one fifth of 20- to 24- year old non-Hispanic Whites are married, approximately one-third of Mexican Americans in the same age range are married (Oropesa & Landale, 2004).

Despite the large representation of this population that marries young and has high marriage rates, very little is known about the marital experiences of couples of Mexican origin living in the United States. Accordingly, a recent review of the marriage literature has shown that only two published studies have examined the marital experience of Mexican origin couples in the past decade (Helms, in press). This lack of knowledge is problematic because couples of Mexican origin living in the United States have higher rates of marital dissolution during the childrearing years than those in Mexico and their White counterparts in the United States (Bramlett & Mosher, 2001; Phillips & Sweeney, 2005). Furthermore, despite values that are generally supportive of

marriage, scholars have voiced concern that marriages of Mexican origin couples are at risk given unique stressors faced by this group (Oropesa & Landale, 2004). Clearly, a focus on marital relationships is important and should include the examination of sociocultural factors that compromise and protect marital quality for couples of Mexican origin living in the United States.

As couples of Mexican origin adapt to life in the United States, they may experience acculturative stress which may, in turn, be linked to their own and their partner's marital satisfaction and perceptions of marital conflict. The process of cultural adaptation is defined as attaining the knowledge, behavioral expectations, attitudes, and values associated with the host culture and the ethnic culture (Phinney, 1990).

Acculturation plays an important role in this process. Acculturation is primarily the outcome of contact with the host culture and has the potential to lead to acculturative stress. Rodriguez, Myers, Mira, Flores, and Garcia-Hernandez (2002) described acculturative stress as the struggles individuals experience while attempting to adapt to the host culture, such as language barriers or cultural incongruities. Previous research has documented the negative effects of acculturative stress on individual outcomes, such as depression and psychological well-being (Cervantes, Padilla, & Salgado de Snyder, 1991; Landale, 1997; Rodriguez et al., 2002); however, there are currently no published studies that examine the link between acculturative stress and marital quality for couples of Mexican origin. Although this link has yet to be empirically explored, scholars have proposed its importance theoretically and suggest that the link between acculturative

stress and marital satisfaction and marital conflict represents a worthwhile area of inquiry for future research (Helms, Supple, & Proulx, 2011; Oropesa & Landale, 2004).

The effects of acculturative stress on spouses' perceptions of marital satisfaction and marital conflict may be attenuated or magnified under certain relational conditions (Helms et al., 2011; Huston, 2000). Identified in prior research is a relational process labeled "marriage work" in which wives discuss marital concerns with their close friends or husbands (Helms, Crouter, & McHale, 2003; Oliner, 1989; Proulx, Helms, & Payne, 2004). In Oliner's (1989) research, the term marriage work was used to describe women's active involvement in one another's marriages through regular disclosure about concerns related to marriage. Oliner specifically defined this process as "reflection or action to achieve or sustain the stability of a marriage and the sense of its adequacy" (p. 123), and argued that marriage work has the potential to serve as an important protection against the typical stressors encountered by married couples in their everyday lives. Her in depth interviews with 17 working and middle class wives and three divorced women focused on the extent to which they perceived marriage work with close friends to be helpful or harmful to their perceptions of marital quality. Oliner observed that not only did wives talk considerably with close friends about marital concerns and that these discussions reinforced their commitment to their marriages, but also that they enhanced positive feelings about their marriages. She concluded that marriage work with friends led to changes in wives' emotional states regarding their marriages and their perceptions of marital quality.

Counter to Olikier's (1989) conclusion regarding marriage work with friend, a competing hypothesis informed by the family therapy concept of *triangulation* in relationships suggests that pulling friends into the marital relationship can have long-term negative effects on the relationship (Bowen, 1966). According to this concept, an unstable two-person relationship can form into a three-person triangle under stress (Bowen, 1978). This occurs after one person in the two-person relationship brings in a third person into the triangle as tension mounts in their relationship. The role of the third person (e.g., close friend) in relieving tensions or conflict experienced in the marriage may be functional in the short-term. However, according to Bowen's theory, regular triangulation with a close friend may compromise rather than protect spouses' marital quality.

More recent studies with working and middle class samples of predominantly White married women have documented that in addition to marriage work with friends, wives also engage in marriage work with their husbands—a process that was linked to wives' perceptions of marital satisfaction and conflict (Helms et al., 2003; Julien et al., 2000; Proulx et al., 2004). Missing from this body of work, however, is an empirical test of Olikier's theoretically proposed moderating influence of marriage work as a protection of spouses' marital quality against potentially threatening stressors.

The important role that strong social ties play in the protection of individual health and well-being for members of poor Mexican communities has been demonstrated (Alvarez & Bean, 1976; Hoppe & Heller, 1975; Vega, 1990; Velez-Ibañez, 1996). To date, however, neither the link between more broadly defined forms of social support and

marital quality has been examined, nor has marriage work, specifically, been examined among Mexican origin couples. Having a close friend or husband with whom one can discuss marital concerns is likely to be particularly important for Mexican origin wives' marital quality in the context of stressors associated with immigrating to a foreign country. Moreover, the stressors associated with immigration create a context in which wives often rely on their husbands as a source for discussing marital concerns more so than their counterparts in Mexico who rely more heavily on female kin and friends for similar discussions (Bender, Castro, & O'Donnell, 1999; Hoban, 2005). Thus, it is likely that the link between wives' acculturative stress and wives' marital quality (i.e., spillover effects) is moderated by the extent to which wives' are able to discuss marital concerns with their close friends and husband. The extent to which wives' marriage work with close friends and husbands will moderate the association of wives' acculturative stress on husbands' perceptions of marital satisfaction and conflict (i.e., crossover effects) is unknown, but dyadic frameworks for understanding marriage suggest that testing the association is an important avenue to pursue (Helms et al., 2011).

Huston's (2000) socioecological framework orients researchers to study marital quality from an ecological perspective. His perspective has been applied to the study of Mexican-origin couples specifically (Helms et al., 2011) and speaks to the importance of individual spouse's responses to their larger macroenvironmental conditions including the sociohistorical, cultural, socioeconomic, social, and physical environment. This model is particularly useful in understanding marital quality for Mexican origin women who are navigating their relationships in the larger context of cultural adaptation. Helms

et al. (2011) further underscored the importance of wives' experiences of acculturative stress as they adapt to life in the United States and they oriented researchers to the consideration of how wives' individual experiences of acculturative stress are linked to their perceptions of marital quality. Furthermore, the importance that Huston's model places on the marital relationship as a marital behavioral system comprised of two individuals with their own beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions embedded within a larger network of close relationships suggests to me that (a) the extent to which wives engage in marriage work with both their husband and their close friends are important factors to consider in the study of marriage, and (b) potential crossover effects from wives' perceptions of acculturative stress to husbands' perceptions of marital quality are important to examine. Together, this model offers an orienting framework underscoring the importance of examining how wives' acculturative stress is linked to their own and their husbands' perceptions of marital satisfaction and marital conflict and how the relational process of marriage work with friends and spouse may play a role in understanding this link.

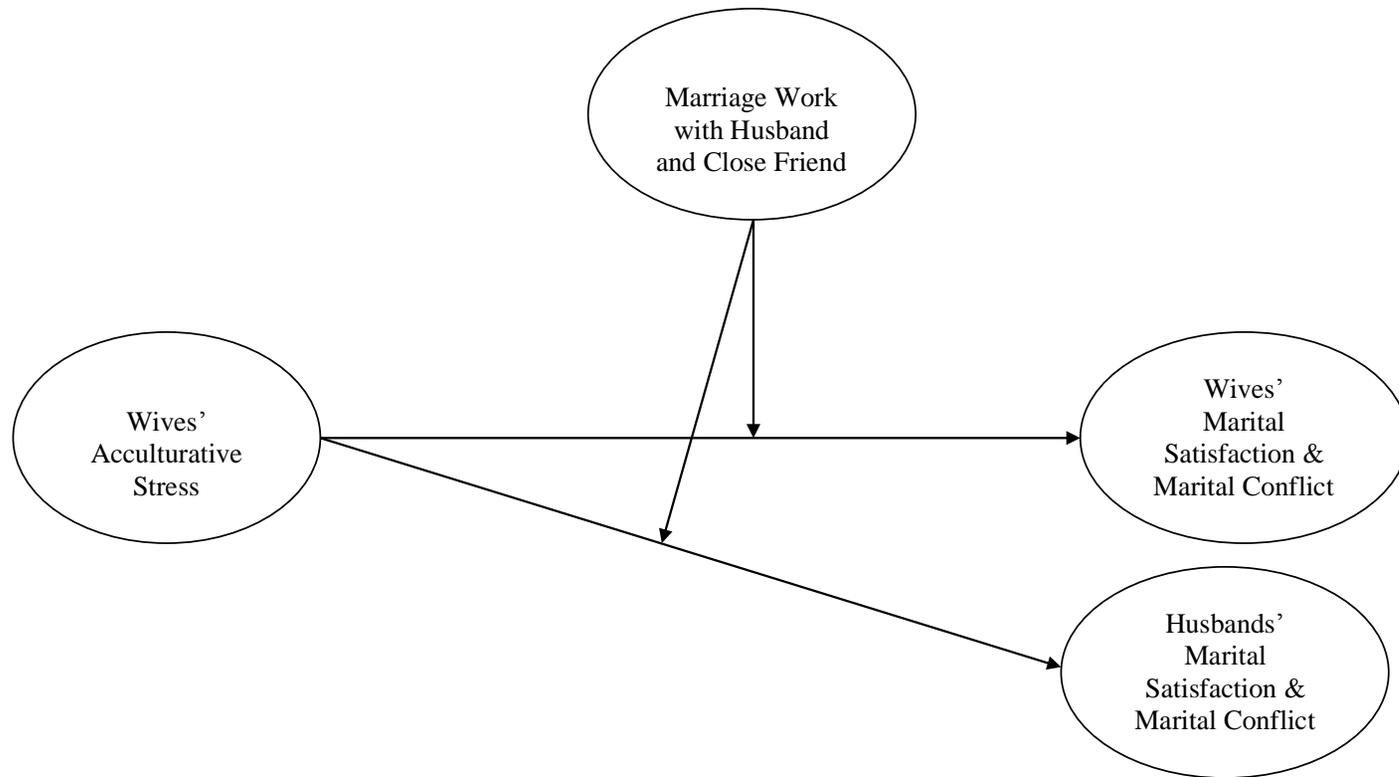
A risk and resilience theoretical framework offers further support for the model tested in this thesis. This theoretical perspective offers a framework for understanding the interaction between risk and protective influences on individual adjustment and offers guidance regarding the direction of effects and model paths for the proposed study (Rutter, 2006). Risk factors are conditions that have demonstrated a higher probability of maladjustment (Rutter, 1990), whereas protective factors are defined as conditions that protect against the negative effects of risk (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). Applied to the

conceptual model in this study (see Figure 1), spouses' marital satisfaction and marital conflict (the outcomes of interest) are influenced by the interplay between wives' acculturative stress and her marriage work with spouse and friend. In this model, acculturative stress is the risk that is hypothesized to affect spouses' adjustment defined as marital satisfaction and marital conflict. Marriage work is the protective factor that is hypothesized to moderate the spillover and crossover associations between acculturative stress and marital quality, as measured through marital satisfaction and marital conflict.

