

THE ROLE OF ENDURING VULNERABILITIES AND COPING IN ADJUSTING
TO MARITAL STRESS

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Alesia Hanzal

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As members of the Dissertation Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Alesia Hanzal entitled

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and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Dr. Chris Segrin Date: 6/12/08

Dr. Jake Harwood Date: 6/12/08

Dr. Matthias Mehl Date: 6/12/08

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copies of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

_____ Date: 6/12/08
Dissertation Director: Dr. Chris Segrin

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ABSTRACT

This investigation examines some of the potential underlying processes and factors associated with marital stability. Two studies were guided by Karney and Bradbury's vulnerability-stress-adaptation (VSA) model of marital development. Variables examined included negative affectivity, educational attainment, work and family stressors, conflict resolution styles, mutual problem solving, marital satisfaction, personal commitment, and divorce proneness. Study one used an existing data set consisting of 194 married couples and tested a part of the VSA model. Results indicate that high negative affectivity is associated with the endorsement of negatively toned conflict styles. In comparison to husbands, wives' negative affectivity and use of negatively toned conflict styles were found to be more detrimental to marital quality in general. Conflict resolution styles were able to explain the relationship between negative affectivity and marital quality for husbands more so than wives. Study two examined 186 newly married couples and tested additional paths of the VSA. The enduring vulnerability, negative affectivity, played a significant role in wives' and husbands' perceived stress and lower marital quality. Marital quality was significantly associated with how spouses personally communicated with their spouses about problems and concerns. Additionally, mutual problem solving was related to increased levels of stress for wives and husbands. There were partner effects for husbands' mutual problem solving on wives' perceived stress, but not vice versa. Last, mutual problem solving significantly mediated some of the relationships between enduring vulnerabilities, stressful events, and marital quality. Both studies highlight the impact communication processes have on a

dyadic level in marital relationships. These findings will allow scholars, clinicians, and married individuals to further understand some of the factors and processes that contribute to dyadic adjustment and stable marriages.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Rationale for Study

Russell and Wells (1994) reported that the single most powerful predictor of happiness among spouses is their quality of marriage. More specifically, marital quality accounts for roughly 45% and 51% of that variance in happiness within husbands and wives, respectively (Russell & Wells, 1994). Marriage has become a prominent research topic in the past two decades. Researchers are particularly interested in the factors that make or break the coveted bond. One reason for this is because it is estimated that almost 50% of all first marriages will end in divorce. Currently, Arizona is among the top 25% of states in the nation for divorce rates (CDC, 2006) and has one of the highest marriage rates as well.

Research has noted that factors, such as the stable characteristics that each person brings into the marriage, have a profound impact on early marital quality. For example, a person's educational attainment, socioeconomic status (Jose & Alfons, 2007), and personality (Fisher & McNulty, 2008) can all influence marital quality. In fact, personality is a burgeoning topic within marriage. A personality trait that has received a lot of attention because of its deleterious relationship with marriage is neuroticism. Neuroticism has been closely linked to poor marital compatibility (Kelly & Conley, 1987), low levels of marital satisfaction (Russell & Wells, 1994), and increased marital conflict (Thomsen & Gilbert, 1998).

Additionally, Karney, Story, and Bradbury (2005) note that the first years of marriage are very susceptible to potential decreases in marital satisfaction depending on the stress placed on the relationship. Some of these documented stressors include, but are not limited to, lack of problem solving (Cohan & Bradbury, 1997), multiple role demands (Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Wethington, 1989), transition to parenthood (Lawrence, Rothman, Cobb, Rothman, & Bradbury, 2008), and acute or chronic threats (e.g., illness, loss of a job, death of a family member) (Story & Bradbury, 2004). As reported by Davila, Karney, Hall, and Bradbury (2003), marital satisfaction becomes significantly less positive during the first four years of marriage. It is during these years when many of the problems that forecast divorce are thought to be present.

In addition to the stable characteristics that people bring into marriage and stress placed on the relationship, a couple's communication can also influence marital quality. The ways in which spouses resolve conflicts (Caughlin & Vangelisti, 2006), reciprocate positive and negative affect (Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson, 1998), and provide support for one another (Brock & Lawrence, 2008) can all affect marital success. Because marriage is a dyadic relationship, both spouses are able to influence each other's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). This is thought to be a quintessential feature of closeness in marital relationships. Further, Kenny et al. (2006) note that mutual influence is a major component to relationships because one partner can potentially affect the other partner's outcomes.

Therefore, continuing research aimed at understanding the variables that influence newlywed marital quality and longevity as well as mutual influence spouses have on one

another is clearly warranted. This research has many implications for understanding the course and quality of married life, none more prominent than divorce (Davila et al., 2003; Karney & Bradbury, 1997).

The current research examines stable characteristics or enduring vulnerabilities that might make newlyweds particularly vulnerable to the ill effects of work and family stressors. Also under examination are the communication processes spouses use in order to gain a better understanding of how communication impacts marital quality. The following paragraphs highlight the variables that make up the theoretical model driving this research. Further, two complimentary studies are presented, each testing the validity of the model.

Theoretical Background

Almost 500 studies have investigated variables that predict marital quality and stability. Most of the reported effects that lead to satisfaction and stability appear to fall within three inclusive categories: enduring vulnerabilities, stressful events, and adaptive processes. In order to gain a better understanding how each variable might lead to different relationship outcomes, Karney and Bradbury (1995) devised a model, called the vulnerability-stress-adaptation (VSA) model of marital development, and proposed that marital outcomes, such as marital quality, are a function of enduring vulnerabilities, stressful events, and adaptive processes (Cohan & Bradbury, 1997). More specifically, “the model holds that enduring vulnerabilities and stressful events exert their effect on marriage through adaptive process” (Cohan & Bradbury, 1997, p. 114). The VSA model of marriage can be found in Figure 1.

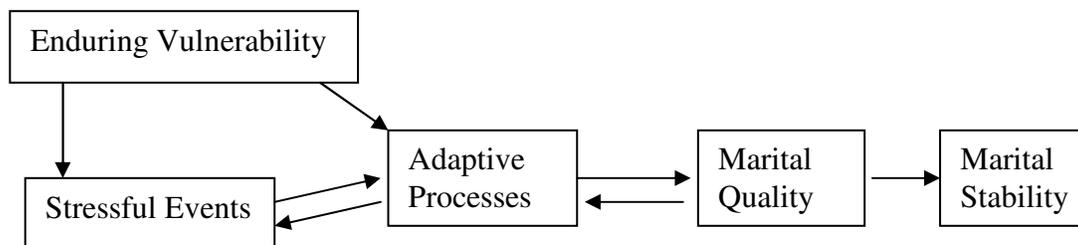


Figure 1

Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation (VSA) Model of Marital Development

Enduring Vulnerabilities

The first domain in the VSA model of marital development is enduring vulnerabilities. These are considered to be stable characteristics that a person brings to a relationship. For example, a person's dating history, personality, and educational attainment are all enduring vulnerabilities. As a result, individuals with differing backgrounds and personalities are likely to vary in their ability to contend with differences of opinion, marital difficulties or transitions. Further, they are also likely to be exposed to different sorts of stressful events. Past research has found that newlyweds' levels of negative affectivity can predict their initial level of marital satisfaction (Karney & Bradbury, 1997). As noted in Karney and Bradbury (2004) interactional processes, such as problem solving abilities, and individual difference variables, such as personality, both play significant roles marital satisfaction.

Stressful Events

Another component of the VSA model, stressful events, is likely to have a significant effect beyond that of enduring vulnerabilities. Stressful events are thought to have a direct effect on adaptive processes and vice versa. According to the VSA model,

the amount of stress perceived will directly influence how spouses manage their stress. Additionally, the way in which a person copes is also thought to influence the amount perceived stress. According to Wheaton (1997), marital stressors include, but are not limited to, threats, problems, demands, and/or constraints that can affect one or both spouses. Research has reported that spouses who report higher levels of chronic stress also tend to report lower levels of marital quality (e.g., Cohan & Bradbury, 1997).

Additionally, spouses with higher levels of chronic stress are more vulnerable to marital dissatisfaction with the presence of acute stressors (Cohan & Bradbury, 1997). It is as if these couples are unable to cope with any additional stress, regardless of its magnitude, that they are not already experiencing.

Adaptive Processes

The third major component of the VSA model is adaptive processes. These are the behaviors or method(s) by which spouses solve a marital problem(s). For example, methods might include conflict resolution styles and/or behaviors such as engaging in mutual problem solving. Past research pertaining to this model has primarily examined the psychological variables involved in adaptive processes such as making attributions and appraisals for marital interactions. One such study found that appraisals of problem solving interactions after their occurrences mediated changes in marital satisfaction (Bradbury & Fincham, 1991). In other words, a spouse's relationship dissatisfaction can be explained by the attributions they provide for negative events or outcomes. For example, dissatisfaction in a relationship is associated with ascribing a partner's negative behavior to his or her enduring characteristics (e.g., lazy, uneducated, etc.). Further,

marital attributions about satisfaction over time have been found to predict whether the marriage stays intact or dissolves (Karney & Bradbury, 2000) and remains satisfying (Karney, Bradbury, Fincham, & Sullivan, 1994). According to the model, adaptive processes might have the most direct effect on marital quality, which would, in turn predispose a marriage to stability or instability. Adaptive processes have also been found to affect the likelihood of stressful events (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). For example, if spouses are unable to adapt to stressful events, it is possible that the stressors will perpetuate or worsen over time.

Marital Quality and Stability

The fourth and fifth components of the model are marital quality and marital stability. According to the VSA model, the quality of marriage might also reciprocally affect adaptive processes such that, for example, spouses would find it increasingly difficult to engage in interactions that enable them to resolve their differences as they become less satisfied with their marriage. Karney and Bradbury (1995) state there is a lack of research on this path because marital researchers have rarely examined the predictors of change in adaptive processes.

As for marital stability, this path of the VSA model of marital development requires longitudinal research as it is conceptualized as a product of marital satisfaction. It is hypothesized that as marital quality declines, the probability of marital instability will increase. Research that has longitudinally examined this link of the model has supported its existence, albeit the link is weak in magnitude (Karney & Bradbury, 1995).

The following pages examine the domains of the VSA model of marital development as it pertains to the two current studies.

VSA Model of Marital Development and Studies 1 & 2

Enduring Vulnerability

Personality traits and demographic variables, such as educational attainment, have been widely examined in conjunction with marital satisfaction and marital stability (Karney and Bradbury, 1995). Furthermore, because personality and educational attainment have been found to have reliable effects on marriage, they are variables of interest for studies 1 and 2. The following sections examine how personality (i.e., neuroticism) and educational attainment serve as vulnerability factors to stressful life events, adaptive processes, and marital quality.

Negative affectivity. Research has suggested that personality is comprised of five major dimensions: extraversion, openness, agreeableness, neuroticism, and conscientiousness (McCrae & Costa, 1987). Each factor has been found to have trait-like characteristics (i.e., an enduring disposition). Research indicates that people's personality traits are related to different interpersonal phenomena. For example, couples with similar personality traits, such as conscientiousness, report better marital adjustment than those who differ on this trait (Nemecek & Olson, 1999). Conversely, neuroticism has been linked with poor marital quality and divorce (Karney & Bradbury, 2000; Kelly & Conley, 1987). The personality trait, neuroticism, is often used interchangeably with negative affectivity because they are thought to be conceptually synonymous. Although neuroticism is more of a construct and negative affectivity is a central and organizing feature of

neuroticism, research will often use measurements of negative affectivity to denote neuroticism. Therefore, from this point on, the term negative affectivity will be used instead of neuroticism. Although one's personality can be somewhat variable over time, negative affectivity is one personality trait that is more stable over time. In fact, some research suggests that negative affectivity is in part genetically determined (McCrae, 1990).

Negative affectivity is comprised of distressing emotions and people high in this personality trait are generally emotionally reactive, meaning that they typically respond to adverse situations by expressing feelings of anger, anxiety, disgust, embarrassment, helplessness, and/or sadness (Borkenau, Mauer, Riemann, Spinath, & Angleitner, 2004; Davila et al., 2003). Additionally, individuals high in negative affectivity are more prone to worry, feelings of depression, and perceiving more stress than those who are low in negative affectivity. It is as if the lens through which they view the world is negatively distorted. For example, negative affectivity is significantly related one's perception and experience of stressful events, relationship satisfaction (Tolpin, Cohen, Gunthert, & Ferrehi, 2006), and sexual satisfaction (Fisher & McNulty, 2008). Negative affectivity influences how people cope with stress, perceive the quality of their interpersonal relationships, as well as how they report their psychological and physiological well-being (McCrae, 1990). It is common for the interpersonal problems that are manifested by this personality trait to be experienced by all parties involved (Barelds, 2005).

Educational attainment. Research suggests there is more assortative mating or active selection going on in mate selection than social homogamy (Luo & Klohnen,

2005). Active selection, also known as assortative mating, explains that mates actively select others who share similar attitudes, beliefs, religious preferences, ethnic backgrounds, age, education, and political preferences (Lou & Klohnen, 2005; Botwin, Buss, & Shackelford, 1997). Conversely, social homogamy refers to people matching up with others simply because they share similar backgrounds and/or environments (Lou & Klohnen, 2005). SES is generally a result of the highest educational level attained and therefore, husbands and wives tend to be similar in respect to socioeconomic status (SES) to a certain extent (Kerckhoff, 1976). Research suggests that socioeconomic status (SES) and educational attainment are highly correlated and that they have implications for marital quality and longevity. For example, people who are less educated generally have lower income levels, are less serious about school, cohabit before marriage, are more likely to initiate early sexual activity, get pregnant, and marry young (Kerckhoff, 1976). In contrast, higher educational attainment is significantly related to decreases in marital dissolution rates (Heaton, 2002). Faust and McKibben (1999) suggest that higher education, such as college, teaches people how to communicate and compromise, thus leading to better communication within marriage. Based on the aforementioned research, it becomes clear that a lack of educational attainment, in addition to negative affectivity, might serve as a vulnerability factor to stressful life events, unhealthy adaptive processes, and overall relationship quality.

