THE EFFECT OF FAMILY OF ORIGIN ON EARLY MARRIAGE OUTCOMES:

A MIXED METHOD APPROACH

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family—my parents, who have always loved and supported me unconditionally; my husband, who is the most patient and understanding man I have ever met; and my sons, who bring me joy every single day.

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined the effect of family of origin characteristics on current marital satisfaction, within a sample of newlywed couples, using dyadic and mixed methods approaches to conceptualization, data collection, and data analysis.

The data used to investigate this process—sometimes called intergenerational transmission—was collected in two phases. First, quantitative data in the form of close-ended questions was collected separately from each member of 190 newlywed couples via hard-copy questionnaires. These questionnaires included measures of family of origin characteristics (e.g., interparental conflict), current marital processes (e.g., conflict resolution style), and marital outcomes (e.g., marital satisfaction). Second, in-depth and open-ended questions were asked of 18 couples in semi-structured couple interviews. The 18 couples who were interviewed in phase two of the data collection represent a purposive sub-sample of the original 190 couples from phase one of data collection.

Results of structural equation modeling of a conceptual model based on the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM; Cook & Kenny, 2005) indicated that the family or origin characteristics measured predicted a decrease in marital satisfaction, especially for wives. In addition, mixed evidence was found for the potential meditational role of conflict resolution style. Results of thematic coding of the interview data revealed that: a) families of origin serve as marriage role models in complex and multifaceted ways; b) there are other important models of marriage, aside from families of origin, that influence marital outcomes; c) it is likely that couples use a combination of different marriage role

models to form their ideas of marriage (and therefore their marital outcomes); and d) it is possible that in some cases families of origin do not provide a marriage role model at all.

Finally, results of a configural comparative analysis utilizing both the quantitative and qualitative data revealed that couples negotiate the pathway from their families of origin to their own marriages in diverse ways. Three distinct pathways were identified, including a "modeling" pathway, a "modified modeling" pathway, and a "compensation" pathway. Interpretations and implications of these findings are discussed. In addition, future directions for research in this area are suggested.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Rationale for the Current Study

Relationships, both with our family of origin and our family of choice, are influential and complex contexts of development. While both of these contexts are multifaceted and significant enough to comprise entire fields of research in their own rights, the influence of one (family of origin) on the other (family of choice) is an area of growing interest among researchers.

This process, sometimes called "intergenerational transmission" has been approached in a number of ways. Some researchers have approached it from a marital quality perspective, attempting to determine if marital quality is transmitted across the generations (e.g., Amato & Booth, 1991). Other researchers have approached it from a demographic perspective, examining the likelihood that children of divorce will end up divorcing themselves—the intergenerational transmission of divorce (e.g., Cherlin, Kiernan, & Chase-Landsdale, 1995; Wolfinger, 1999). Many researchers have approached this issue by investigating the long-term impacts of parental divorce on adults and their intimate relationships in a broader sense (see Christensen & Brooks, 2001 for a review). Still others have taken a developmental perspective on romantic relationships— proposing that individual dispositions or skills acquired earlier in life (which are presumably shaped by the family of origin) influence the interactional processes between romantic partners that eventually affect relationship success or failure (e.g., Bradbury, Cohan, & Karney, 1998; Conger, Cui, Bryant, & Elder, 2000). The current study investigates the impact of family of origin characteristics (e.g., level of interparental

conflict) on current marital outcomes (i.e., marital satisfaction), and how conflict resolution style may mediate that impact. In addition, the current study examines this process in a sample of newlywed couples, with both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

<div align="center">Intergenerational Transmission</div>

In contemporary American society, it is estimated that half of all marriages will end in divorce, and that every year more than one million children will experience the divorce of their parents (Amato & Keith, 1991). Concern over the staggering divorce rate and the state of contemporary marriage has stimulated a good deal of research on the possible causes of marital dysfunction (see Bradbury et al., 1998). In trying to understand what causes marriages to deteriorate, some researchers have focused on the characteristics that individuals bring to marriage. Not surprisingly, the assumption that some of the characteristics that individuals bring to marriage can be traced to the family of origin has led to the belief that marital satisfaction and stability are transmitted across generations (Amato & Booth, 2001; Story et al., 2004).

Indeed, this conceptualization of an intergenerational transmission of marital quality and stability is supported by family systems theory. Family systems theory provides an important framework for understanding families and the way that family members are interrelated. For instance, one of the main assumptions of family systems theory is that people cannot be understood by examining them in isolation from their family system (Broderick, 1993). Like the Gestaltian concept of "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts," family systems theory asserts that a system must be understood

as a whole, and that families are an important context to consider in all facets of research on individuals and relationships. It is only with some knowledge of their family of origin, or the greater context of their marriage, that we as researchers can start to understand individuals' and couples' experiences of marriage.

In addition, family systems theory asserts that families are inherently interdependent (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993)—meaning that what happens to one part of a family (e.g., the marital dyad) influences all other parts of the family (e.g., the children). These children then grow up to (likely) get married and form their own families, and in this way the effects of any parental conflict and divorce in the first generation may therefore be felt for generations to come (Bowen, 1978). Not only can this notion of interdependence lend the current study conceptual and theoretical justification for examining the effects of families of origin on current marriages, but it also lends support for adopting a dyadic view of marriage (which will be discussed further later in this chapter).

Consistent with this notion of interdependence and intergenerational transmission, research indicates that parental divorce increases the risk that offspring will see their own marriages end in divorce (Amato, 1996, 1999; Segrin, Taylor, & Altman, 2005; Teachman, 2002; Wolfinger, 1999). In fact, in an article commenting on a 25-year study of the legacy of divorce, Wallerstein and Lewis (2004) assert that divorce begets fewer marriages, poorer marriages, and more divorces—and that divorce is not an acute stress from which children recover, but a life-transforming experience. While it should be noted that not all scholars would agree with this fatalistic picture of children and young adults

from divorced families, and have criticized Wallerstein for her use of a clinical sample, numerous empirical studies have provided evidence that those who experience a parental divorce are more likely to divorce themselves (e.g., Amato, 1996; Bumpass, Martin, & Sweet, 1991; Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Wolfinger, 2000). Given the large number of children in our society who are exposed to parental divorce, researchers are working to understand the mechanisms that explain this intergenerational transmission. Specifically, researchers have explored the mechanisms of relationship quality, interparental conflict, and relationship skills.

<div align="center">Relationship Quality</div>

In attempting to understand the intergenerational transmission of divorce, some researchers have focused on the effect that family of origin may have on future marital quality (e.g., Amato & Booth, 1991)—the suggestion being that parental divorce may lead to poorer quality marriages in offspring, and that this diminished marital quality may be one factor in increasing the likelihood of those offspring to divorce.

Relationship quality has long been a topic of interest to researchers, and has been categorized as the central variable used in marital research (Fincham & Bradbury, 1987). In fact, the large number of papers published on this topic, especially in the past two decades, attests to the continued importance placed on understanding the quality of marriage—not only as an end in itself, but also as a means to understand its effect on numerous other processes inside and outside the family (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000).

Relationship quality has been, and continues to be, conceptualized and measured in a number of ways—and so a brief discussion of how this concept is operationalized may be warranted. In the past, evaluations of marital quality which utilize domain-specific items have suffered from the problem of redundancy—that is, the construct used to "explain" variance in marital quality is measured by items that tap the same concept as a subset of the items used to measure marital quality. For example, Banmen and Vogel (1985), as cited in Fincham and Bradbury (1987), report a significant association between communication (Marital Communication Inventory, 1970; e.g., "Do the two of you argue a lot over money?") and marital quality (Dyadic Adjustment Scale; Spanier, 1976; e.g., "Indicate the extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner on: handling family finances"). The correlation found between these two scales is likely due at least in part to an overlap in how these constructs are defined, which may lead to unjustified conclusions about the predictors of marital quality.

Fincham and Bradbury (1987) have long argued the case for conceptualizing marital quality as a set of items which measure a spouse's *global* evaluation of his or her marriage, rather than relying on domain-specific items (e.g., items that measure specific behaviors). The major advantage of an index based on global judgments is that it can be interpreted clearly because items are semantically consistent, and do not overlap with descriptive or domain-specific assessments of the marriage. These global measures such as the Marital Quality Index (Norton, 1983), which is used in the current study, are based on self-report data that exclusively evaluate the relationship as a whole—and are

supported by experts in the field as effective ways to evaluate marital quality (Bradbury et al., 2000).

The current study examines marital quality not only because of its centrality in the marital literature, but also because of its centrality in the notion of intergenerational transmission. Many researchers examining intergenerational transmission use marital quality as the outcome (i.e., investigating if adults who experienced a parental divorce have lower marital quality), or as an explanation of the intergenerational transmission of divorce (i.e., adults who have experienced a parental divorce may be more likely to divorce themselves because they are more likely to have poorer quality marriages).

In fact, although not all researchers have found that adult offspring from divorced and non-divorced families differ on measures of marital quality (e.g., Feng, Giarrusso, Bengston, & Frye, 1999)—many prominent researchers in this area suggest that there is a some relationship between parental divorce and marital quality. For example, Amato and Booth (1991) found that adults who experienced a parental divorce reported lower marital well-being than those adults from intact families. It should be noted, however, that Amato and Booth (1991) based this conclusion on measures of spousal disagreements and marital problems, and that they found no differences in marital happiness, which more closely resembles a global measure of marital quality. Nonetheless, Amato (1999) concluded that marital quality is transmitted across generations.

While the idea that family of origin characteristics (e.g., parental divorce) affect eventual marital quality is a well established one, the empirical evidence seems to be mixed depending on how the outcome of marital quality is conceptualized. To address

this confusion in the extant literature, the current study examines the impact of family of origin on offspring marital quality—utilizing a global measure of marital quality.

<div align="center">Interparental Conflict</div>

Beyond looking at the effects of *divorce* on later outcomes many researchers have examined interparental conflict, or the level of perceived conflict in the family of origin home, as a predictor of outcomes for offspring of divorced parents. The work of these researchers has demonstrated that children's adjustment following divorce may be more related to the level of perceived conflict in the home, than to the actual divorce itself (Jennings, Salts, & Smith, 1991; Larson, Benson, Wilson, & Medora, 1998; Stone & Hutchinson, 1992). For example, Forehand and McCombs (1989) conclude that the existing research (including their own) provides strong support for a relationship between interparental conflict and offspring difficulties in various areas (e.g., social competence, internalizing problems, externalizing problems).

In fact, more recent research has found that family of origin conflict was an important factor in the intergenerational transmission of marital quality. For example, using a longitudinal prospective study design, Amato and Booth (2001) found that parents' marital discord in 1980 (when offspring were age 13, on average) predicted offspring's reports of their own marital harmony in 1997 (when offspring were age 30, on average). Amato and Booth (2001) provide evidence that family of origin does influence current marital quality, but also that examining family of origin conflict (not just divorce) may be an important factor to consider in the process of intergenerational transmission.

In addition, Doucet and Aseltine (2003) found no significant relationship between parental divorce and overall quality of marriage in young adulthood—but did find that childhood family conflict was strongly related to several domain-specific measures of marital quality (specifically lower levels of perceived marital support, higher levels of marital dissatisfaction, and more frequent disagreements with spouse).

Findings by other researchers who examined parental conflict also support this conclusion. Specifically, Caspi and Elder (1988) found that parental conflict was associated with an elevated number of behavior problems among offspring as children, and that as adults those offspring exhibited a problematic interpersonal style that appeared to negatively affect the quality of their marriages. More recently, in a study of young adult committed relationships, Yu and Alder-Baeder (2007) found a significant correlation between parents' level of negative interaction and offspring relationship quality.

Because of these findings—and because Story et al. (2004) describe the value of considering factors of family of origin functioning when considering intergenerational transmission (suggesting that future research would benefit from the examination of family conflict *and* parental divorce in predicting offspring functioning)—the effects of both family of origin conflict and family of origin structure are considered in the current study.

Relationship Skills

When examining the effect of family of origin conflict on marital quality, many researchers focus on how the family of origin shapes current relationship skills (such as

conflict resolution strategies). This notion—that we "learn" romantic relationship skills from the early relationships in our lives (those of our family)—is strongly rooted in social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory is based on the principle that people can learn simply by observing the behaviors of others (Bandura, 2001). Unlike Skinner, and the behaviorists who came before, Bandura argued that people do not have to directly act and experience consequences to learn—observational learning can be a powerful cognitive process. According to the principle of observational learning, people can learn behaviors by watching the behavior of others, and the outcomes of that behavior.

In describing the process of learning, Bandura posited that individuals are shaped by the interaction of three important factors: 1) the biological and psychological characteristics of the individual; 2) the individual's behavior; and 3) the environment that individual is in—a concept he referred to as triadic reciprocal causation or reciprocal determinism (Miller, 2002). In addition, Bandura described three specific types of environments the imposed environment— the selected environment, and the created environment. The imposed environment is one that individuals have little control over; they cannot control the presence of this environment, only the way that they interpret and react to it (Miller). In many ways, families of origin are imposed environments—as the old adage goes "you can't choose your family."

In addition to being important facets of the environment in which an individual develops, parents likely also influence the other important factors that shape development and learning—contributing to the genetic make-up of their offspring (in cases of biological parents) and the offspring's characteristics, as well as actively shaping the

behavior of the offspring. In this way, parents play a complex and multifaceted role in determining offspring outcomes. Of particular interest for the current study, parents can serve as influential models of marriage—imparting important lessons about relationship functioning long before their offspring are in marital relationships themselves.

In the case of intergenerational transmission, researchers have applied this theory to predict that individuals will likely model the relationship skills they observe in their parents, and reenact those same skills in their own marriages. For example, if the imposed environment of family of origin includes a high level of conflict, it may lead offspring to eventually repeat (or model) those behaviors and patterns of conflict in their own marriages, which may in turn influence the quality of those marriages.

In fact, when considering the effect of family of origin conflict on marital quality, some researchers have found a significant link between family of origin conflict and current relationship skills. For example, in addition to finding a significant correlation between parents' level of negative interaction and offspring relationship quality, Yu and Adler-Baeder (2007) also found that parents' level of negative interaction was moderately and positively associated with the level of negative interactions in participants' own intimate relationships.

Consequently, many researchers have examined the relationship skills (or the lack thereof) of adults who have experienced a parental divorce. Hetherington and Kelly (2002) go as far as to conclude that a family history of parental divorce causes offspring to be relationship-challenged and to possess fewer relationship skills. More specifically, Hetherington and Kelly suggest that adults who have experienced a parental divorce have

more trouble controlling the four horsemen (criticism, contempt, denial, withdrawal)—

aspects of negative conflict resolution strategies that have been linked to an elevated risk

of marital dissolution (Gottman, 1994).

Other researchers have found that adults who experienced a parental divorce

report poorer communication in their own intimate relationships (Herzog & Cooney,

2002; Sanders, Halford, & Behrens, 1999). In addition, Levy et al. (1997) found that

wives' family of origin factors (e.g., communication) were strongly associated with the

observed conflict resolution behaviors of both husbands and wives. These findings are

significant to consider when examining the intergenerational transmission of divorce,

because researchers such as Markman (1991) and Gottman (1994) have suggested that

the acquisition of skills in intimate communication (in particular managing conflict) are

fundamental developmental tasks required to sustain satisfying intimate adult

relationships. In addition, longitudinal research by Markman and colleagues has linked

premarital communication to subsequent marital distress and divorce (see Markman,

1981; Markman & Hahlweg, 1993); and longitudinal research by Gottman has linked

marital communication to marital quality and risk of divorce.

Beyond examining the impact of families of origin on offsprings' relationship

skills, past research suggests the importance of examining relationship skills as a possible

mediator of the intergenerational transmission process. For example, Cohan and

Bradbury (1997) found that spouses' problem-solving behavior was related to reports of

marital satisfaction—and suggest that neglecting to assess marital processes (such as

conflict resolution style) might misrepresent the relationship between family of origin

and marital satisfaction. In fact, some researchers have concluded that negative

interpersonal processes appear to be the vehicle by which experiences in the family of

origin are carried forward into the next generation (Story et al., 2004), and that

interpersonal behavior problems (e.g., ineffective communication) mediate a large part of

the effect of family of origin on current marital outcomes (Amato, 1996). Furthermore,

Amato (1999) concludes that adults who experienced a parental divorce had fewer

opportunities to learn interpersonal skills (e.g., communicating effectively), and

controlling for these problematic behaviors eliminates the connection between parental

and offspring divorce. The current study heeds the suggestions of past researchers, and

examines relationship skills (specifically conflict resolution style) as a mediator of the

impact of family of origin on current marital relationship quality.

Conflict Resolution Style

While researchers have examined relationship skills in a variety of ways, one

area of relationship skills that has been frequently investigated in relation to marital

satisfaction and marital stability has been how couples deal with conflict. In fact,

managing conflict has been identified as one of the central tasks of maintaining a

marriage (Gottman, 1994). How conflict is managed has been linked to relationship

satisfaction and relationship stability (Gottman; Markman, Renick, Floyd, Stanley, &

Clements, 1993). More specifically, each spouse's marital satisfaction is positively

related to the frequency with which each spouse uses constructive strategies to resolve

conflict (e.g., compromise) and negatively related to the frequency with which each

spouse uses destructive strategies to resolve conflict (e.g., withdrawal; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Heavey, Layne, & Christensen, 1993; Huston & Vangelisti, 1991).

Further, studies of couples in early marriage (i.e, within the first five years) indicate that conflict resolution style not only predicts concurrent marital satisfaction, but also future marital satisfaction as well. For example, Noller, Feeney, Bonnell, and Callan (1994) found that conflict strategies (such as disengagement and positive problem solving) predicted not only concurrent marital satisfaction (for wives), but also marital satisfaction in the future (i.e., a year or two later) for husbands and wives. Schneewind and Gerhard (2002) also studied couples in early marriage, and found that conflict resolution style (i.e., positive conflict strategies *and* dysfunctional conflict strategies) predicted not only concurrent marital satisfaction, but also was a significant factor in predicting marital satisfaction five years later—and in fact, may become increasingly more influential in predicting marital satisfaction over the first five years of marriage. In addition, Schneewind and Gerhard also found that conflict resolution style was a significant mediator of the association between relationship personality factors (e.g., empathy) and relationship satisfaction. This past research indicates that how couples manage conflict in the early critical years of marriage is an important relationship process, which deserves attention when examining issues of marital satisfaction.

Further, while conflict strategies have been operationalized in many ways, the current study utilizes the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSI; Kurdek, 1994) to capture this construct. Unlike other measures of conflict, which may focus on patterns of couple communication (e.g., Ineffective Arguing Inventory), the CRSI is based on the

position that relationship outcomes are affected be each partner's individual strategies for dealing with interpersonal conflict (Kurdek). The CRSI measures four strategies for dealing with conflict, including positive problem solving (e.g., compromise), conflict engagement (e.g., personal attacks), withdrawal (e.g., refusing to discuss the issue further), and compliance (e.g., giving in and not defending one's position)—which are based on strategies that previous research has documented in couples using behavioral observations (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989), and have been linked to relationship satisfaction as well as relationship dissolution (Gottman, 1994). In the current study, conflict resolution style is conceptualized as the combination of constructive strategies (i.e., positive problem solving) and destructive strategies (i.e., conflict engagement and withdrawal). Although measured, compliance was not included in the measurement or structural model analyses of the current study for a number of reasons which are discussed in the results section.

The Issue of Gender

While not a major focus of the current study, a careful review of the extant literature in this area indicates that gender may be an important construct to consider, and is consequently the focus of a research question in the current study. Although some of the existing studies examining potential gender differences in the process of intergenerational transmission of marital quality and stability are methodologically flawed, and findings are mixed, there is existing evidence that gender may play an interesting role.

Previous research utilizing an individualistic approach (i.e., comparing groups of females to groups of males) has yielded some evidence that there may be gender differences in the degree to which families of origin impact current marital quality and stability, although the findings are mixed. For example, Feng et al. (1999) found that a parental divorce significantly increased daughters' odds of divorce, but did not significantly increase sons' odds of divorce. In contrast, when utilizing a multigroup model, Amato & Booth (2001) found no significant gender difference in the link between parents' and children's marital quality.

In addition, there is also some existing evidence that there may be gender differences in the way that family of origin experiences influence current relationship skills and processes. For example, Levy et al. (1997) found that women's family of origin factors were more closely correlated with dating couples' communication behaviors (e.g., conflict resolution behaviors of both men and women). More recent research, which also adopted an individualistic approach, found that the effect of parental divorce on interpersonal problems (e.g., increased conflict in interpersonal relationships) was much stronger among females than males (Huurre, Junkkari, & Aro, 2006).

Research comparing couple types (i.e., couples where the woman's parents have divorced vs. couples where the man's parents have divorced) have found some similar results. Specifically, Sanders et al. (1999) found that couples in which the woman's parents had divorced showed more negative communications during conflict discussions than did couples in which neither partner's parents had divorced, or in which the man's

parents had divorced—concluding that, for women, a history of parental divorce is associated with more negative couple communication before marriage.