The goal of this study is to examine both spillover and crossover links between Mexican origin wives' acculturative stress and their own and their husbands' reports of marital satisfaction and marital conflict as a function of wives' marriage work with husband and marriage work with friend. In examining how wives' acculturative stress is linked to spouses' perceptions of marital satisfaction and marital conflict, dispositional and structural factors that may account for this link were controlled (i.e., marital status: legally married vs. living as married, depressive symptoms, and age of firstborn). Specifically, it was hypothesized that wives' marriage work with husband and marriage work with friend would moderate the relationship between wives' acculturative stress and spouses' marital satisfaction and marital conflict beyond that explained by the control variables. More specifically, the link between wives' acculturative stress and their own and their husbands' marital satisfaction and marital conflict is expected to be attenuated under conditions of high marriage work with husband or high marriage work with friend. That is, when wives engage in higher levels of marriage work with their husbands or close friend, it is expected that the hypothesized negative association between wives'

acculturative stress on spouses' marital satisfaction will be lessened but some stress is still expected. When wives engage in lower levels of marriage work with their husbands or close friend, wives' acculturative stress is expected to be negatively related to spouses' reports of marital satisfaction. In addition, the link between wives' acculturative stress and spouses' marital conflict is hypothesized to be positive under conditions of low marriage work with husband or friend and would be smaller under conditions of high marriage work.

Figure 1. Conceptual model depicting associations between wives' acculturative stress and spouses' marital quality: Marriage work with husband and close friend as moderators.



CHAPTER II
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS, DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS,
AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, I discuss how Huston's (2000) social ecological framework for understanding marriage supports the current projects' focus on wives' perceptions of acculturative stress, marriage work with husbands and close friends, and spillover and crossover links with husbands' and wives' reports of marital conflict and satisfaction. Next, I introduce the risk and resilience theoretical perspective and discuss how it informs hypothesized associations in the conceptual model. Following the discussion of these two theoretical frameworks that inform the goals of this study, I define key constructs and review the empirical literature in support of the hypothesized conceptual model.

Huston's Social Ecology of Marriage Framework

Huston's (2000) three-level model for viewing marriage was originally designed to provide an interdisciplinary framework for studying marital relationships in a social and ecological context. More recently, this socioecological framework has been adapted to inform the study of marriage among Mexican-origin couples living in the United States (Helms et al., 2011). In his original model, Huston identified three central elements to understanding marriage. These include the macroenvironment, individual properties, and marital behavior. The macroenvironment accounts for both the larger macrosocietal

context (e.g., cultural context, economic context) and dimensions of the social environment in which individuals and their marital behavior are embedded (Helms et al., 2011; Huston, 2000). Related to the current study, dimensions of the social environment include spouses' relationship with friends. Moreover, Huston distinguished marital behavior from individual spouses' personal characteristics and perceptions of the marital relationship by including individual properties as a central element in the model. Individual properties consist of two key components including spouses' intrapersonal qualities (e.g., psychological characteristics, cultural and gendered orientations and values, ethnic identity, and physical health) as well as spouses' beliefs and attitudes about the marriage (e.g., perceptions of marital satisfaction) and evaluations of each other. The third element in Huston's model, marital behavior, focuses on the marital dyad and represents spouses' interactions and shared activities.

Taken together, Huston's (2000) social ecology of marriage framework is useful for orienting the focus of the current study given its explicit attention to the marital relationship and its interaction with dimensions of cultural and social context. Both in Huston's original model and in the more recent adaptations of the model for the study of Mexican-origin couples and families (Helms et al., 2011), an emphasis is placed on an ecological approach that attends to pertinent dimensions of the macro-environment (i.e., stressors related to cultural adaptation) in which individual spouses and their marriages are embedded, the intersection of these environments with spouses' perceptions of their marital quality (e.g., perceptions of marital satisfaction and conflict/negativity), and the relational conditions under which links between macroenvironmental stressors and

marital quality emerge (i.e., marriage work with husbands and close friends).

Furthermore, the dyadic nature of marital quality, including the possibility for within couple variations in husbands' and wives' perceptions of the marriage (i.e., an individual property), is underscored and supports the current projects' examination of spillover and crossover effects of wives' acculturative stress to both spouses' reports of marital conflict and satisfaction.

As pertaining to this study, Huston's (2000) social ecological framework supports a focus on Mexican-origin spouses' perceptions of marital satisfaction and conflict/negativity (i.e., an individual property) in the larger context of cultural adaptation (Helms et al., 2011). Cultural adaptation consists of a process known as acculturation in which individuals learn the shared beliefs, values, and expectations for behavior associated with their host culture (Phinney, 1990). Individuals typically experience acculturative stress to some extent as they adapt to living in the host culture (Rodriguez et al., 2002). Drawing from Huston's model, wives' individual experiences of cultural adaptation have the potential to affect their own and their husbands' perceptions of marital quality. More specifically, the extent to which pressures to change cultural beliefs and practices are experienced as stressful by wives (i.e., acculturative stress) has the potential to spillover into wives' own evaluations of marital satisfaction and conflict/negativity as well as crossover into their husbands' perceptions of marital quality.

Huston's (2000) model further underscores the importance of examining the behaviors that spouses engage in with each other as well as with other social network members:

Researchers focusing on the dynamics of marital interaction study couples as two-person units, as if they rarely spent time together as part of a social group...the centrality of the spouses in each other's day-to-day lives, as well as their joint and independent involvement with friends and kin, reveal much about the nature of the spouses' marital relationship. (pp. 300–301)

Although Huston's framework does not specifically identify marriage work with spouses and close friends as an important area of inquiry, the emphasis in the model on marital behavior and the larger social context of marriage offers theoretical support for its inclusion in the current study.

Risk and Resilience Framework

Although Huston's (2000) social ecological framework provides support for the inclusion of the key constructs in the current study, the risk and resilience framework offers support for the model paths and the direction of effects in the conceptual model (as depicted in Figure 1). The risk and resilience framework focuses on individual adjustment within the context of risk. This framework was originally developed to explain variations in adjustment (i.e., psychological, social, and academic) for children who experienced adversity and has been applied to the study of child and adolescent development in the context of economic hardship, urban poverty and unsafe neighborhoods, poor parental mental and physical health, abusive home environments, and isolated catastrophic events (see Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000 for a review).

The risk and resilience framework proposes that individual adjustment outcomes are a result of the interplay between risk and protective influences (Rutter, 2006). More specifically, the framework seeks to explain why and under what conditions individuals thrive psychologically, academically, and socially despite adversity, and emphasizes attention to potential moderating factors. In this section, I outline key concepts from the risk and resilience framework and discuss how they relate to constructs in the conceptual model for the current study. Specifically, I propose a link between wives' acculturative stress (i.e., risk factor) and spouses' perceptions of marital satisfaction and conflict/negativity (i.e., spouses' individual adjustment), and include wives' marriage work with husband and close friend (i.e., protective factors) that have the potential to moderate the link between risk and individual adjustment.

Risk factors are defined as situations or conditions that increase the probability of maladjustment (Rutter, 1990). Risk factors can be thought of as acute or chronic stressors. Acute stressors refer to isolated events that impose risk, whereas chronic stressors are ongoing conditions that increase the potential for maladjustment. I propose that the acculturative stressors experienced by Mexican-origin wives resulting from the daily pressures to alter cultural beliefs and practices (i.e., a form of chronic stress) represent a risk. Indeed, a body of work exists documenting the negative effects of acculturative stress on individual well-being for Latinos living in the United States (Cervantes et al., 1991; Landale, 1997; Rodriguez et al., 2000). In the conceptual model for the current study, wives' acculturative stress is treated as a risk factor and is hypothesized to be related negatively to both husbands' and wives' perceptions of marital

satisfaction and positively to husbands' and wives' perceptions of marital conflict/negativity which are treated as indicators of spouses' individual adjustment.

This risk and resilience framework additionally offers support for the moderators in the current model—marriage work with husband and marriage work with a close friend, which are hypothesized to serve as protective factors. A central premise of the risk and resilience framework is that individual adjustment is predicted by the interplay between risk and protective influences (Rutter, 2006). Protective factors are conditions that buffer against the negative effects of risk (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). In past theoretical and empirical work, protective factors have included both qualities housed within the individual (e.g., temperament, personality, intelligence) and behavioral processes that occur as the individual interacts in the social environment (Luther et al., 2000). Wives' marriage work (i.e., discussions about marital concerns) with their husbands and close friends is a potentially protective process that wives' can engage in with their husbands and close friends. In the current study, wives' marriage work in these two central relationships is treated as a protective factor moderating the hypothesized spillover and crossover associations between acculturative stress and spouses' perceived marital quality (i.e., marital satisfaction and conflict/negativity).

Definitions of Key Constructs

Acculturative Stress

Immigrants of Mexican origin must cope with stressors that arise because of conflicting experiences between Mexican and Anglo cultures as they adapt to life in the United States (Phinney, 1990). One component of cultural adaptation is acculturation.

Acculturation is the processes through which individuals learn the shared beliefs, values, and expectations for behavior associated with the host culture (Bernal & Knight, 1993; Gonzales, Knight, Birman, & Sirolli, 2003; Phinney, 1990). Although recent conceptualizations of acculturation emphasize that immigrants can have a strong sense of ethnic identity and participate fully in the host culture (Gonzales et al., 2003), individuals are likely to experience some degree of stress as they adapt to life in the United States. Often referred to as *acculturative stress* are those difficulties that spouses encounter as they adapt to the host culture (e.g., language difficulties, perceived cultural incompatibilities, and cultural self-consciousness; Rodriguez et al., 2002).

Marriage Work

Oliker (1989) first used the term “marriage work” in her qualitative study that examined the conversations that married women reported engaging in with close friends. In this study, Oliker observed that women frequently discussed concerns about their marriages or husbands with close friends. She labeled this process “marriage work” and defined it as “reflection or action to achieve or sustain the stability of marriage and the sense of its adequacy” (p. 123).

Oliker (1989) drew upon the concept of emotion work (Hochschild, 1979) to inform her choice of the term “marriage work” as a label for the process wives’ engaged in during their discussions of marital concerns with close friends. Emotion work is defined as deliberate acts taken to change emotions or feelings in a specific context. Hochschild described emotion work as an attempt to comply with *feeling rules*, social guidelines that determine what emotion is appropriate in a particular situation. Among

the variety of techniques Hochschild proposed for managing emotions, Oliner focused on cognitive techniques in formulating the concept of marriage work. Cognitive techniques are attempts “to change images, ideas, or thoughts in the service of changing feelings associated with them” (Hochschild, 1979, p. 562). In her study, Oliner identified women’s discussions of marital concerns with friends as a demonstration of cognitive emotion work. Women’s qualitative accounts of their discussions with close friends described how talking about marital problems or concerns with close friends changed their attitudes and feelings about their marriages through their friend’s validation of their feelings and the new perspectives friends offered. Oliner’s study focused on the friendships of married women and did not directly examine the extent to which wives’ engaged in marriage work with their husbands. However, Oliner acknowledged, and subsequent work has demonstrated (Helms et al., 2003; Julien et al., 2000; Proulx et al., 2004), that wives’ engage in marriage work with husbands as well as friends.