Stressful Life Events

Today, it is common to have both spouses employed in professional or managerial careers (Googins & Burden, 1987) and having both parents work outside of the home is

not as inconceivable as it once was (Crouter & Manke, 1997). According to Googins and Burden (1987), most dual-earner couples value having close ties with each other and believe that there is some equality within their marriage. However, along with supporting each other's careers, spouses also have to manage balancing their family, personal needs and demands (Sperry, 1993). This can prove to be very challenging and distressing on a personal and interpersonal level. The following paragraphs examine different types and consequences of work and family stress.

Work stress. Research suggests work stressors are significantly linked to poor mental health and stress related symptoms, such as aggression (Haines, Marchand, Harvey, 2006), depression, self-esteem (Schwartzberg & Dytell, 1996), and negative mood (Story & Repetti, 2006). For example, work role insignificance or feeling that one's career is unimportant greatly contributes to work related stress and poor subjective well-being (Googins & Burden, 1987). Further, environmental discomfort and work roles that are not challenging are also predictors of work-related stress (Schwartzberg & Dytell, 1996). Such environmental stressors might include negative feedback, feelings of isolation, lack of clarity within job description, and/or tension in the workplace (Jones & Fletcher, 1996). Jones and Fletcher (1996) reported that work complexity, heavy workload, feeling pressure to take on more work, and always feeling at the beck and call of others were also work-related stressors.

Family stress. As for stress in the family, employed spouses have reported that lack of spousal support and feeling their family role is insignificant have contributed to their poor mental health and distressing states (Schwartzberg & Dytell, 1996). Jones and

Fletcher (1996) noted that difficulty with social relationships, partner relationships, and family pressures were salient domestic stressors. Literature has documented that other prominent family stressors include lack of emotional support from children, not being challenged at home (e.g., role at home does not allow for the development of special abilities and interests), and lack of task sharing (e.g., no cooperation between spouses in household chores or childrearing) (e.g., Ford, Heinen, & Langkamer, 2007).

In general, research suggests that dual-earner couples have to make difficult choices regarding career and family life. One decision spouses are commonly faced with is balancing time for work and time for family. Many spouses feel that in order to be successful in their careers, they have to make sacrifices in another domain of their life, usually resulting in less ‘couple time’ and more ‘work time’ (Haddock & Rattenborg, 2003). This decision has a major implication for married life; the lives of dual-earner couples are more likely to experience less marital satisfaction than other couples. For some, less couple or family time can result in resentment toward their spouse, especially if he/she is continuously aspiring to reach work goals (i.e., staying late in the office or going on business trips) instead of concurrently pursuing family goals as well (i.e., going on trips together, relaxing on Sundays, etc.).

Job-home interference stress. Regardless of their career (i.e., inside or outside the home), men’s and women’s roles give them a sense of importance and identity. When this identity is challenged, some would say that stress arises and has the power to contaminate a marriage and family life. For example, many spouses have to hold multiple roles (i.e., father, main provider, and caretaker, etc.) and find that succeeding within

multiple domains is quite challenging and distressing (Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Wethington, 1989). The struggle between work and family roles is known as job-home interference (Schwartzberg & Dytell, 1996). Job-home interference is defined by one area of responsibility conflicting with the other.

It is well documented that work stress can have a negative impact on the family domain and marital satisfaction and that family stress can have a negative impact on the work domain and marital satisfaction (Ford et al., 2007). For example, it is not uncommon for work stress (e.g., arguments at work during the day) to become family stress (e.g., arguments at home during the evening) and vice versa (Schulz, Cowan, Cowan, & Brennan, 2004; Bolger et al., 1989). This is commonly referred to as stress contagion or stress spillover (Schulz et al., 2004). Stress spillover can lead to more negative coping styles and negative communication patterns in general (i.e., interpersonal conflict, anger, and withdrawal) between spouses and ultimately lead to poor marital quality (Ford et al., 2007; Schulz et al., 2007).

It is very clear that the balancing act of career and family is very difficult and requires much attention from both spouses in order to benefit everyone involved. Further, because the lives of dual-earner couples are so busy, couples might be too busy to notice and/or do anything about the start of something going askew in their relationship. The following section examines coping strategies that are used to deal with stressful work and family events.

Adaptive Processes

According to Folkman and Lazarus, coping is defined as “the person’s constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the person’s resources” (1986, p. 992). Dyadic coping or communication between spouses plays a vital role in marital quality. For example, how spouses interact with one another regarding conflict, threats to the relationship, or stressful situations can largely determine marital success.

There is perhaps no marital communication process that has generated more scholarly interest than conflict. How couples argue and disagree about issues appears to be more consequential to the success of marriage than what they argue about or how often they experience conflicts (Prado & Markman, 1999; Noller & Feeney, 1998; Stanley, Markman, & Whitton, 2002). Certain styles for responding to conflict such as demand and withdrawal and contempt and criticism are particularly deleterious to marital well-being (Eldridge & Christensen, 2002; Gottman, 1994; Heavey, Christensen, & Malamuth, 1995). Conversely, expressing positive affect and soothing one another with positive communication are predictive of marital stability and happiness among newlyweds (Gottman et al., 1998). Because these and other conflict patterns are good predictors of marital satisfaction (e.g., Kurdek, 1994; Noller & Feeney, 1998; Schneewind & Gerhard, 2002) they play an important role in the ultimate success or failure of marriages. Additionally, Kurdek (1994) found that in general, husbands’ marital satisfaction was more consistently associated with their wives’ styles for handling conflict, than wives’ satisfaction was affected by their husbands’ conflict resolution styles. Findings such as these indicate that the association between conflict styles and

marital satisfaction is most appropriately (and informatively) analyzed at the dyadic level. Spouses' relationship conflicts are not only predicted by their own prior behaviors, but by their partners' behaviors as well (Canary, Cupach, & Serpe, 2001).

Negative affectivity can have deleterious effects on how people perceive and communicate their problems in the arenas of work and family with their spouse. For example, someone high in negative affectivity might not only perceive more stress (e.g., disagreement about spousal roles, having enough time for work and family, having a sufficient income, or childcare responsibilities), he/she might have a more difficult time dealing with the stressors. Further, this added stress might play a crucial role in spouses' perceptions of relationship satisfaction, commitment, and attitudes towards their marriage. For example, Jones and Fletcher (1996) found that spouses often perceive their significant other as being preoccupied with work and therefore detached from the marriage. Bouchard (2003) found that some conflict resolution strategies are associated with the presence of negative affect. People high in negative affectivity tend to be less assertive in conflict situations and as a result try to distance themselves and avoid the situation. This avoidance of conflict is generally associated with lower levels of satisfaction (Caughlin & Vangelisti, 2006).

Gottman (1993) claims that once couples start to habitually complain or criticize one another they have often started the trend into dissolution. Gottman's (1993) four horsemen of the apocalypse is comprised of four behaviors that can ultimately lower marital satisfaction and lead to divorce. He claims that once a couple becomes critical of one another (first horseman), they are likely to become defensive (second horseman) of

their own positions and stand up for their actions. For example, Jones and Fletcher (1996) reported that partners would off-load worries and frustrations onto their partner in order to release stress. Contempt, the third horseman, soon follows and leaves the tone of conversation very negative and disrespectful. Ultimately, the couple might experience stonewalling or withdrawal (fourth horseman) in their marriage. This is where one or both spouses emotionally check out from the relationship (Gottman, 1993). Gottman (1994) also introduced the distance and isolation cascade model which virtually follows the same pattern as the four horsemen of the apocalypse but emphasizes the cognitions that accompany different stages of marital dissolution. One characteristic that is pertinent to both models is the willingness of spouses to work through problems together. The act of mutual problem solving reflects a couple's outlook of their marriage. For example, if spouses do not feel that talking about their concerns or problems will result in potential gain, they move one step closer to marital dissolution.

Additionally, Cohan and Bradbury (1997) found that positive problem solving behavior helps explain the relationship between stressful life events and marital adjustment. Although men and women are equally effective in providing support to their spouses, women have a tendency to elicit more positive support than men. For example, Neff and Karney (2005b) found that men report receiving more positive support from their spouse when they experience a more severe stressful problem than do women who experience a similar stressor. Further, women who were extremely stressed out reported greater amounts of negative behaviors and support from their spouses. It is possible that

certain communication processes mediate the relationships between negative affectivity, stressful life events, and marital quality.

Marital Quality

Three different manifestations of marital quality are examined in the current investigations: marital satisfaction, personal commitment, and divorce proneness.

Marital satisfaction. Marital satisfaction refers to the emotional perception of gratification in regard to being married to someone. A person's marital satisfaction is subjective and can vary over time as well as in magnitude. There are many variables that have been found to influence marital satisfaction. For example, research has consistently reported that negative affectivity is a strong predictor of marital quality and satisfaction (Lavee & Ben-Ari, 2004). Not only does this personality factor misconstrue people's attributions of their marriage (Karney et al., 1994), it is also a strong predictor of marital satisfaction at different points in a relationship (Karney & Bradbury, 1997). Educational attainment has also been linked to marital satisfaction. Faust and McKibben (1999) note that low levels of education put people at a disadvantage to reaching economic and educational goals. As a result, economic pressures wax and wane at the couple and can ultimately lead to marital dissolution. The personal or dyadic stress a person perceives also plays a role in marital satisfaction. Additionally, whether or not the individual and/or couple can effectively cope with the stressors ultimately determines how the marriage functions and how satisfying it is. Bodenmann (1999) conducted a meta-analysis and found that positive dyadic coping was significantly associated with marital satisfaction and accounted for 30% - 40% of the variance.

Personal commitment. Relationship commitment can be defined as having the intent to maintain a relationship as well as having feelings of psychological attachment to another person (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998). Couples who are committed to one another experience a sense of “we-ness” and allegiance that is established with regard to their dependence on the relationship (Rusbult et al., 1998). Further, commitment directly influences a couple’s behavior in their relationship. Negative affectivity has been found to negatively impact a person’s relationship commitment (Kurdek, 1997b). Individuals with partners high in negative affectivity perceived more costs than rewards in the relationship, as well as feeling that there were many attractive alternatives, thus leading to lower levels of persistence to maintain the relationship (Kurdek, 1997a).

Divorce proneness. Divorce proneness refers to the extent to which people view their marriage as unstable (Previti & Amato, 2003). It encompasses both thoughts and behaviors that promote divorce, such as the presence of thoughts that one’s marriage is in trouble or thinking about divorce. Additionally, people might be more prone to getting a divorce if they talk about divorce with their spouse on a regular basis. Other behaviors might include discussing divorce with friends and family members or leaving home for a short time/trial separation. Previti and Amato (2003) claim that when people are asked about marital cohesion (in open-ended questions) their responses reflect their salient thoughts and are subsequently good predictors of divorce.

Hypotheses and Conceptual Model for Study One

The data for this study were collected as part of a larger investigation of communication and satisfaction in the early years of marriage (Hanzal & Segrin, 2008;

Segrin, Hanzal, & Domschke, (2008). The purpose of this study was to test several paths of the VSA model of marital development. More specifically, this study examined the paths between enduring vulnerabilities, adaptive processes, and marital quality. Study 1 included two enduring vulnerabilities (i.e., negative affectivity and educational attainment), four adaptive processes (i.e., conflict resolution styles), and two manifestations of marital quality (i.e., marital satisfaction and relationship commitment). The following hypotheses address these relationships.

H1: Enduring vulnerabilities will be associated with adaptive processes such that negative affectivity will be negatively related with positive problem solving and positively related with conflict engagement, compliance and withdrawal, and educational attainment will be positively related with positive problem solving and negatively related with conflict engagement, compliance and withdrawal.

H2: Enduring vulnerabilities will be associated with marital quality such that negative affectivity will be negatively related and educational attainment will be positively related with marital quality.

H3: Adaptive processes will be associated with marital quality such that positive problem solving will be positively related with marital quality and conflict engagement, compliance, and withdrawal will be negatively related with marital quality.

H4: Marital quality will be associated with adaptive processes such that marital satisfaction and relationship commitment will be positively related with positive problem solving and negatively related with conflict engagement, compliance, and withdrawal.

H5: Adaptive processes will serve as a mediator between the enduring vulnerabilities and marital quality.

A conceptual model for Study 1 can be found in Figure 2.

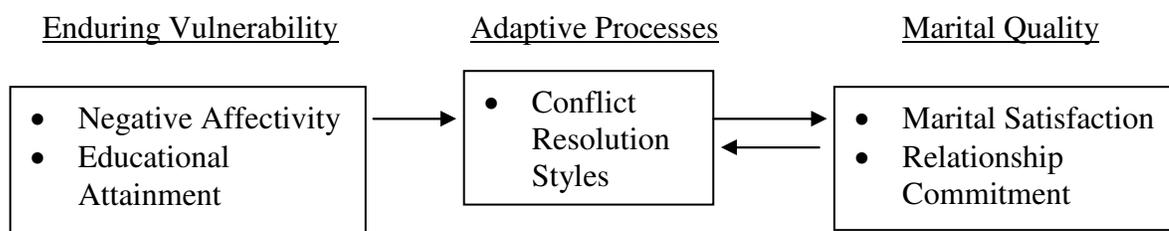


Figure 2

Conceptual Model for Study 1

Hypotheses and Conceptual Model for Study Two

Study two expanded on the first study by examining additional pathways of the VSA model of marriage as well as other factors that fall within the given domains of marriage. Similar to study one, educational attainment and negative affectivity were tested as the enduring vulnerabilities. As for stressful events, work, family, and job-home interference stressors were assessed. Adaptive processes included open communication, a type of coping proposed by Gottman (1999). Last, marital quality was assessed by examining marital satisfaction, personal commitment, and divorce proneness. The following hypotheses address the paths of the VSA model of marriage that were examined. The only path that was not addressed in Study 2 included that from marital quality to marital stability. This path requires longitudinal data, which is outside the scope of the current research.