In addition, there is support in the extant literature for the notion that there may be gender differences in how husbands and wives manage conflict, and how this conflict impacts marital satisfaction. Indeed, work in this area has supported the notion that women are more likely to initiate discussions of conflictual issues within the context of marriage (Gottman, 1999), and that women are socialized to be more attuned to marital processes (Johnson, 1997). Recent findings lend support to this notion that women are socialized to be "relationship barometers"—meaning that wives' marital and interpersonal functioning may be more predictive of husbands' marital outcomes than the reverse (Faulkner, Davey, & Davey, 2005). More specifically, Faulkner et al. found that wives' conflict management skills predict husbands' levels of marital satisfaction, with no evidence for the reverse (i.e., no significance was found for the influence of husbands' conflict management skills on wives' levels of marital satisfaction.

Moreover, using the same measure employed in the current study (although with longitudinal data), Kurdek (1995) found that wives' conflict resolution style predicted husbands' marital satisfaction independently and in conjunction with husband's conflict resolution style—concluding that husbands' marital satisfaction is more frequently affected by how their wives resolve conflict than vice versa. For example, wives' frequent use of conflict engagement at Time 1 in his study was independently linked to a decrease in husband's subsequent marital satisfaction scores.

While the existing research provides some evidence that a gender difference may exist in the intergenerational transmission of marital quality and stability the findings are mixed and far from conclusive. This potential gender difference is something that needs further exploration, and can potentially be more effectively addressed using a dyadic approach (rather than individualistic or group-level approach). Based on past research, the current study will use the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) to examine the link between family of origin factors and conflict resolution style, as well as the link between conflict resolution style and marital satisfaction—with particular attention to potential differences in how these links may differ for husbands and wives. The Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) is a model of dyadic relationships that integrates the conceptual view of interdependence in relationships with the appropriate statistical techniques to handle dyadic data (Cook & Kenny, 2005). Utilizing the APIM to conceptualize the intergenerational transmission process allows for the investigation of both actor effects (e.g., how much a wife's family of origin impacts her own marital satisfaction), as well as partner effects (e.g., how much a wife's family of origin impacts her husband's marital satisfaction). In addition, by using structural equation modeling (SEM) to evaluate the APIM, I am also able to compare and statistically evaluate parameters within the model (e.g., the wives' partner effects vs. the husbands' partner effects). Moreover, the extensive and rich nature of the qualitative data collected in the current study allows for the unique opportunity to further understand potential gender differences in the phenomenon of intergenerational transmission.

Dyadic Approach

One limitation of the extant research in the area of intergenerational transmission is that few of the existing studies take a truly dyadic approach to understanding the intergenerational transmission of marital quality and stability. In fact, a number of studies utilize only information from individuals (i.e., data from only one member of each couple), and an individualistic orientation to interpret the inherently dyadic phenomenon of marriage—even though most marital researchers would argue that dyadic approaches are necessary to understand current marital functioning and quality (e.g., Huston, 2000). The current study adds to the extant literature in this area by adopting a dyadic approach throughout data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

One advantage of this approach is that it will utilize data collected from more than one source, and this use of multiple reporters affords this research more credibility (e.g., by eliminating possible shared-method variance), more information (e.g., multiple perspectives), and unique opportunities to address "dyadic-type" research questions that may not be adequately examined using data from only one member of each couple. For example, with dyadic data researchers can explicitly examine (rather than infer) not only actor effects, but also partner effects—which measure a form of interdependence and are therefore by definition dyadic in nature (Cook & Kenny, 2005). As such, the current dyadic study will not only measure how a person's current marital satisfaction is predicted by their own family of origin factors (i.e., actor effect), but also how a person's current marital satisfaction is predicted by their partner's family of origin factors (i.e., partner effect).

Beyond the potential conceptual benefits of adopting a dyadic approach to this issue, there is empirical evidence in the extant literature suggesting that conceptualizing data at the couple level when examining the intergenerational transmission of marital quality and stability may be critical. For example, while research has consistently shown that individuals who have experienced a parental divorce are more likely to divorce themselves, there is also evidence that this risk may be elevated if both members of the marriage have experienced a parental divorce (e.g., Amato, 1996; Emery, 1999). In fact, Wolfinger (2003) argues that family structure homogamy is an important factor to consider when investigating the intergenerational transmission of divorce—finding that adults who experienced a parental divorce are more likely to marry other adults who share their family of origin experience of divorce, and that those marriages are even more likely to fail than ones with just one member who experienced a parental divorce.

This tendency for individuals who have experienced a parental divorce to marry a partner who has a similar family of origin experience—what Wolfinger calls family structure homogamy—can perhaps be best understood within the context of Mate Selection Theory. The basic premise of Mate Selection Theory is that the process of choosing a partner or spouse is not random, but rather somewhat systematic and deliberate. Individuals consciously (or unconsciously) seek potential spouses with specific traits or qualities, and in turn are more likely to end up with partners who possess those specific traits or qualities. In addition, the traits and qualities that individuals seek in a potential partner are likely ones that they themselves also possess, as evidenced by

the fact that individuals usually end up with a partner who is very similar to them (Buss, 1985).

Beyond providing a context for understanding family structure homogamy, Mate Selection Theory can also provide an additional theoretical framework to understand the actual process of intergenerational transmission—specifically the link between a partners' family of origin and an individual's relationship processes and outcomes. First, sociocultural theories of mate selection highlight the fact that social homogamy—that is similarity on social characteristics such as race, religion, or class—is critical to the conservation and continuity of the family and other social institutions (Eckland, 1982). Since marriage is arguably an important social institution, it is logical to conclude that social characteristics are likely important variables in mate selection as well. In the current research, characteristics of the family of origin (including family structure and level of conflict) can arguably be considered social characteristics.

Second, in addition to findings indicating that partners are likely to be similar in many ways (e.g., Blackwell & Lichter, 2004), research on mate selection has also shown that an individual's partner is also likely to be very similar to that individual's family of origin. In fact, some research has shown that there may be more similarity between the partner and the family of origin than between the partners themselves (Bereczkei, Gyris, & Bernath, 2002). This similarity is likely the result of the offspring choosing a mate that shares important social characteristics with his or her family of origin—and potentially serves not only to produce family structure (or process) homogemy in married couples, but also to reinforce that homogeny. That is, if you married into a family that commonly

utilized destructive conflict resolution strategies, that family would then become part of your "reference group" and would likely serve to reinforce your use of destructive conflict resolution strategies. Moreover, your use of these destructive conflict resolution strategies would certainly have an effect on your partner's marital satisfaction.

This theoretical framework, and corresponding empirical support, shed some light on the complex ways in which families of origin may influence individuals within the context of marriage. Indeed, they compel us to examine the ways in which families of origin not only influence their own offspring (i.e., family of origin actor effects), but the selection of and eventual development of their offspring's partner (i.e., family of origin partner effects). For example, in the case of the current research, Mate Selection Theory provides reason to suspect that husbands' families of origin will be associated with wives' conflict resolution style (i.e., husbands' family of origin partner effect on wives' conflict resolution style), and that wives' conflict resolution style may in turn mediate the association between husbands' family of origin and wives' marital satisfaction (i.e., husbands' family of origin partner effect on wives' marital satisfaction). Of course, the parallel scenario for wives' families of origin (i.e., wives families' of origin will be associated with husbands' conflict resolution style, which may in turn mediate the association between wives' family of origin and husbands' marital satisfaction) is equally plausible.

The highly complex and interdependent nature of the relationships among these variables again highlights the utility of adopting a dyadic approach to examining the issue of intergenerational transmission—a conclusion that is also highlighted by empirical

evidence. For example, in a notable exception to the tendency for researchers to use individual data to examine intergenerational transmission, Sabatelli and Bartle-Haring (2003) utilized a dyadic approach to examine how family of origin experiences influence marital adjustment. In a sample of long-term couples (parents' of college students; married an average of 23 years), these researchers found evidence that wives' family of origin experiences, more so that husbands', were central to the prediction of marital adjustment. Indeed, they found that wives' family of origin experiences were significantly related to husbands' marital adjustment, whereas husbands' family of origin experiences were not significantly related to wives' marital adjustment variables (Sabatelli & Bartle-Haring). While the constructs used by Sabatelli and Bartle-Haring are conceptualized very differently than in the current study—family of origin influence was conceptualized as differentiation (e.g., respect, empathy) rather than family structure and/or conflict (as in the current study), and the marital outcome examined was marital adjustment (e.g., intimacy) rather than marital satisfaction – their work lends support to two of the arguments presented in the current research. First, when examining the influence of family of origin experience on current marital outcomes it is imperative to use a dyadic approach, and conceptualize the couple as the unit of analysis. Second, within this dyadic framework, there is evidence to support the utility of the current study's first research question—that there may be some gender differences in how families' of origin influence current marriages.

Mixed Methods Approach

In addition to taking a dyadic approach to data collection, analyses, and interpretation, the current research also utilizes mixed methodology to more effectively and efficiently examine hypotheses and research questions about the complex phenomenon of intergenerational transmission (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). By thoughtfully combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, mixed methodology affords the current researcher the opportunity capitalize on the strengths, and negate the limitations, of each individual approach—resulting in a research product that is arguably superior to monomethod studies (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

For example, the current study is comprised of quantitative survey data as well as qualitative interview data. The quantitative data is used to test hypotheses, validate an existing conceptualization of the phenomenon of intergenerational transmission, and gather data from a relatively large sample of couples. The qualitative data is used to interpret the quantitative findings, explore research questions, and more accurately represent diverse experiences by tapping directly into participants' perceptions and meanings (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Moreover, the quantitative survey data in the current study allows for a breadth of evidence which establishes the overall pattern of intergenerational transmission, while the qualitative data in the current study help to explain, interpret, and give context to that pattern (Irwin, 2008).

In recent years there have been numerous calls for increased methodological diversity and more integrated approaches that combine methods throughout the social sciences (e.g., Creswell, 2002, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003), as well as increasing

interest in mixed methods research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). In addition, within the study of intergenerational transmission there has been support for the use of interviews to understand the meanings of events from the perspective of the participants (Boney, 2003), and a call for "methodological innovation which is sensitive to the diverse experiences, as well as the complex aspects of relationships" (Arditti, 1999, p. 51). Despite this, the primary researcher is aware of no previous mixed methods research studies in the area of intergenerational transmission, and therefore utilizes mixed methodology to make potentially make both methodological and meaningful contributions to the extant literature.

<div align="center">Hypotheses and Research Questions</div>

Based on the existing theoretical frameworks and empirical findings on the intergenerational transmission of marital quality and stability discussed above, the current study examines a model which conceptualizes the relationship between family of origin factors (parental marital status, interparental conflict, and family of origin conflict) and current marital satisfaction, and the possible mediating role of conflict resolution style in that relationship (see Figures 1 & 2). Specific research hypotheses and research questions which address parts of this model, and/or the model as a whole, are presented below.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Family of origin factors (i.e., parental divorce, family conflict, and interparental conflict) will be significantly and negatively associated with current marital satisfaction for both husbands and wives (see Figure 1).

Hypothesis 2: Conflict resolution style will mediate the association between family of origin and current marital satisfaction for both husbands and wives, as reflected in both actor and partner effects (see Figure 2).

Research Questions

Research question 1: Will there be evidence of a gender difference in the way that families of origin influence current marital outcomes?

Specifically:

1a: When examining the link between families of origin and conflict resolution style, are husbands' and wives' actor effects significantly different (paths a and c of Figure 2)? Are husbands' and wives' partner effects significantly different (paths e and f of Figure 2)?

1b: When examining the link between conflict resolution style and marital satisfaction, are husbands' and wives' actor effects significantly different (paths b and d of Figure 2)? Are husbands' and wives' partner effects significantly different (paths g and h of Figure 2)?

1c: Will a gender difference in the process of intergenerational transmission of marital quality emerge from participants' descriptions of their experiences and/or the results of the configural comparative analysis?

Research question 2: In what specific ways do families of origin influence current marital outcomes?

Research question 3: Is there more than one "pathway" that couples follow from their experience with their families of origin to their current experience of marriage? If so, what are these pathways, and what is the potential role of the members of the couples in determining which pathway they follow?

CHAPTER TWO: METHODS

Procedures

The current study utilized a sequential explanatory approach to conducting mixed methods research (Creswell, 2003), and as such the quantitative and qualitative data for the study were collected in two phases (see figure 3). The first phase of the study focused on collecting and analyzing quantitative survey data, and the second phase of the study focused on collecting and analyzing qualitative data via semi-structured interviews with a selective sub-sample of couples who completed surveys in phase one. Finally, after both phases of data collection and analysis, the qualitative and quantitative findings were integrated at the interpretation stage of the study. This particular mixed methods approach was utilized because it provided the unique opportunity to use one type of data to aid in the interpretation of the findings derived from of the other (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003).

Quantitative data for the current study were collected as part of the Early Marriage Study (see Segrin, Hanzal, & Domschke, 2009). To be eligible to participate in the Early Marriage Study, all couples had to meet the following criteria: a) they had to be married, and this marriage had to be a first marriage for both members of the couple, b) they had to be newlyweds (that is married for five years or less), and c) both members of the couple had to be willing to participate.

I limited recruitment to participants who are newlyweds, and in their first marriages, for a few reasons. First, much of the previous research on possible mediators of intergenerational transmission of relationship stability or quality (e.g., attitudes about

marriage) utilizes convenience samples of college students who are not yet married (e.g. Burgoyne & Hames, 2002; Herzog & Cooney, 2002; Stone & Hutchinson, 1992), or in dating relationships (e. g. Levy, Wamboldt, & Fiese, 1997; Mullett & Stolberg, 2002)— and considerably less research in this area has focused on newlywed couples specifically (cf. Story, Karney, Lawrence, & Bradbury, 2004). In order to examine constructs such as marital satisfaction, married couples were actively recruited for the current study.

Second, by focusing specifically on newlywed couples, the current study can capture couples after they have made the commitment to marriage (an arguably important step in the family life course), but before the possible dissolution of many marriages. Finally, collecting data from newlywed couples, as opposed to using a sample of married couples at heterogeneous stages of marriage, narrows the focus of the study. The impact of the family of origin on outcomes such as marital satisfaction may change over time, and may be greatly influenced by marital histories— especially marital histories that involve multiple transitions. Focusing the study on the newlywed years of first marriages eliminates that possible confound.

Couples were recruited using two different methods. The first method utilized courthouse records of marriage licenses filed in one county in Arizona within the past five years. Using information provided in these court records, 204 recruitment letters which briefly described the study were sent to potential participants (see Appendix A). Participants who responded with an interest to take part in this research by mailing back a postage paid postcard were then mailed surveys (one for the husband, one for the wife) and consent forms (see Appendix B), as well as separate pre-addressed stamped

envelopes to return their surveys independently. Participants were given their choice of a

$10 gift card to Target or Best Buy for their completion of the surveys. Of the 204

recruitment letters that were sent, 8 were returned as undeliverable. Of the 196 couples

who presumably received recruitment letters, 24% (n = 47 couples) actually participated

in the study. This response rate is comparable to the response rates of other studies where

similar recruitment techniques were used (e.g., M. D. Johnson et al., 2005; Kurdek,

1991). Approximately one quarter of the total sample was recruited with this method.

The remaining three quarters of participants were recruited through solicitations

in a number of undergraduate classes in two departments of a large southwestern

university located in the same Arizona county from which the courthouse records were

obtained. Students were offered extra credit towards their course grade if they identified

an eligible couple (either themselves, or someone they knew) by providing researchers

with the couple's names and contact information. These eligible couples were then

mailed surveys (one for the husband, one for the wife) and consent forms, as well as

separate pre-addressed stamped envelopes to return their surveys independently. Of the

248 couples who were referred by students, 74% (n = 184 couples) actually participated.

Of the 231 couples who mailed back completed surveys (from both recruiting

methods), 194 couples were in fact eligible to participate. The surveys from the

remaining 37 couples were excluded because of one of the following reasons: 1) one

member of the couple was previously married, or 2) the couple was married for more

than 5 years at the time they filled out the survey. Surveys from four additional couples

were excluded from data analysis because there was a significant amount of missing data

in the responses (e.g., one participant left an entire page of the survey blank). The remaining surveys were used in all subsequent analyses (see also the following discussion of missing data management). This process yielded a total sample size of 190 couples.

The sample used for the qualitative portion of this study was a sub-sample of the original 190 couples that participated in the first phase of data collection by filling out the quantitative survey measures. Ten percent (19 couples) of the couples from the original sample participated in semi-structured, dyadic follow-up interviews. These couples were selected through purposive sampling for heterogeneity (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998), which utilized information on these couples' families of origin, available from their survey data. Specifically, for the follow-up interviews, a sub-sample of couples were identified to equally represent four categories of marital status of family of origin present in the sample (i.e., both members of the couple grew up in intact families, both members of the couple grew up in divorced families, the wife grew up in a divorced family/husband grew up in an intact family, wife grew up in an intact family/husband grew up in a divorced family).

To recruit couples to participate in phase two of the data collection, letters and interview interest forms (see Appendix C) were mailed to the 190 couples who participated in phase one of the data collection, using the contact information that they provided at the time of the survey (approximately two years earlier). Despite efforts to verify and update the addresses of the newlywed couples, of the 190 letters that were sent, 24 were returned as undeliverable and were not able to be resent (i.e., the forwarding address for the couple was not publicly available). Of the 166 couples who

presumably received the letters and interest forms, 23 (14%) returned the enclosed interview interest form in the provided self-addressed stamped envelope indicating that they would be willing to be interviewed. These couples were then contacted via telephone to arrange a convenient time and place to conduct the interview. Of the 23 couples who indicated they were interested, 19 participated in the interview process. Of the remaining four couples, interviews were not completed because 1) the couple came from a category of marital status of family of origin that was already adequately represented in the sub-sample (i.e., at least 25% of the sub-sample), or 2) despite numerous attempts to schedule and reschedule, the husband and the wife were never available at the same time to participate. In addition, one couple was interviewed—but due to technical failure the data was unusable (i.e., both recording devices failed during the course of the interview). This resulted in a final sample size of 18 couples for the second phase of data collection.

The second (qualitative) phase of data collection consisted of an independently completed brief follow-up questionnaire (see Appendix D) to assess marital satisfaction at the time of the interview, as well as a jointly completed genogram and semi-structured interview with the primary investigator (15 couples) or a trained research assistant (4 couples).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in person in the participants' homes, and lasted between 45 min and 150 minutes. Interviews were scheduled at a time of the participants' choosing, when both members of the couple could be present. Each interview began with the interviewer briefly explaining the purpose of the study, what was entailed in participating, and obtaining informed consent from both partners. After

the consenting process, the husbands and wives independently filled out a short survey assessing their martial satisfaction while the interviewer set up the recording equipment.

The interview then proceeded with the couple jointly creating a family genogram (see Appendix E), with guidance from the interviewer. Not only did the joint creation of the genogram provide the interviewer with visual and comprehensive demographic information about the current couple and their respective families of origin, but it had other benefits as well. First, the process of collecting genogram information helped the interviewer to build rapport with the couple by collecting information in a collaborative and structured way-- allowing participants to give factual information with a minimal amount of defensiveness (Timm & Blow, 2005). Second, the genogram served as a visual grounding or reference point throughout the interview, so that it was easy to clarify which members of families or family relationships the participants were describing. Third, the genogram aided in framing the interview topics in a systematic and intergenerational way, which may have helped participants to more explicitly share their impressions of how their current marriage is influenced by their respective families of origin. And finally, the construction of the genogram served as a joint task where the interviewer could observe the interactions of the couple, and record these observations in field notes. These field notes served to supplement the information gathered in the interview itself.

Once the genogram was completed, the interviewer asked both members of the couple to respond to a series of pre-determined questions about the history of their relationship, their current marital relationship (including marital satisfaction, and conflict resolution style), and their families of origin (see section on interview protocol, below).

While each couple was asked the same pre-determined questions, the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for the flexibility to discuss important issues that arose during each individual interview with further probing questions as appropriate. All interviews were recorded, and later transcribed into text format for analyses.

Like all other phases of this research, the interviews reflected a dyadic approach— both members of the couple were interviewed simultaneously. This approach, commonly called "joint interviewing" has been shown to produce data that are qualitatively different than data from sole interviews (i.e., interviewing one member of a couple at a time; Arksey, 1996), and has the potential to elicit shared or dissimilar understandings (Arksey), and to generate more comprehensive data as interviewees fill one another's gaps and build on one another's responses (Seymour, Dix, & Eardley, 1995). Joint interviewing also allowed for the participants to be more at ease and comfortable (with their partner present) throughout the interviewing process, and gave the interviewer the unique opportunity to observe the couple interacting. In addition, joint interviewing has been utilized in the past to explore these issues with married couples (e.g., Oral History Interview), and is consistent with the overall goal of this research adopt a dyadic approach to understanding the intergenerational transmission of marital quality and stability whenever possible.

Because of the in-depth, as well as dyadic, nature of the interviews—both interviewers (the primary investigator, as well as a trained research assistant) were specially trained in this research methodology. Beyond basic interviewing skills (e.g., building rapport, avoidance of leading questions, providing appropriate verbal and non-

verbal feedback), skills and approaches necessary for joint interviewing were also practiced and perfected during practice interviews with volunteer couples (who had hot completed phase one of data collection) before interviews were conducted with participants. These practice interviews included the consenting process, creating a genogram, and conducting the semi-structured interview itself—and were recorded and reviewed/critiqued by both interviewers for training purposes. The joint interviewing skills addressed in the practice interviews included being observant and noting interaction patterns between the spouses (e.g., who was more likely to speak first, how did they negotiate any differences in opinion), as well as an inclusive manner of probing and prompting. For example, interviewers practiced equally engaging with both members of the couple—making eye contact with both, eliciting answers from both members of the couples on all questions, and alternating who is prompted (or subtly encouraged) to answer a question first.