A related, but conceptually distinct construct referred to as “start-up” has been examined in the marital interaction literature. Start-up refers to *how* a conflict discussion is started. Gottman, Coan, Carrere, and Swanson’s (1998) research on marital behavior examined associations between start-up and marital stability and happiness. Specifically, Gottman et al. focused on negative start-up which he defined as “the escalation of conflict from one partner’s neutral affect to the other partner’s negative affect” (pg. 7). This negative start-up model derived from Patterson’s (1982) work on how coercive processes in families begin. Start-up behaviors that discourage the escalation of conflict have also been studied. The term “*softening*” was used to describe the act of changing

the hardness of confrontation (Greenberg & Johnson, 1988). Findings from Gottman's work suggest that wives' negative start-up predicts divorce for couples, whereas a *softened* start-up by wives predicted marital happiness and stability.

The emphasis on *how* discussions about marital concerns are brought up differentiates Gottman's (1998) work on marital start-up from Oliner's (1989) conceptualization of marriage work. Oliner's research focused on wives discussions about marital concerns with close friends and not husbands, and perhaps therefore did not explicitly examine the manner in which wives brought up marital concerns. Furthermore, more recent research on wives' marriage work with husbands showed that wives' marriage work was unrelated to either spouse's reports of marital conflict or negativity suggesting that marriage work is conceptually distinct from marital conflict and the negativity associated with start-up (Helms et al., 2003; Proulx et al., 2004). (It should be noted, however, that neither of these studies utilized direct observations of marriage work or marital conflict/negativity.) Marriage work is also distinct from social support, which has been operationalized by researchers as "the frequency with which [spouses] receive affirmation, opportunity for discussion, or instrumental assistance in marital, parenting, or personal domains" (Proulx, Helms, Milardo, & Payne, 2009, p. 197). In the current study, marriage work was operationalized as wives' self-reports regarding how often marital concerns were discussed across 16 different domains of marriage (e.g., marital communication, division of housework, division of child care, husbands' child rearing philosophy, husbands' support for their role as parent, family decision-making) and not *how* these concerns were raised. Drawing from Oliner's conceptualization that

characterizes marriage work as a form of positive emotional management, marriage work is treated as a protective factor that has the potential to buffer against the hypothesized negative effects of wives' acculturative stress on wives' and husbands' marital quality.

Marital Quality

Based on a risk and resilience framework, in the present study wives' and husband's reports of marital quality (i.e., marital satisfaction and marital conflict/negativity) serve as indicators of individual adjustment. That is, lower levels of perceived marital satisfaction and higher levels of perceived marital conflict/negativity represent individual maladjustment.

Marital satisfaction has been defined as spouses' subjective, cognitive evaluations regarding their level of happiness in or satisfaction with their marriages (Helms, in press). Researchers have studied marital satisfaction extensively and recent scholarly critiques have advocated for conceptual clarity of the construct (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000; Huston, 2000). More important, marital satisfaction should be distinguished from spouses' characterization of marital behaviors or other beliefs about or feelings associated with their marriages or partners (e.g., love, warmth). Accordingly, the scale used in the present study aligns with contemporary conceptualizations of marital satisfaction and assesses spouses' satisfaction across 16 domains of marriage (e.g., the division of childcare, the division of housework) that are relevant to parents of young and school-aged children (Huston, McHale, & Crouter, 1986; McHale & Crouter, 1992) and those of Mexican origin (e.g., family commitment, endorsement of Mexican culture and tradition; Wheeler, Updegraff, & Thayer, 2010).

Recent reviews of the marital literature have documented that marital conflict and related dimensions of discord including negativity have dominated the research focused on marital behavior (Fincham, Stanley, & Beach, 2007; Helms, in press). In this literature, marital conflict is typically defined as the extent to which spouses' have disagreements, the intensity of the disagreements, and the negative emotional components that may accompany the disagreements (e.g., anger, hostility). A content analysis of the marital literature published in the last decade showed that survey methods were used most often to assess marital conflict/negativity (i.e., in 74% of the studies), whereas 23% of the studies on marital conflict utilized observational methods, and 3% assessed marital conflict via qualitative interview accounts (Helms, in press). The conceptualization of marital conflict/negativity in the current study aligns with how marital conflict has been assessed in prior work in that it includes spouses' perceptions of the frequency and intensity of marital arguments as well as the degree to which spouses' feel angry with their partner (Braiker & Kelley, 1979).

Review of Relevant Literature

In general, marriage is the norm among Mexican-origin families. Specifically, in 2004 Mexican-origin families represented the largest subgroup of all Hispanic-origin married couples in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Yet there is a paucity of research on predictors of marital quality among families of Mexican descent; only four studies over the past 30 years exist on marital satisfaction or conflict among Mexican origin couples (i.e., Bean, Curtis, & Marcum, 1977; Contreras, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 1996; Markides, Roberts-Jolly, Ray, Hoppe, & Rudkins, 1999; Wheeler et al., 2010).

Currently, the limited research related to marital quality among Mexican-origin couples has relied on samples from the southwest United States and has addressed (a) the extent to which family size, wives' employment, and the division of marital power is associated with husbands' and wives' reports of marital satisfaction; (b) associations between spouses' reports of passionate love and their perceptions of marital satisfaction; (c) changes in marital negativity over time; and (d) the links between a variety of conflict resolution strategies and spouses' perceptions of negativity in the marriage. No studies to date have examined the links between stressors associated with cultural adaptation and marital quality for Mexican-origin couples, neither have researchers examined marital quality among Mexican-origin couples residing in emerging immigrant sections of the country.

Research focused on individual responses to stressors associated with migration and adaptation has documented direct effects between acculturative stress and individual well-being for Latinos (Cervantes et al., 1991; Rodriguez et al., 2002). Although not focused on marital quality, these studies offer some support for the hypothesized association between acculturative stress and indicators of individual adjustment proposed in the current study. Because marital quality has yet to be examined as an indicator of adjustment, currently there is no empirical evidence to document the theoretically supported link between acculturative stress and marital quality among Mexican-origin couples. To offer some empirical support for this link, I next draw from the literature linking more broadly defined contextual stressors to marital quality.

In the past decade there has been increased interest in how contextual stressors predict marital quality (Fincham & Beach, 2010). Factors external to marriage have been found to shape spouses' interactions, their evaluations of marriage, and eventually marital stability (Karney & Bradbury, 2005). Researchers have begun to assess marital quality and behavior in a variety of contexts with the purpose of understanding how the predictors of marital quality may diverge depending on the context in which particular marriages exist. Accordingly, attention has been devoted to examining a variety of contextual stressors that spouses encounter as predictors of marital quality. The Iowa Youth and Families Project laid the groundwork for research on contextual stress and family relationship in its examination of 400 Iowa families living during the Great Farm Crisis that occurred during the 1980s. Findings from this body of work revealed that economic strain obstructed effective relationship maintenance for married couples (Conger, Rueter, & Elder, 1999).

More recent work has focused on a variety of chronic, contextual stressors and their links with marital quality. For example, the results of a four year study of 172 middle-class newlywed couples showed that spouses experiencing relatively high levels of chronic stress (e.g., financial difficulties and insufficient employment) reported lower marital satisfaction overall and seemed to have more difficulty sustaining their marital satisfaction over time (Karney, Story, & Bradbury, 2005). A study of 169 newlywed couples further demonstrated evidence of crossover effects between husbands' and wives' experiences of chronic stress and their partners' evaluations of marriage that emerged under certain marital conditions. More specifically, the everyday, chronic

stressors that wives' experienced affected their husbands' evaluations of marriage in marital contexts where couples had negative conflict resolution styles, whereas husbands' reports of chronic stress were linked to wives' marital satisfaction only when wives themselves reported high levels of chronic, daily stress (Neff & Karney, 2007).

Moreover, as scholars began to focus on the marital experiences of couples beyond the fairly advantaged, White and middle class group, the examination of stressors unique to the contexts in which these marriages were embedded became an important area of inquiry (Fincham & Beach, 2010). Partially in response to racial gaps in rates of marriage and marital dissolution, there has been an increased focus on the community contexts of African American marriages and their implications for marriage (Wickrama, Bryant, & Wickrama, 2010). Adverse community characteristics (i.e., concentration of poverty, racial and ethnic segregation, and residential instability) has been found to negatively influence the marital relationships of community residents by inducing a variety of stressors that intensify family conflict and increased family instability (Conger et al., 2002). Moreover, Cutrona et al. (2003) found that among 202 married African American couples, neighborhood-level economic disadvantage predicted lower marital warmth during marital interactions, and family financial strain predicted lower perceived marital quality (i.e., measured via a composite index of marital satisfaction, divorce proneness, and satisfaction with the division of housework and childcare).

This literature examining the link between contextual stressors and marital quality offers support for the hypothesized link between acculturative stress (i.e., a type of contextual stressor unique to individuals adapting to life in the United States) and marital

quality examined here. Although prior work linking contextual stressors to marital quality has been based solely on studies of White and Black couples, the documented links between contextual stressors and marital quality suggest that the examination of acculturative stress as a predictor of marital quality is merited. In addition, findings demonstrating the existence of spillover and crossover links as well as relational moderators of the association between contextual stressors and marital quality offer further support for the hypothesized spillover and crossover effects of wives' acculturative stress as well as the treatment of marriage work as a moderator. Heeding the recommendations of contemporary scholars who have advocated a culturally informed study of marriage and family relationships among Mexican-origin couples and other immigrant groups and families of color (Helms et al., 2011; Kazak, 2004; Parke, 1998; Updegraff, Crouter, Umaña-Taylor, & Cansler, 2007), the current study examines spillover and crossover links between wives' acculturative stress and spouses' reports of marital satisfaction and conflict/negativity as a function of wives' marriage work with husbands and close friends.

Currently, the understanding of marriage work is based primarily on research conducted with non-Latino, White, middle- and working-class populations (Helms et al., 2003; Oliner, 1989; Proulx et al., 2004). For example, Helms et al. (2003) examined the link between husbands' and wives' marriage work with close friends and one another and their perceptions of marital quality with 142 predominantly White, middle- and working-class, married couples. Related to the current study, findings suggested that wives engaged in similar levels of marriage work with their close friends and husbands. In

addition, there was support for wives' marriage work with their husbands as a moderator for the relationship between marriage work with friends and several indicators of wives' marital quality. Specifically, wives' marriage work with friends was negatively related to their reports of marital love and positively related to reports of ineffective arguing at low levels of marriage work with spouse. However, there was no significant relationship found between wives' marriage work with friends and marital quality for wives at high levels of marriage work with their husbands. No support was found for crossover effects of wives' marriage work with friends or spouse to husbands' reports of marital quality, nor was husbands' marriage work with friend or spouse associated with either spouse's reports of marital quality.

Proulx et al. (2004) extended this work by examining the links between wives' marriage work with friends and spouses in specific domains of marriage and perceptions of marital quality in a sample of 52 predominantly White wives. Findings revealed that in all but two domains wives were equally likely to discuss marital concerns with both their husband and close friend. These included marital communication, spouses' childrearing philosophies, family decision making, social life and leisure, support for wives' work roles, support for wives' parenting, division of household chores, and division of childcare. Wives were more likely to discuss financial concerns with their husband than with their close friend and were more likely to discuss relations with in-laws with friends than with their husbands. The authors found no direct links between wives' reports of marital conflict/negativity and wives' marriage work with husband or friend. In contrast, marriage work with husband in the domains of marital

communication, social life and leisure, support for parenting role, and support for work role was significantly related to wives' reported marital satisfaction. Moreover, significant interactions effects between wives' marriage work with friend and marriage work with spouse showed that the marriages in which wives engaged friends more so than husbands in discussions about family finances or support for wives' work roles were characterized by more conflict (as reported by wives). Regarding marital satisfaction, for wives who engaged in low levels of marriage work about parenting role support with their husband, marriage work in the same domain with friend was negatively related to wives' reports of marital satisfaction. Proulx et al. concluded that overall wives' engagement in marriage work across most domains with friends was not directly linked to their perceptions of marital conflict and satisfaction, however, there were some domains in which marriage work with friends may affect marital quality when wives engage in low levels of marriage work with their husbands in the same domains (i.e., family finances, support for work role, support for parenting role).