H1: Enduring vulnerabilities will be associated with adaptive processes such that negative affectivity will be negatively related to adaptive processes and educational attainment will be positively related with adaptive processes.

H2: Enduring vulnerabilities will be associated with stressful events such that negative affectivity will be positively related with stressful events and educational attainment will be negatively related with stressful events.

H3: Enduring vulnerabilities will be associated with marital quality such that negative affectivity will be negatively related with marital satisfaction and personal commitment and positively related with divorce proneness, and educational attainment will be positively related with marital satisfaction and personal commitment and negatively related with divorce proneness.

H4: Stressful events will be associated with adaptive processes such that stressful events will be positively related with negative affectivity and negatively related with educational attainment.

H5: Stressful events will be associated with marital quality such that stressful events will be negatively related with marital satisfaction and personal commitment, and positively related with divorce proneness.

H6: Adaptive processes will be negatively associated with stressful events.

H7: Adaptive processes will be associated with marital quality such that mutual problem solving will be positively related with marital satisfaction and personal commitment and negatively related with divorce proneness.

H8: Marital quality will be associated with adaptive processes such that marital satisfaction and personal commitment will be positively related with mutual problem solving and divorce proneness will be negative related with mutual problem solving.

H9: Marital quality will be associated with stressful events such that marital satisfaction and personal commitment will be negatively related with stressful events and divorce proneness will be positively related with stressful events.

H10: Adaptive processes will serve as a mediator between enduring vulnerabilities and marital quality.

H11: Adaptive processes will serve as a mediator between enduring vulnerabilities and stressful events.

H12: Adaptive processes will serve as a mediator between stressful events and marital quality.

A conceptual model for Study 2 can be found in Figure 3.

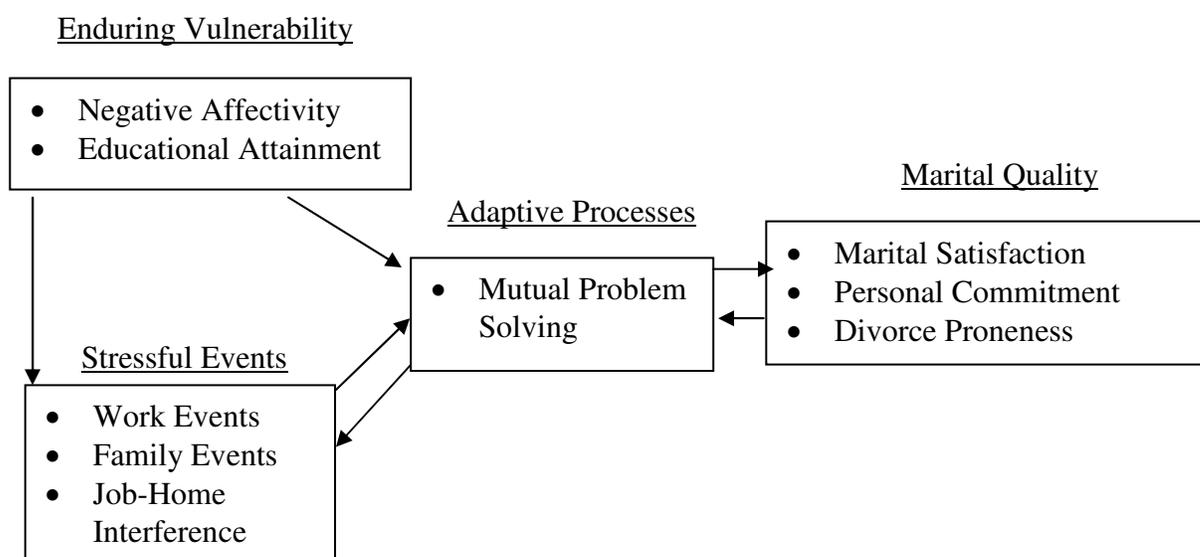


Figure 3.

Conceptual Model for Study 2

CHAPTER TWO

STUDY ONE METHOD

Method

Participants

Married couples were recruited for this study through two different methods. The first method solicited couples' participation through marriage licenses filed in Pima County Arizona within the past five years. Using information provided in these court records, 204 recruitment letters were sent out explaining the nature of the study and inviting couples to participate with a postage paid post card that they could return if interested. Eight of these letters were returned as undeliverable and of the 196 who received the letters, 24% actually participated in the study. Although this response rate is low, it is comparable to response rates in the published literature where sampling is based on mailings to those who filed for marriage licenses (e.g., Johnson et al., 2005; Kurdek, 1991). Couples recruited through court records were given two \$10 gift cards to retail stores in exchange for their participation. The second recruitment method sampled married couples by referral from students at a large Southwestern university. Students were offered extra credit toward their course grade if they referred a couple to the study who had been married within the last five years. For these referrals, students listed the married couple's names and address on a card that was presented to the research staff. These couples were then contacted through the mail. The students referred 248 couples to the study, and 74% actually participated.

Out of all the returned questionnaires, 15 were discarded because only one spouse completed the survey, the data from one same-sex couple were deleted as that was outside the scope of the investigation, two couples' data were deleted because they had been married over five years, and 33 couples' data were deleted because at least one spouse had been previously married. Consequently, the final sample included 194 couples (35 recruited from marriage licenses, 159 recruited through university students) in their first marriage and who were married less than five years. This study investigated newly married couples because many of the risk factors that make couples more likely to divorce are salient during the first years of marriage. Couples had been married on average 1.61 years ($SD = 1.45$). Husbands' mean age was 27.72 ($SD = 5.08$) and wives' was 26.04 ($SD = 4.36$). Collectively, this sample was 2% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 3% Asian or Pacific Islander, 3% Black, 14% Latina/o, 76% White, and 2% other/unknown. The majority of these couples (78%) had no children, and among those 43 couples who did, 30 had only one child. Husbands had on average 15.21 years of formal education ($SD = 2.34$) and 83% held a full-time job. For wives, the average number of years of formal education was 15.73 ($SD = 2.10$), and 60% were employed full time. Fifty-two percent of all couples were comprised of husbands and wives employed full time.

Measures

Negative affectivity was assessed using the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS, Watson, Clark & Tellegan, 1988). The PANAS consists of 20-items. Ten items refer to positive affect (e.g., "strong," "excited," and "interested") and 10 items refer to

negative affect (e.g., “scared,” “ashamed,” and “hostile”). The strength of each emotion was rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale where 1 = Very slightly or not at all, and 5 = extremely. Participants were asked the extent to which they had experienced these emotions during the last week. This scale is a good indicator of the more general tendency toward negative affectivity. Only the items pertaining to negative affect were used for this study. Cronbach’s α was .85 for husbands and .84 for wives.

Conflict resolution styles were measured using the 32-item Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSI; Kurdek, 1994). The CRSI assesses self- and partner-reports of how frequently (1= never, 5 = always) each of four different styles of conflict resolution are used. Husbands and wives were asked to report how frequently *they* use positive problem solving (e.g., focusing on the problem at hand), conflict engagement (e.g., exploding and getting out of control), withdrawal (e.g., reaching a limit, shutting down, and refusing to talk any further), and compliance (e.g., giving in with little attempt to present my side of the issue). Cronbach’s alphas in this study for husbands’ and wives’ conflict engagement, positive problem solving, withdrawal, and compliance were $\alpha = .79, .76, .79, .84$ and $\alpha = .80, .71, .73, .78$, respectively.

Marital quality was assessed with two measures. First, participants completed the Quality Marriage Index (QMI; Norton, 1983). The QMI is a global evaluative assessment of marital satisfaction and happiness. The six items assess the nature of the marriage and quality of the relationship (e.g., my relationship with my partner is very stable). All items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale, with five items anchored at 1 = very strong disagreement and 7 = very strong agreement, and the sixth anchored with 1 = very

unhappy, 7 = perfectly happy. High scores on all items indicated a good quality marriage. Cronbach's α was .93 for husbands and .96 for wives. Second, participants completed the Personal Commitment Scale, a subscale from The Investment Model Scale (Rusbult et al., 1998). This 7-item scale assesses commitment on a global level. All items are scored on a 9-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (Completely disagree) to 9 (Completely agree), with higher scores indicating high commitment levels. Sample items include, "I want our relationship to last for a very long time," and "I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner." Cronbach's α was .82 for husbands and .79 for wives.

In addition to these scales, participants completed a number of demographic items, such as sex, age, race/ethnicity, educational attainment, and employment, and several scales not relevant to the present report.

Procedure

Once couples agreed to participate through one of the two recruitment methods, they received a packet in the mail. The packet contained a cover letter with instructions, consent forms, two surveys, and two pre-paid envelopes. Questionnaires were only identified by code number and no names were recorded on any of the instruments. Participants were instructed to complete the questionnaires independently and to use the pre-paid envelope that was provided to individually mail their completed survey and signed consent form back.

Analytical Strategy

Hypotheses 1-4 were analyzed using the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) (Kashy & Kenny, 1999). APIM treats the dyad as the unit of analysis and examines how variables vary both between and within dyads. See Figure 4 for a conceptual model of the APIM.

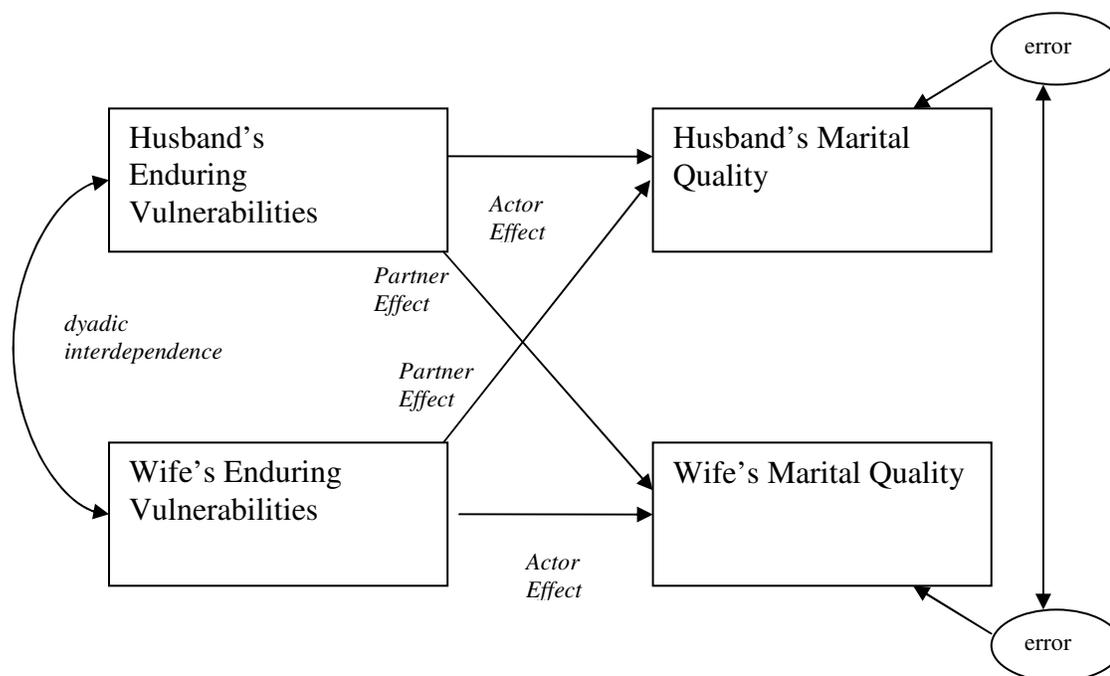


Figure 4

Conceptual Model of the APIM

All means and standard deviations for the variables in Study 1 can be found in Table 1. The within dyad correlations for negative affectivity, education, four conflict styles, marital satisfaction, and personal commitment indicated that most of the variables were correlated significantly between husbands and wives, calling for interdependence analyses (see Table 2). It is important to note that three variables, negative affectivity, global marital satisfaction, and personal commitment were log transformed for all analyses because the variables were either negatively or positively skewed for wives and

husbands. Logarithmic transformation attempts to restore skewness when variables do not have a normal distribution by taking the logarithm of a set of numbers (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken 2002). In other words, log transformation essentially diminishes the right or left tail of the distribution in an attempt to normalize the distribution. In the case of negatively skewed distributions, the variable is first reflected, log transformed, and then reflected back to preserve the original direction of the scaling. APIM analysis of interdependence within interpersonal relationships can be accomplished by using pooled regression analysis, structural equation modeling (SEM) (using AMOS software), or multilevel modeling (MLM) to estimate both actor effects and partner effects (Cook & Kenny, 2005). The current study used structural equation modeling (AMOS) to statistically analyze the APIMs and reported all actor and partner effects as standardized coefficients for ease of interpretation even though significance tests are based on unstandardized coefficients. SEM with maximum likelihood estimation or asymptotically distribution-free was used to estimate all models and to account for missing data or skewed variables.

The mediational tests for hypothesis 5 were conducted via multiple regression analyses as described by Baron and Kenny (1986). Mediation, according to Baron and Kenny (1986), is said to occur when (1) the independent variable (IV) is associated with the mediator; (2) the mediator is associated with the dependent variable (DV); (3) the IV and the DV are significantly associated in the absence of the mediator; and (4) the relationships between the IV and the DV are significantly reduced when controlling for the influence of the mediator. To be considered full mediation, this association should be

reduced to nearly zero (Baron & Kenny, 1986). For partial mediation, this relationship needs to be significantly reduced. The Sobel test (Sobel, 1982) indicates whether this reduction in magnitude is statistically significant and is distributed as z with critical values of + or – 1.96. This test requires the use of the unstandardized coefficients from the multiple regression analysis. However, for ease of interpretation, the results are reported as standardized coefficients. For these analyses, negative affectivity was treated as the independent variable. The dependent variable, marital quality, was measured by marital satisfaction and personal commitment. The mediator(s), conflict resolution styles, was measured by four different styles including positive problem solving, conflict engagement, compliance, and withdrawal.