<div align="center">Participants</div>

The sample used for the quantitative portion of this study consisted of 190 couples who were in their first marriages. Participants were married between one month and 72 months, with an average length of marriage of 20 months. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 49 years of age. The mean age for husbands was 27.8 (SD = 5.1) years of age and the mean age for wives was 26.1 (SD = 4.4) years of age. Seventy-eight percent of husbands and 75% of wives identified themselves as White/Caucasian, 13% of husbands and 14% of wives identified themselves as Hispanic, and 9% of husbands and 11% of wives identified themselves as another race/ethnicity (e.g., American Indian or

African American). The years of education in the sample ranged from 8 to 25, with the educational level for both husbands and wives averaging about three and a half years of college. For both husbands and wives the majority of the participants were employed full-time (83% and 61%, respectively), while the remainder reported being employed part-time (7% and 20%, respectively), being a homemaker or full-time student (6% and 14%, respectively), or being unemployed or retired (4% and 7%, respectively). In addition, 25% of the couples in the sample had at least one child.

It should be noted that the demographic characteristics of the groups of participants from the two different recruiting methods were quite similar on most counts (i.e., age, age at time of marriage, length of marriage, number of children, years of formal education), with the exception of race/ethnicity, and employment status (for wives only). For both husbands and wives, a higher percentage of participants who were recruited through courthouse records identified themselves as being Hispanic (27% and 24% respectively, as compared to 12% and 11%, respectively for the participants recruited through university classes), although this difference was not statistically significant. In addition, a higher percentage of wives recruited through the courthouse records reported being unemployed at the time of the survey (12% as compared to 2%), and a lower percentage of wives recruited through the courthouse records reported being employed part-time (12% as compared to 21%). This difference was the only statistically significant difference between the two samples, X^2 (4, N = 190) = 9.69, $p < .05$. The implications of these differences are addressed in the discussion.

The sub-sample used for the qualitative portion of this study included 18 couples, who ranged in age from 21 to 36 years (mean age for husbands was 29, mean age for wives was 27), and had been married an average of 4 years (ranged from 2.5 to 7 years). A majority of the interviewed participants identified themselves as White/Caucasian (83% of husbands, 78% of wives), with the remainder identifying as Hispanic (17% of both husbands and wives), or another race/ethnicity (5% of wives). The years of education ranged from 12 to 21, with the mean level of education averaging 16 years for husbands and 17 years for wives. Ninety-four percent of husbands and 83% of wives were employed full-time, while 6% of husbands were retired. The remainder of wives reported being employed part-time (11%), or being a homemaker/full-time student (6%). In addition, at the time of the interview 72% of the couples had at least one child (three of those couples had a newborn).

<div align="center">Measures</div>

Survey Measures

Demographics. On the written survey, participants were asked to provide demographic data such as age, race/ethnic background, age at marriage, education, and employment status (see Appendix F).

Parental marital status. Parental marital status was assessed with 1 dichotomous item, which asked "Were your parents ever divorced or separated for a period of more than one year?" (where 1 = yes, and 0 = no).

Family of origin conflict. Conflict in the family of origin was assessed by asking each participant to fill out the conflict subscale of the Family Environment Scale (FES)

(Moos & Moos, 1994). For this 9-item subscale, participants were asked to think about

the family they grew up with, and indicate on a 5-point likert-type scale (where 1 =

strongly disagree, and 5 = strongly agree) how much they agreed or disagreed with

statements such as "We fight a lot in our family" (see Appendix G). This subscale has

been found to be reliable in past research (e.g., α = .95; Moos & Moos), as well as in the

current study (α = .83 for husbands, α = .80 for wives).

Interparental conflict. Interparental conflict was measured using the 13-item

Perceptions of Interparental Conflict-I/F Scale (PIC-I/F), which is a shortened version of

the Children's Perceptions of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC; (Kline, Wood, &

Moore, 2003). The items, such as "I often saw my parents arguing," and "When my

parents had an argument, they yelled a lot" were on a likert-type scale ranging from 1

(strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Please see Appendix H for the entire scale. This

scale has been validated with young adults from both divorced and non-divorced families

(Bickham & Fiese, 1997), and has been shown to be reliable in past research (e.g., α =

.83; Kline et al., 2003), as well as in the current study (α = .94 for husbands and wives).

Marital satisfaction. Marital satisfaction was assessed using the Quality Marriage

Index (QMI; Norton, 1983). This scale consists of five items asking participants to rate

the extent to which they agree with statements about their marriage (e.g., "We have a

good marriage"), and one item asking participants to rate their overall happiness with

their marriage (see Appendix I). For this study, all items on this scale contained a

response set ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree). Past research has

found this scale to be highly reliable for husbands and wives (α = .96 and α = .96,

respectively; M. D. Johnson & Bradbury, 1999), and the current study found high levels of reliability for husbands and wives (α = .93 and α = .96, respectively).

Conflict resolution style. Conflict resolution style was assessed using the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSI; Kurdek, 1994). The CRSI measures the frequency of use of various strategies for dealing with conflict, assessed by four items each, including positive problem solving (e.g., "focusing on the conflict at hand"), conflict engagement (e.g., "exploding and getting out of control"), and withdrawal (e.g., "tuning the other person out"). For every item, each partner was asked to indicate how frequently (1 = never, 5 = always) they use that particular strategy to deal with arguments or disagreements with their partner (see Appendix J). Reliability on each of the self-report subscales has been moderate in past research (ranging from .77 - .85, and .66 - .86, for husbands and wives respectively; Kurdek). Reliability in the current study for self-reported positive problem solving, conflict engagement, and withdrawal was good for husbands (α = .76, .80, and .80, respectively), as well as wives (α = .72, .80, and .73, respectively).

Semi-Structured Interview Measures

Genogram. Genograms are tangible and graphic representations of complex family constellations and patterns (McGoldrick, Gerson, & Shellenberger, 1999), and use symbols, lines, and brief narratives to depict key information about a family and its history (Timm & Blow, 2005). As discussed above in procedures, the genogram served as: a) a way to build rapport between the interviewer and the couple; b) a visual grounding or reference point; c) a way to frame the interview topics in an

intergenerational way and d) an interaction task which the interview could observe and include in field notes.

Assessment of "change." Because the qualitative phase of data collection occurred approximately two years after the quantitative phase, efforts were taken to assess what (if anything) had changed significantly for the couples between the first and second phases of data collection. To document any major demographic changes, participants were asked "can you tell me what, if anything, has changed in the last two years or so since you completed the surveys?" They were then prompted to report any changes in family structure, income, employment, education, and anything else they felt was significant. In addition, any changes to family structure or family membership (e.g., if the couple had a baby) were explicitly discussed during the construction of the genogram. One significant change in this sub-sample was the rate of parenthood – twelve of the eighteen couples reported having babies since they completed the first phase of data collection, and many of those were first time parents. This family membership change led to a change in employment for some wives (two reported becoming full time moms, while one left her job to start an at home business). The only other notable change in demographic characteristics would be in the realm of education – three wives and two husbands reported gaining at least one year of education since the first phase of data collection.

To determine if there were any significant changes in the outcome variable of interest (marital satisfaction), a brief questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the interview (see Appendix D). This questionnaire included the same 6 question scale

that was used in phase one of data collection (see description of the Quality Marriage

Index above). Results indicate that, on average, there was not a significant change in

marital satisfaction from the first phase of data collection to the second phase of data

collection for husbands ($t(17) = 1.52$, *ns*) or wives ($t(17) = 1.21$, *ns*).

   Interview protocol. The interviewer asked both members of the couple to respond

to a series of pre-determined questions about the history of their relationship, their current

marital relationship (including marital satisfaction, and conflict resolution style), and

their families of origin (see Appendix K).

   This interview protocol was developed based on: a) the Oral History Interview

(Buehlman & Gottman, 1996; e.g., "Tell me about how you decided to get married. Of all

the people in the world, what made you decide that this was the person you wanted to

marry?"); b) the quantitative questions on the first phase of data collection for the current

study (e.g., to assess marital satisfaction – "How satisfied are you with your marriage

overall? Can you explain to me why you are satisfied or unsatisfied?"); and c) an

interview protocol used in an earlier pilot study with women who had experienced a

parental divorce conducted by the primary investigator (Dennison, 2005; e.g., "How did

you learn about marriage? Were/are there any 'marriage role models' in your life? If so,

what did you learn from them? If not, how have you learned about marriage?"). Included

in the section of the interview on families of origin were explicit questions about how the

participants felt that their parents' marriages (and possible subsequent divorces)

influenced their own (e.g., Do you feel that your parents' or your partner's parents'

marriage/divorce impacts your current marriage? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?).

Field notes. Following each interview, the interviewer wrote out a description of the interview process, as well as any observations about the couple, their interactions, or the setting. Field notes for this study included logistical information about the interview (e.g., description of the location, and where the interviewer and each participant sat throughout the interview), practical issues that may have influenced the nature or frequency of participants' responses (e.g., "newborn baby was a little fussy, wife was working to comfort baby and seemed distracted during questions 13-15, declined offer to pause interview"), as well as observations about the couples' interactions (e.g., "husband and wife made little physical contact or eye contact throughout the interview-- wife would often look towards husband, but he would avoid her gaze," or "husband and wife were in close contact throughout the interview—making eye contact, holding hands, and touching each other's arms frequently"). The field notes were not formally coded, but were often incorporated as "asides" within the transcripts, and served as a way to give context and deeper meaning to the content of the interviews (Bogdan & Biklin, 2003).

CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS

Quantitative Analysis

Missing Data Management

Although the current study had very little missing data overall (0.46%), a portion

of the missing data were imputed via a manual estimation method using the following

guidelines: a) missing values were replaces only if there was one missing item from a

multi-item scale, b) where there was a clear pattern of responses (e.g., 4, 4, 4) that value

was imputed (i.e., 4), and c) where the pattern as unclear the midpoint of the scale was

entered (C. Segrin, personal communication, October 14, 2006). To address the

remainder of the missing data that were unable to be imputed (i.e., single items that were

not part of a scale, or multiple items in the same scale), selective listwise deletion was

employed—which resulted in four couples being excluded from all analyses.

Imputing missing data has advantages over traditional methods of handling

missing data. Rather than omitting all cases that have missing data on any variable of

interest (listwise deletion), or omitting cases that are missing specific variables for certain

analyses (pairwise deletion), imputing data allows the researcher to retain those cases--

therefore utilizing more available data, reducing estimation bias, maintaining a uniform

sample size, and producing less biased estimates of variances, means, and correlations

(Graham, Cumsille, & Elek-Fisk, 2003).

Once the missing data were imputed in the final dataset, preliminary analyses

were run on all the variables of interest. See table 1 for the correlation matrix and

descriptive statistics for all manifest variables.

Creation of Latent Variables

Latent variables, rather than manifest variables, were utilized in the current study for a number of reasons. First, latent variables allow for the examination of constructs that cannot be directly observed (e.g., marital satisfaction). Second, the use of latent variables allows for the possibility of multidimensional conceptualizations of constructs, which may perhaps more accurately represent the complex nature of the current variables of interest such as "family of origin." In addition, latent variables (when used in conjunction with structural equation modeling) have the added benefit of correcting for measurement error, and therefore increasing the size of the meaningful parameter estimates (Byrne, 2010; Kline, 2005). Finally, the use of latent modeling has the advantage of allowing for the explicit and statistical comparison of nested models, which will be discussed in more detail later in these results.

To prepare the data for use in structural modeling with latent variables, three parallel latent variables were created for husbands and wives using parceling techniques, including family of origin (see indicators 1, 2, 3 and 10, 11, 12 in figure 4), conflict resolution style (see indicators 4, 5, 6 and 13, 14, 15 in figure 4), and marital satisfaction (see indicators 7, 8, 9 and 16, 17, 18 in figure 4). See table 2 for the correlation matrix and descriptive statistics of the latent variables.

Parceling was utilized in this study for a number of reasons. First, two of the latent constructs are multidimensional, and using the internal-consistency approach has the advantage of keeping the multidimensional nature of the construct explicit (Little, Cunningham, Sandar, & Widaman, 2002). Second, purposeful parceling results in a

reduction in various sources of sampling error (Little, et al., 2002). Finally, parceling in this case creates a more parsimonious model overall, with fewer parameter estimates (Bandalos & Finney, 2001).

The indicators for family of origin and conflict resolution style were created using the internal-consistency approach to parceling, with each indicator representing different facets of the latent construct (Little et al., 2002). Family of origin indicators represented parental marital status (1 item; indicators 1 & 10), interparental conflict (13 items; indicators 2 & 11), and family of origin conflict (9 items; indicators 3 & 12). This family of origin latent variable was created to more accurately reflect the multi-faceted nature of the family of origin influence on offspring and their subsequent relationships—moving beyond family status alone as a potential predictor of subsequent offspring outcomes. While certainly not exhaustive, family status, family conflict, and inter-parental conflict have been found to be important predictors of offspring outcomes (both individually and within the context of relationships), and examining them together in one model (as this latent variable allows) is an important step towards moving beyond the dichotomous conceptualization of family of origin (i.e., comparing offspring from "divorced families" with offspring from "intact families") for which some previous research is criticized.

Current couple conflict resolution style indicators were comprised of sub-scales of the CRSI—including conflict engagement (4 items; indicators 4 & 13), positive problem solving (4 items; indicators 5 & 14), and withdrawal (4 items; indicators 6 & 15)—again designed to better capture and measure this multi-faceted concept within the statistical models. Although measured, the CRSI sub-scale representing compliance was not

utilized in the final measurement or structural models for two reasons. First, preliminary

data analyses with the current data could not clearly establish the valence of

compliance— providing evidence that compliance could be a constructive or destructive

strategy, perhaps depending on the context. For example, results of preliminary

measurement models which included compliance as an indicator of conflict resolution

style indicated that compliance loaded differently onto the latent construct than the other

three indicators (or CRSI sub-scales), which was reflected not only in the individual

factor loading but also in a decrease in overall model fit. Second, there is a precedent in

previous publications for utilizing selected sub-scales of the CSRI (e.g., Kurdek, 1995),

and more specifically for using this existing scale without the compliance sub-scale when

examining marital relationships (e.g., Van Doorn, Branje, & Meeus, 2007).

In addition, it should be noted that while the current conceptualization of conflict

resolution style includes indicators of both constructive (i.e., positive problem solving)

and destructive (i.e., conflict engagement and withdrawal) conflict resolution strategies—

as is the case in some existing research as well—the indicator for positive problem

solving had a negative loading onto the latent construct, which means that higher values

on the latent construct in this case are most meaningfully interpreted as indicating higher

usage of destructive conflict strategies.

Marital satisfaction was also comprised of three indicators, each of which were

parcels of selected items from the QMI. Items in this case were parceled based on their

standard deviations (modified balance technique), which is designed to maximize the

variance of each parcel (Landis, Beal, & Tesluk, 2000). This particular parceling

technique was used because of the nature of this variable. Prior to actually analyzing these data, the current researcher had theoretical and empirical evidence to suspect that in a newlywed sample, it was likely that there would be little to no variance in marital satisfaction—that is, many or all of the couples would report being very satisfied and few or no couples would report being unsatisfied (a phenomenon sometimes called the "honeymoon effect"). In an effort to mitigate the effect of this potential negative skew in the outcome variable, this modified balance technique was used to maximize or "balance" the variance of the parcels (for a discussion of parceling to overcome problems associated with non-normally distributed data see Alhija & Wisenbaker, 2006, Bandalos, 2002, and Hau & Marsh, 2004). In addition, although this method of parceling may not be universally accepted, recent research has found evidence that there are no differences in disattenuated structural coefficient estimates when a single unidimensional scale is used to measure a latent construct by using individual items, item parcels, or even a single item (Sass & Smith, 2006).

Measurement Model

In order to determine the relationship between the indicators and the latent constructs, a measurement model was constructed and assessed. This confirmatory factor analysis model was evaluated using maximum likelihood estimation with LISREL Version 8.8 software (see Figure 4). The scale was set by fixing the variance of the latent constructs to 1, and all latent variables were allowed to covary. In addition, parallel indicators (e.g., positive problem solving for husbands, and positive problem solving for

wives) were allowed to covary as well, given their similar scaling and content. This resulted in a close fitting model: $\chi^2_{(df = 111, N = 190)} = 162.56$; RMSEA = 0.042 $_{(.021-.059)}$; NNFI = 0.97; CFI = 0.98.

Measurement Invariance

To assess measurement invariance, that is to determine whether these constructs are defined in the same way for husbands and wives, a second measurement model was run that constrained all parallel factor loadings (e.g., the loading of the parental marital status factor to the latent variable of family of origin for husbands and wives—manifest variables 1 & 10 in figure 4) to be equal. When comparing this model to the original measurement model, these nested models provide mixed evidence for construct-level metric invariance. A chi-square difference test revealed that the unconstrained measurement model fits the data better than the constrained model ($\chi^2_{diff} = 38.773$, $df_{diff} =$ 9, n = 190, p < 0.001)—indicating that the constructs may manifest in different ways for husbands and wives. However, the use of the chi square difference test for assessing invariance has been criticized because its dependence on sample size can make trivial practical differences result in statistical significance in large samples, or conversely make meaningful differences fail to result in statistical significance in small samples (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002).

Furthermore, Cheung and Rensvold (2002), after a simulation examining 20 goodness-of-fit indexes (GFIs), concluded that change in the comparative fit index (CFI) is one of three GFIs that is a robust statistic for testing between group invariance. In this

case, the difference in CFI for the constrained and unconstrained measurement models is

.014 (using the formula $\Delta CFI = CFI_c - CFI_{uc}$)-- which is arguably at or very close to the

criteria for construct level metric invariance (smaller than or equal to 0.01) proposed by

Cheung and Rensvold. In addition, the RMSEA for the constrained measurement model

is .0537, which is within the 90% confidence interval of the unconstrained model (Card

& Little, 2006). Given the evidence provided by comparing the relative (CFI) and

absolute (RMSEA) fit indexes, I concluded that measurement invariance is tenable, and

that subsequent similarities/differences in latent variances and covariances in the

structural model can be interpreted as practical meaningful similarities/differences

between husbands and wives. For example, in the measurement model the latent

correlations between husbands and wives were statistically significant for: family of

origin (r = .27), conflict resolution style (r = .46), and marital satisfaction (r = .63)—

lending support to the dyadic and inter-related nature of these constructs.

Structural Models

Once the measurement model was established to fit the data, and measurement

invariance was assessed, a series of structural models designed to represent the APIM

with these data were tested. These models represented the interdependent nature of the

data, as well as the extent to which conflict resolution style potentially mediated the

impact of family of origin on current marital satisfaction.

First, an unrestricted APIM-based model of the data was assessed, which included

all possible direct paths from the predictor variables to the outcome variables (see figure

1), as well as all possible indirect paths including conflict resolution style as a mediator of the relationship between family of origin and marital satisfaction (see figure 2). This model showed acceptable fit, $\chi^2 = 197.77$, $df = 120$, n = 190, p = 0.00; RMSEA = 0.051 $_{(.036-.067)}$; NNFI = 0.95; CFI = 0.96. In addition this model provided some evidence to support hypothesis 1, as the direct path from wives' family of origin to wives' marital satisfaction was significant ($b = -.29$, $p < .01$)—indicating that (for wives) family of origin factors (e.g., interparental conflict) predict decreases in marital satisfaction.

Second, a more restricted APIM-based model of the data was assessed, which included only the indirect paths from the predictor to the outcome through the mediator (see figure 2). As was the case with the unrestricted model, this model also displayed acceptable fit, $\chi^2 = 210.78$, $df = 124$, n = 190, p = 0.00; RMSEA = 0.055 $_{(.040-.070)}$; NNFI = 0.95; CFI = 0.96. To address hypothesis 2, which predicted that conflict resolution style would mediate the relationship between family of origin and marital satisfaction, this restricted model was statistically compared to the aforementioned unrestricted model. A chi-square difference test revealed that there was a significant difference between the two models ($\Delta\chi^2(4) = 13.01$; $p < .01$)—evidence that in the overall model conflict resolution style does not fully mediate the relationship between family of origin and current marital satisfaction, but that partial mediation is tenable.

Finally, to begin to answer research question 1 about possible gender differences, a series of nested structural models of the data were statistically compared. For each parallel actor and partner effect, a less restricted model (which allowed the parallel actor or partner paths to vary freely) was statistically compared to a more restricted model

(which constrained the parallel actor or partner paths to be equal). Chi-square difference tests for each set of nested models revealed there were no statistically significant gender differences in any indirect paths.