An observational study with 88 White, French Canadian, spouse-friend dyads by Julien and Markman (2000) further examined the conversations of husbands and wives disclosing marital difficulties to their best friend. Conversations with friends initiated by spouses about a recent marital difficulty were video-taped for twenty minutes and later coded to assess spouses' and friends' influence in regulating spouses' emotional feelings associated with the marriage. (All spouses in the study confirmed that they did talk to their friends about their marital difficulties prior to participation in the study.) The associations between a variety of coded behaviors and spouses' post-conversation

feelings about the marriage were examined as well as the links between spouses' marital satisfaction (which was assessed prior to the observed dyadic conversation) and expressions of negativity and positivity about the marriage expressed by both spouse and friend during the observed conversation. Findings showed that maritally dissatisfied husbands and wives and their friends expressed fewer positive and more negative views of the marriage during the observed conversation than maritally satisfied spouses and their friends. Findings also suggested that maritally dissatisfied spouses and their friends were less effective than satisfied ones in constructing positive views of marriage via the conversation. Friends of satisfied wives, however, were particularly helpful in assisting the spouses in maintaining a sense of good marriage. Although they did not label spouses' conversations as marriage work, this observational study extends Oliner's (1989) work in that it suggests that both men and women discuss marital difficulties with close friends. However, the extent to which conversations with friends about marital difficulties alter spouses' feelings about the marriage may depend on the existing marital context.

The extent to which marriage work protects spouses' evaluations of marital quality from the effects of contextual stressors has not been examined. Even though Oliner (1989) originally proposed that talking about marital concerns with friends was protective of wives' evaluations of the marriage, specific demonstrations of the protective qualities of this process in the context of stress have not been examined. The present study offers a direct test of marriage work (with friend and spouse) as a moderator of the association between wives' perceived acculturative stress and husbands' and wives'

perceptions of marital quality. Accordingly, the present study extends the literature by examining the potential moderating effects in both spillover and crossover models and by including wives' marriage work with husbands as a moderator. Although Oliner did not examine wives' marriage work with husbands in her own work, scholars have proposed its protective potential theoretically (Julien et al., 2000; Proulx et al., 2004).

Furthermore, recent qualitative accounts with Latino immigrants in the south, suggest that the extent to which wives can discuss marital concerns with their husbands is important in the context of cultural adaptation (Bender et al., 1999; Helms et al., 2011).

In sum, a review of the literature reveals multiple conceptual gaps that have yet to be addressed. Although some research has documented direct effects between acculturative stress and individual well-being for Latinos living in the United States, no studies to date have examined the links between stressors associated with cultural adaptation and marital quality for Mexican-origin couples. Studies that examine marital quality among Mexican-origin couples are scarce, and no studies have examined the marital experiences of couples of Mexican origin residing in emerging immigrant sections of the country. Moreover, the moderating influence of marriage work as a protection of spouses' marital quality against potentially threatening stressors to the marriage is unknown. The work that has been done on wives' marriage work is based on samples of primarily White women and has examined direct links of wives' marriage work or discussions of marital concern with friends with marital quality (Julien et al., 2000; Oliner, 1989) or the interactive effect of wives' marriage work with friends and marriage work with husbands on marital quality (Helms et al., 2003; Proulx et al., 2004).

The potential for wives' marriage work with friends and husbands to protect spouses' evaluations of their marriage from contextual stressors has been theoretically proposed (Oliker, 1989; Helms et al., 2011) but is currently unexplored. The current study builds on a limited body of prior work to address these gaps in the literature via (a) the examination of marital quality among Mexican-origin couples that are residing in an emerging immigrant section of the country, (b) a direct test of wives' marriage work as a protective factor potentially moderating the effects of wives' perceived acculturative stress on marital quality, (c) the examination of the proposed associations in both spillover and crossover models, and (d) the inclusion of both wives' marriage work with friends and husbands as moderators.

Huston's (2000) framework supports the focus on wives' marriage work with husbands and close friends given the emphasis the model places on marital behavior and the spouses' interactions with those in the larger social context of marriage. Furthermore, a risk and resilience framework calls attention to potential protective factors that might modify the effects of acculturative stress on individual adjustment. Accordingly, the proposed study examines marriage work with husband and marriage work with close friend as moderators of the association between wives' acculturative stress and their own and their spouses' marital satisfaction and marital conflict. It is expected that the hypothesized negative effects of wives' acculturative stress on their own and their spouses' marital satisfaction will be lessened when wives engage in higher levels of marriage work with their husbands or close friend. The link between wives' acculturative stress and their own and their spouses' marital conflict is hypothesized to be positive

under conditions of low marriage work with husbands or close friend and would be lessened under conditions of high marriage work.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Sample and Procedure

Study participants were 110 Mexican, first-generation immigrant wives residing in North Carolina and recruited to participate in a larger study of marriage via cultural insiders and snowball sampling methods within predetermined census tract locations in Guilford, Forsythe, and Chatham counties. To be included in the larger study, both wives and their husbands had to agree to participate, be of Mexican origin, and couples had to be legally married or “living as married” in consensual unions, and have an elementary school-aged or younger firstborn child living in the home. Sixty-nine percent of wives were married and 31% were “living as married.” Of the legally married couples, 79% were married in the U.S. and 21% were married in Mexico. Table 1 contains additional sample demographic characteristics. This dataset is suitable to answer the questions of this study because it is a sample of first-generation, Mexican immigrant, legally married and living as married couples.

During separate two to three hour home interviews conducted by bilingual, Latina interviewers, spouses described their background, individual well-being, marital quality, marriage work, their familiarity with and acceptance of various dimensions of Anglo and Latino culture, and their perceptions of acculturative stress. In addition, wives were asked to list members of their social network and identify whom they considered to be

their closest friend. Wives were asked to name a friend who “you are closest to who is not a member of your immediate family – that is, not your spouse or child.” Wives were allowed to select other relatives and friends were allowed to live near or far. Sex, geographic location, and the kin status (if relevant) of the close friend was also recorded. After completing background information about their close friend, wives’ responded to a series of questions regarding the friendship including a measure of marriage work.

Respondents had the option of being interviewed in either Spanish or English; however, all but one interview was conducted in Spanish. Interviewers read each survey question and possible responses aloud to reduce problems associated with variations in literacy. Wives and husbands were interviewed separately. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected as part of the larger study, and only measures with demonstrated reliability and validity with Latino samples were used. Home visits were arranged at the couple’s convenience and couples were compensated with a \$50 gift card for their time.

Measures

Acculturative stress. The 7-item Pressure to Acculturate subscale of the Multidimensional Acculturative Stress Inventory (MASI; Rodriguez et al., 2002) was used to assess wives’ perceptions of acculturative stress. This MASI was specifically designed to assess acculturative stress among individuals of Mexican origin living the United States. Rodriguez and colleagues demonstrated the scales’ reliability and validity with a sample of 174 adults of Mexican origin living in Los Angeles. More specifically, four subscales were derived via principle components analysis (i.e., Spanish competency

pressures, English competency pressures, pressure against acculturation, pressure to acculturate), and these subscales correlated in hypothesized directions with multiple criterion measures of acculturation and psychological well-being. The acculturative stress subscale fit well with the theoretically driven research questions in the present study and was thus the only subscale used.

The seven Pressure to Acculturate items used in the current study assessed stress associated with the pressure to change one's core values, beliefs, and attitudes (e.g., "It bothers me when people pressure me to assimilate to the American way of doing things" and "I don't feel accepted by Americans"). For each item of the Pressure to Acculturate subscale, respondents used a Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all stressful) to 5 (extremely stressful) to indicate their perceptions of potential stressful situations; if respondents had not experienced a particular stressor during the past year, they were instructed to select 0 (never happened to me). As reported by the authors of the MASI (Rodriguez et al., 2002), this response pattern is typical in many stress inventories, was argued to be preferable to approaches that do not allow for the "0=never happened to me" category, and reflects common practice in other frequently used measures of acculturative stress for Latino adults and adolescents (see the Hispanic Stress Inventory; Cervantes, Padilla, & Salgado de Snyder, 1990; Cervantes et al., 1991). Furthermore, the MASI is a preferred measure of stress associated with cultural adaptation used by contemporary scholars who study Mexican American parents (e.g., Umaña-Taylor, Updegraff, & Gonzales-Backen, 2011; White, Roosa, Weaver, & Nair, 2009) and was recommended for use in the current study by these scholars. Scores for the measure were determined by

averaging wives' responses across the seven items; higher scores indicated higher levels of stress. There were no missing data for this scale in the current study. Cronbach's alpha was .85 for wives' reports in the current sample.

Two indicators of marital quality were assessed in this study: marital conflict/negativity, and marital satisfaction. Because the study of marital quality among Mexican-origin couples is its infancy, few measures of marital quality have been validated for use with Latino samples. Preliminary measurement analyses with a sample of Mexican American couples exist for the two measures of marital quality used in this study (Thayer & Updegraff, 2004; Wheeler et al., 2010). As part of the larger study from which the current study originated, a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were conducted to ascertain if previous measurement strategies held in the current sample of Mexican-origin couples. The CFA analyses were conducted separately for each measure of marital quality (i.e., separate analyses for husbands' and wives' reports) and each measure of wives' marriage work (i.e., with friend and spouse) using Amos 18. In addition, multigroup analyses were conducted to demonstrate the factor loadings associated with each item were comparable across husbands and wives. Model fit statistics (χ^2 , CFI, and RMSEA) provided an assessment regarding whether or not a specified factor structure demonstrated an adequate fit to the observed data. In some cases these data were multivariate non-normal (likely due to skew in items assessing satisfaction) which can upwardly bias χ^2 values. Accordingly, the Bollen-Stine bootstrapped χ^2 was also calculated to evaluate fit (B-S χ^2). In addition, standardized factor loadings were scrutinized to ascertain the extent to which all survey items

demonstrated a statistically significant (and reasonable in terms of magnitude, $>.35$) loading onto the appropriate marital quality or marriage work latent factor.

Marital satisfaction. To assess marital satisfaction, wives and husbands completed a 16-item modified version of the Domains of Satisfaction Scale initially developed by Huston et al., (1986) and adapted for use with Mexican Americans by Updegraff and her colleagues on the Juntos project (Wheeler et al., 2010). Respondents were asked to think about the past year and use a 9-point scale ranging from 1= extremely dissatisfied to 9= extremely satisfied when answering the items. These 16 items were developed to assess spouses' satisfaction with general domains of marriage (e.g., marital communication, the division of childcare, the division of housework) as well as domains of marriage identified as uniquely valued for Latino couples (e.g., relatives, Mexican culture, and traditions). An exploratory factor analysis supported a single-factor solution for both wives' and husbands' reports of marital satisfaction for the Juntos project (Wheeler et al., 2010). The confirmatory factor analyses conducted for the current study indicated that data were multivariate nonnormal and also pointed to a number of correlations among item uniquenesses that, when freed, led to a good model fit. Final models for both husbands' ($\chi^2 = 144.24$, $df = 99$, $p = .00$, B-S $\chi^2 p = .35$, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .06) and wives' reports of marital satisfaction ($\chi^2 = 197.94$, $df = 100$, $p = .00$, B-S $\chi^2 p = .18$, CFI = .92, RMSEA = .09) demonstrated an adequate fit to a unidimensional model with 5 and 4 correlated uniquenesses for husband and wife models, respectively. Moreover, all standardized factor loadings were statistically significant and greater than .35. These modifications to the unidimensional model likely

indicated some shared covariation in specific items regarding specific aspects of marriage (e.g., satisfaction with the division of childcare and cooperation in parenting).