CHAPTER THREE

STUDY ONE RESULTS

Results

Hypothesis 1: Adaptive Processes as a Function of Enduring Vulnerabilities

Hypothesis 1 predicted significant relationships between actors' enduring vulnerabilities and partners' adaptive processes such that negative affectivity would be negatively related to positive problem solving and positively related to conflict engagement, compliance, and withdrawal, and educational attainment would be positively related with positive problem solving and negatively related with conflict engagement, compliance and withdrawal.. One of the enduring vulnerabilities, education, was eliminated from all analyses because it was not correlated with any of the other variables used in this study (see Table 2). Therefore, the analysis used the actors' negative affectivity as the predictor variable and the four different conflict styles as dependent variables. A series of four SEMs were analyzed to estimate the actor and partner effects of this relationship.

The APIM results for negative affectivity and conflict resolution styles can be found in Table 3. Negative affectivity significantly predicted wives' and husbands' own use of positive problem solving, conflict engagement, compliance, and withdrawal (actor β s for wives = -.35, .46, .18, .25, and husbands = -.25, .35, .20, .35 respectively, all $p < .05$). There were no partner effects as wives' and husbands' negative affectivity did not significantly predict their partners' use of conflict styles.

Hypothesis 1 received partial support as half (8 of 16) of the predicted outcomes were met. In general, wives and husbands' negative affectivity is associated with greater personal use of more negative toned conflict styles (e.g., withdrawal) and lesser use of positively toned conflict styles (e.g., positive problem solving). However, wives and husbands' negative affectivity does not appear to influence their partners' use of conflict resolution styles.

Hypothesis 2: Enduring Vulnerabilities as a Function of Marital Quality

Hypothesis 2 posited that negative affectivity would be negatively related to global relationship satisfaction and personal commitment. This hypothesis was also tested with SEM (see Table 4 for APIM results). In regard to negative affectivity and global relationship satisfaction, both actor and partner effects were found for wives, with the actor effect being greater than the partner effect. Wives' negative affectivity predicted their own global marital satisfaction (actor $\beta = -.37, p < .01$), but also influenced their husbands' global marital satisfaction (partner $\beta = -.23, p < .01$). There was an actor effect found for husbands as their negative affectivity significantly predicted their own global marital satisfaction (actor $\beta = -.29, p < .001$). However, there was no partner effect found for husbands' negative affectivity.

Another SEM tested the relationship between negative affectivity and personal commitment. Table 4 reports the APIM results. Wives' negative affectivity predicted their own personal commitment to their marriage (actor $\beta = -.29, p < .001$) as well as their husbands' personal commitment to the marriage (partner $\beta = -.28, p < .001$). There were no actor or partner effects found for husbands.

Hypothesis 2 was partially supported as 5 of 8 predicted outcomes were met. In general, negative affectivity has both individual and dyadic effects on marriage. Wives high in negative affectivity tend to have lower marital quality (i.e., are less content and less personally committed their marriage) and have spouses with lower marital quality (i.e., are less satisfied and less personally committed) as well. Husbands' negative affectivity does not seem to have as profound of an effect as it only influences their own global satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3: Adaptive Processes as a Function of Marital Quality

Hypothesis 3 predicted a positive relationship between positive problem solving and marital quality (global marital satisfaction and personal commitment) and negative relationships between conflict engagement, compliance, and withdrawal and marital quality (global marital satisfaction and personal commitment). These hypotheses were tested with a series of eight SEMs (see Table 5 for APIM results).

The first series of SEMs examined the relationships between conflict resolution styles and global marital satisfaction. There were significant actor effects for wives' and husbands' use of positive problem solving, conflict engagement, compliance, and withdrawal. More specifically, positive problem solving positively predicted global marital satisfaction for each spouse (actor β for wives = .27, and husbands = .21, $p < .05$) and conflict engagement, compliance, and withdrawal negatively predicted marital quality (actor β s for wives = -.25, -.19, -.20, and husbands = -.22, -.15, -.31, all less $p < .05$). There were also several significant partner effects. Wives' use of three conflict styles (positive problem solving, conflict engagement, and withdrawal) also significantly

predicted global marital satisfaction in their husbands' (partner β s = .19, -.18, -.19, respectively, all $p < .05$), while two conflict styles (conflict engagement and withdrawal) employed by husbands predicted their wives' global marital satisfaction (partner β s = -.16, -.24, respectively, $p < .05$).

The next series of SEMs examined the relationships between conflict resolution styles and personal commitment. There were actor effects for wives as their use of positive problem solving, conflict engagement, compliance, and withdrawal significantly predicted their own personal commitment (actor β s = .34, -.23, -.29, -.21, respectively, all $p < .01$). There were no significant actor effects for husbands. There were also significant partner effects for wives, but not for husbands. Wives' use of positive problem solving (partner β = .21, $p < .01$), conflict engagement (partner β = -.28, $p < .001$), and compliance (partner β = -.23, $p < .01$) all significantly predicted less personal commitment from their husbands.

Hypothesis 3 received partial support as 21 of 32 predicted outcomes were met. The endorsement of conflict styles impact marital quality in two ways. First, wives and husbands who engage in more positive problem solving and less negatively toned conflict resolution styles personally experience higher marital quality. More specifically, wives are more globally satisfied with their marriage as well as personally committed, and husbands are more satisfied with the relationship in general. Second, there are also effects on spouses. Wives' who endorse positive problem solving have husbands with an enhanced quality of marriage (i.e., more relationship satisfaction in general and more personal commitment).

Hypothesis 4: Marital Quality as a Function of Adaptive Processes

Hypothesis 4 predicted positive relationships between marital quality (global marital satisfaction and personal commitment) and positive problem solving, and negative relationships between marital quality (global marital satisfaction and personal commitment) and conflict engagement, compliance, and withdrawal. These hypotheses were tested with a series of eight SEMs and the APIM results are located in Table 6.

The first portion of this hypothesis posited that global marital satisfaction would be positively associated with positive problem solving and negatively related with conflict engagement, compliance, and withdrawal. There were significant actor effects for wives and three conflict resolution styles. Wives' global marital satisfaction significantly predicted their own use of positive problem solving, conflict engagement, and compliance (actor β s for wives = .19, -.24, -.25, respectively, all $p < .05$). There were also significant actor effects for husbands, as their global marital satisfaction significantly predicted their use of positive problem solving, conflict engagement, and withdrawal (actor β s for husbands = .31, -.20, -.27, respectively, all $p < .05$). No partner effects were found for wives and husbands.

The next series of SEMs examined the relationship between personal commitment and conflict resolution styles. There were significant actor effects for wives as their personal commitment significantly predicted their own use of positive problem solving, conflict engagement, compliance, and withdrawal (actor β s for wives = .29, -.18, -.24, -.20, respectively, all $p < .05$). No actor effects were found for husbands. There was one significant partner effect for wives and husbands. Husbands' and wives' personal

commitment significantly predicted their partners' conflict engagement (partner β for wives = $-.16$ and husbands = $-.18$, respectively, both $p < .05$).

Hypothesis 4 was partially supported, as 13 of 32 predicted outcomes were met. In general, marital quality (global relationship satisfaction and personal commitment) is predictive of wives' own use of conflict styles. However, only global marital satisfaction is predictive of husbands' use of conflict styles. Additionally, spouses' marital quality does not influence each others' use of conflict styles. The only exception was for conflict engagement. Wives and husbands who are personally committed to the marriage have spouses who are less likely to actively encourage or promote conflict.

Hypothesis 5: Adaptive Processes as a Mediator of Enduring Vulnerabilities and Marital Quality

Hypothesis 5 posited that conflict resolution styles would mediate the relationship between enduring vulnerabilities and marital quality for wives and husbands. Mediation tests were run separately for wives and husbands. The correlation matrix in Table 7 indicated that negative affectivity is significantly associated with both indicators of marital quality (i.e., global marital satisfaction and personal commitment) for wives. Also, all four conflict resolution styles are significantly associated with negative affectivity and both measures of marital quality. The final test of mediation involved assessing whether the negative affectivity-marital quality relationship was significantly reduced when controlling for the mediators (i.e., conflict resolution styles).

Table 8 reports all findings for the mediation tests for wives. Analyses of the negative affectivity-marital satisfaction relationship when controlling for each conflict

style yielded only one significant finding. The previously significant relationship between negative affectivity and global marital satisfaction ($\beta = -.42, p < .001$) is reduced in magnitude ($\beta = -.37, p < .001$) by controlling for positive problem solving. Even though still significant, this is a statistically significant reduction in magnitude ($z = 2.04, p < .05$). However, because the negative affectivity-global marital satisfaction association is still significantly greater than zero, it is most accurate to characterize positive problem solving as a partial mediator of the negative affectivity-marital satisfaction relationship.

The next set of analyses for wives examined the relationship between negative affectivity and personal commitment when controlling for each conflict style. Two significant findings for wives emerged. The previously significant relationship between negative affectivity and personal commitment ($\beta = -.31, p < .001$) is reduced in magnitude by controlling for positive problem solving ($\beta = -.21, p < .01$) and compliance ($\beta = -.26, p < .001$). The Sobel test indicates that both reductions are statistically significant in magnitude. The z scores for positive problem solving and compliance are 3.01 ($p < .01$) and 2.5 ($p < .01$), respectively. Positive problem solving and compliance are partial mediators of the negative affectivity-personal commitment relationship for wives.

Hypothesis 5 also predicted that conflict resolution styles would mediate the negative affectivity-marital quality relationship for husbands. As indicated in the correlation matrix located in Table 9, negative affectivity is significantly associated with global marital satisfaction but not personal commitment to the marriage. Additionally, all four conflict resolution styles are only significantly associated with global marital satisfaction. The final test of mediation involved assessing whether the negative

affectivity-global marital satisfaction relationship was significantly reduced when controlling for each conflict style.

As indicated in Table 10, there were three variables that partially mediated the negative affectivity-global marital satisfaction relationship for husbands. The previously significant relationship between negative affectivity and global marital satisfaction ($\beta = -.39, p < .001$) is reduced in magnitude by controlling for positive problem solving ($\beta = -.32, p < .001$), conflict engagement ($\beta = -.31, p < .001$), and withdrawal ($\beta = -.29, p < .001$). The z scores for positive problem solving, conflict engagement, and withdrawal are 2.7 ($p < .01$), 2.3 ($p < .05$), and 3.0 ($p < .01$), respectively. Because the relationships are still larger than zero, it is most accurate to label positive problem solving, conflict engagement and withdrawal as partial mediators of the negative affectivity-global marital satisfaction relationship.

Hypothesis 5 was moderately supported for wives and husbands. In regard to wives, positive problem solving is the only conflict style that can partially explain the relationship between negative affectivity and both indicators of marital quality for wives. This suggests that wives who are high in negative affectivity are less able to engage in effective problem solving with their spouse, and therefore, experience poorer marital quality in terms of global relationship satisfaction and personal commitment. The conflict style, compliance, is a partial mediator of the negative affectivity-personal commitment relationship. Wives who are irritable and emotionally distressed might “give in” and comply with their partner because they feel their voice is unheard. As a result, they are more likely to be less committed to the marriage. Regarding husbands, 3 of 4 conflict

styles partially mediated the relationship between negative affectivity and only one indicator of marital quality, global marital satisfaction. Positive problem solving, conflict engagement, and withdrawal can all lend support in explaining the relationship between negative affectivity and global marital satisfaction for husbands. These findings suggest that husbands who are emotionally distressed are less able to engage in effective problem solving with their wives and are more likely to engage in negatively toned conflict styles (i.e., conflict engagement and withdrawal). By engaging in these adverse conflict styles, husbands become less satisfied with their marriage in general.

CHAPTER FOUR

STUDY TWO METHOD

Method

Participants

Married couples were recruited for this study using the same two methods as Study 1. First, couples who had filed for marriage licenses in Pima County Arizona within the past year were recruited to participate. In order to have a more diverse sample for this study, couples living in certain areas of Tucson (e.g., zip codes with a high concentration of ethnic minorities and low household incomes) were targeted. This method sought to counteract the bias of responses received via the second recruitment method, student referrals (e.g., White, affluent couples) and include more ethnic minority groups. Nine zip codes were chosen with median household incomes ranging from \$19,337 to \$35,336 (see Table 11). These are all lower than the median household income of Arizona, which is \$41,963 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). Additionally, these areas also vary in race and ethnicity. For example, 24% to 91% of the populations in the zip codes are Non-White (see Table 7 for the breakdown). From the court records, 178 recruitment letters were sent out soliciting participation in the study. Couples who were interested sent back the postage paid post card that was provided. Fifteen of these letters were returned as undeliverable and of the 163 who received the letters, 31% actually participated in the study. Couples recruited through court records were given a \$25 gift card to a retail store in exchange for their participation. The second recruitment method sampled married couples by referral from students at a large Southwestern university.

Mirroring Study 1, students were offered extra credit toward their course grade if they referred a couple to the study who had been married within the last five years. Once the student provided the married couple's names and address, the couple was contacted through the mail. The students referred 204 couples to the study, and 84% actually participated.

Out of all the returned questionnaires, 5 were discarded because only one spouse completed the survey, one couple's data were deleted because they had been married over five years, 4 couples' data were unusable because the questionnaires were not completed properly, and 28 couples' data were deleted because at least one spouse had been previously married. Consequently, the final sample included 186 newlywed couples (30 recruited from marriage licenses, 156 recruited through university students) who were married less than five years. Couples had been married on average 1.52 years ($SD = 1.42$). Husbands' mean age was 27.37 ($SD = 4.20$) and wives' was 25.71 ($SD = 3.96$). Collectively, this sample was 1% American Indian, 2% Asian or Pacific Islander, 15% Latina/o, 78% White, and 4% other/unknown. The majority of these couples (72%) had no children, and among the 52 couples who did, 42 had only one child. Almost 55% of all husbands held a college degree from a 4-year institution and 86% held a full-time job. For wives, 60% held a college degree from a 4-year institution and 61% were employed full time. Fifty-five percent of all couples were comprised of both spouses employed full time.