Final Model

Given the information from the unrestricted and restricted structural model, as well as the nested models comparing parallel paths, a final model was constructed to most closely represent the data and the conceptualization of the process of intergenerational transmission of marital quality in this sample. This model (see figure 5) retains all of the indirect paths of the more restricted model, as well as the direct path from wives' family of origin to wives' marital satisfaction that was found to remain significant in the unrestricted structural model. In addition, because there was no statistical difference between any of the parallel actor and partner effects, these pathways were constrained to be equal in the final model to increase statistical power. This final model represents the data significantly better than the restricted model, as evidenced by a chi-square difference test ($\Delta\chi^2(3) = 10.90$; $p < .01$), and is more parsimonious (e.g., fewer paths) than the unrestricted structural model. In addition, the model closely fits the data according to both absolute and relative fit indexes, $\chi^2 = 199.886$, $df = 127$, n = 190, $p = 0.00$; RMSEA = $0.048_{(.032-.063)}$; NNFI = 0.96; CFI = 0.97.

Beyond the fit of the overall model—the fact that each parameter (or individual path) within the model is statistically significant provides evidence to support the current conceptualization of the phenomenon of the intergenerational transmission of marital

quality (see figure 5). Specifically, the statistically significant actor effects of family of origin on conflict resolution style ($b = .15$, $p < .05$) indicate that each partners' family of origin experience does in fact have an association with their own current conflict resolution style. Moreover, the statistically significant partner effects of family of origin on partners' conflict resolution style ($b = .15$, $p < .05$) indicate that families may be a significant predictor of functioning in future relationships—not only for the person who grew up in the family, but also for that person's eventual partner.

Not surprisingly, an examination of the individual paths from husbands' and wives' conflict resolution styles to husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction ($b = -.28$, $p < .001$) provide evidence that a person's destructive strategies for handling conflict in a relationship predict decreases in their own marital satisfaction. Moreover, an examination of the partner effects of conflict resolution style on marital satisfaction ($b = -.18$, $p < .01$) also provides evidence that one's own destructive strategies for handling conflict predict decreases in the marital satisfaction of one's partner. Of particular interest, when examining the individual paths of the model, is the significance of the direct path between wives' families of origin and wives' marital satisfaction—which represents an effect above and beyond the other predictors in the model ($b = -.32$, $p < .001$).

The mediating effect of conflict resolution style was also statistically assessed within each theoretically relevant pathway with the use of a Sobel's test (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002). For the indirect actor effects of family of origin on marital satisfaction through conflict resolution style (i.e., husband's family of origin → husband's conflict resolution style → husband's marital satisfaction), results of

the Sobel's test provided some evidence for mediation, as the mediating effect approached significance ($z = -1.84$, $p = .065$). In addition, the indirect partner effects of family of origin on partners' marital satisfaction through partner's conflict resolution style (i.e., husband's family of origin → wife's conflict resolution style → wife's marital satisfaction) also approached significance ($z = -1.84$, $p = .065$), providing some evidence for partial mediation of that particular pathway as well.

Although Sobel's tests of these individual mediating pathways only approached significance, it should be noted that in the final model the indirect effects of family of origin on marital satisfaction were statistically significant ($b = -.07$, $p < .05$), providing further evidence that in the entire model conflict resolution style at least partially mediates the association between family of origin and marital satisfaction for husbands and wives.

Qualitative Analysis

The data collected from the semi-structured interviews in this study (i.e., genograms, field notes, and interview recordings/transcripts) were analyzed in two ways before being integrated with the results of the quantitative data analyses.

Thematic Coding Process

First, an inductive and iterative approach to thematic coding was used while collecting the qualitative data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003), where the data from all sources (i.e., genograms, field notes, and interview transcripts/recordings) were carefully explored and examined throughout the data collection process by the primary investigator

and the trained secondary interviewer to generate common "themes" across the interviews. The process of thematic coding began early in the stages of phase two of data collection, and included strategies such as taking detailed field notes (both during and immediately after conducting the interviews), data management (creating and organizing data files), reading and memoing (reading through text and forming initial impressions), describing and defining recurring themes across interviews, and classifying (grouping initial codes/ideas into meaning units) (Creswell, 1998). Throughout phase two data collection and analyses, the primary investigator, as well as the trained secondary interviewer, discussed important concepts as they arose from the data collection and reflection process, and compared/contrasted interview transcripts, genograms, and field notes to either support or challenge those initial themes.

The initial themes that emerged, and received support from multiple interviews, were compiled and developed into an initial "start list" of codes. These codes were revisited and revised as new interviews were conducted. Once the final interview was conducted, the primary investigator and the trained secondary interviewer carefully reviewed all of the data multiple times, and again revised the "start list" of codes that was created throughout the data collection process. This list of codes was refined into a preliminary coding scheme, by categorizing and collapsing codes into meaningful categories to help organize the information and facilitate interpretation.

This preliminary coding scheme was then carefully reviewed in light of a thorough consideration of the complete collection of qualitative data, with special attention being paid to any disconfirming evidence or themes that may have been missed.

Once the primary investigator was confident that this coding scheme would accurately capture the meaning of the qualitative data, each interview was then coded according to this scheme, which consisted of two major categories: 1) how the couple learned about marriage/who or what influenced their marriage, and 2) what impact (if any) did they perceive their families of origin had on their current marriage. Within these two categories, there were multiple codes that could be assigned to each couple that was interviewed. Please see table 3 and table 4 for the complete list of codes within each category.

Each code was considered dyadically (as with the quantitative analyses, the couple was the unit of analyses), and independently (that is, the decision of whether or not to assign each code to each couple was not dependent on the assignment of any other code). The dyadic nature of the coding meant that each couple (not each individual) was coded—which in practice meant that if either member of the couple expressed an experience that meaningfully represented a code (e.g., having a single parent, and therefore no parental marriage role model), then that code (i.e., "parents provided no role model") was assigned to that couple (not the specific member of the couple who had the experience). In addition, because of the dyadic and independent nature of the coding, it is important to note that it is possible for each couple to be coded as endorsing codes that may seem contradictory (e.g., "parents as positive role models" and "parents as models of what *not* to do"). In the case of these two codes, that could mean that each member of the couple expressed experiences that were coded as one of the two codes (i.e., husband's parents were good role models, but wife's parents were not), or it could indicate a more

complex set of experiences for one or both members of the couple. While this may

obscure some information about the couple (i.e., which member(s) of the couple had

parents who were positive marriage role models), the primary investigator felt it was

important to maintain the couple as the unit of analysis throughout the entire research

process because of the dyadic nature of the concepts being considered (e.g., marriage).

The advantages and challenges of using the couple as the unit of analysis in qualitative

coding will be discussed further in the discussion section.

Each couple was then coded by the primary investigator, as well as a trained

secondary coder (who was *not* the trained secondary interviewer). The final step of the

thematic coding process involved coding the interview in its entirety—that is taking all of

the data from the interview into account in when assigning codes. The written transcript

served as the primary source of data throughout the coding process (including

establishing and measuring inter-rater reliability), but in cases where the two coders

disagreed and/or the transcript did not provide enough information to make a reliable

determination, other sources of data were utilized to provide more context and help

determine the intended meaning. For example, the husband of one couple stated "TV"

when asked how he learned about marriage, but did not provide any explanation or

description of what this taught him and his wife about marriage. At first examination it

was unclear if in fact television had been an important source of information on marriage

for this couple, or if that was not the case (i.e., perhaps television had played a very

minor part in contributing to their understanding of marriage, and therefore did not

warrant endorsement of "media" as an overall theme). To determine if the code "media"

should be assigned to this couple, the original recording and the field notes from the interview were utilized. When considering multiple sources of data in this case, it became clear that the husband was a self proclaimed "jokester"—and that he joked throughout the interview (as noted in the field notes). In addition, it was clear from his tone of voice and his wife's laughter (on the recording) that he was in fact joking in this case. Moreover, it was noted in the field notes (and supported by the transcript) that this couple was very articulate and verbose in their responses—giving thorough responses, and explaining concepts in great detail. The fact that "TV" was said but not discussed or explained by this particular couple also lends support to the conclusion that television was not a meaningful source of information on marriage for them, and therefore the code of "media" was not appropriate in this case.

This example also illustrates the importance of context in the current coding process, and the fact that coding was applied to the interview in its entirety—not smaller "codeable chunks" or "meaning units" as is often used in some methods of analyzing text (e.g., content analysis). In this study, the overall meaning and experience of the couples was considered in coding, not just the couples' words.

Intercoder reliability. The primary investigator followed the recommendations of Lombard, Snyder-Duch, and Bracken (2002) in ensuring intercoder reliability. First, the independent secondary coder went through extensive training on the coding scheme, and reliability was informally assessed during the training process. During the training stage, the coding scheme was revised for clarity and any possible overlap of code meaning (that is, could one piece of meaningful information be coded in multiple ways?). Next,

reliability between coders was formally tested in a pilot test of a random 10% of the data

(in this case two couples). The results of this pilot test (50% agreement) did not reach the

pre-determined "appropriate minimum acceptable level of reliability" (Lombard, et al.,

2002, p. 600) set by the primary researcher (80% agreement), and so training and

consensus coding (where each "discrepant" code is discussed until agreement is reached)

continued until both coders were more confident and comfortable with the coding

scheme. A second pilot test was conducted with another randomly selected 10% of the

data (two couples), and the results were much improved (94% agreement). Final

intercoder reliability was then assessed using the entire sample of interviewed couples,

and was above the minimum acceptable level (80% agreement) at 85% agreement, with a

Cohen's Kappa of .81.

Thematic Coding Results

Learning about marriage. To address research question 2, participants were

questioned throughout the interview about what they felt influenced their current

marriage, and how they learned about marriage. It should be noted that while the

interviews were framed around families of origin (e.g., beginning the interview session

with jointly creating a genogram), the questions relating to how the participants learned

about marriage began more generally (e.g., "How did you learn about marriage? Where

there any role models in your life?"), and only specifically focused on the families of

origin when participants' themselves identified them as marriage role models.

In terms of how the interviewed couples learned about marriage, and who they

saw as their "marriage role models"—parents were certainly the most frequently

mentioned. However, parents were discussed as positive role models by only about half of the couples (56%)—more couples discussed their parents as mediocre or partial role models (67%), or as models of what *not* to do in marriage (61%). While most couples did bring up their parents as a source of information about marriage, or as a model of marriage—many couples were very articulate in discussing the fact that it wasn't that clear-cut. Some couples did answer simply that their parents' marriage influences their own, and gave straight-forward examples of how (e.g., "they taught me about the roles in marriage… like who does what"). But, most couples had much more reflective and complex responses—discussing how there were some parts of their parents' marriages that were positive (and things that they would like emulate in their own marriage), and yet there were other parts of their parents' marriages that that they saw as negative (and are very careful *not* to model themselves). For example, the wife of one couple who received the code of "parents as mediocre or partial role models" explained:

> Uh I don't think, like I said, my parents were very good role models um as far as relationship goes. They certainly, you know, have been my heroes at some point or another for other accomplishments, but their relationship was certainly not one of them.

She went on to discuss how her parents' marriage did teach her about perseverance and commitment, but that her parents were not effective communicators and were unable to resolve conflicts—two things that she identified as keys to a successful marriage. She was also candid about her efforts to overcome this lack of a positive conflict resolution model, admitting that she occasionally "shuts down" and "walks

away" from issues in her own marriage, but that her husband is "good about talking issues out" and "forces her to face things" when she is tempted to withdraw.

Her husband talked about a similar impression of his parents as well— although he generally considered them positive marriage role models, he articulated a struggle between how he observed his parents' marriage functioning and how his own marriage functioned. He admitted that they had strong influence on him, but stated that:

At the same time some of the things that I was raised with and those ideas inform the decision I make, I think I make decisions directly opposite to those things too, cause whenever there were problems or conflicts in my parents' house-- when discussing it wouldn't work-- there was the time to just kind of wash your hands of it and pray. Pray about it because you know God would take care it, and I do not have that in my thought process at all.

Many couples also explicitly discussed their parents' marriages as bad models, or models of what *not* to do (61%). One husband first mentioned that he learned about marriage by "doing it… pretty much"—and then (almost begrudgingly) mentioned his parents, stating "probably as a detriment to how I learned about marriage was from my parents… unfortunately. Which I try not to emulate a lot of what they did… my parent's marriage, in my opinion, was always a mess."

Another wife expressed similar sentiments, explaining "for me, I learned about all the negative parts of marriage from my parents, and then the good parts I learned from [my husband]." She went on to explain that her parents' marriage was business like, and probably failed for that reason. She was able to pin point that observing this made her

realize what kind of partner she did not want to have (i.e., one like her dad) and what kind of marriage she did not want to have (e.g., one that lacked affection).

In these cases (and many others), it seems the respondents recognized the short-comings and negative aspects of their parents' marriages, and worked to find alternative ways to function in their own marriages and their own lives. One wife simply stated, after her husband discussed that his parents were mediocre role models who taught him some good things, "I mean, my parents, I mean to be honest, not so much. I just pretty much learned what not to do from them."

In addition, it should be noted that 28% of the couples discussed the fact that their parents provided no marriage role model for them—either because their parents' marriage "failed" and they wrote it off entirely, or because their parents were divorced and/or remained single for the better part of their formative years. This too, was discussed in a very reflective and thoughtful way by the couples. One wife discussed how her parents' divorce and the lack of a good marriage role model influenced not only her current marriage, but also her feelings about marriage in general and her decision to marry. She stated:

I had a complex about marriage you know just assuming that you know if I got married it would mean I'd end up getting divorced. I had to go through a whole soul-searching. Do I really want to do that? Do I want to risk that? Do I want to risk having kids and putting them through that? And it, it really, you know, I had to take a hard look at my relationship, and you know soul search myself and realize you know…I…that's up to me. I set my own path.

In the cases where parents provided no role models, participants described consciously choosing other models to help them learn about marriage, including other family members, peers' parents, and in young adulthood the peers' themselves. In fact, many participants (even those whose parents were positive marriage role models) reported deliberately using additional marriage role models to help them create their own meanings of marriage. Interestingly, the most commonly endorsed code in terms of source of learning about marriage, or marriage role models, was the participants' social networks (72%). For the purposes of this research, this was defined as any family members besides parents (e.g., Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles, and Siblings) or any close friends. This finding may be partly due to the fact that "parents as role models" was broken up into different codes, but the fact that a majority of couples mentioned positive marriage role models in their friends and family is certainly noteworthy.

Beyond simply using the marriages of their friends and families as additional marriage models, some participants discussed observing them in conjunction with that of their parents to gain a better perspective and to learn about different possibilities. One wife discussed observing her parents' marriage, along other marriages in her close family, and "just really observing that there were different types of ones and there were marriages I wanted and… and marriages I didn't want and I could be- I'm the only one who could control that."

Moreover, some couples discussed their Grandparents' marriages in comparison to their parents' marriages—showing that they have carefully thought about intergenerational transmission across multiple generations, and what this might mean for

their own marriage. For example, one husband discussed how his paternal Grandparents' marriage lacked communication, and postulated that this was why his father made it a point to discuss everything. He explained how his Grandparents had "grown apart" because they did not discuss important issues—and how that had adversely affected his father. He even gave an example of his own observation, where instead of expressing her disapproval of her husbands' behavior directly to him, his Grandmother spitefully stuck out her tongue behind his back (but so that the rest of the family could see). He went on to describe the stress that this placed on his father (the designated "peace-keeper" of the family), and how his father vowed never expose his children to that type of stress. Consequently, his father preached and modeled the benefits of open communication in marriage—a virtue that this husband consciously replicated in his own marriage.

Also, seemingly separate of the influence of family, some participants (usually husbands) mentioned the unique things that they learned from friends' marriages. One husband talked extensively about the things he had learned from his "buddies" getting married before him—stating:

When I really started thinking about marriage was when a couple of my friends were married. I used to watch them 'cause I knew them growing up, and then you'd see them when they got married how they wouldn't be around as much anymore because they were with their wives, and [I would] watch how they had to be more responsible.

He went on to say:

I mean you learn a lot from your parents of course, but you're more just growing

up yourself. I think watching other adults be married or have kids or have relationships— you can pick up on things that are good and bad I guess.

Indeed, many couples when discussing their parents' marriage recognized the limited viewpoint that they had growing up, and were often more descriptive of their own experiences as children than of the quality or characteristics of their parents' marriage.

Other couples discussed actively comparing their own marriage to that of their friends, and using that as a discussion point about what they did and didn't want from their own marriage (e.g., "I am glad we don't bicker like them" or "I see a lot of [women] wanting to get married to have the wedding versus wanting to get married to have the marriage—and for me marriage is something you commit to every single day").

Clearly, parents and families provide a context to learn about marriage, but perhaps peers provide another important perspective on marriage. From peers, the respondents seemed to get a view of marriage that involved more candid disclosures (peer discussions about relationships, rather than parent-child discussions), and a more "modern" conceptualization of marriage and how it can work—perhaps providing a model of marriage that young adults can identify with more than their parents' marriage. In any case, social network influence on marriage is certainly an area that warrants more investigation, and will be touched on further in the discussion.

Finally, some respondents also identified religion (39%) and the media (28%) as important influences on how they learned about marriage. Religion was a prevalent theme in a number of interviews; a few couples were candid about the fact that they explicitly modeled their marriage after the guidelines laid out in the Bible (e.g., love,

honor, and obey; man as the decision maker), and their responses to many questions came back to that fact. In some cases, these religious values were passed down from their families of origin, and continued to serve as a powerful influence in their lives—but in other cases, religion served as a model and a foundation when their parents had failed to provide one. One couple described the fact that they both became Christians (as young adults) after growing up in families with divorced parents, and that their chosen religious lifestyle changed their views on life and marriage entirely. The husband declared, "before I was Christian I like never wanted to get married." In fact, they met while both working for the church, and identify their Senior Pastor and his wife as their primary marriage role model. The wife explained:

> Uhh trying to think with my parents, I learned how not to do marriage basically. Uh, most of what I learned about marriage was by seeing successful marriages through uh and they only-- only really successful ones I've seen are Christians. You know and you've heard a lot of our philosophies going back to what Jesus said, what the Bible says. So mostly through seeing, you know, Christian families that have been married awhile and seeing how it really does work with them. I would say that's how my biggest influence was with marriage or how I've learned about it.

Media as a source of information about, or influence on, marriage was a theme that was briefly touched on in a number of interviews—but was often mentioned in a tongue and cheek way ("well I saw this Dr. Phil show…"), or as a "confession" of sorts accompanied by some embarrassment. One wife explained:

Well on the one hand for me I got my parents who were really not like the best

example, and then literature [wife laughs]. I read a lot of novels. I think I've

learned more about marriage from John Cleary novels, which isn't necessarily the

best way to learn about marriage but… [wife's voice trailed off].

Another wife admitted to using Dr. Laura as a marriage role model, but quickly qualified

it by stating, "isn't she divorced?"

Current influence of families of origin. Throughout the course of conducting the

interviews, and examining the data, a few important themes emerged that centered around

the families of origin and the current and direct impact of those families on the couples'

marriages. This more "current" conceptualization of the influence of families of origin

differed from the more indirect impact the researcher originally conceptualized with the

quantitative phase of this study, and provided important additional clues to answering

research question 2. In an effort to capture this useful information, the category of

"current influence of families of origin" was created, with four codes.

First, many couples (83%) identified that beyond whatever model their parents

had provided them of marriage, their parents were currently a positive influence on their

marriage. This was most often discussed as instrumental or emotional support, such as

babysitting children or providing advice/counsel when needed. Many couples mentioned

simple ways that families showed their support, by asking how the spouse is doing, or

stating that they "make a cute couple." More than one husband also specifically discussed

his father-in-law as a good source of support (with everything from marital problems to

home repair).

Half of the couples interviewed also identified negative ways in which their families currently impact their marriage (many of them the same couples who mentioned positive influences, as discussed above). One way this was discussed was as "spill-over" of family issues that put a strain on their current marriage. For example, one husband recounted what it was like when his wife's mother recently divorced (for the second time), saying that he would:

> …want to know who's calling her [his wife] at times on the Saturday night when things are going good and wondering if it's her mom or her sister calling to talk about the divorce, because it would take her away from some of the things that maybe we're doing and put her in maybe a bad mood afterwards.

Another way that this theme manifested in the interviews was in discussions of differences in expectations between a member of the couple and the family, or as a by-product of differences in their two families of origin. For example, one wife explained that the unrealistic expectations of her mother-in-law were a constant stressor on her current marriage (e.g., the expectation that she go back to school and become a nurse, rather than be a stay-at-home mom). Another wife admitted that although her husband's family has positive impacts on their marriage, it can also be:

> …somewhat of a strain because I don't have, I don't hold all of those viewpoints that his parents do so… [pause] Sometimes it's hard for me to accept, so um you know, any extended amount of time that we spend with them um can be frustrating for me and therefore put pressure on our relationship you know while we're with them—because I don't feel, I don't know, maybe it's just comfort

level. I don't feel completely comfortable with them because their beliefs are so different [than her family].

Some couples (28%) discussed specific things that they have learned about marriage from the parents of their partners—a theme that we coded as "cross-influence." This most commonly occurred in cases where one member of the couple came from an intact family, and that marriage serves as a current model for the member of the couple who came from a divorced family—although it was endorsed by one couple where both members came from intact families. The husband of that couple expressed, "I think her family is an example of how I want our family to be."