Responses were averaged to create the scale score, and higher scores on the scale indicated higher levels of marital satisfaction. Cronbach alphas were .94 for wives and .91 for husbands in the current study. One husband was missing a score for marital satisfaction due to interviewer error (i.e., the entire measure was skipped, and the participant was unable to be reached in the two weeks following the interview to correct the error). Thus, the sample size was reduced by one for analyses including husbands' marital satisfaction.

Marital conflict/negativity. To assess marital conflict, three items from the original 5-item marital conflict/negativity subscale of Braiker and Kelley's (1979) Relationship Questionnaire were used. Although prior principal components and factor analysis results provided support for the internal consistency of the full 5-item conflict/negativity scale in a sample of Latina mothers of school-aged children (Thayer & Updegraff, 2004) and a sample of Mexican American husbands and wives (Wheeler et al., 2010), the results of confirmatory factor analyses for the current study suggested the exclusion of two of the five original items. The CFA for both husbands ($\chi^2 = 2.25$, $df = 5$, $p = .82$, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .00) and wives ($\chi^2 = 3.2598$, $df = 5$, $p = .55$, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .00) demonstrated good fit to these data, consistent with previous research. However, the item "To what extent do you try to change things about your spouse that bother you?" demonstrated low standardized factors loadings for both husbands and wives ($< .35$) and the item "To what extent to you communicate negative feelings toward

your spouse?” had a low and nonsignificant loading in models involving data on wives. In the final measurement construction, these two items were omitted when creating summary scores of marital conflict for both wife and husband reports.

Respondents were asked to think about the past year and use a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (very infrequently/not at all/never/not serious at all) to 9 (very frequently/very much/very often/very serious) when answering the three items in the marital conflict/negativity subscale. The three items used in the current study assessed spouses’ perceptions of negativity and conflict in the marriage (i.e., “How often do you and your husband argue with one another?”; “How often do you feel angry or resentful toward your husband?”; “When you argue, how serious are the arguments?”). Responses were averaged to create the scale score, and higher scores indicated greater levels of conflict/negativity. Cronbach alphas for reports of conflict/negativity were .72 for wives and .56 for husbands. There were no missing data found for husband’s reports of marital conflict/negativity. One wife was missing one of the three items on the scale, and her own mean was substituted for the missing item value (A. Acock, personal communication, September 2, 2011; Acock, in press)

Marriage work with spouse and friend. To assess marriage work with spouse and friend, wives completed a 16-item scale adapted from Helms and her colleagues’ 10-item measure of marriage work (2003). The scale was expanded for the current study to include the additional six domains of marriage assessed in the adapted measure of marital satisfaction. The 16-item scale assesses the extent to which spouses’ discussed marital concerns with their husbands and close friend across domains. Participants completed

two parallel sets of items at different points in the interview, with a referent of spouse for marital assessments and the identified close friend for friendship assessments of marriage work. Wives received the following instructions prior to completing the scale:

Spouses vary in how much they talk to their [spouse/close friend] about concerns they have about their marriage or family. Please circle the number that best describes how often you bring up a concern and talk it through with your [spouse/friend] when problems or concerns arise in the following areas of your marriage. If you have had no problems or concerns in a particular area in the past year, simply leave the item blank. (Helms et al., 2003, p. 968)

The 16 items (communication, support for work role, division of child care, division of household work, childrearing philosophies, childrearing concerns, support for parent role, parenting decision making, cooperation in parenting, relatives, family decision-making, conflicts/disagreements, Mexican culture and traditions, family commitment, religion, and family finances) reflected a variety of domains of marriage and included such items as “Communication: How often do you bring up how well you and your spouse talk over important and unimportant issues?” and “Mexican Culture and Traditions: How often do you bring up your husband’s participation in Mexican cultural celebrations and traditions?”

Confirmatory factor analyses demonstrated good fit for a one-factor model for the 10-item version of marriage work with spouse and marriage work with friend in Helms and colleagues (2003) study of predominantly White middle and working class couples. CFA support for a one-factor model was also found in the current study for the 16-item version of the marriage work scale for both wives’ marriage work with husband (with 6 correlated uniquenesses, $\chi^2 = 188.72$, $df = 98$, $p = .00$, B-S $\chi^2 p = .09$, CFI = .92,

RMSEA = .09) and wives' marriage work with friend (with 7 correlated residuals, ($\chi^2 = 191.03$, $df = 97$, $p = .00$, B-S $\chi^2 p = .19$, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .09). In addition to acceptable model fit statistics, all items demonstrated factor loadings $>.35$ that were statistically significant.

Respondents were asked to think about the past year and use a 16-item scale ranging from 1 (never) to 9 (very often) to indicate how often they had brought up marital concerns and talked about them with their spouse or close friend when problems arose in each of the 16 relationship domains. Spouses who felt an area was not applicable to them were allowed to leave that question blank and interviewers were trained to label that the response as LM (logically missing) to differentiate it from refusal or interviewer error. It should be noted, however, that all participants completed all items on the marriage work scale (i.e., no responses were coded LM) with the exception of one participant for whom eight responses were left blank due to interviewer error (i.e., the interviewer skipped a page). Per guidance from Alan Acock (personal communication, 2011; Acock, in press), values for the missing eight items on the 16-item scale were mean substituted from the participant's remaining eight responses. Scores for the measure were created by averaging items; higher scores indicated higher levels of marriage work. Cronbach's alphas were .93 for wives' report of marriage work with spouse and .95 for wives' report of marriage work with friend.

Demographic and Dispositional Variables

Depressive symptoms. The 12-item form of The Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977) was used to assess the extent to which

husbands and wives experienced depressive symptoms. The reliability and validity of the measure is well documented, including internal consistency, factor structure, test-retest, convergent and discriminant validity. In addition, the CES-D is available in Spanish and has been used with Mexican-American samples in nationally representative studies (Mosicicki, Locke, Raie, & Boyd, 1989) and in ethnic-homogeneous samples (e.g., Roosa, Reinholtz, & Angelini, 1999). Mosicicki and colleagues presented norms for English and Spanish-speaking Mexican Americans who differed in acculturation status. Respondents were asked to think about the past month and use a 4-item scale ranging from 1 (rarely or none of the time) to 4 (most of the time) when answering the items. These 12 items assess cognitive, affective, and behavioral symptoms associated with depression (e.g., “I felt that everything I did was an effort” and “I felt sad”). Scores for the measure were created by summing across the 12 items with a higher score indicating a greater frequency/presence of symptoms of depression. There were no missing data for this measure in the current sample. Cronbach’s alphas were .72 for wives and .60 for husbands.

Age. Husbands and wives were asked to indicate their how old they were in years on their last birthday.

Years in the US. Husbands and wives indicated the number of years they had been living in the United States at the time of the interview.

Marital duration. Husbands and wives reported the number of years they had been married or living as married (consensual union) with their partner at the time of the interview.

Education. Husbands and wives indicated the highest level of education they had completed. Education was coded in years of schooling.

Work hours. Husbands and wives were asked how many hours per week they spent at work (including breaks).

Income. Spouses were asked to indicate how much they had earned (individually) before taxes and other deductions in the past 12 months. Family income was determined by adding wives' and husbands' reports of personal income.

There were no missing data for any of these demographic variables.

Proposed Analyses

Preliminary analyses will be conducted to examine the bivariate associations between the study variables and to describe the characteristics of wives' close friends. The proposed research questions and hypotheses will be addressed in a series of four hierarchical regression analyses run separately for each indicator of marital quality (i.e., marital satisfaction and marital conflict/negativity). In each analysis, covariates will be entered in block one, followed by the independent variable of wives' acculturative stress in block two, and the interactions between wives' acculturative stress and marriage work with friend and wives' acculturative stress and marriage work with spouse in block three. In these analyses, I will examine the extent to which wives' acculturative stress and the interaction of acculturative stress with marriage work accounts for variance in husbands' and wives' perceptions of marital quality (i.e., marital satisfaction and marital conflict/negativity), beyond that explained by a set of control variables including wives' legal marital status, depressive symptoms, and age of firstborn.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Results are presented in two parts. Part one presents findings from preliminary analyses, including bivariate associations among variables and descriptive analyses, including mean comparisons of wives' marriage work with close friends and wives' marriage work husbands and spouses' reports of marital quality. Part two presents findings from a series of hierarchical regression analyses conducted to test the hypothesized association between wives' acculturative stress and spouses' marital satisfaction and marital conflict as a function of marriage work with husbands and close friends for both spillover and crossover models.

Preliminary Analyses

Correlation Results

Bivariate Pearson correlations were computed with key model variables. Correlations reflect the degree of relatedness among variables and can range from -1.0 to 1.0 , with $+/- .1$ to $.3$ indicating a weak association, $+/- .3$ to $.5$ indicating a moderate association, and $+/- .5$ to 1.0 indicating a strong association (Cohen, 1988). The majority of bivariate associations were weak to moderate in strength. Correlation results are presented in Table 2. Marital status was positively associated with wives' depressive symptoms, wives' pressure to acculturate, and wives' marital conflict; marital status was also negatively associated with wives' marital satisfaction. Overall, wives' who were in

consensual unions (i.e., not legally married) reported higher levels of depressive symptoms, acculturative stress, and marital conflict and lower levels of marital satisfaction than legally married wives. These significant associations provide further support for including marital status as a control variable. Wives' depression, another control variable in the substantive analyses, was positively correlated with wives' pressure to acculturate and wives' marital conflict and negatively correlated with wives' marital satisfaction and marriage work with husband. Only one significant bivariate association between the independent and dependent variables in the study was found. Wives' acculturative stress was negatively associated with wives' marital satisfaction.

Several significant associations were found between the dependent and moderator variables. Wives' marital satisfaction was positively associated with wives' marriage work with spouse and marriage work with friend; wives' marital conflict was positively associated with wives' marriage work with friend. Furthermore, husbands' marital satisfaction was positively associated with wives' marriage work with spouse, and husbands' marital conflict was negatively associated with wives' marriage work with spouse.

Several significant associations were found between and within spouses' reports of marital satisfaction and conflict. Wives' marital satisfaction was positively associated with husbands' marital satisfaction at a trend level, whereas husbands' and wives' marital conflict were moderately, positively associated. Negative within-spouse associations between marital conflict and satisfaction were found for both husbands and wives. Finally, a significant association that was moderate in strength was found between the

moderator variables; wives' marriage work with friend was positively associated with wives' marriage work with spouse.