Measures

Negative affectivity was assessed using the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS, Watson et al., 1988) and Neuroticism subscale of the Big-Five Inventory (BFI-John & Srivastava, 1999). Both of these measures are highly correlated as they both assess the same construct. The PANAS measures general tendencies or expressions of negative affectivity while the Neuroticism subscale measures negative affectivity as a trait. Please refer to Study 1 for a more thorough description of the PANAS scale. Only the negative items from the PANAS were used for Study 2. Cronbach's α was .83 for husbands and .86 for wives. The Neuroticism subscale of the BFI is comprised of 8 items that measure negative affectivity as a personality trait. Participants rate the extent that they find themselves tense, nervous, relaxed, emotionally stable, etc. on a 5-point Likert-type scale, where 1 = Disagree strongly and 5 = Agree strongly. Cronbach's alphas in this study for husbands and wives were .82 and .78, respectively. Next, similar to Study 1, participants completed the PANAS.

Stress was measured using three scales. First, participants completed a modified version of the Work Stress Scale (Schwartzberg & Dytell, 1996). The participants were informed to refer to their paid work when completing this scale. Participants who were unemployed, were asked to fill out the scale referring to their role as a homemaker/full-time student. This 11-item measure assesses five specific work stress dimensions. The dimensions include work disruptions (e.g., "I am frequently interrupted at work."), overload (e.g., "I am asked to do excessive amounts of work."), lack of resources (e.g., "I do not receive enough help and equipment to get the job done."), insignificance (e.g., "I do not feel my job is meaningful."), and environmental discomfort (e.g., "The physical

work environment is both uncomfortable and unpleasant.”). Each item was measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale where 1 = Strongly disagree and 7 = Strongly agree. Cronbach’s alphas in this study for husbands and wives were .70 and .69, respectively.

Next, participants completed a modified version of the Family Stress Scale (Schwartzberg & Dytell, 1996). This 11-item scale measured 5 dimensions of family stress. Each item was measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree and 7 = Strongly agree. The family dimensions assessed included role insignificance (e.g., “The things I do at home don’t seem to be very meaningful.”), role overload (e.g., “I do not have enough time to do what my family expects of me.”), lack of emotional support from spouse (e.g., “My spouse is always criticizing me.”), and lack of task sharing (e.g., “My spouse and I cooperate with each other to get the household chores done.”), and lack of emotional support from child (e.g., “I don’t think my child or children give me enough love and affection.”). Married couples who did not have a child were instructed to skip the 3 items pertaining to childrearing. Cronbach’s α was .79 for husbands and .70 for wives.

Last, participants completed the Job-Home Interference Scale (Schwartzberg & Dytell, 1996). Five items assessed the degree to which participants experience conflict between responsibilities on the job and at home. Each item was measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly agree with higher scores indicating higher levels of job-home interference. Sample items include, “I feel that my job tends to interfere with my home life,” or “I think about family problems

during work hours.” Reliabilities for husbands and wives were $\alpha = .74$ and $.75$, respectively.

Mutual problem solving was assessed with the Working Things Out subscale, of the Distance and Isolation Questionnaires (Gottman, 1999). This subscale refers to how people try to work things out/mend problems via communication with their spouse. Sample items include, “I have given up trying to talk things out,” or “Our conversations about our problems never seem to get anywhere.” Each item was scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree, with higher scores being more indicative of giving up in the relationship and not openly communicating with one another. Husbands and wives were asked to report how frequently they engage in mutual problem solving. Cronbach’s alphas in this study for husbands’ and wives’ mutual problem solving were $\alpha = .88$ and $.81$, respectively.

Marital Quality was assessed with four scales. Two scales, the Self-Attributes Questionnaire (SAQ, Swann, De La Ronde, & Hixon, 1994) and Quality Marriage Index (QMI, Norton, 1983) were used to assess marital satisfaction. First, participants completed a version of the SAQ, which assesses specific perceptions spouses have about behavioral traits and their partners. As noted in Neff and Karney (2005b), the SAQ represents a measure that is more specific in nature than global measures of marital satisfaction. Participants were asked how personally important six specific qualities (i.e., intellectual capability, physical attractiveness, athletic ability, social skills, organization, and tidiness) are to them. These items were scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 0 = Extremely unimportant to 4 = Extremely important. Next, they were asked the

extent to which their partner possesses these six qualities. Items were scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale where 1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree. Essentially, each trait had two scores, one rating the importance, and the other indicating the appraisal of the trait. Both of these scores were then multiplied for each trait, resulting in six totals. These totals were then summed to create a composite score for the scale. Scores ranged from 19-120 for husbands and 30-107 for wives. Higher scores were indicative of having greater trait importance as well as greater spousal possession of traits. This is can be translated to higher levels of specific aspects of marital satisfaction.

Next, relationship satisfaction was examined using the Quality Marital Index (QMI). The QMI was also used in Study 1. Therefore, please see Study 1 for a complete description of this measure. Cronbach's alphas for husbands and wives in this study were both $\alpha = .92$.

The Personal Commitment Level subscale from The Investment Model Scale (TIMS, Rusbult et al., 1998) is the third measure of marital quality. This measure was also used in Study 1 and assesses commitment on a global level. Please see Study 1 for a more thorough description. Reliabilities for husbands and wives in this study were $\alpha = .76$ and $.82$, respectively.

Last, participants completed a modified version of the Divorce Proneness Scale (Edwards, Johnson, & Booth, 1987). This scale is comprised of 8 items that measure the extent to which people think about divorce and terminating their relationship. Sample items include, "Has the thought of getting a divorce or separation crossed your mind?" or "As far as you know, has your spouse ever thought your marriage was in trouble?"

Participants were asked the extent to which they have thought about each statement by circling *never*, *occasionally*, *often*, or *very often*. Cronbach's alphas for husbands and wives were $\alpha = .82$ and $.87$, respectively.

In addition to these scales, participants completed a number of demographic items, such as sex, age, race/ethnicity, educational attainment, how many children they have, and their current employment status.

Procedure

The same procedure used in Study 1 was implemented in Study 2. Once participants agreed to participate through one of two recruitment methods, they received a packet in the mail. The packet contained a cover letter with instructions, consent forms, two surveys, and two pre-paid envelopes. Again, questionnaires were only identified by code number and no names were recorded on any of the instruments. Participants used the pre-paid envelope that was provided to mail their completed survey and signed consent form.

Analytical Strategy

All means and standard deviations of the variables in Study 2 can be found in Table 12. Hypotheses 1-9 were analyzed using the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) (Kashy & Kenny, 1999). The within dyad correlations for negative affectivity, neuroticism, educational attainment, mutual problem solving, work stress, family stress, job-home interference, global satisfaction, satisfaction of specific aspects, personal commitment, and divorce proneness indicated that most of the variables were correlated significantly between husbands and wives, calling for interdependence analyses (see

Table 13). Negative affect, mutual problem solving, global satisfaction, personal commitment, and divorce proneness were log transformed for all analyses because the variables were either negatively or positively skewed for wives and husbands. Similar to Study 1, the current study used structural equation modeling (i.e., AMOS) to statistically analyze the APIMs. All actor and partner effects were reported as standardized coefficients, again, for ease of interpretation. Structural equation modeling with maximum likelihood estimation or asymptotically distribution-free was used to estimate all models and to account for missing data or skewed variables.

The mediational tests for hypotheses 10-12 were conducted via multiple regression analyses. The Sobel test was used again to determine whether there were significant reductions in the relationships between the IV and DV when controlling for the potential mediator. Although the Sobel test requires the use of unstandardized coefficients from the multiple regression analyses, the results are reported as standardized coefficients for consistency. For hypothesis 10, enduring vulnerabilities (negative affectivity, neuroticism, and educational attainment) were treated as the independent variables. The dependent variable, marital quality, was measured by marital satisfaction, satisfaction or specific aspects, personal commitment, and divorce proneness. Hypothesis 11 treated enduring vulnerabilities as the independent variables and stressful events (work stress, family stress, and job-home interference) as the dependent variables. Finally, hypothesis 12 treated stressful events as the independent variables and marital quality (marital satisfaction, satisfaction with specific events, personal commitment, and

divorce proneness) as independent variables. The potential mediator was mutual problem solving in all analyses.

CHAPTER FIVE
STUDY TWO RESULTS

Results

Hypothesis 1: Enduring Vulnerabilities as a Function of Adaptive Processes

Hypothesis 1 predicted a negative relationship between negative affectivity and mutual problem solving and positive relationship between educational attainment mutual problem solving. The analyses used two indicators of negative affectivity (negative affect and neuroticism) and educational attainment as the predictor variables and mutual problem solving as the dependent variable. A series of three SEMs were analyzed to estimate the actor and partner effects. Table 14 reports the APIM results for H1a-c.

Regarding the first indicator of negative affectivity, negative affect, there was only one significant finding. Husbands' negative affect significantly predicted their partners' mutual problem solving attempts ($\beta = -.20, p < .05$). The next SEM examined the second indicator of negative affectivity, neuroticism, and its relationship with mutual problem solving. Both actor and partner effects were found for husbands, with the partner effect being greater than the actor effect. Husbands' neuroticism predicted their own use of mutual problem solving (actor $\beta = -.17, p < .05$), but also influenced their wives' use of mutual problem solving (partner $\beta = -.28, p < .001$). There were no actor or partner effects found for wives' neuroticism.

Husbands' educational attainment significantly predicted husbands' own use of mutual problem solving (actor $\beta = .20, p < .01$) as well as their partners' use of mutual problem solving (partner $\beta = .21, p < .01$). There were no actor or partner effects for

wives as their educational attainment did not significantly predict their own or their partners' use of mutual problem solving.

This hypothesis received partial support as 5 of the 12 predicted outcomes were met. In general, husbands who display negative affect engage in less mutual problem solving and have wives who also communicate less about their problems. However, the more educated husbands are, the more openly they and their spouses communicate their problems and concerns. This suggests that wives might only disclose information about problems if their husbands are emotionally stable because only then will it have a positive impact.

Hypothesis 2: Enduring vulnerabilities as a Function of Stressful Events

Hypothesis 2 predicted that enduring vulnerabilities would be significantly associated with stressful events, such that negative affectivity would be positively related to stressful events and educational attainment would be negatively related to stressful events. A series of nine SEMs were conducted and the actor and partner effects can be found in Table 15.

The first set of analyses examined the relationship between both indicators of negative affectivity (negative affect and neuroticism) and stressful events. There were significant actor and partner effects for husbands, but not for wives in regards to negative affect and work stress (actor $\beta = .27$ and partner $\beta = .17$, both $p < .05$). Husbands' negative affect also significantly predicted their own family stress (actor $\beta = .21$, $p < .01$) and their partners' family stress (actor $\beta = .16$, $p < .05$). Last, negative affect significantly predicted wives' and husbands' own experience of job-home interference stress (actor β s

for wives = .20 and husbands = .38, all $p < .01$). There were no partner effects as wives' and husbands' negative affect did not significantly predict their partners' job-home stress interference. There were significant actor effects for neuroticism and all indices of stressful events. Neuroticism significantly predicted wives' and husbands' own experience of work stress, family stress, and job-home stress interference (actor β s for wives = .15, .18, and .19, and husbands = .20, .26, and .35, respectively, all $p < .05$). There were two significant partner effects for neuroticism and stressful events. Husbands' neuroticism significantly predicted their wives' family stress and job-home stress interference (partner β s = .25 and .28, respectively, both $p < .001$).

The second part of the hypothesis posited that educational attainment would be negatively related to stressful events. Husbands' educational attainment significantly predicted wives' levels of work stress and family stress (partner β s = -.17 and -.26, both $p < .05$). The only significant finding for wives was a partner effect for job-home interference (partner β = -.15, $p < .05$).

Hypothesis 2 received partial support as it met 18 out of 32 of the predicted outcomes. Negative affectivity clearly influences how wives and husbands experience stress. More specifically, husbands' negative affect and neuroticism lead to their own increased perceptions of all types of stress (i.e., work, family, and job-home interference stress), whereas wives' neuroticism has more of an impact on their own perceived work, family, and job-home interference stress. Wives with husbands who are high in negative affectivity experience more stress than husbands with wives who are high in negative affectivity. It may be that wives are unable to cope with their spouses' unstable emotions

and negative affect and as a result perceive their work and family life to be more stressful. Educational attainment appears to have more implications for one's spouse than themselves. Husbands with higher levels of education have wives who experience less work and family stress. Additionally, wives who are more educated have husbands who experience less job-home interference stress. One explanation could be that having an education results in landing a secure job, thus lowering the likelihood for family stress or job-home interference stress.

Hypothesis 3: Enduring Vulnerabilities as a Function of Marital Quality

Hypothesis 3 predicted that enduring vulnerabilities would be related to marital quality. First, it was posited that negative affectivity would be negatively related to global relationship satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects, and personal commitment, and positively related to divorce proneness. The second part of the hypothesis predicted that educational attainment would be positively related to global relationship satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects, and personal commitment, and negatively related to divorce proneness. A series of 12 SEMs were conducted with the enduring vulnerabilities (two indicators of negative affectivity and educational attainment) as independent variables and the four indicators of marital quality as the dependent variables. Marital quality, the latent variable, is measured by marital satisfaction (both global satisfaction and satisfaction with specific aspects of the marriage), personal commitment, and divorce proneness.

First, the relationship between negative affectivity-marital quality was examined. The results of the APIM analyses for the first indicator of negative affectivity, negative

affect, can be found in Table 16. Wives' negative affect significantly predicted their own global relationship satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects of the marriage, personal commitment, and divorce proneness (actor β s = -.31, -.22, -.23, .26, respectively, all $p < .01$). There were also actor effects for husbands as negative affect significantly predicted their own global relationship satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects of the marriage, and divorce proneness (actor β s = -.16, -.15, .27, respectively, all $p < .05$). There were two significant partner effects for husbands. Husbands' negative affect significantly predicted wives' personal commitment (partner β = -.15, $p < .05$) and divorce proneness (partner β = .20, $p < .01$).