The effects of these "current" models of marriage in the parents of a partner seem qualitatively different from the models provided by their own parents. It is possible that partners' parents provide some of the insights of "family" in that they often have an intimate view of their in-laws' relationship, but without the baggage or bias that they may experience with their own parents.

Finally, a few couples (22%) explicitly discussed learning important lessons about marriage from comparing how their two families of origin functioned—a theme that we coded as "interactional influence." In these cases, the couples were very reflective in describing the model of marriage that their own parents provided, as well as the model provided by their partners' parents, and what they learned and concluded by actively comparing and contrasting the two. For example, one couple explicitly stated "our families are very different"—and throughout the interview this theme came up as they discussed their attitudes about marriage, how they handle conflict, and how they

experience their own marriage. She described her family as very close and very cooperative in everything they do, and he described his family as very independent, where everyone does what they want. This came up while the couple was discussing roles in marriage (e.g., how much "power" a wife has), their conflict resolution style (e.g., she expects him to contribute around the house, he gets defensive), and how their families support their current marriage (e.g., her family sends cards for every little occasion, while his family often neglects to send cards for even major holidays).

Not only did this couple discuss these differences, but also how these differences translated into their expectations and experience of marriage, and how they consciously try to balance the influence of these two different models on their own marriage. He spoke candidly about working on being more interdependent like her family, by thinking less about himself, and more about their marriage and their family (they were new parents). She candidly spoke about trying to accommodate his need for independence (which she attributed to growing up in his family of origin), by giving him space when he needed it, and trying to phrase things in the form of requests rather than demands. Clearly, this couple (and the others who endorsed this code), learned something from comparing and contrasting both families that they did not necessarily learn from their own family of origin alone.

Configural Comparative Analysis

Interview data were also analyzed, in conjunction with some of the quantitative data, using the qualitative configural comparative analysis (CCA) method (Rihoux &

Ragin, 2009). This method is similar to the notion of an antecedents matrix, described by Miles and Huberman (1994), and involves making a matrix that serves as a visual representation of the variables of interest for a limited number of cases. This method uniquely allows for systematic cross-case comparisons, while at the same time preserving within-case complexity (Rihoux & Ragin), by providing the researcher with a systematic way to make case-by-case comparisons across columns, and identify patterns across and within cases.

Configural comparative analysis is unique in that it is both qualitative ("case–oriented"), as well as quantitative ("variable-oriented")—however, because each individual case is considered as a complex combination of properties (i.e., a "whole") that is not obscured in data analysis (Rihoux & Ragin), this method lies more clearly on the side of "case-oriented" methods (Rihoux & Lobe, 2009).

Moreover, unlike most mainstream statistical techniques, CCA does not adopt the basic assumptions of uniformity of causal effects (i.e., that a given factor is assumed to have the same type of effect on the outcome across all cases), and additivity (i.e., that a given factor is assumed to have the same incremental effect on the outcome across all cases; Rihoux & Ragin, 2009). Instead, CCA allows for the possibility of equifinality (i.e., that different "causal paths" may lead to the same outcome). This underlying assumption, as well as the specific techniques utilized in CCA, make it especially well suited to address research question three, by examining the number and character of the different potential pathways that exist from family of origin to current marital satisfaction (Ragin, 1987).

In this study CCA was applied by creating a matrix out of the main variables of interest collected from the initial surveys (i.e., interparental conflict, family conflict, current conflict resolution style, and marital satisfaction), as well as the codes generated during the first phase of qualitative data analysis (e.g., parents as positive marriage role models), for the 18 couples interviewed. For each couple, values for all variables of interest from the original survey were entered into the matrix—including values for each member of the couple when that information was available (e.g., wife's marital satisfaction *and* husband's marital satisfaction). Values in the cells of the matrix were determined based on how the participant's original survey response on that particular variable compared to the responses of the entire surveyed sample. Responses that fell into the top third were considered high, responses that fell into the bottom third of the responses were considered low, and those that fell in-between were considered moderate. The quantitative data was collapsed in this way to allow for visual comparison across and between cases.

The qualitative codes were dichotomously represented on the matrix as endorsed or not-endorsed for all couples (e.g., a "0" or "1" could be entered into the cell corresponding to each possible code). It is important to note that unlike the variables of interest from the original survey, these were coded for couples only and not for individual members of couples. In addition, a final variable in the matrix was created to group the couples according to the structural nature of their family of origin experiences. This variable created four groups of couples: 1) couples comprised of two members from intact families ("intact;" n=5); 2) couples comprised of a husband from a divorced family,

and a wife from an intact family (n=4); 3) couples comprised of a wife from a divorced family, and a husband from an intact family (n=5); and 4) couples comprised of two members from divorced families ("divorced;" n=4).

After careful examination of this matrix by the primary researcher, a few interesting group patterns in the data emerged—namely how the codes endorsed by the "intact" group differed from those endorsed by the "divorced" group. For example, 100% of the couples in the intact group identified their parents as positive role models, whereas none of the couples in the divorced group did. In addition, while 100% of the couples in the divorced group identified their parents as models of what *not* to do, only 40% of the intact group couples did (the lowest endorsement of all four groups). Also, while social network as a model of marriage was highly endorsed across the board, it was endorsed much more by the divorced group (100%) than the intact group (60%).

Not only did these two groups differ on the qualitative codes, but they showed distinct patterns within the quantitative variables as well. Not surprisingly, the intact group overwhelmingly reported relatively low levels of interparental and family conflict in their families of origin, whereas the divorced group overwhelmingly reported relatively high levels of these same variables. For these couples, however, this did not seem to easily translate into marital satisfaction—as 60% of the intact couples reported relatively low martial satisfaction (i.e., at least one member reported low satisfaction, and the other member was either low or moderate), whereas 75% of the divorced couples reported relatively high marital satisfaction (in fact, 5 respondents in this group reported their marital satisfaction as a "perfect 10"). It should be noted, however, that marital

satisfaction in this sample reflected what might be termed a ceiling effect (or a "newlywed effect")—in that most responses fell between 7.5 and 10 on a 10 point scale. Therefore, it is only in comparison to this skewed sample that these responses can be categorized as "low" on satisfaction, and should be interpreted in this context and not as a reflection of overall poor marital satisfaction (i.e., 8 out of 10 isn't bad). This ceiling effect, however, also lead to such a narrow range for "high" satisfaction as it was defined for these purposes (i.e., the top third of responses represented values above 9.83) that the fact that most members of the divorced group reported high satisfaction, while none of the members of the intact group did, is certainly a noteworthy one.

This potentially surprising pattern, as well as other more nuanced ones (that will be addressed in the discussion) observed throughout the process of CCA, supports the conclusion that the qualitative and "case-orientated" data did not completely support or concur with the findings from the quantitative data analyses. At this point, the primary researcher carefully considered these findings and attempted to answer research question three—is there more than one "pathway" that couples follow from their experience with their families of origin influence to their current experience of marriage? Given the current data, as well as limited previous research in this (e.g., Feeney, 1999; Mahl, 2001; Shulman, Scharf, Lumer, & Maurer, 2001) and similar areas (e.g., Beaton & Doherty, 2007; Floyd & Morman, 2000), three distinct possible pathways were established and compared with the current data.

First, the *modeling pathway* reflects the pathway conceptualized and tested by the quantitative phase of the current study, as well as most of the extant literature—

essentially that the family of origin represents an influential model of marriage, and that offspring, in turn, follow this model and repeat similar patterns in their own marriages. This pathway simplistically embodies the process of intergenerational transmission—that is, patterns of relationship behavior and subsequent marital outcomes (such as divorce) being directly "transmitted" from one generation to the next.

The second proposed pathway is the *modified modeling pathway*, which not only modifies to some extent the influence of the model provided by the family of origin, but also extends the current notion of modeling to include other models of marriage as well. More specifically, the modified modeling pathway allows for the possibility that families of origin may have provided partial or mediocre models of marriage, and that the young adult is active in picking and choosing which aspects of that model to follow (and/or to supplement that model with additional significant models as well).

Finally, the third pathway proposed is the *compensation pathway*. This pathway describes cases where young adults either wrote off their parents entirely as models of marriage (that is, the parents provided *no* model), or consider their parents to be a model of what *not* to do (and they therefore work to behave differently in their own marriages). This final pathway also allows for the possibility that the young adult is active in evaluating, reconstructing, supplementing, and possibly rejecting the model of marriage provided by his or her parents.

Each couple that was interviewed was carefully examined holistically—using the quantitative variable patterns, qualitative codes, patterns across the two, and interview data as a whole—and was coded into one of the three proposed pathways. Following a

similar process described above for the thematic codes, the pathway codes were also

subjected to formal inter-rater reliability testing. Although each member of a couple may

have indicated unique family of origin experiences, effort was made to keep the couple

the unit of analysis and to code the couple into the pathway that represented their "case"

the best. Despite best efforts, however, this was not possible in two cases (where one

member of the couple clearly followed the modeling pathway, and the other member of

the couple clearly followed the compensation pathway)—and it was determined that the

meaning of these cases would be obscured by "averaging" the two into one pathway for

the couple. In these two cases, the couples received two pathway codes.

While the same procedure was followed to measure and establish reliability for

the pathways as was used for the thematic coding, the inter-rater agreement on the coding

of the pathways proved to be much higher during the first pilot test (100% agreement)

using 20% of the sample (in this case, 4 couples). Consequently, further training and

consensus as was used in the thematic coding was not necessary in this case. The final

inter-rater reliability for the pathway coding of the entire interviewed sample was high,

with 89% agreement, and a Cohen's Kappa of .82. See table 5 for descriptions of the

common characteristics of couples who followed each pathway.

Examining the pathway coding reveals some notable findings. First, only one

couple clearly endorsed the modeling pathway (and two additional couples were coded as

the modeling pathway *and* the compensation pathway). Although the modeling pathway

represents (by far) the most commonly examined, discussed, and researched explanation

for how a family of origin impacts a current marriage in the extant literature—it was clearly not a "good fit" for most of the couples in the current interviewed sample.

Second, the most commonly coded pathway was the modified modeling pathway (56%, n=10 couples), indicating that this may be a more accurate way to describe the process of influence from family of origin to current marriage for these couples. Not only does this pathway explicitly incorporate a more complex and multifaceted offsping view of parents' marriages (e.g., perhaps as a good model for some things, but not all things), it also accounts for the young adult being an active agent in forming his or her own marriage (i.e., choosing the specific aspects of a parental marriage that he or she would like to emulate). The modified modeling hypothesis gives the young adult the "credit" to recognize what he or she wants to get out of a parental marriage model and what he or she may strive to do differently—a process on participant aptly described as "cherry picking." This pathway also recognizes that young adults have marriage role models beyond their parents that can either supplement or replace the model that their parents have provided.

Finally, the current findings account for the possibility that in some cases young adults deliberately do not model their marriage after the marriage model provided by their parents—especially in cases where the parental marriage model is a negative or "unsuccessful" one. In these cases, the young adult may "write off" his or her parents' marriage all together and turn to other models to learn about marriage, and/or use his or her parents' marriage as a cautionary tale and an example of "what *not* to do"— subsequently going on to forge different patterns of relationship behavior and potential

marital success. This compensation pathway not only recognizes the active agency that young adults have in observing, interpreting, and analyzing the models of marriage provided by their parents, but also opens the door to the investigation of the active agency that young adults exhibit in choosing and utilizing models of marriage other than their parents. This conceptualization also provides a way to explain the current finding that the couples who came from families with divorce and relatively high levels of conflict also reported the highest levels of satisfaction of the entire interviewed sample—a finding that seems at odds with the generally accepted conceptualization of intergenerational transmission. It may not be the most common pathway (28% of couples in this sample, n=5), but it does give us a different picture of how families of origin can impact current marriages. It also gives us clues as to how those who experienced parental divorce and/or poor marriage role models may be able to change those patterns in their own marriages, and *not* repeat the patterns that made their parents' marriages unsuccessful.

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

Quantitative Findings

Intergenerational Transmission

The quantitative results of the final structural model in the current study not only support much of the extant research on the intergenerational transmission of marital quality and stability, but also provide specific insights into the process. For instance, the quantitative findings of the current research reinforce the negative association between family of origin characteristics (e.g., parental divorce and interparental conflict) and marital quality which has been addressed in previous research (e.g., Amato & Booth, 2001; Yu & Adler-Baeder, 2007). Moreover, this finding is true both for husbands and wives.

The current quantitative findings also provide specific evidence that the family that each spouse grew up with not only influences their own reported relationship processes and outcomes, but also the relationship processes and outcomes reported by their spouse as well. Specifically, the current research moves beyond examining only actor effects, and explicitly measures and assesses partner effects. The results of the final structural model demonstrate that wives' families influence not only their own marital satisfaction, but also the marital satisfaction of their husbands (and the same is true for husbands' partner effects).

The current findings also provide evidence that husbands' self-reported conflict resolution style significantly influences not only their own marital satisfaction, but the marital satisfaction of their wives as well (and the same is true for wives' partner

effects)—a conclusion which makes a great deal of intuitive sense, but nonetheless has previously received limited empirical support (cf. Kurdek, 1994).

Perhaps a more surprising conclusion that can be drawn from the current findings is that there are significant actor *and* partner effects for husbands' and wives' families on current conflict resolution styles (and in fact the strength of the these associations appears to be comparable). This indicates that a husband's or wife's conflict resolution style is influenced by not only his or her own family of origin experience, but also (and perhaps equally) by the family of origin experience of his or her spouse. This finding seems counter-intuitive—especially when considered in light of the well established concept of modeling and observational learning (e.g., Bandura, 2001). Although observational learning is certainly possible after short exposures to models, presumably long-term, repeated exposure (as is the case with one's own parents) should be significantly more influential. If an individual spends their entire life observing and modeling the behavior of their parents'—how can the influence of their own parents' be essentially statistically equivalent to the influence of their spouses' parents (whom they have presumably only observed and modeled for a relatively short time)?

The seemingly equivalent actor and partner effects in this case could mean a number of things. First, they may be a result of the interdependent nature of marriage and the concepts themselves—that is, the high correlation between husbands' family of origin experience and wives' family of origin experience, as well as the high correlation between husbands' conflict resolution style and wives' conflict resolution style. Certainly, given the dyadic nature of marriage, these constructs are not independent. If

the predictor variables are highly correlated, and the outcome variables are highly correlated—then it is not entirely unexpected that there would be some similarity in the way that the concepts are associated as well.

Another possible explanation for the similarity in actor and partner effects in this case can be found in Mate Selection Theory, and the fact that any research (including the current research) which studies married couples is inherently susceptible to selection effects. That is, participants choose to get married, and they choose who to marry—presumably not at random. So these patterns of selection (e.g., choosing a spouse based on compatibility) may influence the findings in systematic ways. For example, those who have a positive outlook on marriage may report high levels of marital satisfaction, more positive methods of conflict resolution, and may remember their experience with their family of origin as more positive. In addition, these "marital optimists" are more likely to marry other "marital optimists" who share their view of marriage (and in fact, many couples discussed their similarities in outlook and values as a strength of their marriage during the interview). The overall lens through which the participants view all of the constructs involved (positive or negative), as well as the potential propensity to marry someone who views life through a similar lens, could certainly account for at least some of the association between these concepts in the structural model.

In addition, as discussed in the introduction, there is some evidence to support the notion that individuals choose marriage partners who are similar to them in many ways—including general social characteristics such as race (Eckland, 1982), as well as family of origin characteristics in specific (Bereczkei, Gyrin, & Bernath, 2002; Wolfinger, 2003). If

this is the case for couples in the current study, this may (at least partially) account for

some of the similarity in the actor and partner effects of families of origin. In other

words, if you are instrumental in choosing a mate based on his or her family of origin

characteristics—you are thereby, in some ways, instrumental in determining the effect

that your in-laws will have on your marital outcomes. Moreover, since your family of

origin presumably influences not only your outcomes (family of origin actor effects), but

also the selection of your spouse—and spouse's family of origin, and the subsequent

effects they have on your marital outcomes (family of origin partner effects)—it is logical

to conclude that these effects will be comparable.

However, the fact these data were gathered from two different sources

(eliminating shared method variance), and the fact that there were unique and statistically

significant partner effects above and beyond the actor effects *and* the significant

correlation of the husbands' and wives' reports of family of origin experience and

conflict resolution style, indicates that there may also be more practical reasons for the

similarity in actor and partner effects in this case. Indeed, there may be complex (and

perhaps somewhat direct) ways that a spouse's family of origin influences the way that

one functions in a marriage—an idea that is discussed further in regards to the qualitative

and integrative findings of the current study (later in this discussion).

Conflict Resolution Style as a Mediator

The second hypothesis of the current study was not fully supported—conflict

resolution style does not fully mediate the association between family of origin and

current marital satisfaction—although the current findings do not eliminate the possibility that conflict resolution style may partially mediate this association in some cases (e.g., the actor and partner effects of family of origin on marital satisfaction for husbands). These findings imply that conflict resolution style cannot be ruled out as a potential mechanism of the intergenerational transmission of marital quality and stability, but that it is certainly not adequate in fully explaining this process. Conflict resolution style may play a part in the association between family of origin and marital outcomes—but other constructs may have important roles in this association as well. Indeed, other potential mediators of this process have been discussed in the extant literature—and although beyond the scope of the current study, certainly deserve to be examined further.

Another factor that may affect the meditational findings of the current study is the multifaceted conceptualization of the family of origin—specifically the combination of both family structure and levels of conflict to create the latent predictor variable. While arguably a strength of the current study—as these constructs have been examined extensively in the extant literature, and are certainly correlated—it could also be somewhat obscuring the findings in this case. In a recent study, Cui and Fincham (2010) examined these two constructs as distinct predictors, and found that conflict with partner is a mediator between parents' marital conflict and current relationship quality, while attitude about marriage mediated the association between parental divorce and relationship quality. Although conducted with a sample of unmarried undergraduate students, Cui and Fincham's research does demonstrate the feasibility of alternative meditational explanations for the process of intergenerational transmission of relationship

quality, and the potential for family structure and parental conflict to play different predictive roles in that process.

Potential Gender Differences

The evidence provided by the current findings to address the first research question was mixed. On the one hand, the influence of the wives' families of origin seemed to differ from the influence of husbands' families of origin; as evidenced by the fact that the direct path from wives' family of origin to wives' marital satisfaction remained significant in the less restrictive model, while the comparable direct path for husbands did not. This finding indicates that conflict resolution style is not a strong mediator of the relationship between family of origin and marital satisfaction for wives, but that it could be a strong mediator of the same relationship for husbands. This finding could also indicate that wives' families of origin, as compared to husbands' families of origin, have a potentially distinct effect on marital outcomes.

However, in examining the specific indirect pathways to address research question 1a, I found no evidence that the actor effect of family of origin on conflict resolution style differed by gender. Also, I found no evidence that the partner effect of family of origin on spouses' conflict resolution style differed between husbands and wives. Likewise, when examining the evidence to address research question 1b, I found that the actor and partner effects of self-reported conflict resolution style on marital satisfaction did not seem to differ by gender either. This essentially means that the respective actor and partner effects of husbands and wives throughout the model were

comparable—therefore implying that there are little to no meaningful gender differences in how these processes manifest. While the findings regarding potential gender differences in the process of intergenerational transmission of marital quality and stability in the extant literature are mixed, the current findings seem to refute the claim of some researchers that wives' families of origin may be more influential in predicting relationship processes (e.g., Huure, Junkkari, & Aro, 2006; Sanders et al., 1999), and that wives' conflict resolution strategies may be more predictive of husbands' marital outcomes than the reverse (Faulkner, Davey, & Davey, 2005). This issue was explored further with configural comparative analysis, as well as careful reflection on the thematic coding, and is discussed further in the following sections.

<div align="center">Qualitative Findings</div>

While the results of the thematic coding of the qualitative data in this study do not necessarily contradict the quantitative findings, they do provide strong evidence that the structural model presented in the current study does not fully explain or represent the process of intergenerational transmission of marital stability and quality. Whereas quantitative findings from the structural model in the current study seem to support the notion that families of origin serve as marriage role models, and that young adults follow the example set by these role models, thereby determining their marital outcomes—the qualitative findings indicate that the process is not that straightforward. Specifically, the results of the thematic coding of the qualitative data indicate that: a) families of origin serve as marriage role models in complex and multifaceted ways; b) there are other important models of marriage, aside from families of origin, that influence marital

outcomes; c) it is likely that couples use a combination of different marriage role models to form their ideas of marriage (and therefore their marital outcomes); and d) it is possible that in some cases families of origin do not provide a marriage role model at all.

A review of the qualitative data collected for the current study reveal that the influence of families of origin on current marital satisfaction is far less clear-cut and direct than it appears from the quantitative data (and much of the previous research in this area). The qualitative results outline numerous ways in which families of origin played a part in how these participants learned about marriage, and likely how families of origin influence current marital satisfaction. Rather than simply looking to parents as a model of what marriage should be, and then following that model—the participants in this study described diverse ways in which they evaluated the marriage model that their parents provided, and then consciously decided how much to follow that model. Moreover, participants also identified additional marriage models which they thoughtfully used to supplement their own learning about marriage, and develop the tools necessary to build what they saw as a successful marriage.