Descriptive Analyses

A series of t-tests for dependent samples were conducted to examine the extent to which wives engaged in marriage work with their husbands versus their close friends. There was a significant difference in the extent to which wives engaged in marriage work with their husband and close friend ($t = 2.61, p = .01$). Wives were more likely to engage in marriage work with husbands ($M = 6.82, SD = 1.35$) than with close friends ($M = 6.41, SD = 1.56$). T-tests for dependent samples were conducted to examine wives and husbands' reports of marital satisfaction and marital conflict/negativity. There was a significant difference in wives and husbands' reports of marital satisfaction ($t = -2.66, p = .01$). Husbands reported higher levels of marital satisfaction ($M = 7.57, SD = 0.98$) than wives ($M = 7.18, SD = 1.35$). There was an additional significant difference in wives and husbands' reports of marital conflict ($t = 6.28, p < .001$). Wives reported higher levels of marital conflict ($M = 3.76, SD = 1.82$) than did husbands ($M = 2.96, SD = 1.41$).

Links Among Acculturative Stress, Marriage Work with Husband and Close Friend, and Marital Quality

A series of hierarchical regression analyses exploring the hypothesized association between wives' acculturative stress and spouses' marital quality as a function of marriage work with husbands and close friends was conducted. Continuous predictor variables were centered (i.e., the item mean was subtracted from each variable before the interaction term was formed) when interaction items were created to reduce

multicollinearity (Aiken & West, 1991). The results of the hierarchical regression analyses predicting marital quality are presented in Tables 3 - 6. It was hypothesized that the link between wives' acculturative stress and their own and their husbands' marital satisfaction and marital conflict would be attenuated under conditions of high marriage work with husband or high marriage work with friend. That is, when wives engaged in higher levels of marriage work with their husbands or close friend, it was expected that the hypothesized negative effects of wives' acculturative stress on spouses' marital satisfaction would be smaller. In addition, the link between wives' acculturative stress and spouses' marital conflict was hypothesized to be positive under conditions of low marriage work with husband or friend and would be lessened under conditions of high marriage work.

For the model predicting spillover effects for wives' marital satisfaction (i.e., Table 3), neither marriage work with husband nor marriage work with friend moderated the association between wives' acculturative stress and their own reports of marital satisfaction. Thus, contrary to the hypothesis, no support was found for moderation in the spillover model predicting wives' marital satisfaction. Wives' marriage work with husband was, however, a significant predictor of wives' marital satisfaction, and the addition of this variable in step two resulted in a significant change in R-square. The significant positive main effect for wives' marriage work with husbands and wives' marital satisfaction suggested that the more marriage work with husbands wives' reported, the greater their perceptions of marital satisfaction.

Based on a retrospective power analyses for the moderating effect of marriage work with husband on the association between wives' acculturative stress and their own reports of marital satisfaction, the variability was not excessive and was well within the range of standard errors of other effects within the model. Although the effect size (i.e., the strength of the relationship) was small, the sample size needed to achieve significance at the .05 level was approximately 144% larger (i.e., a sample size of 268). Therefore, the lack of a moderating effect may be due to the relatively small sample size. For the moderating effect of wives' marriage work with friend on the association between wives' acculturative stress and their own reports of marital satisfaction, the variability was not excessive and was well within the range of standard errors of other effects within the model. Although the effect size was small, the sample size needed to achieve significance at the .05 level was approximately 50% larger (i.e., a sample size of 155). Therefore, the lack of a moderating effect may be due to the relatively small sample size.

Similarly, the hypothesis that wives' marriage work would moderate the association of wives' acculturative stress and marital quality was not supported for the model predicting spillover effects for wives' marital conflict (see Table 4). Wives' depression and reports of marriage work with friend emerged as significant predictors of wives' marital conflict. Wives' depression was positively associated with their reports of marital conflict suggesting that the more depressed wives' were the more marital conflict they perceived. Finally, marriage work with friend was positively associated with wives' marital conflict suggesting that the more wives' engaged in marriage work with their close friend, the more conflict they perceived with their husbands. Wives' acculturative

stress did not predict their marital conflict, and neither marriage work with husband nor marriage work with friend moderated the association between wives' acculturative stress and their own reports of marital conflict. Thus, contrary to the hypothesis, no support was found for moderation in the spillover model predicting wives' marital conflict.

Based on a retrospective power analyses for the moderating effect of marriage work with husband on the association between wives' acculturative stress and their own reports of marital conflict, the adjusted power of the estimated effect size of .02 was .05 reflecting an extremely small effect size, high variability, or an insufficient sample size. With the existing effect size, the sample size needed to achieve significance at the .05 level was 25,818. Because this was more than 200 times the size of the current sample size, lack of significance for this interaction effect was most likely due to its negligible magnitude rather than the result of the sample size being underpowered. The standard error for the effect was within the range of standard errors of other effects in the model. Therefore, it did not seem excessive. In addition, for the moderating effect of marriage work with friend on the association between wives' acculturative stress and their own reports of marital conflict, the adjusted power of the estimated effect size of .052 was .05 reflecting an extremely small effect size, high variability, or an insufficient sample size. With the existing effect size, the sample size needed to achieve significance at the .05 level was 2,977. Because this was roughly 30 times the size of the current sample size, lack of significance for this interaction effect was most likely due to its negligible magnitude rather than the result of the sample size being underpowered.

Partial support for the study hypothesis was found in the model predicting crossover effects for husband's marital satisfaction (see Table 5). Both a main effect for wives' marriage work with spouse and the interaction between wives' marriage work with spouse and wives' acculturative stress were found for the model predicting husbands' marital satisfaction. A positive association between wives' marriage work with husband and husbands' marital satisfaction indicated that the more marriage work wives' reported engaging in with their husbands, the more satisfaction their husbands' reported. This main effect was qualified, however, by the significant interaction. A significant change in R-square for step 3 indicated that the inclusion of the interaction terms significantly contributed to variation in husbands' reported marital satisfaction. As hypothesized, a significant interaction between wives' acculturative stress and marriage work with husband emerged demonstrating that wives' acculturative stress was linked with husbands' marital satisfaction at different levels of wives' marriage work with husband.

To further explain the interaction, husbands' reports of marital satisfaction were regressed onto wives' reports of acculturative stress at high (i.e., one standard deviation above the mean) and low (i.e., one standard deviation below the mean) levels of wives' marriage work with husband (Aiken & West, 1991). As illustrated in Figure 2, the examination of simple slopes revealed that for couples in which wives' engaged in low levels of marriage work with their husbands, wives' acculturative stress was negatively ($\beta = -.59, p < .05$) related to their husbands' reports of marital satisfaction. In marriages where wives' reported lower levels of marriage work with their husbands, the more

acculturative stress wives' perceived, the less satisfied their husbands' were with the marriage. In contrast, in marriages where wives engaged in higher levels of marriage work with their husbands, the association between wives' acculturative stress and husband' marital satisfaction was not significant ($\beta = .16$, ns). This finding indicated that the negative effect of wives' acculturative stress on husbands' marital satisfaction found under conditions of lower marriage work with husband was attenuated in marriages in which wives reported higher levels of marriage work with their husbands. As hypothesized, in marriages where wives were talking to their husbands about marital concerns at low levels, the more acculturative stress wives reported, the less marital satisfaction husbands reported and the less acculturative stress wives reported, the more marital satisfaction husbands reported. In addition, as hypothesized, in marriages where wives reported engaging in high levels of marriage work with their husbands, wives' stress was unrelated to husbands' reports of marital satisfaction.

No support was found for the moderating effect of wives' marriage work with friends on the crossover link between wives' acculturative stress and husbands' marital satisfaction. Based on a retrospective power analyses for the moderating effect of wives' marriage work with friend on the association between wives' acculturative stress and husbands' reports of marital satisfaction, the variability was not excessive and was well within the range of standard errors of other effects within the model. Although the estimated effect size was small, the sample size needed to achieve significance at the .05 level was 60% larger (i.e., a sample size of 175). Therefore, the lack of a moderating effect may be due to the relatively small sample size.

As presented in Table 6, the model predicting crossover effects for husbands' marital conflict provided partial support for the study hypotheses. Several significant positive associations linking husbands' depression and wives' marriage work with husbands' marital conflict were found. The significant positive main effect for husbands' depression in the crossover model suggested that higher levels of husbands' depression were associated with greater perceived marital conflict for husbands. The significant negative main effect for wives' marriage work with husband in the crossover model suggested that the more marriage work with husbands wives' reported, the less marital conflict husbands perceived. In addition, the interaction between wives' marriage work with spouse and wives' acculturative stress was found for the model predicting husbands' marital conflict. As hypothesized, a significant interaction between wives' acculturative stress and marriage work with husband emerged demonstrating that wives' acculturative stress was linked with husbands' marital conflict differently at low or high levels of wives' marriage work with husband.

To further explain the interaction, husbands' reports of marital conflict were regressed onto wives' reports of acculturative stress at high (i.e., one standard deviation above the mean) and low (i.e., one standard deviation below the mean) levels of wives' marriage work with husband (Aiken & West, 1991). As illustrated in Figure 3, the examination of simple slopes revealed that for couples in which wives' engaged in low levels of marriage work with their husbands, wives' acculturative stress was positively ($\beta = .51, p = .10$) linked to husbands' reports of marital conflict. In contrast, in marriages where wives' reported higher levels of marriage work with husbands, the association

between wives' acculturative stress was negatively ($\beta = -.38, p = .09$) linked to husbands' marital conflict. This finding indicated that the positive association between wives' acculturative stress and husbands' marital conflict found under conditions of low marriage work with husband was reversed in marriages in which wives reported higher levels of marriage work with their husbands. As hypothesized, in marriages where wives talked to their husbands about marital concerns at low levels, the more acculturative stress wives reported, the more conflict husbands reported. However, in marriages where wives reported engaging in high levels of marriage work with their husbands, acculturative stress was negatively related to husbands' reported marital conflict. That is, the more stress wives' reported, the less marital conflict/negativity husbands reported in the context where wives were discussing marital concerns with husbands at high levels.

No support was found for the moderating effect of wives' marriage work with friends on the crossover link between wives' acculturative stress and husbands' marital conflict/negativity. Based on a retrospective power analyses for the moderating effect of wives' marriage work with friend on the association between wives' acculturative stress and husbands' reports of marital conflict/negativity, the variability was not excessive and was well within the range of standard errors of other effects within the model. Although the effect size was small, the sample size needed to achieve significance at the .05 level was approximately 121% larger (i.e., a sample size of 243). Therefore, the lack of a moderating effect may be due to the relatively small sample size.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Informed by Hustons' (2000) ecological model and a risk and resilience framework, this study explored both spillover and crossover links between Mexican origin wives' acculturative stress and their own and their husbands' reports of marital quality. Hustons' model suggests that wives' individual experiences of acculturative stress result from their experiences in the larger macrosocietal context and may be linked to their perceptions of marital quality. A risk and resilience framework further suggests that spouses' marital satisfaction and marital conflict may be influenced by the interplay between wives' acculturative stress and her marriage work with her husband and close friend. More specifically, wives' marriage work was the protective factor that was hypothesized to moderate the link between wives' acculturative stress and spouses' marital quality. Thus, it was hypothesized that marriage work with husband and marriage work with friend would moderate the association between wives' acculturative stress and spouses' reports of marital satisfaction and marital conflict.

Preliminary Findings

The pattern of correlations empirically supported the inclusion of marital status and depression as controls in the analyses (see Table 2). Marital status was positively associated with wives' depression, wives' pressure to acculturate, and wives' marital conflict; it was also negatively associated with wives' marital satisfaction. Wives'

depression, another control variable in the substantive analyses, was positively correlated with wives' pressure to acculturate and wives' marital conflict and negatively correlated with wives' marital satisfaction and marriage work with husband. The significant associations with indicators of marital quality, specifically, provide further support for including marital status and depression as control variables.