The next set of SEMs examined the relationships between neuroticism (the second indicator of negative affectivity) and marital quality (see Table 17 for APIM results). There were several significant actor effects. Wives' and husbands' neuroticism significantly predicted their own global relationship quality, satisfaction with specific aspects of the marriage, and divorce proneness (actor β s for wives = -.25, -.29, .22, and husbands = -.22, -.18, .23, respectively, all $p < .01$). Additionally, husbands' neuroticism predicted their partners' marital quality. More specifically, husbands' neuroticism significantly predicted wives' global relationship satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects of the marriage, personal commitment, and divorce proneness (partner β s = -.21, -.16, -.15, .21, respectively, all $p < .05$). Wives' neuroticism significantly predicted one indicator of husbands' marital quality, global relationship satisfaction (partner β = -.17, $p < .05$).

The last series of SEMs examined the relationship between educational attainment and marital quality (see Table 18 for APIM results). There were only two significant findings for wives. First, there was a significant actor effect for wives as their educational attainment significantly predicted their own personal commitment to the relationship (actor $\beta = .15, p < .05$). Second, wives' educational attainment significantly predicted their husbands' divorce proneness (partner $\beta = -.18, p < .05$). There were several significant findings for husbands. More specifically, husbands' educational attainment not only predicted their own personal commitment to the marriage (actor $\beta = .18, p < .05$) and divorce proneness (actor $\beta = -.16, p < .05$), but also their partners' global relationship satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects of the marriage, personal commitment and divorce proneness (partner β s = .19, .20, .15, -.19, respectively, all $p < .05$).

Hypothesis 3 received partial support as it met 29 of the 48 predicted outcomes. In general, wives who are moody and less emotionally stable perceive lower levels of marital quality than those who are low in negative affectivity. Similarly, husbands higher in negative affectivity are more likely to divorce if they perceive problems in their marriage and are less satisfied with the relationship in general as well as with specific aspects of the marriage. Wives, more so than husbands, are impacted to a greater degree if their partner is high in negative affectivity. A husbands' negative affectivity appears to decrease all aspects of marital quality for wives. Spouses, however, do perceive divorce proneness similarly if their partner is high in negative affectivity. Both are more likely to consider divorce if their spouse is emotionally stable. As for educational attainment, wives and husbands who have attained higher levels of education are more personally

committed to their relationship. Further, wives appear to be more satisfied and committed with their marriage if their husbands have completed a 4-year college degree or a graduate degree and husbands are less likely to consider terminating the relationship if their wives are more highly educated.

Hypothesis 4: Stressful Events as a Function of Adaptive Processes

Hypothesis 4 posited that stressful events (work stress, family stress, and job-home interference) would be negatively related to adaptive processes (mutual problem solving). The APIM results for hypothesis 4 can be found in Table 19.

All indices of stressful events predicted wives and husbands own engagement in mutual problem solving. Specifically, work stress, family stress, and job-home interference stress all predicted wives' and husbands' mutual problem solving with their partners (actor β s for wives = -.33, -.55, -.35, and husbands = -.26, -.50, -.21, respectively, all $p < .01$). There was one significant partner effect for wives. Wives' job-home interference stress significantly predicted their partners' mutual problem solving (partner $\beta = -.15, p < .05$). No partner effects were found for husbands as their job-home interference stress did not predict their wives' mutual problem solving.

Seven of 12 predicted outcomes were met, leading to partial support for hypothesis 4. Overall, family stress has the largest influence on whether spouses personally engage in mutual problem solving. Wives and husbands who perceive higher levels of family stress are less likely to discuss problems or openly communicate with their spouse. It is possible that wives and husbands feel that talking about things with their partner will not make a difference and therefore, choose to keep things to

themselves. Additionally, to the extent that wives experience high levels of stress spillover from work to home (or vice versa), their husbands will be more closed off and less open with them about relationship concerns.

Hypothesis 5: Stressful Events as a Function of Marital Quality

Hypothesis 5 posited that stressful events (work stress, family stress, and job-home interference) would be negatively related to global relationship satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects, and personal commitment and positively related to divorce proneness. A series of 12 SEMs were conducted where stressful events were the independent variables and the four indicators of marital quality were the dependent variables.

First, the relationships between work stress and marital quality were examined. The APIM results are located in Table 20. Wives' and husbands' work stress significantly predicted their own marital quality in terms of global relationship satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects of the marriage, and personal commitment (actor β s for wives = -.19, -.24, -.19 (all $p < .01$), and husbands = -.16, -.17, -.15 (all $p < .05$), respectively). Husbands' work stress also significantly predicted their own and their partners' propensity to divorce (actor $\beta = .19$, $p < .01$ and partner $\beta = .16$, $p < .05$).

The next series of SEMs examined the relationship between family stress and marital quality. The APIM results can be found in Table 21. Wives' and husbands' family stress significantly predicted their own global relationship satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects of the marriage, personal commitment, and divorce proneness (actor β s for wives = -.38, -.24, -.27, .26 and husbands = -.35, -.20, -.35, .44, respectively, all p

<.01). Wives' and husbands' family stress also significantly predicted their partners' global relationship satisfaction, personal commitment, and propensity to divorce (partner β s for wives = -.15, -.20, .20 and husbands = -.21, -.26, .22, respectively, all $p < .05$).

Finally, the relationships between job-home interference stress and marital quality were assessed (see Table 22 for APIM results). Wives' job-home interference stress significantly predicted their own global relationship satisfaction, personal commitment, and divorce proneness (actor β s = -.33, -.22, .28, respectively, all $p < .01$), as well as their spouses' personal commitment and divorce proneness (partner β s = -.17, .22, respectively, all $p < .05$). There were two actor effects for husbands as their job-home interference stress significantly predicted their own global relationship satisfaction and propensity to divorce (actor β s = -.21 and .22, respectively, both $p < .01$). No significant partner effects were found for husbands.

Hypothesis 5 received partial support as 29 of 48 predicted outcomes were met. In general, wives and husbands who experience job overload, disruptions, and stress at work are less satisfied with the quality of their marriage. Further, wives' propensity to divorce increases if their husbands are stressed with work. In regard to family stress, spouses are less content with their marriage if they perceive their partner to be unsupportive and uncooperative with household tasks. Both husbands and wives who experience stress spillover from work to family (and/or vice versa) are less content with their marriage and are more prone to divorce. Further, husbands feel the repercussions from their wives' job-home interference stress. Not only are husbands less personally committed to the relationship, but they also see divorce as a viable solution to their marital problems.

Hypothesis 6: Adaptive Processes as a Function of Stressful Events

Hypothesis 6 predicted that adaptive processes (mutual problem solving) would be negatively related to stressful events. In other words, the more people openly discussed their problems, the less they would perceive work, family, and job-home interference stressors. A series of three SEMS were conducted, where mutual problem solving was paired with each type of stress (work, family, and job-home interference stress). All APIM results are located in table 23.

Mutual problem solving significantly predicted wives' and husbands' own perceived work, family, and job-home interference stress (actor β s for wives -.40, -.51, -.32, and husbands -.27, -.53, -.24 respectively, all $p < .01$). Additionally, husbands' mutual problem solving significantly predicted wives' perceptions of work and family stress (partner β s for husbands .21 and -.15, respectively, all $p < .05$). There were no partner effects for wives as their engagement in mutual problem solving did not predict their husbands' perceived stress.

Hypothesis 6 was partially supported as 7 of 12 associations were significantly predicted. Wives and husbands who engage in mutual problem solving perceive less stress themselves in all domains (i.e., work, family, and job-home interference stress). Further, husbands' mutual problem solving was negatively associated with their wives' perceived family stress but positively related to their wives' perceived work stress. Openly discussing issues was only beneficial in one situation. Husbands' who discuss and disclose concerns with their wives lessen the family stress that the wives perceive.

Conversely, wives' use of mutual problem solving did not significant play a role in the perceived stress of their husbands.

Hypothesis 7: Adaptive Processes as a Function of Marital Quality

Hypothesis 7 predicted that adaptive processes (mutual problem solving) would be positively related to global relationship satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects, personal commitment and negatively related to divorce proneness. A series of four SEMs were conducted, where mutual problem solving was coupled with each indicator of marital quality.

As indicated in Table 24, mutual problem solving significantly predicted wives' and husbands' own global relationship satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects of their marriage, personal commitment, and divorce proneness (actor β s for wives .34, .20, .33, -.25, and husbands .39, .24, .44, -.46, respectively, all $p < .01$). Additionally, husbands' engagement in mutual problem solving significantly predicted their wives' global relationship satisfaction ($\beta = .24, p < .001$), satisfaction with specific aspects of the marriage ($\beta = .19, p < .01$), personal commitment ($\beta = .25, p < .001$), and divorce proneness ($\beta = -.40, p < .001$). The only significant partner effect for wives was with divorce proneness. Wives' use of mutual problem solving significantly predicted their partners' propensity to divorce ($\beta = -.16, p < .05$).

Hypothesis 7 was supported as 13 of 16 predicted outcomes were met. Marital quality is high to the extent that spouses communicate their problems with one another. Wives and husbands' engagement in mutual problem solving predicts all aspects of their own marital quality, including satisfaction, personal commitment, and divorce proneness.

Further, if husbands openly talk to their spouse and voice their concerns, the more satisfied and committed their wives are to the marriage. This partner effect was not found for wives as their mutual problem solving behaviors did not impact their husbands' marital quality.

Hypothesis 8: Marital Quality as a Function of Adaptive Processes

Hypothesis 8 posited that marital quality would be related to adaptive processes such that global relationship satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects, and personal commitment would be positively associated with mutual problem solving and divorce proneness would be negatively associated with mutual problem solving. A series of four SEMs were conducted and all APIM results can be found in Table 25.

Marital quality significantly predicted how spouses personally discussed their problems with one another. Wives and husbands use of open communication and mutual problem solving behaviors is significantly related to their own global relationship satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects, personal commitment, and divorce proneness (actor β s for wives = .42, .26, .37, -.32 and husbands = .33, .18, .41, -.34, respectively, all $p < .05$).

All partner effects for wives were significant. More specifically, wives' global relationship satisfaction ($\beta = .20, p < .01$), satisfaction with specific aspects of the marriage ($\beta = .20, p < .01$), personal commitment ($\beta = .15, p < .05$) and propensity to divorce ($\beta = -.27, p < .001$) all predicted their husbands' use of mutual problem solving. There were no partner effects for husbands as their marital quality did not predict their partners' disclosure of relationship problems or concerns.

Overall, hypothesis 8 was partially supported as 12 of 16 predicted outcomes were met. In general, spouses who report high marital quality are more likely to work out marital problems with their partner by talking to one another. Further, husbands are more willing to talk about their problems if their partners are satisfied with the marriage and personally committed. This was not the case for wives. The marital quality of husbands had no bearing on wives' mutual problem solving.

Hypothesis 9: Marital Quality as a Function of Stressful Events

Hypothesis 9 predicted that marital quality would be associated with stressful events (work stress, family stress, and job-home interference) such that global relationship satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects, and personal commitment would be negatively related to stressful events and divorce proneness would be positively related to stressful events. A series of 12 SEMs were conducted.

First, the relationships between global relationship satisfaction and all three indicators of stressful events were examined. The APIM results appear in Table 26. Regarding global relationship satisfaction, wives' satisfaction significantly predicted their own work stress ($\beta = -.28, p < .001$), family stress ($\beta = -.42, p < .001$), and job-home interference stress ($\beta = -.37, p < .001$). Husbands' global relationship satisfaction significantly predicted their own family stress ($\beta = -.30, p < .001$) and job-home interference ($\beta = -.19, p < .05$), resulting in two actor effects. There was only one significant partner effect. Wives' global relationship satisfaction significantly predicted their husbands' family stress ($\beta = -.21, p < .01$). Hypotheses d-f, pertaining to satisfaction with specific aspects of marriage, also yielded significant actor effects for both wives and

husbands. Wives' and husbands' satisfaction with specific aspects of the marriage significantly predicted their own work and family stress (actor β s for wives = $-.24, -.27$, and husbands = $-.21, -.18$, respectively, all $p < .05$). Only one partner effect was found. Wives' satisfaction with specific aspects of the marriage predicted husbands' perceived family stress ($\beta = -.17, p < .05$).

The next set of analyses examined the relationship between personal commitment and stressful events (see Table 27 for APIM results). Wives' personal commitment predicted their own work stress ($\beta = -.22, p < .01$) and family stress ($\beta = -.27, p < .001$). Husbands' personal commitment predicted their own family stress ($\beta = -.33, p < .001$). There were also significant partner effects. Wives' and husbands' personal commitment significantly predicted their partners' perceived family stress (partner $\beta = -.20$ and $-.21$, respectively, both $p < .01$).

The last series of SEMs examined the relationships between divorce proneness and stressful events. These APIM results are also presented in Table 27. There were significant actor effects as divorce proneness positively predicted wives' and husbands' own family stress and job-home interference (actor β s for wives = $.19, .21$ and husbands = $.52, .28$, respectively, all $p < .05$). Additionally, husbands' propensity to divorce significantly predicted their wives' perceptions of family stress (partner $\beta = .26, p < .01$).

Hypothesis 9 received partial support as 21 of 48 predicted outcomes were met. In general, spouses who are satisfied with their marriage perceive less stressful events. Wives and husbands who are personally committed to the relationship also tend to experience less stress. However, if wives and husbands feel that divorce is on the

horizon, they are more likely to personally experience higher degrees family and job-home interference stress. Spouses' marital quality also influences their partners' perceptions of family stress. For example, husbands will experience less family stress if their partners' are satisfied with the marriage. Further, both partners will experience less family stress if their spouses are personally committed to the relationship. Finally, if husbands are thinking about divorce or perceiving their marriage is in trouble, their wives are more likely to experience family stress.

Hypothesis 10: Adaptive Processes as a Mediator of Enduring Vulnerabilities and Marital Quality

The following mediational hypotheses are analyzed at the individual level rather than the dyadic level in order to examine the unique role that mutual problem solving plays for each spouse. Therefore, each hypothesis addresses both wives and husbands.