About half of the couples identified at least one of their respective sets of parents as positive marriage role models, and described ways in which they model their current marriage accordingly—which provides evidence that supports the results of the structural model. However, *more* couples identified at least one set of their respective sets of parents as mediocre marriage role models (67%), and identified ways that they compensated for this (e.g., utilizing alternative models of marriage, "cherry-picking" what they wanted from their parents' marriage model)—providing evidence that partially

supports the results of the structural model, but certainly paints a different picture of the process.

In addition, many couples (61%) considered at least one of their sets of respective parents as models of what *not* to do in marriage, and gave rich descriptions of the ways in which they compensated for this "anti-role model" by following alternative models of marriage, or even deliberately working to do things differently than what their parents' modeled for them—which seems to challenge the results of the structural model. Moreover, some couples (28%) were clear that their parents provided no role model when it came to marriage, and that they did not model their marriage after their parents' in any way—which seems to contradicts the results of the structural model (or at least undermine its validity for some couples).

Beyond the model that parents did or did not provide for these couples, the qualitative findings also reveal that most couples rely on models of marriage other than their parents (e.g., social network, religion, media). These were used not only in place of the models provided by their parents, but also in conjunction with the model that their parents provided. For example, many participants explained ways in which they compared and contrasted other models with that of their parents to actively construct the type of marriage that they wanted for themselves. This commonly came up in the case of spouses' parents (coded in the current study as interactional influence)—where participants describe balancing the influence of their own parents and their spouses' parents. This finding specifically supports the interdependent and dyadic nature of this

process, and gives important insight into how actor and partner effects may shape overall marital outcomes.

The majority of couples interviewed (72%) identified non-parental members of their social network that they considered to be important models of marriage—a notion that is not even addressed with the current conceptualization of the structural model. These models, especially non-family members, provide a "peer" model of marriage—and potentially a completely different perspective on marriage. Whereas many of the couples were sometimes tentative about their understanding of their parents' marriage (i.e., consciously recognizing that a child's view is limited, or that parents' generally do not share intimate details of their relationship with their children), the couples that identified peers as marriage role models were less so. They described candid disclosures by their peers, and seemed to present summaries of their friends' marriages that were both more specific (e.g., describing relationship processes in detail) and less qualified (i.e., did not use phrases like "I was just a kid" or "but what do I know") than the summaries of parents' marriages. Moreover, in many cases the couples seemed to identify more closely with the marriages of their peers—perhaps considering them to be more up-to-date or contemporary models of marriage than those of their parents.

As we become an increasingly individualistic society (i.e., focused less on family, and perhaps more on those we choose to surround ourselves with), peers seem to be a context that is growing in influence and importance. In fact, a recent study in the field of political science concluded that divorce is "contagious"—and spreads between friends, siblings, and coworkers. Specifically, McDermott, Fowler, and Christakis (2009) found

that people are 75% more likely to divorce if a person they are connected to is divorced. Coupled with the findings of the current study—namely that most couples use multiple marriage role models, often including members of their social network—the influence of social networks on marital quality and stability certainly merit consideration.

While not dealing explicitly with family, the qualitative findings on the importance of peer models of marriage may in fact be somewhat supported by family systems theory. First, by expressing the potential limitations that they felt in accurately describing the relationship processes of their parents, participants were essentially describing the boundaries that family systems theory would posit are present in all families. Parents represent a sub-system within the system of the family, which is defined through maintaining proper boundaries with other members of the family—in this case children. Parents likely maintain this boundary between themselves and their children by not sharing intimate details of their marriage and how it functions with their children. This guarded presentation of marriage not only limits the amount of information that children get from parents, but also helps to maintain the proper hierarchy within the family—the second aspect of family systems theory that can be applied to this finding.

Hierarchy within families, that is the structure of the family which privileges the parental sub-system over that of the child sub-system, is not only part of every healthy family (according to family systems theory; Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993), but could also be a potential explanation for the importance of the social network in providing marriage models. Peers, an arguably central part of the social network, are generally considered to be equals (i.e., not above you in the structure of your social system)—

which means that they most likely provide models of behavior that you more closely identify with than the models presented by parents. In fact, during adolescence (generally considered a "formative" time in the development of relationship skills), peers become an increasingly important reference group (Harris, 1995), while differentiation or individuation from parents is common (Blos, 1967; Bowen, 1978).

Moreover, social cognitive theory may provide some clues about how observational learning regarding marital processes may differ, depending on whether the model is a parent or a peer. First, Bandura breaks the process of observational learning down into four sub-processes—attentional, retentional, reproduction, and reinforcement/motivational. The first of which (i.e., attentional) serves as an important pre-requisite for all of the sub-processes that follow by essentially postulating that we cannot learn to imitate a model unless we pay attention to it, and that *which* models we choose to pay attention to depend on our needs and interests (Crain, 2000). In the case of the qualitative findings in the current study, one could argue that peers (who are likely forming marriages around the same time as the participant), as opposed to parents (who likely formed marriages before the participants were born), may provide a more interesting model of marriage—and one that comes at a time when a model of marriage is more needed.

Secondly, when describing the interaction between the person, the person's behavior, and the environment that is central to modern social learning theory (i.e., triadic reciprocal determinism), Bandura (1997) describes three possible types of environments—an imposed environment, a selected environment, and a created

environment. An imposed environment is one that is occurs without the conscious choice or control of the person (e.g., a family of origin). Because a person has no control over whether he or she is exposed to this environment, that person will likely exert his or her control (or agency) by interpreting and reacting to this environment (Miller, 2002). In the case of the current study's participants, this could be in the way that they actively choose to either follow (i.e., modeling pathway) or not follow (i.e., compensation pathway) the model of marriage provided in their family of origin. A selected environment, however, is one that is chosen by the person (e.g., peers). Because they have more control over this environment, it may be feasible to presume that the current participants are more directly influenced by their peers' marriages (or at least influenced in a qualitatively different way than by their parents' marriage).

Beyond considering models of marriage, and how they have helped to shape these participants' marriages *over time*— the current qualitative findings bring to light the *current* and *direct* ways that families of origin may be shaping these participants' marriages. More specifically, the results of the qualitative coding illuminate not only the multifaceted nature of the influence that families of origin have on shaping the individuals within the marriage (e.g., how the family you grew up with influences your conflict resolution style), but also the multifaceted ways that families of origin currently and directly influence marital outcomes. For instance, participants discussed ways that their families are currently helping them to improve their marital satisfaction (e.g., offering to babysit while they go on a "date"), as well as ways that their families are currently hindering their marital satisfaction (e.g., causing continual stress).

Moreover, the qualitative findings of the current study provide powerful evidence that the participants in the current study were surprisingly reflective, and were able to not only explicitly describe the process of intergenerational transmission, but also directly comment on their role in the process. This is an insight that not only extends the current excepted conceptualization of intergenerational transmission (i.e., that we are somehow destined to follow in our parents' footsteps), but also serves as strong support of one aspect of Bandura's notion of modeling (i.e., the participant as an active learner). Indeed, Bandura (2001) argued that people have what is called agency (or power to choose their own direction in life). In the current study, agency could be conceptualized as the capacity to exercise control over the nature and the quality of one's own marriage— which would entail not only a high level of self-reflectiveness, but also an active commitment to building a successful marriage (Bandura, 2001). While somewhat focused on the influence of models in the environment (e.g., family of origin), Bandura's perspective does acknowledge that we are self-reflective and that we have the power to choose our own paths in life—a notion that supports the current configural comparative analysis findings.

Mixed Methods - Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integration of the quantitative and the qualitative findings in the current study was conducted in formal and informal ways. Formally, quantitative and qualitative findings were explicitly combined in the configural comparative analysis. The findings derived from the configural comparative analysis indicate that couples negotiate the pathway from their families of origin to their own marriages in different ways. In fact,

many couples do not directly model the behaviors of their parents within marriage as much of the extant research would indicate (i.e., the modeling pathway). Instead, the current findings provide evidence that many couples only partially model their current marriage off of their parents' marriage (i.e., the modified modeling pathway), and that some couples even seem to consciously use their parents as models of what *not* to do (i.e., the compensation pathway).

This finding that there are multiple pathways leading from family of origin models of marriage to one's own marital outcomes may seem to be at odds with the notion of modeling as commonly presented in the extant literature, but in fact it can be understood and interpreted within the framework of social learning theory by the concepts of agency, reinforcement, and motivation.

As discussed above, agency could be conceptualized as the capacity to exercise control over the nature and the quality of one's own marriage, and can help explain how different pathways are possible. In its most basic terms, the fact that each participant is an active agent in forming and conceptualizing his or her own marriage means that each participant also has the choice of how much to emulate (or not emulate) the model of marriage that he or she grew up with. Thus, it makes sense that the current mixed method findings do not paint a uniform picture of the process of intergenerational transmission—because each participant is exerting some level of control over the process, which potentially weakens the link between the parental marriage role model and current marriage outcomes.

Moreover, the concepts of reinforcement and motivation within the framework of social learning theory may also help to explain these findings, especially when examining the compensation pathway. How is it that participants with negative parental marriage role models can end up with high marital satisfaction? It is possible that these participants not only observed their parents' negative model of marriage, but also the negative consequences their parents suffered as a result. This vicarious negative reinforcement (Crain, 2000) could potentially have an inhibitory effect on the participants—that is, these participants may be less likely to repeat their parents' marriage mistakes, because they know the negative consequences that can result. In other words, perhaps they are learning from their parents' mistakes. Moreover, the more negative the consequences are perceived to be, the more motivated the perceiver may be to forge a different path (and many of the couples interviewed appeared highly critical of their parents, and subsequently highly motivated to "do things differently"). Coupled with the opportunity to observe and learn adaptive marital strategies from other models (e.g., Aunts or Uncles), as well as a high level of agency or control—observing negative consequences to things like divorce and destructive conflict resolution strategies in parents could actually result in a lower risk of repeating these negative outcomes for some couples.

While I believe the (further) development of multiple pathways is a significant contribution to the field, it should be noted that it is not completely without support in the extant literature. There are notable examples of the compensation pathway in a few existing studies—both within and outside of the field of romantic relationships. For instance, Mahl (2001) used a grounded theory approach to discover that there are

different styles of connections between parental divorce and romantic relationship outcomes—finding that while some offspring may model their own relationship on observations of parents' relationships, others may view their parents' relationship as a learning experience and perhaps an example of what not to do. Shulman, Scharf, Lumer, and Maurer (2001) presented the same idea in their study of the resolution of the parental divorce experience in young Israeli adults, stating "conceptually it could argued that some young people carry forward the less-than-optimal relationship template to which they were exposed in their family of origin, while other build their own more adaptive codes of relationships" (p. 473). Moreover, a number of studies of fathers explicitly examine this very conceptualization as it related to fatherhood—working to test the "modeling hypothesis" against the "compensation hypothesis" (e.g., Beaton & Doherty, 2007; Floyd & Morman, 2000). However, the current study represents a systematic and comprehensive effort to address this conceptualization within the arena of intergenerational transmission of marital quality and stability.

In addition to the development of different pathways, the findings of the comparative configural analysis also revealed some interesting patterns within the data. In addition to the more striking patterns presented in the results of the current study—most dealing with group comparisons of the "divorced" group and the "intact" group—there were more subtle patterns that also emerged. Specifically, there were few discernable differences observed between the group of couples where only the husband experienced the parental divorce, and the group of couples where only the wife experienced the parental divorce. Actually, the only differences between the group of

couples where only the husband experienced the parental divorce and the group of

couples where only the wife experienced the parental divorce that were noted by the

primary researcher were in the proportion of couples in each group who identified parents

as good marriage role models (25% and 80%, respectively), and in the proportion of

couples who indicated that their families of origin were currently a positive influence on

their marriage (60% and 100%, respectively). In all other respects (e.g., levels of conflict

in families of origin, current conflict strategies, parents as mediocre or partial role

models, and current marital satisfaction) these groups of couples showed very similar

patterns of responses.

As was the case with the quantitative findings of the current study, the lack of

major discernable differences between these two groups of couples in the configural

comparative analysis matrix also questions the assertion in some of the extant literature

that there may be gender differences in the associations between families of origin,

relationship skills, and marital outcomes. Despite the current finding that the direct path

from wives' families of origin to wives' marital satisfaction is significant (while the

comparable path for husbands is not), as well as the indication from previous research

that there may be a gender difference in the process of intergenerational transmission, the

majority of the current findings indicate that this is not the case.

<div align="center">Strengths of the Current Study</div>

The strengths of the current study lie not only in the contributions to the existing

research on this topic (discussed above), but also in the measurement and methodological

approaches that were utilized. One such approach is the deliberate way in which the

constructs used in this study were conceptualized and measured. First, family of origin was conceptualized in a more complex and comprehensive way than is typical. Not only were participants with diverse family of origin experiences included in the study, but factors of those families of origin beyond family structure variables were considered— which moves this study beyond the dichotomous conceptualization of family (i.e., "divorced" vs "intact") which has been criticized for oversimplifying the complexity of the issue of intergenerational transmission of marital quality and stability (Boney, 2003).

Second, an important potential mediator of the process of intergenerational transmission was conceptualized and measured in a multifaceted way, and was utilized as a latent variable (as were the other variables of interest) in data analyses. Conflict resolution style is a complex concept, and is certainly not completely "captured" in this study—but the current research benefitted from a multidimensional conflict resolution style scale, as well as the creation of a latent variable from the various subscales contained therein. Indeed, the subscales of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (Kurdek, 1994) aided in measuring the different aspects of this concept, while the creation of a latent variable utilized these multiple data points to more accurately measure and represent this complex construct.

Finally, the outcome examined in the current research (marital satisfaction) was measured with a well-established and globally-focused scale. Not only does this afford the current study the opportunity to establish high levels of reliability in the measurement of marital satisfaction, but it also strengthens the findings and conclusions by limiting the overlap of the outcome variable with predictive constructs. In other words, by assessing

marital satisfaction with a global measure that does not contain domain specific items (e.g., "I fight a lot with my spouse"), the current researcher can be confident that the associations found between variables (such as conflict resolution style and marital satisfaction) are not due to similarities in the way they are measured.

Perhaps the greatest strength of the current study is the utilization of a complex and comprehensive methodological approach. For example, throughout all phases of the study, inherently interdependent concepts such as family and marriage were examined dyadically as much as possible. Quantitative data were collected from both the husbands and wives, and were analyzed by conceptualizing the couple as the unit of analysis. Not only does this lend the current study ecological validity, but it also has the advantage of utilizing multiple reporters to eliminate the issue of shared method variance (i.e., finding significant associations between variables because they are reported by the same person). In addition, the qualitative phase of the study also utilized multiple reporters, by engaging in joint interviewing. As previously discussed, joint interviewing allows for more comprehensive, collaborative, and complex data than sole interviewing (i.e., interviewing just one member of the couple, or interviewing each member of the couple separately).

Beyond utilizing multiple reporters, the current study also utilized multiple types of data and data analysis techniques—allowing for the triangulation of data sources in order to more effectively understand the phenomenon of intergenerational transmission. In fact, the specific mixed methods approach employed in the current research (i.e., the sequential explanatory design) provided the researcher with the unique opportunity to use one type of data to aid in the interpretation of the findings derived from of the other

(Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). For example, in the current study the quantitative findings establish that there is a significant association between families of origin and current marital satisfaction, but it is the qualitative findings that give clues as to the specific ways that families of origin affect current marital outcomes.

Finally, mixed methodology affords the opportunity to investigate and present a greater diversity of views and experiences than could be tackled with quantitative or qualitative methods alone. In the current research, this opportunity resulted not only in contributions to a broad understanding of the phenomenon, but also in the more in-depth insights provided by the thematic codes (e.g., that some husbands and wives explicitly compare and contrast their respective families of origin), and the identification of multiple possible pathways from families of origin to current marital outcomes.

By using mixed methods and configural comparative analysis, the current study achieved a balance between a nomothetic approach and an idiographic approach that is rare in the extant literature and the field as a whole. Often, researchers are either focused on the potential generalizability of their potential findings (breadth), or on the degree to which they can fully understand an individual case or set of cases that represent a specific experience (depth)—but rarely do researchers make explicit and methodological efforts to address both. While the process of intergenerational transmission of marital quality is one that effects almost all members of the population, it is also an inherently personal and private experience—and one that most certainly can best be understood by integrating diverse methodological and conceptual approaches.

Limitations of the Current Study

Despite the many strengths of the current study, there are some notable limitations that also merit mention. First, while efforts were taken to secure a diverse and representative sample, the sample in the current study is limited. Namely, the sample was collected through two different recruitment methods, and may not be representative of the population of interest (i.e., all newlywed couples). The portions of the sample collected from the two different recruitment methods were very similar, however there was one statistically significant difference—employment status (for wives only). Although this variable may not be directly relevant to the current hypotheses and research questions, there is no way of assuring that it did not influence the findings in some small way. In fact, wives' employment status may be an important factor in determining financial security and patterns of money management—two issues that may influence levels and styles of marital conflict, and marital stability (e.g., Pahl, 1980; Poortman, 2005). Moreover, money is the most often reported topic of marital disagreement in the early years of marriage (Oggins, 2003).

There is also one notable difference between the overall sample used for the quantitative phase of the study (N = 190), and the sub-sample used for the qualitative phase of the study (N = 18)—the rates of parenthood (25% versus 72%, respectively). Having children of your own is a major life event which almost undoubtedly changes your perspectives on issues of family and marriage. While beyond the scope of this study, the impact of parenthood on the process of intergenerational transmission is certainly an area that deserves further examination.

In addition, as is commonly the case in social science research, the sample used for this study was self-selected (that is they choose to participate), and highly educated (having completed, on average, three and a half years of college). This obviously has implications for the current research, and it again questions whether the sample is truly representative of the population of interest. Moreover, it tempers the findings and conclusions of the current research, because the differences between the sample and the population cannot be assessed. In addition, the self-selection issue was especially problematic in the qualitative phase of the current study, as it is likely that there are systematic differences between married couples who would welcome a researcher into their home to discuss their marriage, and those that would refuse this opportunity. Specifically, it is likely that the couples interviewed for this study are more apt to be significantly more self-reflective about their marriages—which has important implications for the current findings.

Another limitation of the current study is that family of origin characteristics were measured with the retrospective accounts of those involved, which introduces potential recall bias into the measurement of families of origin. While some may argue that the participants' perceptions of their families are of paramount importance in this case—the current research would have certainly benefitted from longitudinal and/or observational data to measure family of origin characteristics. A longitudinal study, which measured family of origin characteristics at one time point and marital satisfaction of offspring at a subsequent time point, would not only clarify the interpretation of the findings—but would also strengthen the support for the directionality of the structural model used in the

current study. In addition, "objective" observations of the families of origin would afford

the opportunity to clarify the role of the participants perceptions in the process of

intergenerational transmission (i.e., is it the perception of high levels of conflict or

"actual" high levels of conflict in the family of origin that have an effect on one's own

conflict resolution style?).

While the diversity of methodological approaches utilized in the current study is

certainly a strength (as discussed above), the decisions to the use multiple reporters and

multiple sources of data did not come without drawbacks. First, in a practical sense, the

prerequisite of data from both members of the couple for inclusion in the study may have

had a limiting effect on the diversity of both the sample and the range of topics

addressed. For example, it is not unreasonable to suspect that if an individual was

unsatisfied in his or her marriage, and/or had some serious marital issues, he or she would

be less likely to volunteer to participate in a research study aimed at newlyweds.

Therefore, it is likely that the recruiting methods in the current study precluded the

participation of couples where one (or both) member(s) had serious concerns regarding

the marriage—which certainly limits the sample in some ways. In addition, the use of

joint interviewing may have limited the extent to which participants disclosed on

sensitive topics (i.e., participants may have "held back" on certain topics such as thoughts

of divorce because they did not want to upset their partner).

The conceptualization of the couple as the unit of analysis throughout data

analyses was certainly limited in some ways as well. For example, although the APIM

affords researchers with the ability to appropriately examine interdependent data, in the

current study this interdependent data is still comprised of arguably individual variables (e.g., wives' marital satisfaction). The dyadic nature of the current study is somewhat limited by the collection of data from two interdependent individuals, as well as the use statistical analysis of interdependent, yet individual, variables.

Also, in the qualitative phase of the study, conceptualizing the couple as the unit of analysis presented some unique challenges in coding the data (e.g., what to do when one member of the couple has a very difference experience than his or her spouse), and interpreting the data (i.e., does "collapsing" the data of both members of the couple into one code that is assigned to the couple as a whole clarify or obscure the meaning of their collective experience?).

In addition, the use of latent variables and structural equation modeling— arguably a significant statistical strength of the current study beyond its utility for interdependent data—also has its notable limitations. As is the case with any research utilizing this technique, it should be noted that the current study cannot establish causation, nor can the results be interpreted as the only explanation that "fits" the data. While theoretical and empirical evidence was presented to support the current configuration of the variables within the model, the current results to do preclude the possibility that a model configuring the variables differently wouldn't also fit the data well (e.g., Edwards & Bagozzi, 2000). For example, in the current study "family of origin" was a predictor, and was placed at the beginning of the temporal sequence with directional arrows to the outcome of marital satisfaction. Because the data were collected at one time point (albeit retrospectively, in the case of family of origin characteristics)

temporal relationships between the variables cannot be proven, and it would also be plausible to hypothesize that current marital satisfaction influences the way that the participants perceive their families of origin—therefore reversing the direction of the associations within the model.