Overall, living in a consensual union (i.e., not legally married) was associated with higher levels of depression, acculturative stress, and marital conflict and lower levels of marital satisfaction for wives. It is possible that the experience of living as married in a consensual union may be qualitatively different from the experience of legal marriage for the first-generation husbands and wives of Mexican origin in the study. Alternatively, legal marital status in this study may be a proxy for legal status in the U. S., which was not assessed. According to the Pew Hispanic Center (2011), unauthorized immigrants made up 3.7% of the nation's population in March 2010. Mexicans are the largest group of unauthorized immigrants, accounting for 58% of the total. Implications of the experience of being undocumented have received insufficient research attention (Sullivan & Rhem, 2005), although some studies have examined mental health issues and acculturative stress among identified Latino undocumented immigrants in the US (Arbona et al., 2010; Pérez & Fortuna, 2005). Because legal marriage in the current study may be confounded with legal status, caution should be taken in interpreting the bivariate associations with marital status.

Analyses revealed that there was a significant difference in the extent to which wives engaged in marriage work with their husband and close friend. Findings from this

study showed that wives were more likely to engage in marriage work with husbands than with close friends. This finding contrasts with previous work that showed that primarily White wives engaged in higher levels of marriage work with their close friends than husbands (Helms et al., 2003) and suggested that women do not engage in marriage work with their husbands (Oliker, 1989). The current findings align with more recent work with primarily White women that found that women engaged in more marriage work with husbands than friends when discussing concerns related to finances (Proulx et al., 2004). This same study, however, found no differences in the extent to which wives engaged in marriage work with close friends versus their husbands in most other domains of marriage work (e.g., marital communication, division of housework, division of parenting). The finding in the current study is notable given caveats noted in discussion sections of prior work in which authors suggest that marriage work with friends may be normative and may occur more frequently than marriage work with husbands in cultural groups that emphasize connections with kin and close associates outside the marriage. The current finding showing that first-generation immigrant Mexican wives discuss marital concerns more with their husbands than close friends challenges these speculations.

Marital Status, Depressive Symptoms, and Firstborn Age

Although used as a control variable, the significant links between depression and marital quality found in the substantive analyses of this study call for additional attention. Depression was consistently associated with marital satisfaction and conflict and negativity. There was a trend level negative main effect for wives' depression in the

spillover model suggesting higher levels of depression were associated with lower levels of marital satisfaction for wives. Wives' depression was also positively associated with wives' reports of marital conflict suggesting that the more depressed wives were, the more conflict they perceived in their marriage. Similarly, there was a significant positive main effect for husbands' depression in the crossover model suggesting that higher levels of depression were associated with higher marital conflict for husbands.

Although the nature of the current data make it impossible to determine whether being depressed leads to lower levels of marital quality or vice versa, a possible explanation for these findings is that those wives or husbands who report greater levels of depression are more likely to view their marriages in a negative manner than are wives or husbands who score lower on depression. It is also possible that wives or husbands whose marriages are characterized by high levels of conflict and low levels of satisfaction might be more depressed. This interpretation is supported by previous work suggesting that dispositional factors, such as depression, influence reports of marital quality (Beach, 1996). Regardless of the direction of causality between spouses' depressive symptoms and perceptions of marital quality, the cross-sectional association found in this sample of immigrant Mexican-origin couples is consistent with several decades of research with less diverse samples (Proulx, Helms, & Buehler, 2007). Moreover, the consistent links found between depression and reports of marital quality further supports the inclusion of depression as a control variable in examining how wives' marriage work with husbands and close friends moderates the association between wives' acculturative stress and marital quality.

Marital status was positively associated with wives' marital conflict at a trend level in the regression analyses suggesting that wives who were not legally married reported more conflict in their marriages. As mentioned previously, however, without controlling for legal residence in the United States, this trend level finding should be interpreted with caution. Lastly, age of first born was negatively associated with wives' marital conflict at a trend level suggesting that the younger the firstborn, the more conflict wives perceived in their marriages.

Spillover Effects

The goal of this study was to examine the link between wives' acculturative stress and their own and their husbands' marital satisfaction and marital conflict. Marriage work with husband and marriage work with friend were hypothesized to moderate the association between wives' acculturative stress and spouses' reports of marital quality. For the model predicting spillover effects for wives' marital satisfaction, neither marriage work with spouse nor marriage work with friend moderated the association between wives' acculturative stress and their own reports of marital satisfaction. However, acculturative stress was related at a trend level with wives reports of marital satisfaction in the expected direction. That is, a higher level of stress experienced by wives was associated with lower levels of wives' perceived marital satisfaction.

Moreover, wives' marriage work with husband was a significant predictor of wives' marital satisfaction suggesting that higher levels of marriage work with husbands was associated with greater marital satisfaction for wives. The nature of the data does not make it possible to tease apart the direction of effects in this association. A possible

explanation for these findings is that greater levels of marriage work with their husbands make wives feel more satisfied. Alternatively, more maritally satisfied wives may do more marriage work with their husbands. In addition, this model only included self-report data from wives, and, thus, additional error was introduced into the analyses in the form of shared-method variance. Nonetheless, this main effect finding aligns with previous work showing that actively seeking out spouses to discuss marital concerns is linked with marital quality (Helms et al., 2003; Lee, 1988; Oliner, 1989; Proulx et al., 2004). Moreover, this finding is consistent with studies from the broader literature on social support among Mexican immigrant mothers in which wives emphasized the importance of being able to discuss a variety of topics and concerns with their husbands and pointed to the necessity of relying on their husbands in the United States for a variety of forms of emotion work in a way that they had not when residing in Mexico (Bender et al., 1999; Hoban, 2005; Parrado & Flippen, 2005).

For the model predicting spillover effects for wives' marital conflict, the hypothesis that wives' marriage work would moderate the association of wives' acculturative stress and marital quality was not supported. One should note that marriage work with husband was not associated with wives' reports of marital conflict. This is consistent with prior research that did not find marriage work to be associated with marital conflict (e.g., Helms, et al., 2003; Proulx et al., 2004) and offers further support that marriage work is conceptually distinct from marital conflict or negativity. In addition, marriage work with friend was positively associated with wives' marital conflict suggesting that the more wives' engaged in marriage work with their close friend, the

more conflict they perceived with their husbands. This finding was contrary to Oliner's (1989) qualitative study which found that, in general, wives' marriage work with friends resulted in reinforced commitment to the marriage and improved feelings about their marriages (i.e., greater marital satisfaction). However, this finding was consistent with Helms et al. (2003), which found that wives' marriage work with friends was positively related to wives' reports of ineffective arguing in the marital dyad. Given these patterns of findings, there was some support for Oliner's assertions that wives' marriage work with friend is linked with their perceptions of marital quality (i.e., marriage work with friend was positively associated with wives' marital conflict) and there was no support for the moderation hypothesis for wives' marriage work with friend. Thus, these findings offer little support for either Oliner's (1989) assertions or Bowen's (1966) competing hypothesis.

The cross-sectional nature of the data does not allow a determination of the direction of effects in the association between marriage work with friend and wives' marital conflict. A possible explanation for this finding is that talking with friends leads wives' to perceive more conflict in their marriage or it could be that wives' talk to their friends more in marriages that are characterized by more conflict/negativity. In addition, this model only included self-report data from wives (i.e., wives reported on both their own marriage work and their view of the marital relationship), and, thus, the finding may be an artifact of the additional error introduced into the analyses in the form of shared-method variance.

For spillover models, retrospective power analyses for the moderating effects of marriage work with husband and marriage work with friend on the association between wives' acculturative stress and reports of marital satisfaction demonstrated that lack of a moderating effect is likely due to the relatively small sample size. Therefore, the non-significant interaction effects in this model should be viewed with caution. In contrast, retrospective power analyses for the moderating effects of marriage work with husband and marriage work with friend on the association between wives' acculturative stress and their own reports of marital conflict demonstrated that lack of significance for this interaction effect was most likely due to the negligible magnitude of the effect, rather than a small sample size. That is, there was enough power to detect a significant interaction effect for these associations. Hence the conclusion that marriage work did not serve as a protective factor against wives' acculturative stress on her perceptions of marital conflict is accurate.

Crossover Effects

The model predicting crossover effects for husbands' marital satisfaction provided partial support for the study hypothesis. Although not hypothesized, a main effect for wives' marriage work with husband was found. The positive association between wives' marriage work with husband and husbands' marital satisfaction indicated that the more marriage work wives reported engaging in with their husbands, the more satisfaction their husbands reported in their marriage. Moreover, a main effect for wives' marriage work with husband was found in the model predicting crossover effects for husbands' marital conflict. The negative association between wives' marriage work with

husband and husbands' marital conflict indicated that higher levels of wives' marriage work with husbands were associated with lower marital conflict for husbands. Consistent with recent research on wives' marriage work with husbands (Helms et al., 2003; Proulx et al., 2004), this finding offers further support that wives' marriage work, as was measured in the present study, is conceptually distinct from the marital conflict or negativity associated with start-up. Although the current study did not assess how marital concerns were brought up, these main effects would suggest that husbands were not experiencing marriage work by their wives as aversive or negative. Indeed, the more marriage work wives' reported engaging in with their husbands, the more marital satisfaction and the less marital conflict/negativity husbands' reported.

Moreover, this crossover finding contrasts with past work conducted with primarily White samples in which no support was found for crossover effects in the association between marriage work with husband and perceptions of marital quality (Helms et al., 2003). More specifically, these findings extend previous literature showing that wives' actively seeking out husbands to discuss marital concerns is an important predictor of husbands' marital quality for couples of Mexican origin.

As hypothesized, a significant interaction between wives' acculturative stress and marriage work with husband emerged suggesting that wives' acculturative stress was linked with husbands' marital satisfaction at different levels of wives' marriage work with husband. Specifically, for couples in which wives engaged in low levels of marriage work with their husbands, wives' acculturative stress was negatively related to their husbands' reports of marital satisfaction. However, in marriages where wives engaged in

high levels of marriage work with their husbands, the association between wives' acculturative stress and husbands' marital satisfaction was not significant. These findings are supported by a risk and resilience framework in that higher levels of marriage work with husbands served as a protective factor that attenuated the negative effects of the risk factor (i.e., wives' acculturative stress) on husbands' marital satisfaction found under conditions of lower marriage work with husbands. That is, wives bringing up marital concerns to husbands, protected husbands' perceptions of marital satisfaction from the negative effects of wives' acculturative stress.

Additional support for the study hypothesis was found for the model predicting crossover effects for husbands' marital conflict. More specifically, wives' acculturative stress was linked with husbands' marital conflict at different levels of wives' marriage work with husbands. That is, for couples in which wives' reported lower levels of marriage work with husbands, the more acculturative stress wives' perceived, the more conflict husbands' reported. However, in marriages where wives' reported higher levels of marriage work with husbands, the association between wives' acculturative stress and husbands' marital conflict was reversed. That is, the more stress wives perceived, the less conflict and negativity husbands' perceived in the marriage. This negative association between wives' acculturative stress and husbands' marital conflict under conditions of higher levels of marriage work with husbands was not anticipated. It was expected that the positive link between wives' acculturative stress and husbands' marital conflict/negativity would be lessened under conditions of high marriage work with husband. It may be that in marriages in which wives talk openly with their husbands

about their marital concerns as they arise, the stress wives' experience related to sociocultural forces external to the marriage (e.g., acculturative stress) resulted in less marital arguing, anger, and resentment as reported by husbands. More specifically, it may be that immigrant wives' experiences of stress related to cultural adaptation leads couples to interact in a more positive and supportive manner in marriages where wives are communicating openly about marital concerns.