Hypothesis 10 posited that mutual problem solving would mediate the relationships between enduring vulnerabilities (negative affectivity and educational attainment) and marital quality (global relationship satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects, personal commitment, and divorce proneness) for wives and husbands. First, the mediating role of mutual problem solving will be examined for wives. The correlation matrix in Table 28 indicated that both enduring vulnerabilities (educational attainment and negative affectivity) are significantly associated with several or all of the indicators of marital quality (marital satisfaction, personal commitment, and divorce proneness) for wives. For example, negative affect and neuroticism are significantly associated with all indicators of marital quality. Educational attainment is significantly associated with

personal commitment, satisfaction of specific aspects, and divorce proneness. However, negative affect is the only enduring vulnerability that was associated with mutual problem solving. Additionally, mutual problem solving is significantly associated with all four measures of marital quality. For these analyses, negative affect is the independent variable, all four indicators of marital quality are the dependent variables, and mutual problem solving is the potential mediator. The final test of mediation involved assessing whether the negative affect-marital quality relationship was significantly reduced when controlling for mutual problem solving. All results for the mediational tests can be found in Table 29.

Multiple regression analyses tested the negative affectivity-marital quality (marital satisfaction, personal commitment, and divorce proneness) relationship. The previously significant relationship between negative affect and global relationship satisfaction ($\beta = -.33, p < .001$) is reduced in magnitude ($\beta = -.26, p < .001$) by controlling for mutual problem solving. Even though still significant, this is a statistically significant reduction in magnitude. In this case, the Sobel test indicated a significant reduction in the negative affect-global relationship satisfaction relationship by controlling for the effect of mutual problem solving, $z = -2.29, p < .05$. However, because this relationship is still significantly greater than zero, it is most accurate to characterize mutual problem solving as a partial mediator of the negative affect-global relationship satisfaction relationship.

The significant relationship between negative affect and satisfaction with specific aspects of the marriage is also reduced when controlling for mutual problem solving. The significant relationship went from $\beta = -.25 (p < .001)$ to $\beta = -.21 (p < .01)$, and has a z

score of -1.96 ($p < .05$) for coping. Again, because the negative affect-satisfaction with specific aspects relationship is still significantly greater than zero, it is most accurate to characterize mutual problem solving as a partial mediator for this relationship.

The analysis of the negative affect-personal commitment relationship indicated that the previously significant relationship between these two variables ($\beta = -.28, p < .001$) is reduced in magnitude by controlling for mutual problem solving ($\beta = -.21, p < .01$). The Sobel test indicated that the reduction is statistically significant in magnitude. The z score for mutual problem solving is -2.28 ($p < .05$). Again, mutual problem solving is a partial mediator of the negative affect-personal commitment relationship.

Finally, the previously significant relationship between negative affect and divorce proneness ($\beta = .32, p < .001$) is reduced in magnitude ($\beta = .26, p < .001$) by controlling for mutual problem solving. Even though still significant, this is a statistically significant reduction in magnitude, $z = 2.24, p < .05$. Therefore, mutual problem solving is a partial mediator of the negative affect-divorce proneness relationship.

As a first step in evaluating the association between enduring vulnerabilities, adaptive processes, and marital quality for husbands, correlation coefficients were calculated for the associations between all of the major variables in this investigation (i.e., negative affect, neuroticism, educational attainment, mutual problem solving, global relationship satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects, personal commitment, and divorce proneness). These correlations appear in Table 30. The results indicate that the enduring vulnerabilities were significantly related to some or all of the indicators of marital quality. Additionally, mutual problem solving was related to all indicators of

marital quality, but only significantly associated with two of the indicators of enduring vulnerabilities, educational attainment and neuroticism. The final test of mediation involved assessing whether the educational attainment-marital quality relationship and neuroticism-marital quality relationship were significantly reduced when controlling for mutual problem solving. All multiple regression results for the mediational tests can be found in Table 31.

First, the educational attainment-marital quality (i.e., divorce proneness and personal commitment) relationships were assessed. The previously significant relationship between educational attainment and personal commitment ($\beta = .19, p < .01$) is reduced in magnitude ($\beta = .10, ns$) by controlling for mutual problem solving. The Sobel test indicated a marginally significant reduction in this relationship by controlling for the effect of mutual problem solving, $z = 1.91, p = .054$. Mutual problem solving almost completely mediates the educational attainment-personal commitment relationship. Additionally, the previously significant relationship between educational attainment and divorce proneness ($\beta = -.21, p < .01$) is reduced in magnitude ($\beta = -.12, ns$) by controlling for mutual problem solving. However, the Sobel test indicated a marginally significant reduction in the educational attainment-divorce proneness relationship by controlling for the effect of mutual problem solving, $z = -1.92, p < .054$. Thus, almost full mediation was demonstrated again.

Next, the negative affectivity-marital quality relationships were examined. The relationships between neuroticism and global relationship satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects, and divorce proneness were controlled for by mutual problem solving.

First, the significant relationship between neuroticism and global relationship satisfaction ($\beta = -.17, p < .05$) is reduced in magnitude ($\beta = -.14, ns$) by controlling for mutual problem solving. However, the Sobel test indicated that the reduction in magnitude between the association of neuroticism and global relationship satisfaction was not significant by controlling for the effect of mutual problem solving ($z = -1.68, ns$). Further, the previously significant relationship between neuroticism and satisfaction with specific aspects of the marriage ($\beta = -.21, p < .01$) was examined. When controlling for the effect of mutual problem solving, this relationship was reduced to $\beta = -.15, p < .05$. However, again, the Sobel test indicated that this reduction was not significant in magnitude, $z = -1.90, ns$. Finally, the relationship between neuroticism and divorce proneness was tested. The previously significant relationship ($\beta = .22, p < .01$) was reduced when controlling for the effect of mutual problem solving ($\beta = .15, p < .05$). The Sobel test indicated that this too was a marginally significant reduction in magnitude, with a z score of 1.92 ($p = .054$) for mutual problem solving.

Hypothesis 10 received partial support as mutual problem solving partially mediated all relationships between negative affectivity and marital quality for wives but only produced marginally significant findings for husbands. Wives' use of mutual problem solving provides one explanation for the association between negative affectivity and marital quality. People who are high in negative affectivity are more prone to using adverse communication styles, such as closing oneself off to their partner and not openly communicating problems, in the face of stress. Further, it is this lack of mutual problem solving or open communication that in part leads wives to experience less satisfaction,

lower personal commitment, a have higher propensity to divorce. The role of mutual problem solving can provide some insight into the educational attainment-marital quality and neuroticism-marital quality relationships for husbands. For example, it's plausible that men who are highly educated have also learned how to solve problems and communicate more competently than those who did not attend college. Further, by being able to openly communicate with others about marital problems or concerns, husbands might find themselves more committed to the relationship as well as less likely to find divorce a viable solution to a problematic marriage. As the results suggest, mutual problem solving might also mediate the relationship between neuroticism and marital quality. The reason why this enduring vulnerability might be associated with poor marital satisfaction is because highly neurotic husbands are unable to openly communicate their concerns with their spouse. Instead, they keep things to themselves and don't see any potential gain in trying to talk things out with their partners.

Hypothesis 11: Adaptive Processes as a Mediator of Enduring Vulnerabilities and Stressful Events

Hypothesis 11 predicted that mutual problem solving would mediate the relationship between enduring vulnerabilities (negative affectivity and educational attainment) and stressful events (work, family, and job-home interference stress) for wives and husbands. In regard to wives, the correlation coefficients among enduring vulnerabilities (negative affectivity and educational attainment), adaptive processes (mutual problem solving), and stressful events (work stress, family stress, and job-home interference stress) can be found in Table 32. As indicated in this table, the only enduring

vulnerability significantly associated with mutual problem solving is negative affect (1 of 2 indicators of negative affectivity). Further, negative affect and mutual problem solving are significantly related with all types of stressful events (work stress, family stress, and job-home interference stress). Multiple regression analyses examined the negative affect-stressful events relationships and tested for mediation by controlling for mutual problem solving. The results of the mediational tests are in Table 33.

The previously significant relationship between negative affect and work stress ($\beta = .19, p < .01$) was reduced in magnitude when controlling for mutual problem solving ($\beta = .14, ns$). The Sobel test indicated that this was a significant reduction in magnitude, $z = 2.16, p < .05$. Mutual problem solving completely mediated the relationship between negative affect and work stress for wives.

There was also a significant reduction ($z = 2.41, p < .05$) between negative affect and family stress when mutual problem solving was controlled for. The once significant relationship ($\beta = .17, p < .05$) was reduced in magnitude to ($\beta = .08, ns$). Because this relationship was reduced to zero, mutual problem solving also fully mediated the negative affect-family stress relationship.

Last, the relationship between negative affect and job-home interference stress was examined. This significant relationship was reduced from ($\beta = .23, p < .01$) to ($\beta = .17, p < .05$) when controlling from mutual problem solving. The Sobel test indicated that this was a significant reduction in magnitude, $z = 2.21, p < .05$. However, because this relationship is still greater than zero, it is most accurate to characterize mutual problem solving as a partial mediator of the negative affect-job-home interference relationship.

Following the mediational tests for wives were those of the husbands. As indicated in Table 34, most of the correlation coefficients for enduring vulnerabilities, adaptive processes, and stressful events are significant for husbands. More specifically, mutual problem solving is significantly related to educational attainment and one indicator of negative affectivity, neuroticism. Neuroticism and mutual problem solving are both significantly related to work stress, family stress, and job-home interference stress. However, educational attainment and mutual problem solving are only significantly related to one stressful event, family stress. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), the educational attainment-family stress relationship and negative affectivity-stressful events relationships meet the requirements for mediation. Multiple regression analyses were used to carry out these tests (see Table 35 for mediation results).

The first series of mediational tests examined the relationships between negative affectivity and stressful events, more specifically, the relationships between neuroticism and work, family and job-home interference stress. As indicated in Table 35, the previously significant relationship between neuroticism and work stress ($\beta = .20, p < .01$) was reduced in magnitude to $\beta = .16 (p < .05)$ when controlling for mutual problem solving, however, according to the Sobel test, this was not a significant reduction in magnitude $z = 1.67, ns$. Similarly, although the relationship between neuroticism and job-home interference was reduced from $\beta = .35 (p < .001)$ to $\beta = .31 (p < .001)$ when controlling for mutual problem solving, this reduction did not reach significance with the Sobel test ($z = 1.63, ns$). However, mutual problem solving almost partially mediated one relationship. The previously significant relationship between neuroticism and family

stress ($\beta = .26, p < .001$) was reduced in magnitude to $\beta = .17 (p < .01)$. The Sobel test indicated that this reduction was marginally significant with a z score of 1.95 ($p = .052$).

The previously significant relationship between educational attainment and family stress ($\beta = -.16, p < .05$) was reduced to $\beta = -.06 (ns)$ when controlling for mutual problem solving. The Sobel test indicated that this was a marginally significant reduction in magnitude ($z = 1.95, p = .051$). Therefore, mutual problem solving almost fully mediates the relationship between educational attainment and family stress since it reduced their relationship to zero.

Hypothesis 11 was supported as mutual problem solving either completely or partially mediated the relationship between negative affectivity and stressful events for wives. It may be that wives high in negative affectivity lack the ability to effectively talk about their feelings and discuss their troubles with their partner. Therefore, one reason why these wives perceive more work, family, and job-home interference stress is because they are unable to effectively communicate their problems with their spouse.

Conversely, no support was provided for hypothesis 11 in regard to husbands. However, two findings were approaching significance. Mutual problem solving does appear to explain some of the educational attainment-family stress and negative affectivity-family stress relationships. Because the potential mediator, mutual problem solving, is assessed by how partners' openly communicate problems or withhold information from their spouses, it makes sense that doing the latter would have an impact on family life and perceived family stressors. Rather than be assertive in conflict situations, husbands instead might try to distance themselves and avoid the situation by

not communicating with their spouse. Consequently, this behavior or lack of mutual problem solving might result in misunderstandings, and ultimately the perception that your spouse does not support your role at home.

Hypothesis 12: Adaptive Processes as a Mediator of Stressful Events and Marital Quality

Hypothesis 12 posited that mutual problem solving would mediate the relationships between stressful events (work stress, family stress, and job-home interference stress) and marital quality (global relationship satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects, personal commitment, and divorce proneness) for wives and husbands.

For wives, all variables were significantly correlated with one another, except work stress and divorce proneness. As Table 36 indicated, mutual problem solving is significantly correlated with all three types of stressful events and all indicators of marital quality. Additionally, all three types of stressful events are significantly related to all indicators of marital quality (except for the work stress-divorce proneness relationship). The final test of mediation involved assessing whether the stressful events-marital quality relationships were significantly reduced when controlling for mutual problem solving. Multiple regression analyses were used to test for mediation and results of these analyses can be found in Table 37.

The first series of relationships examined were that of work stress and marital quality. The previously significant relationship between work stress and global relationship satisfaction ($\beta = -.20, p < .01$) was reduced in magnitude ($\beta = -.06, ns$) when controlling for mutual problem solving. The Sobel test indicated that this reduction was significant in magnitude $z = -3.23 (p < .001)$. Mutual problem solving fully mediates the

relationship between work stress and global relationship satisfaction. Mutual problem solving is also a partial mediator of the work stress-satisfaction with specific aspects relationship. This relationship was reduced from $\beta = -.24$ ($p < .001$) to $\beta = -.16$ ($p < .05$) when controlling for the effect of mutual problem solving. The reduction in magnitude was significant ($z = -2.30$, $p < .05$). Last, the significant relationship between work stress and personal commitment was also significantly reduced from $\beta = -.20$ ($p < .001$) to $\beta = -.07$ (ns) when controlling for mutual problem solving. The Sobel test indicated that this is a significant reduction in magnitude ($z = -3.22$, $p < .001$). Thus, mutual problem solving fully mediates the relationship between work stress and personal commitment.