An additional statistical limitation of the current study is that comparing nested models of the data provided mixed evidence for measurement invariance, and that strong measurement invariance was not established. The implications of not establishing strong measurement invariance include the inability to unambiguously interpret the statistical findings of the structural model (Cheng & Rensvold, 2002)—especially when addressing the issue of potential gender differences. Consequently, the possibility that the variables of interest are defined and displayed differently by males and females is not one that can be ruled out within the current study, and certainly deserves further examination in future research. It should be noted, however, that the issue of invariance was at least considered in the current research and found to be tenable— which represents an improvement upon most previous research with married couples.

Another limitation of the current quantitative results is that, as with all data analyses, the practical significance of these findings can not necessarily be determined. Although the quantitative analyses did yield statistically significant results, as well as close model fit—that statistical significance does not directly translate into practical significance. In fact, given the moderate to weak correlations between some of the manifest variables used (see table 1), it is likely that the effect size for the overall model in this case is relatively small. Moreover, it is reasonable to conclude that the percentage

of variance in the outcome accounted for by the predictors and the mediators in this model is relatively small (see figure 5)—a fact that may explain why the qualitative results include a number of factors that are not accounted for by the structural model, and identify a number of relevant areas that warrant further investigation (e.g., the effect of models of marriage within the social network).

Finally, an important limitation of the current study is that it does not provide any evidence about the stability of the various identified pathways (i.e., modeling, modified modeling, and compensation) over time, which could be an important context for interpreting the current findings. For example, what if all of the participants who seemingly followed the compensation pathway in the current research were interviewed again in ten years, only to reveal that they had in fact ended up modeling the negative patterns of their parents' marriages after all? This would certainly frame the interpretation of the compensation pathway in a very different way than it is currently presented, and may even indicate that this "compensation" is not a distinct pathway, but rather a temporary state which merely serves to delay the inevitable modeling pathway. Without examining these constructs over time, it is impossible to tease out the intentions to "cherry-pick" only the positive parts of the model of marriage that your parents' present, from the actual ability to do so for the long-term.

<div align="center">Future Directions</div>

While the current study makes some important contributions to the extant literature—it may in fact raise more questions than it answers. For instance, the failure to fully support the second hypothesis (i.e., that conflict resolution style fully mediates the

association between family of origin and marital satisfaction) indicates that aside from (or more likely in addition to) conflict resolution style, there are almost certainly other constructs that mediate the relationship between families of origin and eventual marital satisfaction. Indeed, there are a number of other potential mediators that are often examined in the extant literature (e.g., commitment)—however, our understanding of the process of the intergenerational transmission of marital quality and stability would benefit greatly from an examination of other potential mediators with dyadic and mixed methodologies (as are employed in the current study).

Another aspect of this process that warrants additional research is the potential influence of gender. Contrary to the evidence presented by much of the existing research presented in the literature review, most of the current findings indicate that there may not be a significant gender difference in the ways that families of origin affect current marital outcomes. While not completely inconsequential, the current findings on gender do not rule out the possibility that significant gender differences do exist, and further research is needed to make any meaningful conclusions.

An additional future direction, that could not only expand upon the current study but also greatly enhance our understanding of the process of the intergenerational transmission of marital quality and stability, would be to explicitly examine participants' awareness of this as a multi-generational process. Although not within the scope of this study (and not something that was directly addressed), there were a number of couples who spontaneously brought up the influence of their grandparents' marriages on their parents' marriages, and then subsequently on their own marriages—seemingly explaining

the intergenerational transmission of marital quality across multiple generations. Indeed, this indicates that participants may be consciously aware of the greater scope of this process (even beyond the influence of their parents' marriages), and may indeed provide valuable insights into this domain of study. While the current study did elicit some direct insights from the couples interviewed, this is an approach that could generate much more understanding of this multi-generational process in the future.

Despite the fact that the current study was strongly focused on the influence of families of origin on marriage—the influence of the social network (that is, extended family and close friends) clearly emerged as an important source of influence as well. In fact, it was the most commonly assigned thematic code in the category that addressed marriage role models (72% of couples in the current study identified their social network as an influence on their understanding of marriage). The notion that social networks are an important source of observational learning that influence the quality and stability of marriage is an often neglected avenue of investigation in our field, but is undoubtedly a fruitful area for future research. Moreover, examining how social networks interact with family experiences to influence marital outcomes may also be crucial to fully understanding this type of intergenerational transmission.

Finally, future research could further explore the compensation pathway identified in previous research (e.g., Mahl, 2001) and in the current study. Rather than taking a "risk" perspective on the potential effects of divorce and conflict in families, as much of the extant literature has done, future research could take a "resiliency" approach by more closely examining those who follow this compensation pathway. These individuals (and

couples) from families that provide poor models of marriage seemingly overcome the "odds" and are able to develop healthy and rewarding marriages in their own lives. Examining the characteristics of these individuals, as well as the strategies that they employ to achieve high marital satisfaction, could benefit not only researchers' understanding of this phenomenon—it could also be applied by those who work directly with young adults facing similar challenges (e.g., pre-marital counseling with those who have experienced a parental divorce).

Conclusion

While there certainly remains much work to be done to fully understand all of the ways in which families of origin affect marriage over time (e.g., the process of intergenerational transmission of marital quality and stability), the current study makes some notable contributions to our understanding of this phenomenon, and to utilizing and refining innovative methodologies to explore this area even further.

APPENDIX A: INITIAL RECRUITMENT LETTER

[Date]

Dear Potential Participants,

The Early Marriage Project (EMP), through the University of Arizona's Communication Department, is currently recruiting couples who are recently married to participate in a confidential survey. This study examines factors that lead to stress and happiness in the early stages of marriage. Please take a minute to read this letter to determine if you might be willing to participate in this important study.

We are looking for couples who have been married for five years or less, with both partners who are willing to fill out our survey (which requires about 20 minutes of time). After filling out the questionnaires separately, each partner will mail the survey back to us (in a stamped envelope that we will provide), and in turn receive a $10 gift card to Target or Best Buy. In addition, all of the responses that you provide will remain confidential, and will in no way be connected to any identifying information (such as your name).

If you are willing to participate in this study, please mail back the enclosed postcard so that we can mail you the surveys.

If you have any questions regarding this study please feel free to contact me at (520) 621-7079. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Chris Segrin, Ph.D.

APPENDIX B: SUBJECT CONSENT FORM

SUBJECT'S CONSENT FORM

Early Marriage Study

You are being asked to read the following material to ensure that you are informed of the nature of this research study and of how you will participate in it, if you consent to do so. Signing this form will indicate that you have been so informed and that you give your consent. Federal regulations require written informed consent prior to participation in this research study so that you can know the nature and risks of your participation and can decide to participate or not participate in a free and informed manner.

PURPOSE

You are being invited to participate voluntarily in the above-titled research project. The purpose of this study is to better understand some of the factors that lead to stress and happiness in the early stages of marriage.

SELECTION CRITERIA

You are eligible to participate in this study because you and your partner are recently married (within the last 5 years) and your marriage license was filed in Pima County, AZ. A total of around 100 couples will be enrolled in this study.

PROCEDURE(S)

Your participation will involve filling out a questionnaire, which we ask that you mail back to us in the provided self-addressed stamped envelope. The survey should take you about 20 minutes and should be filled out independently from your partner to ensure confidentiality. In addition, some couples may be randomly selected for follow-up telephone interviews. If you are selected for a follow-up interview, you will be contacted by one of the researchers on the project after you return your written questionnaire. Your participation is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the project at any time. You may choose to not answer any question during the course of the study.

RISKS

Although no risks to the participants are expected in this study, your participation may involve some minor risks. For example, certain questions might remind you of aspects of your life that you are not content with. However, we would not expect such risks to exceed those that you ordinarily encounter in your daily life.

BENEFITS

There are no immediate benefits to you personally as a result of participating in this study. However, your participation will allow scientists to better understand how people's family experiences are related to their happiness and contentment in the early stages of marriage.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Steps will be taken to ensure confidentiality: (a) no names will appear on the questionnaires; (b) names will be replaced with ID numbers on all research material; and (c) a master list linking names with ID numbers will be secured in locked files with access restricted to the principal investigator and the research assistants (Renee Dennison, Tricia Domschke, Sam Dorros, and

Alesia Hanzal) on this project. The results of this project may be published at a later date or presented at educational seminars and lectures; however, under no circumstances will any identifying information be used.

PARTICIPATION COSTS AND SUBJECT COMPENSATION
There is no cost to you for participating, except your time. As compensation for this time, and to thank you for your participation, we will send you a $10 gift card to Target or Best Buy upon receipt of your completed survey.

CONTACTS
You can obtain further information from the principal investigator Chris Segrin, Ph.D. at (520) 621-7079. If you have questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may call the University of Arizona Human Subjects Protection Program office at (520) 626-6721. (If out of state use the toll-free number 1-866-278-1455.)

AUTHORIZATION
Before giving my consent by signing this form, the methods, inconveniences, risks, and benefits have been explained to me and my questions have been answered. I may ask questions at any time and I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without causing bad feelings. My participation in this project may be ended by the investigator for reasons that would be explained. New information developed during the course of this study which may affect my willingness to continue in this research project will be given to me as it becomes available. This consent form will be filed in an area designated by the Human Subjects Committee with access restricted by the principal investigator, Chris Segrin, Ph.D. I do not give up any of my legal rights by signing this form. A copy of this signed consent form will be given to me.

_____   _____
Subject's Signature   Date

INVESTIGATOR'S AFFIDAVIT:
I have carefully explained to the subject the nature of the above project. I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the person who signed this consent form was informed of the nature, demands, benefits, and risks involved in his/her participation.

_____   _____
Signature of Investigator   Date

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

[Date]

Dear [husband's first name] and [wife's first name],

Approximately two years ago, you and your spouse completed a survey as part of the Early Marriage Study being conducted at the University of Arizona. Thank you again for your participation—we hope you enjoyed the $10 gift cards we sent in appreciation.

As explained in the original consent form, some couples are being asked to complete follow-up interviews. We are contacting you now to see if you and your spouse are willing to be interviewed about your marriage experience so far. The interview should take about an hour, can be conducted in your home (or any location that is convenient and comfortable for you), and you will be compensated for your time.

If you and your spouse are willing to be interviewed, please return the enclosed information form (in the provided self-addressed stamped envelope) indicating the best way for researchers to reach you to schedule the interview. If you have any questions regarding this study please feel free to contact me at (520) 820-2411.

Thanks again for participating in this research project. Your participation will help us to understand vital processes that influence couples' well being in the early years of marriage.

Sincerely,

Renee Dennison
Project Director

Early Marriage Study - Interview Interest Form

Please check one of the options below and fill out the appropriate information:

☐ **We *are* interested in being contacted to be interviewed**

Phone numbers where we can contact you:

Home: _____

Cell: _____

Work: _____

Best time/number to contact you: _____

☐ **We *are not* interested in being contacted to be interviewed**

Name of participant

Address

_____

State, City, Zip Code

_____

(If your address has changed, please make any corrections to your address above)

Please return this form in the stamped envelope provided. Thank you!

APPENDIX D: PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Couple ID: H   W

Pre-Interview Questionnaire

Instructions: The following are statements about your marriage. Please read each of the statements and rate each one according to its corresponding scale. Please circle the number that corresponds with how you feel about each statement in relation to your current marriage. For example, if you strongly disagree with the statement *we have a good marriage*, please circle the number 1.

1. We have a good marriage.

| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Strongly Agree |

2. My relationship with my partner is very stable.

| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Strongly Agree |

3. Our marriage is strong.

| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Strongly Agree |

4. My relationship with my partner makes me happy.

| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Strongly Agree |

5. I really feel like part of a team with my partner.

| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Strongly Agree |

6. The degree of happiness, everything considered, in your marriage.

| Very Unhappy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Perfectly Happy |

Instructions: The following are statements about your personal feelings. Please read each of the statements and rate each one according to its corresponding scale. Please circle the number that corresponds with how you feel about each statement. For example, if you strongly disagree with the statement *I want our relationship to last for a very long time*, please circle the number 7.

	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
7. I want our relationship to last for a very long time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I would not feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. It is likely that I will date someone other than my partner within the next year.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I feel very attached to our relationship- very strongly linked to my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I want our relationship to last forever.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. I am oriented toward the long-term future of my relationship (for example, I imagine being with my partner several years from now).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

APPENDIX E: GENOGRAM SYMBOLS

Male   Female   Age = inside symbol

28

Marriage

m 2003

Living Together

LT 2002
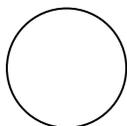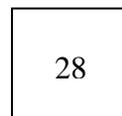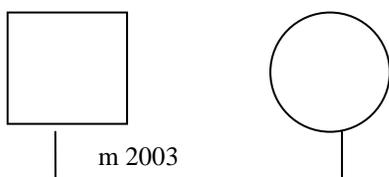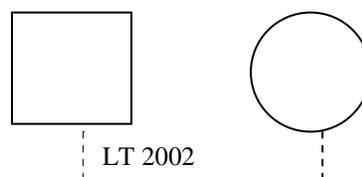
Marital Separation

m 75 s 83   /

Divorce

m 75 s 83 d 85   //
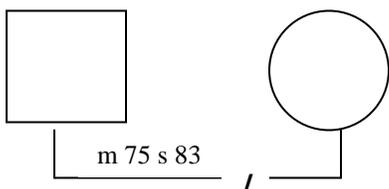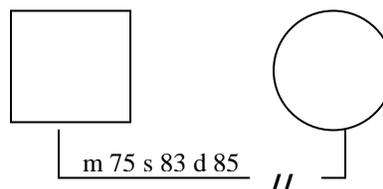
APPENDIX F: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions: The following are demographic questions. Please respond to each with the choices provided.

150. What is your sex? (circle one):   male   female

151. What is your age? _____ years (write in number)

152. What is your race or ethnic background? (check one)

_____ American Indian or Alaskan Native
_____ Asian or Pacific Islander
_____ African American
_____ Hispanic
_____ White
_____ Other or unknown

153. Are you currently: _____married   _____unmarried

153a. If married, what date was your wedding? (mm/dd/yyyy) __ __ / __ __ / __ __ __ __

154. Have you ever been divorced? _____ yes   _____ no

155. Have you ever been widowed? _____ yes   _____ no

156. Since you got married, has the thought of divorce ever seriously crossed your mind?
                        _____ yes   _____ no

157. How old were you when you first got married?____ yrs *(if you have never been married, please skip this question; if you have been married more than once, please answer for your first marriage)*

158. How many children do you have? _____ *(if none, indicate 0 and skip to question 159)*

       158a. Please write in the ages of your children: _____

                                                                _____

                                                                _____

                                                                _____

159.   How many years of formal education have you had? _____ yrs *(e.g., grade school = 6, high school = 12, college graduate = 16, etc.)*

160. What is your employment status?

_____ unemployed, but seeking employment
_____ employed part-time (less than 30 hrs./week)
_____ employed full-time
_____ retired
_____ homemaker or full-time student

161. Thinking about the house, apartment, condominium, etc. that you grew up in, did your parents own it or rent it? *(If they had a mortgage, check "they owned it"; if you lived in more than one place, think about the place where you lived for the longest period of time prior to age 18)*

___ they rented it   ___ they owned it

162. When you were growing up, did your parents have a car, truck, or van at home?

___ no, we didn't own a vehicle most of the time
___ yes, we usually owned one vehicle
___ yes, we usually owned more than one vehicle

163. Did your parents go to college or university?

___ no, neither of them did
___ yes, one of them did
___ yes, both of them did
___ don't know

164. Were your parents ever divorced, or separated for a period of more than one year?
              ____ yes   _____ no

      164a. If yes, how old were you when they divorced or separated?   _____ years old

      164b. If yes, did you ever live with a stepparent?   _____ yes   _____ no

165. Were any of your grandparents ever divorced?   _____ yes   _____ no

166. Do you have any aunts, or uncles who are divorced?   _____ yes   _____ no

167. Do you have any siblings that are divorced?   _____ yes   _____ no

168. Are any of your acquaintances divorced?   _____ yes   _____ no

168a. If so, how many? (write in number) _____

169. Are any of your close friends divorced?   _____ yes   _____ no

169a. If so, how many? (write in number) _____

170. Has your partner ever been divorced?   ____ yes   ____no

171. Have your partner's parents ever been divorced, or separated for a period of more than one year?   ____ yes   ____ no

APPENDIX G: MEASURE OF FAMILY OF ORIGIN CONFLICT

Instructions: The following are statements about families. Thinking about the family you grew up with, please decide how much you agree or disagree with each statement. You may feel that you agree with some of the statements for some family members, and may not agree as much for other family members. Circle a number closer to "strongly agree" if you agree with the statement for most members. Circle a number closer to "strongly disagree" if you disagree with the statement for most members. If the members are evenly divided, decide what the stronger overall impression is, and answer accordingly. Remember, we would like to know that your family seems like to you. So do not try to out how other members see your family, but do give us your general impression of your family for each statement.

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
128. We fight a lot in our family.	1	2	3	4	5
129. Family members rarely become openly angry.	1	2	3	4	5
130. Family members sometimes get so angry they throw things.	1	2	3	4	5
131. Family members hardly ever lose their tempers.	1	2	3	4	5
132. Family members often criticize each other.	1	2	3	4	5
133. Family members sometimes hit each other.	1	2	3	4	5
134. If there's a disagreement in our family, we try hard to smooth things over and keep the peace.	1	2	3	4	5
135. Family members often try to one-up or out-do each other.	1	2	3	4	5
136. In our family, we believe you don't ever get anywhere by raising your voice.	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX H: MEASURE OF INTERPARENTAL CONFLICT

Instructions: The following are statements about parents. Thinking about the parents you grew up with, please decide how much you agree or disagree with each statement. Read each statement, and circle the number that corresponds with how much you agree or disagree. For example, if you strongly agree with the statement *I never saw my parents arguing or disagreeing,* please circle the number 6.

	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
137. I never saw my parents arguing or disagreeing.	1	2	3	4	5	6
138. My parents got really mad when they argued.	1	2	3	4	5	6
139. They may think I didn't know it, but my parents argued or disagreed a lot.	1	2	3	4	5	6
140. When my parents had a disagreement, they discussed it quietly.	1	2	3	4	5	6
141. My parents were often mean to each other, even when I was around.	1	2	3	4	5	6
142. I often saw my parents arguing.	1	2	3	4	5	6
143. When my parents had an argument, they often said mean things to each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6
144. My parents hardly ever argued.	1	2	3	4	5	6
145. When my parents had an argument, they yelled a lot.	1	2	3	4	5	6
146. My parents often nagged and complained about each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6
147. My parents hardly ever yelled when they had a disagreement.	1	2	3	4	5	6
148. My parents broke or threw things during arguments.	1	2	3	4	5	6
149. My parents pushed or shoved each other during arguments.	1	2	3	4	5	6

APPENDIX I: MEASURE OF MARITAL SATISFACTION

Instructions: The following are statements about your marriage. Please read each of the statements and rate each one according to its corresponding scale. Please circle the number that corresponds with how you feel about each statement in relation to your current marriage. For example, if you strongly disagree with the statement *we have a good marriage*, please circle the number 1.

1. We have a good marriage.

Strongly   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Strongly
Disagree   Agree

2. My relationship with my partner is very stable.

Strongly   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Strongly
Disagree   Agree

3. Our marriage is strong.

Strongly   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Strongly
Disagree   Agree

4. My relationship with my partner makes me happy.

Strongly   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Strongly
Disagree   Agree

5. I really feel like part of a team with my partner.

Strongly   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Strongly
Disagree   Agree

6. The degree of happiness, everything considered, in your marriage.

Very   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Perfectly
Unhappy   Happy

APPENDIX J: MEASURE OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION STYLE

Instructions: Please use the scale below to rate how frequently **you** use each of the following styles to deal with arguments or disagreements with your partner. Please read each of the styles listed below, and circle the number that corresponds with how frequently you use each style. For example, if you *launch personal attacks* every time there is an argument or a disagreement, circle number 5 for that style.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
38. Launching personal attacks.	1	2	3	4	5
39. Focusing on the problem at hand.	1	2	3	4	5
40. Remaining silent for long periods of time.	1	2	3	4	5
41. Not being willing to stick up for myself.	1	2	3	4	5
42. Exploding and getting out of control.	1	2	3	4	5
43. Sitting down and discussing differences constructively.	1	2	3	4	5
44. Reaching a limit, "shutting down," and refusing to talk any further.	1	2	3	4	5
45. Being too compliant.	1	2	3	4	5
46. Getting carried away and saying things that aren't really meant.	1	2	3	4	5
47. Finding alternatives that are acceptable to each of us.	1	2	3	4	5
48. Tuning the other person out.	1	2	3	4	5
49. Not defending my position.	1	2	3	4	5
50. Throwing insults and digs.	1	2	3	4	5
51. Negotiating and compromising.	1	2	3	4	5
52. Withdrawing, acting distant and not interested.	1	2	3	4	5

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
53. Giving in with little attempt to present your side of the issue.	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX K: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Couple Interview Protocol

Date & Time:

Couple ID:

(Consent Procedure – explain study and answer any questions)

<u>Update</u>

1. Before we begin the interview, can you tell me what (if anything) has changed in the last 2 years or so since you completed the original surveys? (e.g., children? divorce among your friend or family)

<u>History of the Relationship</u>

2. Can you tell me a little about how you two met and got together?

3. Tell me about how you decided to get married. How long did you know each other before getting married? Did you cohabitate first? (To each spouse) Of all the people in the world, what made you decide that this was the person you wanted to marry?