Overall, the crossover effects to husbands' perceptions of marital quality that were found in these analyses are supported by dyadic frameworks for understanding marriage that have suggested the importance of including both members of the marital dyad in investigations of marriage (Helms et al., 2011; Neff & Karney, 2007). Main effects findings for wives' from these crossover models were further supported by Huston's (2000) model which highlights marital relationships as a system embedded within a larger network of close relationships.

Limitations and Future Directions

The present study contributes to the literature in that no other studies have examined the moderating influence of wives' marriage work in explaining the link between a contextual stress and marital quality in either spillover or crossover models. However, some limitations of the present study should be addressed. It is important to note that this sample represents a unique group in an emerging immigrant section of the country. Moreover, given participants' educational levels, geographic location, and language use (i.e., that they were all predominantly Spanish speaking), the findings of this study are certainly not generalizable to all Mexican Americans. There was also some

shared method variance in the spillover models which relied on wives' self-reports only. Future research should consider observational studies (Julien et al., 2000) that can address these shared method variance concerns. Moreover, this study did not measure how wives' actually brought up their marital concerns to husbands or how much they brought up these concerns.

It is recommended that future research with a larger sample of couples test a three-way interaction of acculturative stress, marriage work with husband, and marriage with friend to test how engaging in different levels of marriage work with husband or friend in different contexts of acculturative stress may be related to both wives and husbands reports of marital quality. Recent studies have examined the two-way interaction between spouses' marriage work with friend and spouse (Helms et al., 2003), but no studies have simultaneously considered this interaction in the context of variation in levels of contextual stressors. Testing a three- way interaction between acculturative stress, marriage work with husband, and marriage work with friend in both spillover and crossover models would provide a better understanding of how contextual stressors are linked with marital quality under different levels of marriage work with husband and close friend.

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APPENDIX A

TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics (N = 110)

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range
Age (in years)			
Wives	28.35	5.44	18 – 47
Husbands	30.54	5.77	18 – 48
Years in the US			
Wives	8.73	4.29	<1 – 19
Husbands	11.49	5.24	3 – 27
Nuclear Family Size	4.13	.93	3 – 7
Marital Duration (in years)	7.34	3.90	1 – 15
Education (in years)			
Wives	9.36	3.11	0 – 16
Husbands	8.69	2.99	1 – 15
Family Income (annual)	\$32,822	\$12,805	\$8,000 – \$83,400
Work Hours (per week)			
Employed Wives (n= 59)	38.82	6.39	16 – 60
Employed Husbands (n=108)	43.06	7.67	32 – 80
Income (annual)			
Wives	\$14,903	\$6,087	\$2,500 – \$31,600
Husbands	\$24,482	\$8,831	\$8,000 – \$69,000

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations between the Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
1. Marital Status ^a	--											
2. Wives' Depression	0.20*	--										
3. Husbands' Depression	-0.06	0.08	--									
4. Age of Firstborn	-.24*	0.06	-0.09	--								
5. Wives' Acculturative Stress	.26**	.30**	0.1	-0.14	--							
6. Wives' Marital Satisfaction	-.24*	-.32**	0.02	0.07	-.19*	--						
7. Wives' Marital Conflict	.31**	.34***	0.14	-.17 [†]	.20*	-.27**	--					
8. Husbands' Marital Satisfaction	-0.04	-0.12	-0.02	0.11	0.02	.18 [†]	-0.02	--				
9. Husbands' Marital Conflict	-0.01	0.03	.24**	-0.05	0	-.18 [†]	.30**	-.27**	--			
10. Wives' Marriage Work with Spouse	-0.14	-.20*	0.13	0	0.05	.65***	-0.09	.20*	-.22**	--		
11. Wives' Marriage Work with Friend	0.08	0.01	-0.11	0.06	0.1	.21*	.19*	0.04	-0.03	.40***	--	
	<i>M</i>	N/A	20.59	20.97	6.19	1.53	7.18	3.76	7.57	2.96	6.82	6.41
	<i>SD</i>	N/A	5.25	4.61	3.83	1.03	1.35	1.82	0.98	1.41	1.35	1.56
	α	N/A	0.72	0.6	N/A	0.85	0.94	0.72	0.91	0.56	0.92	0.95

Note: ^aCoded as 1= legally married, 2= not legally married

[†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 3

Regression Coefficients for Model Predicting Wives' Marital Satisfaction (Spillover Effects) (n=110)

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Marital Status	-.50	.28	-.18 [†]	-.22	.22	-.08	-.19	.23	-.07
Ws' Depressive Symptoms	-.07	.02	-.29**	-.03	.02	-.14 [†]	-.03	.02	-.13 [†]
Firstborn Age	.01	.03	.04	.01	.03	.03	.01	.03	.04
Acculturative Stress				-.20	.10	-.15*	-.19	.10	-.15 [†]
Marriage Work with Husband				.62	.08	.62***	.66	.08	.66***
Marriage Work with Friend				-.02	.07	-.02	-.06	.07	-.07
Acculturative Stress X Marriage Work with Husband							.11	.09	.11
Acculturative Stress X Marriage Work with Friend							-.14	.08	-.15
<i>R</i> ²									
ΔR^2		.13			.49			.50	
		.13**			.36***			.01 ^{ns}	

Note: [†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 4

Regression Coefficients for Model Predicting Wives' Marital Conflict (Spillover Effects)
(*n=110*)

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Marital Status	.86	.36	.22*	.70	.37	.19 [†]	.72	.38	.18 [†]
Ws' Depressive Symptoms	.11	.03	.31**	.10	.03	.29**	.10	.03	.29**
Firstborn Age	-.07	.04	-.14	-.07	.04	-.16 [†]	-.08	.04	-.16 [†]
Acculturative Stress				.06	.17	.03	.04	.17	.02
Marriage Work with Husband				-.12	.13	-.09	-.12	.14	-.09
Marriage Work with Friend				.26	.11	.22*	.27	.12	.23*
Acculturative Stress X Marriage Work with Husband							.02	.15	.02
Acculturative Stress X Marriage Work with Friend							.05	.14	.04
R^2									
ΔR^2		.20			.24			.24	
		.20***			.04 ^{ns}			.00 ^{ns}	

Note: [†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 5

Regression Coefficients for Model Predicting Husbands' Marital Satisfaction (Crossover Effects) (n=109)

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Marital Status	-.04	.21	-.02	.02	.22	.01	.13	.22	.06
Hs' Depressive Symptoms	-.00	.02	-.01	-.01	.02	-.05	-.00	.02	-.00
Firstborn Age	.03	.03	.10	.03	.03	.12	.03	.03	.10
Acculturative Stress				.03	.10	.03	-.00	.10	-.00
Marriage Work with Husband				.17	.08	.23*	.21	.08	.28*
Marriage Work with Friend				-.04	.07	-.07	-.05	.07	-.08
Acculturative Stress X Marriage Work with Husband							.19	.09	.26*
Acculturative Stress X Marriage Work with Friend							-.00	.08	-.01
R^2		.01			.06			.11	
ΔR^2		.01 ^{ns}			.04 ^{ns}			.06*	

Note: [†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 6

Regression Coefficients for Model Predicting Husbands' Marital Conflict (Crossover Effects) (n=110)

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Marital Status	-.01	.30	-.00	-.16	.30	-.05	-.31	.30	-.10
Hs' Depressive Symptoms	.07	.03	.24*	.09	.03	.29**	.08	.03	.26**
Firstborn Age	-.01	.04	-.03	-.02	.03	-.05	-.01	.03	-.04
Acculturative Stress				-.02	.13	-.02	.01	.13	.01
Marriage Work with Husband				-.33	.11	-.32*	-.40	.11	-.39***
Marriage Work with Friend				.12	.09	.14	.16	.10	.18
Acculturative Stress X Marriage Work with Husband							-.30	.12	-.28*
Acculturative Stress X Marriage Work with Friend							.09	.11	.10
R^2		.06			.14			.19	
ΔR^2		.06 [†]			.08*			.05 [†]	

Note: [†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Figure 2. The relation between wives' acculturative stress and husbands' marital satisfaction as moderated by wives' marriage work with husband (MWH).

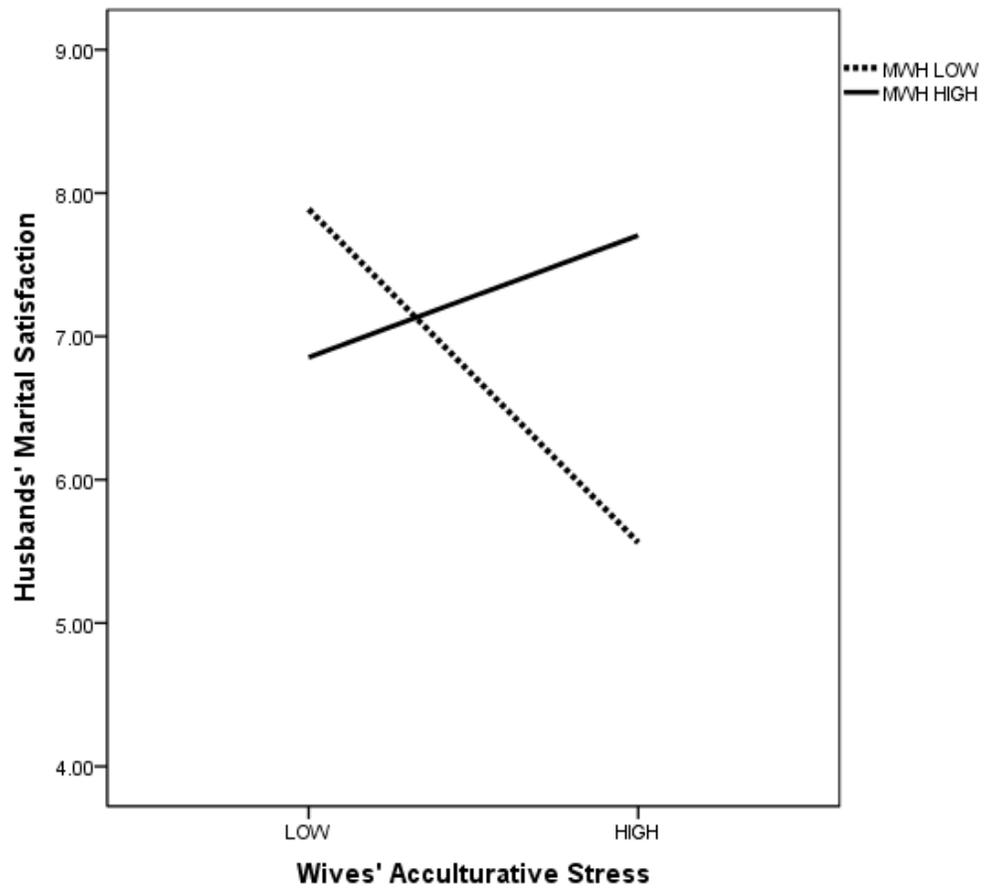


Figure 3. The relation between wives' acculturative stress and husbands' marital conflict as moderated by wives' marriage work with husband (MWH).