<u>Philosophy of Marriage/Divorce</u>

4. What are your attitudes about marriage in general? How would you define a good marriage?

5. I'm interested in your ideas about what makes a marriage work? Why do you think some marriages work, while others don't?

6. How did you learn about marriage? Were/are there any "marriage role models" in your life? If so, what did you learn from them? If not, how have you learned about marriage?

7. What are your attitudes about divorce? Is divorce an acceptable option for someone in an unhappy marriage? Why or why not?

8. How common is divorce among your family and friends? Would you say that divorce is accepted or not accepted in your social circle?

<u>Current Relationship</u>

9. Tell me about your marriage. How would you describe it?

10. What are the benefits of being married? What are the challenges of being married?

11. What are your roles in this marriage? (how do you divide tasks? Who works?)

12. How satisfied are you with your marriage overall? Can you explain to me why you are satisfied or unsatisfied? What factors do you think influence your marital satisfaction?

13. How do you deal with conflict in your marriage? Can you tell me about a time you had a disagreement—one that is an example of a typical disagreement in your marriage? What happened? Did you resolve it? If so, how? If not, why not?

15. Have you ever considered separating or divorcing? If so, can you tell me a little about the circumstances? If not, do you think you ever would consider it? Why or why not?

16. Do your families and friends support your marriage?

17. (To each partner) Where do you picture yourself in 10 years? 20 years?

<u>Families of Origin</u>

18. (To each spouse) We began this interview with mapping out your family. Can you tell me about the family you grew up with? What was your parents' marriage like?

    If Divorced:

18a. Tell me a little about your parents' divorce. How old were you? What was your family like before and during the divorce?

18b. Tell me about your family after the divorce. How did you parents' get along?

18c. In what ways do you feel that your parents' divorce impacted you? Were these impacts positive or negative? Were these impacts long term? What actions, if any, have you taken to address these impacts?

19. (To each spouse) How do you view your spouse's family? How are they different from your family? How are they similar to your family?

20. (To each spouse) Do you feel that the family you grew up with impacts your current marriage? If so, in what ways? What did you learn from them? What did you *not* learn from them? (Or, what did you learn *not* to do)?

21. (To each spouse) Do you feel that the family your spouse grew up with impacts your current marriage? If so, in what ways?

20. Is there anything else about your parents' marriage and/or divorce, or your current marriage, that you would like me to know?

(Thank participants, give them compensation, and assure them of the confidentiality of everything they said during the interview.)

APPENDIX L: HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA.

Human Subjects
Protection Program

1235 N. Mountain Ave.
P.O. Box 245137
Tucson, AZ 85724-5137
Tel: (520) 626-6721
http://www.irb.arizona.edu

March 6, 2008

Renee Peltz Dennison, MS
Advisor: Susan Silverberg Koerner, PhD
Family & Consumer Sciences
PO Box 210033

RE: **PROJECT NO. 08-0192-02** EFFECT OF FAMILY OF ORIGIN ON EARLY MARRIAGE
OUTCOMES

Dear Renee Peltz Dennison:

We received your research proposal as cited above. The procedures to be followed in this study pose no
more than minimal risk to participating subjects and have been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board
(IRB) through an Expedited Review procedure as cited in the regulations issued by the U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services [45 CFR Part 46.110(b)(1)] based on their inclusion under *research categories 6
and 7*. As this is not a treatment intervention study, the IRB has waived the statement of Alternative
Treatments in the consent form as allowed by 45 CFR 46.116(d)(2). Although full Committee review is not
required, the committee will be informed of the approval of this project. This project is approved with an
expiration date of 6 March 2009. Please make copies of the attached IRB stamped consent documents to
consent your subjects.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Arizona has a current *Federalwide Assurance* of
compliance, *FWA00004218*, which is on file with the Department of Health and Human Services and covers
this activity.

Approval is granted with the understanding that no further changes or additions will be made to the
procedures followed without the knowledge and approval of the Human Subjects Committee (IRB) and your
College or Departmental Review Committee. Any research related physical or psychological harm to any
subject must also be reported to each committee. Approval is also granted with the condition that all site
authorization letters will be submitted to the IRB prior to data collection.

A university policy requires that all signed subject consent forms be kept in a permanent file in an area
designated for that purpose by the Department Head or comparable authority. This will assure their
accessibility in the event that university officials require the information and the principal investigator is
unavailable for some reason.

Sincerely yours,

Elaine G. Jones, PhD, RN, FNAP
Chair, Social and Behavioral Sciences Human Subjects Committee

EGJ/rkd
Cc: Departmental/College Review Committee

APPENDIX M: TABLES

Table 1

Husband Reported (H) and Wife Reported (W) Manifest Variables in the Full Sample: Correlations and Descriptive Statistics (N = 190)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1. Parental Marital Status (H)	-																	
2. Interparental Conflict (H)	.44**	-																
3. Family of Origin Conflict (H)	.24**	.51**	-															
4. Conflict Engagement (H)	-.06	.15*	.17	-														
5. Positive Problem Solving (H)	.08	-.01	.02	-.29**	-													
6. Withdrawal (H)	-.13	.11	.06	.40**	-.40**	-												
7. Marital Satisfaction–1 (H)	.08	-.16*	-.10	-.23**	.13	-.29**	-											
8. Marital Satisfaction–2 (H)	.11	-.16*	-.11	-.27**	.27**	-.30**	.77**	-										
9. Marital Satisfaction–3 (H)	.12	-.14	-.07	-.22**	.14	-.17*	.83**	.79**	-									
10. Parental Marital Status (W)	.21**	.20**	.12	.14	-.04	.08	-.14	-.10	-.19*	-								
11. Interparental Conflict (W)	-.02	.24**	.19**	.08	-.02	.11	.01	-.03	-.02	.28**	-							
12. Family of Origin Conflict (W)	-.09	.13	.19**	.06	-.16*	.18*	-.08	-.07	-.06	.17*	.50**	-						

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
13. Conflict Engagement (W)	-.04	.18*	.12	.38**	-.13	.30**	-.19**	-.26**	-.23**	.14	.23**	.12	-					
14. Positive Problem Solving (W)	.08	-.05	-.03	-.17*	.41**	-.18*	.18*	.27**	.19**	.05	-.05	-.08	-.47**	-				
15. Withdrawal (W)	-.06	.10	.09	.23**	-.18*	.09	-.17*	-.20**	-.16*	.09	.06	.09	.33**	-.44**	-			
16. Marital Satisfaction–1(W)	.03	-.18*	-.10	-.20**	.05	-.25**	.53**	.45**	.54**	-.21**	-.18*	-.20**	-.27**	.19**	-.19**	-		
17. Marital Satisfaction–2(W)	.01	-.16*	-.09	-.20**	.07	-.24**	.46**	.46**	.51**	-.29**	-.20**	-.21**	-.28**	.21**	-.18*	.85**	-	
18. Marital Satisfaction–3(W)	.05	-.16*	-.09	-.21**	.09	-.21**	.58**	.50**	.62**	-.22**	-.19**	-.20**	-.29**	.21**	-.11	.89**	.90**	-
M	.32	2.73	2.50	2.08	3.86	2.21	9.24	9.10	9.24	.33	2.67	2.39	2.22	3.88	2.28	9.10	8.96	9.12
SD	.47	.59	.43	.65	.57	.75	1.17	.98	1.08	.47	.62	.50	.70	.58	.72	1.36	1.28	1.38

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$

Table 2

Husband Reported (H) and Wife Reported (W) Latent Variables in the Full Sample: Correlations and Descriptive Statistics (N = 190)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Family of Origin (H)	-					
2. Conflict Resolution Style (H)	.10	-				
3. Marital Satisfaction (H)	-.08	-.24**	-			
4. Family of Origin (W)	.23**	.14	-.10	-		
5. Conflict Resolution Style (W)	.13	.34**	-.18*	.22**	-	
6. Marital Satisfaction (W)	-.11	-.26**	.58**	-.30**	-.21**	-
M	1.85	2.72	9.19	1.80	2.80	9.06
SD	.39	.36	1.00	.39	.32	1.29

*p < .05 **p < .01

Table 3

Learning about marriage/Influence on marriage codes for interviewed sample (N = 18)

Code	% of Couples	Description
Parents as positive role models	56	Discussed parents' marriage in an overall positive way, and identified ways that they emulate it in their current marriage.
Parents as mediocre or partial role models	67	Discussed both positive and negative aspects of their parents' marriage example, and/or identified some ways in which their parents' marriage was lacking.
Parents as models of what *not* to do	61	Discussed parents' marriage example in a very negative way, and consciously as an example of what they did not what in their own marriage
Parents provided no role model	28	Either completed "wrote off" their parents as a model of marriage, or were from a single parent home.
Social Network	72	Described learning about marriage from peers, peers' parents, or extended family.
Religion	39	Identified religious beliefs, the church, or religious teachings (e.g., the bible's definition of marriage) as a factor that shaped their own marriage.
Media	28	Identified portrayals of marriage in television, books, music, movies, or "the media" as a factor that shaped their own marriage.

Table 4

Current influence of families of origin codes for interviewed sample (N = 18)

Code	% of Couples	Description
Direct Influence - Good	83	Positive effects on current marriage
Direct Influence - Bad	50	Negative effects of current marriage
Cross-Influence	28	Effects of spouse's family of origin
Interactional Influence	22	Effects of comparing and contrasting own family of origin with spouse's

Table 5

Pathways identified during configural comparative analysis of interviewed sample

Pathway	Description/Characteristics
Modeling	Generally used parents as a model of marriage, and were aware of similarities in their own marriage; identified families as positive influence on their marriage; average marital satisfaction
Modified Modeling	Partially used parents as a model of marriage, may have "cherry-picked" from parents, and/or used other significant models as well; identified other sources of influence (e.g., social network, religion, media); identified families as positive *and* negative influences on their marriage; average or mis-matched marital satisfaction
Compensation	Either wrote of parents entirely (i.e., provided no role model), or used parents as models of what *not* to do; identified other sources of influence (e.g., social network, religion, media); high or mis-matched marital satisfaction

APPENDIX N: FIGURES

Figure 1. Basic conceptual model of impact of family of origin characteristics on marital satisfaction (note: H indicates husband report, W indicates wife report).
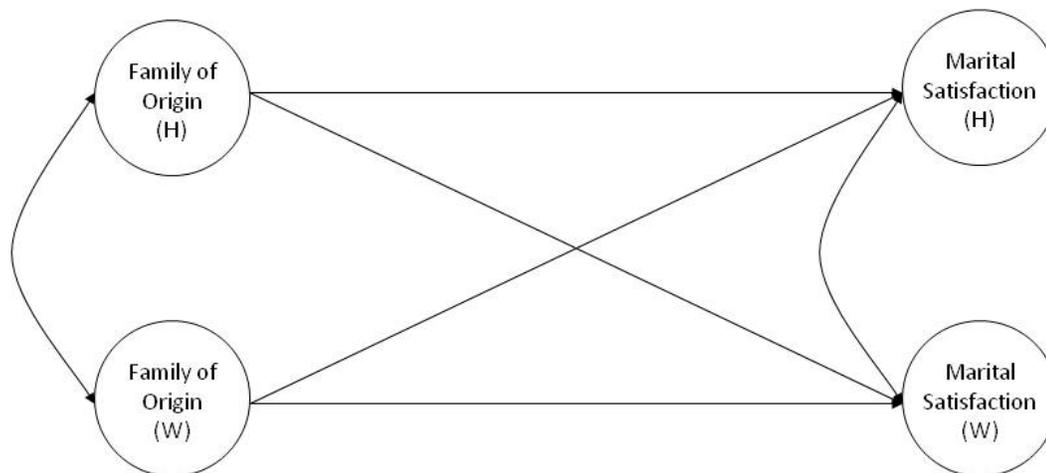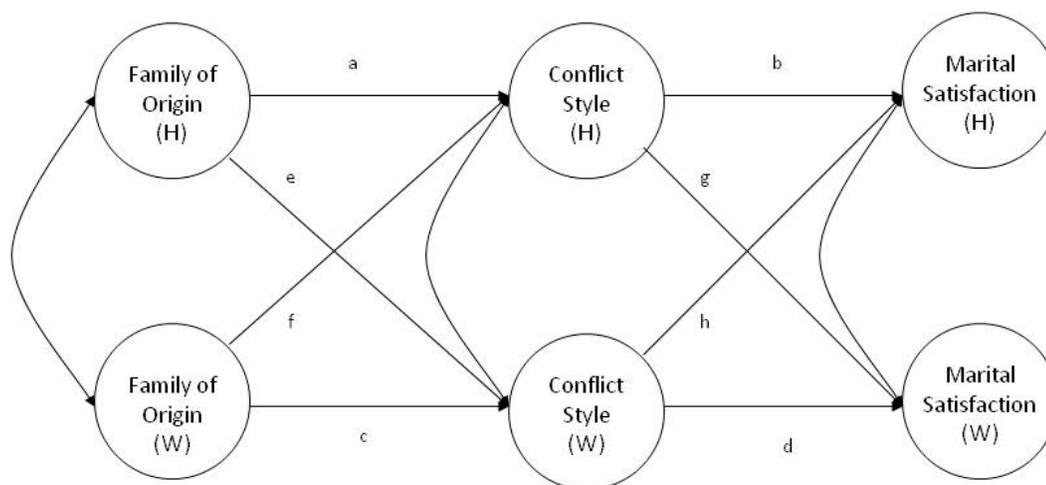
Figure 2. Mediational conceptual model of impact of family of origin characteristics on marital satisfaction (note: H indicates husband report, W indicates wife report).

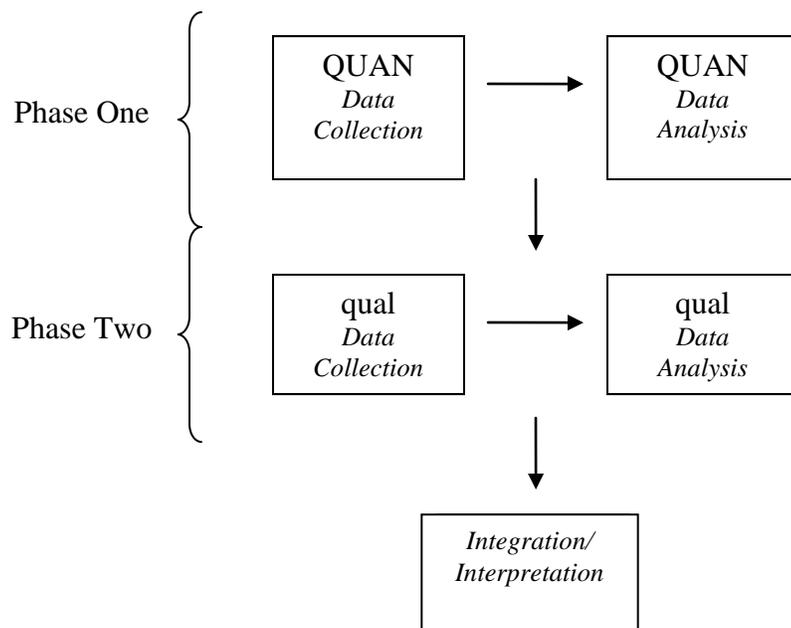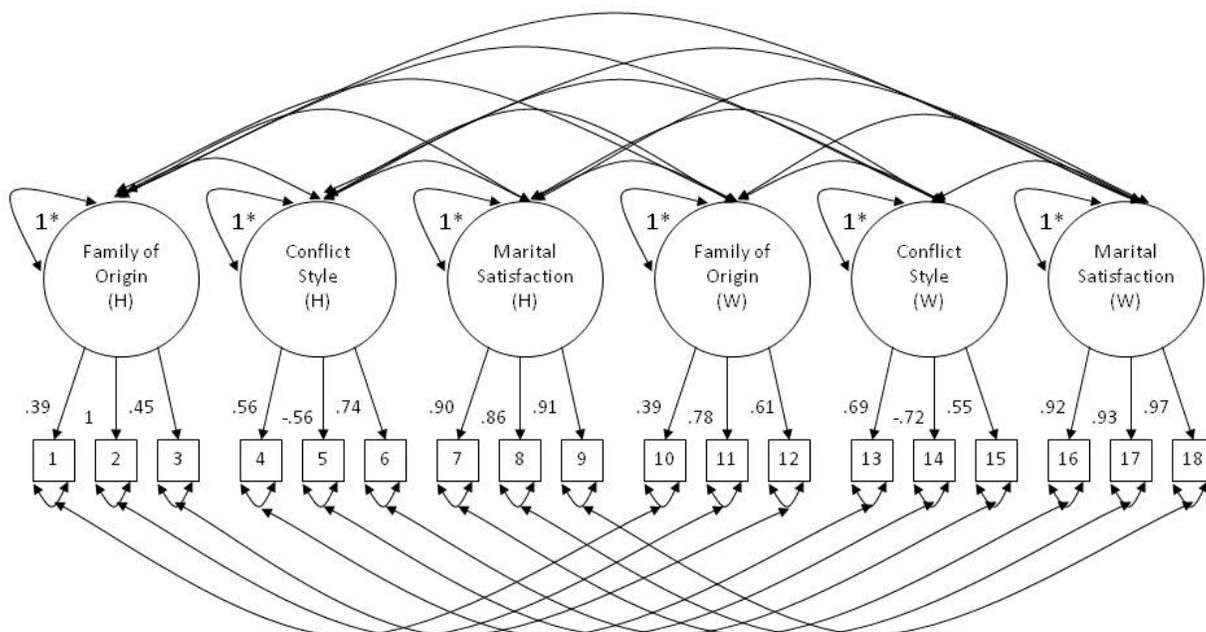*Figure 3*. Sequential Explanatory Research Design (note: capitalization indicates priority).

Figure 4. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Latent Variables with Factor Loadings (note: H indicates husband report, W indicates wife report).

$\chi^2(df = 111, N = 190) = 162.56$; RMSEA $= 0.042$ $_{(.021-.059)}$; NNFI $= 0.97$; CFI $= 0.98$

Figure 5. Final Structural Equation Model of Effect of Family of Origin on Marital Satisfaction (note: H indicates husband report, W indicates wife report).
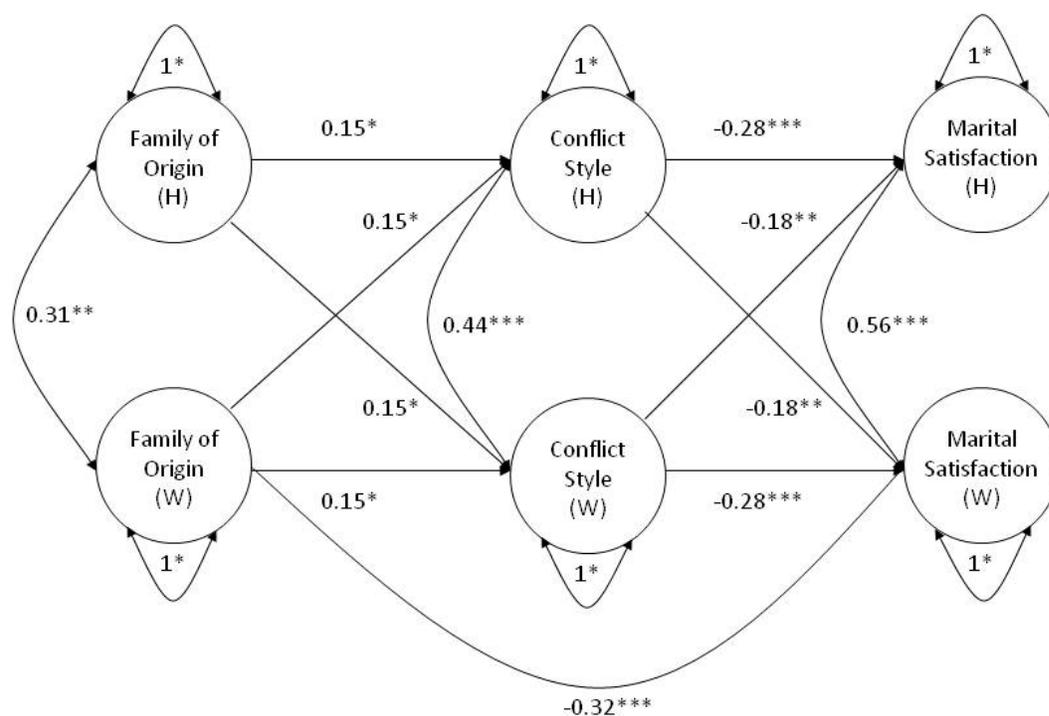
χ^2 = 199.886, *df* = 127, n = 190, p < 0.00; RMSEA = 0.048 (.032-.063); NNFI = 0.96; CFI = 0.97; * *p* < .05, ** *p* < .01, *** *p* < .001

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