The next series of analyses examined the relationships between family stress and marital quality. The previously significant relationships between family stress and global relationship satisfaction ($\beta = -.46$, $p < .001$), satisfaction with specific aspects ($\beta = -.30$, $p < .001$), personal commitment ($\beta = -.38$, $p < .001$), and divorce proneness ($\beta = .35$, $p < .001$) were reduced in magnitude when controlling for mutual problem solving (β s = $-.35$, $-.24$, $-.22$, $.21$, respectively, all $p < .01$). Three of these relationships yielded significant reductions in magnitude. The Sobel test indicated that mutual problem solving partially mediates the relationships between family stress and global relationship satisfaction ($z = -2.77$, $p < .01$), personal commitment ($z = -3.37$, $p < .001$), and divorce proneness ($z = 3.12$, $p < .01$). Mutual problem solving does not appear to mediate the family stress-satisfaction with specific aspects relationship ($z = -1.44$, ns).

Finally, the job-home interference-marital quality relationships were tested. As indicated in Table 37, job-home interference is significantly related to global relationship

satisfaction ($\beta = -.36, p < .001$), satisfaction with specific aspects of the marriage ($\beta = -.15, p < .05$), personal commitment ($\beta = -.22, p < .01$), and divorce proneness ($\beta = .30, p < .001$). All of these relationships were significantly reduced when mutual problem solving was controlled for. More specifically, the job-home interference-global relationship satisfaction relationship was reduced to $\beta = -.25 (p < .001)$ and had a z score of $-4.31 (p < .001)$. Because the job-home interference-global satisfaction relationship is still larger than zero, it is most accurate to label mutual problem solving as a partial mediator. Mutual problem solving also partially mediated the relationship between job-home interference and divorce proneness. Although there was a significant reduction ($z = 4.10, p < .001$) when controlling for mutual problem solving ($\beta = .19, p < .01$), the relationship is still larger than zero and thus, only partially mediated by mutual problem solving. The relationship between job-home interference and satisfaction with specific aspects ($\beta = -.08, ns$) as well as the job-home interference-personal commitment relationship ($\beta = -.09, ns$) were also reduced in magnitude when controlling for mutual problem solving. The Sobel test indicated that both of these reductions are significant in magnitude (z scores = -2.94 and -4.64 , respectively, both $p < .01$). Mutual problem solving fully mediates the relationships between job-home interference and satisfaction with specific aspects, as well as job-home interference and divorce proneness.

Mediational tests were also run for husbands and examined the role of mutual problem solving. As indicated in Table 38, almost all variables are significantly correlated with one another. Mutual problem solving was significantly related to all indicators of stressful events and marital quality. However, job-home interference was

not significantly associated with satisfaction with specific aspects and personal commitment. The final test of mediation involved using multiple regression analyses to assess whether the stressful events-marital quality relationships were significantly reduced when controlling for mutual problem solving. All mediational test results can be found in Table 39.

The first series of multiple regression analyses examined the work stress-marital quality relationship. The previously significant relationships between work stress and global relationship satisfaction ($\beta = -.15, p < .05$), satisfaction with specific aspects ($\beta = -.18, p < .05$), personal commitment ($\beta = -.16, p < .05$), and divorce proneness ($\beta = .20, p < .01$) were reduced in magnitude when controlling for mutual problem solving (β s = $-.05, -.13, -.04, .08$, respectively, *ns*). Sobel tests indicated that mutual problem solving fully mediated the relationships between work stress and global relationship satisfaction ($z = -3.32, p < .001$), satisfaction with specific aspects ($z = -2.35, p < .05$), personal commitment ($z = -3.47, p < .001$), and divorce proneness ($z = 3.47, p < .001$).

Next, the family stress-marital quality relationships were examined. Mutual problem solving also played a role in explaining these relationships. The previously significant relationships between family stress and global relationship satisfaction ($\beta = -.41, p < .001$), personal commitment ($\beta = -.44, p < .001$), and divorce proneness ($\beta = .52, p < .001$) were significantly reduced in magnitude when controlling for mutual problem solving (β s = $-.25, -.25, .34$, respectively, all $p < .01$). The Sobel tests yielded that these reductions were in fact statistically significant (z scores = $-3.39, -4.20, \text{ and } 4.18$, respectively, all $p < .001$). Because all of these relationships are still larger than zero,

mutual problem solving is best labeled as a partial mediator. There was not a significant reduction in magnitude for the family stress-satisfaction with specific aspects relationship when controlling for mutual problem solving, therefore, no mediation occurred.

Last, the relationships between job-home interference and marital quality were assessed. Only two indicators of marital quality (i.e., global relationship satisfaction and divorce proneness) met the requirements for mediation. The previously significant relationship between job-home interference and global relationship satisfaction was reduced in magnitude from $\beta = -.24$ ($p < .001$) to $\beta = -.15$ ($p < .05$). The z score (-3.73 , $p < .001$) indicated that this was a significant reduction in size. However, because the relationship is still larger than zero, mutual problem solving is only a partial mediator for the job-home interference-global relationship satisfaction relationship. The significant relationship between job-home interference and divorce proneness ($\beta = .27$, $p < .001$) was also reduced in magnitude when controlling for mutual problem solving ($\beta = .16$, $p < .05$). According to the Sobel test (z score = 4.03 , $p < .001$), mutual problem solving partially mediated the relationship between job-home interference stress and divorce proneness.

Hypothesis 12 received support as mutual problem solving either partially or completely mediated almost all stressful events-marital quality relationships for wives and husbands. Therefore, mutual problem solving behaviors lend some insight into these relationships. On a whole, wives who experience work, family, and/or job-home interference stress perceive their marital quality to be lower. They are less satisfied, committed, and are more prone to divorce. One explanation for this could be due to their lack of communication with their spouse about their problems or concerns. When wives

are stressed and unable or unwilling to discuss problems with their husbands they are more likely to experience poor marital quality.

Similarly, husbands who report having high levels of work stress experience less satisfaction and commitment in their relationship. Additionally, they are more likely to see divorce as a solution to an unsatisfying marriage. As posited in this hypothesis, mutual problem solving can help explain why this relationship exists. When husbands are under stress, it is possible that they shut down emotionally and withdraw from social interactions. As a result, husbands' wives might be the recipients of this adverse behavior. Without feeling they can openly confide in their wives, husbands might experience even more dissatisfaction in their marriage and perceive that they are alone, which might lessen their personal commitment to the marriage and increase their propensity to divorce.

CHAPTER VI

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Contributions to Scholarship

The goal of this research was to examine the various paths of the VSA model of marital development via two studies. Each study attempted to examine the unique role of each component in the model and how they function together as a whole system. This research contributes to scholarship in several ways. First, it provides more specificity about each of the major components of the VSA model of marital development. The adaptive processes examined in this study, open communication and conflict resolution styles, proved to be significant contributors in the success of marital outcomes. Second, a majority of the findings are based on dyadic data which provides unique insight into actor and partner effects on relational behavior and relationship satisfaction. In other words, this research is able to show how individual factors are linked to relationship outcomes. Last, both studies highlight gender differences and examine how wives' and husbands' enduring vulnerabilities and adaptive processes function in regard to stressful events and marital quality.

General Conclusions

The following section discusses overall conclusions based on studies 1 and 2. Each component of the VSA model is discussed in regard to its unique relationship with the other components of the model.

Enduring Vulnerabilities

The role of enduring vulnerabilities on adaptive processes. The two enduring vulnerabilities that were examined were negative affectivity and educational attainment. These variables are thought to be stable characteristics that spouses bring into the relationship (see Lou & Klohnen, 2005; McCrae & Costa, 1987) and have implications for marital success. Both studies indicated that people's enduring vulnerabilities made them more prone to engaging in certain conflict resolution styles and mutual problem solving.

There were significant actor effects for wives and husbands regarding negative affectivity. Wives and husbands high in negative affectivity engage in more negatively toned and dysfunctional conflict styles themselves, such as conflict engagement or withdrawal. This is consistent with past research that reports that spouses who are high in negative affectivity are more emotionally reactive and therefore, respond more adversely in interpersonal situations (Davila et al., 2003). In accordance with Kurdek (1997a), this study found that individuals high in negative affectivity chose problematic styles to resolve relationship conflict. Conflict engagement, withdrawal, and compliance are all considered to be negatively toned conflict resolution styles because none are effective in addressing the issue(s) at hand. Instead, they are thought to exacerbate the situation (Kurdek, 1995).

The current study also found that husbands' negative affectivity plays a larger role, in comparison to wives', in predicting the amount of mutual problem solving that is used within a marriage. More specifically, husbands high in negative affectivity are less likely to discuss their problems and concerns with their wives and consequently, their

wives are also less likely to openly discuss problems with them. Because this personality trait has been consistently reported to prompt a person to distort and/or overreact to negative relationship events (Bradbury & Fincham, 1991), it becomes clear why wives might not place too much faith in discussing relational issues with their husbands who are high in negative affectivity. It might be that wives are less willing to talk about problems as a response to the lack of communication coming from their spouses. In other words, they are reciprocating the unhealthy behavior that is presented to them. Negative affectivity has consistently been reported to have deleterious effects on marital communication (e.g., Caughlin et al., 2000; Kurdek, 1997a) and the current research confirms this in regard to mutual problem solving.

The enduring vulnerability, educational attainment, appears to be a larger predictor for husbands' communication behaviors than wives' communication behaviors. Husbands' educational attainment not only influenced their own use of mutual problem solving, but that of their wives too. The more educated the husband is, the more the couple tries to work out problems together. Not only do these couples perceive their spouses to be receptive to each others' needs, they acknowledge that voicing their concerns and problems with their partners lead to better marital outcomes (i.e., reaching agreement and/or openly addressing relational issues). This is consistent with past research that has found that well-educated individuals possess better communication skills (Amato & Booth, 1997). Further, Faust and McKibben (1999) have reported that higher education is an important agent in teaching partners how to communicate effectively. For example, people who earn college degrees are exposed to various models

of compromising and negotiation and thus, have been found to utilize them in future relationships (i.e., marriage). The current study furthers this notion and suggests that husbands' educational attainment is associated with their wives' communication to some extent. Of course, it is entirely possible that well educated men seek out women who are already good at solving problems with their partners and vice versa, thus assortatively seeking out mates who match their communication needs.

The role of enduring vulnerabilities on stressful events. Both enduring vulnerabilities were associated with the amount of perceived stress for husbands and wives, however, negative affectivity clearly had a larger impact on perceived work, family, and job-home interference stress. Educational attainment only yielded partner effects, meaning less educated spouses did not perceive more stress themselves, only their partners did. Husbands who are less educated have wives who perceive more work and family stress. Post hoc analyses yield that 84 husbands and 75 wives have earned less than a 4-year college degree. Additionally, in 52 couples both spouses earned less than a 4 year college degree. Of the latter, 77% and 41% of wives and husbands, respectively, report their personal annual income to be in between \$10,000 - 30,000. One reason that wives might experience more work and family stress could be due to the financial pressures placed on them to contribute more to the family income. Men still earn a higher salary on average in comparison to women, so it is plausible that women who are married to less educated men are experiencing the financial repercussions more than women married to husbands who are well educated. Thus, financial strain ultimately creates more work and family stress for women.

Negative affectivity was not only associated with wives' and husbands' own perceived stress but that of their spouse as well. These findings support past research which states that people who are emotionally unstable are more likely to perceive stress (see McCrae, 1990; Tolpin et al., 2006) and have more difficulties in adapting to individual and marital difficulties (Barelds, 2005). Further, the problems generated by negative affectivity seem to be experienced by both spouses. Negative affectivity is a personality trait that has been linked to perceptual distortions of reality and perceptions of situations being worse than they really are. This is at least the case for work, family and job-home interference stress.

Partner effects for husbands were more prevalent than that of wives. Husbands high in negative affectivity have wives who perceive all types of stress (i.e., work, family, and job-home) while wives' high in negative affectivity have husbands who only perceive job-home interference stress. Past research has suggested that women, more than men, tend to be higher in interpersonal and affiliation needs in relationships (Moffitt & Eisen, 1982). This suggests that the lack of positivity or emotional instability of the husband might be why the wife experiences job-home stress spillover. This idea is consistent with those who have found that negative affectivity can contaminate another person's well-being (Kelly & Conley, 1987; Russell & Wells, 1994). It is possible that husbands' negative affectivity leads to less happiness in their partner and as a result, the perception of stress and anxiety in work and family domains. Research has extensively documented the effects of negative emotional expression on psychological well-being. Within interpersonal interactions, the expression of emotions such as anger, frustration,

and criticism may lead to a perception of an unsatisfying relationship. As Gottman (1999) suggests, when couples communicate their emotions, it not only enhances the awareness of one's own emotional state but that of their spouse as well. Emotional expression functions as the basis for satisfaction in the relationship. Therefore, people who are married to emotionally unstable spouses are unable to adapt and cope with perceived job-home interference stress because they perceive their relationship to be troubling from the start. Any additional perceived stress (i.e., work) just exacerbates the situation. In other words, spouses who are married to someone high in negative affectivity are in an uphill battle from the beginning.

The role of enduring vulnerabilities on marital quality. Negative affectivity and educational attainment both have deleterious effects on marital quality. Negative affectivity impacts wives' and husbands' own marital quality as well as most aspects of marital quality in their spouses (i.e., global relationship satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects of the relationship, personal commitment, and divorce proneness). These findings replicate the research aimed at understanding the implications of negative affectivity in marital relationships (e.g., Bradbury & Karney, 2005, Davila et al., 2003). For example, Donnellan, Conger, and Bryant (2004) also found that negative affectivity influences marriage similarly for wives and husbands and that this personality trait can lead to more interpersonal conflict and dyadic stress and less marital quality. Therefore, the significant linkages found in this study between actor and partner effects of negative affectivity and marital quality reinforce just how problematic this personality trait is in marital relationships.

Educational attainment was more influential on the dyadic level than the individual level in regard to marital quality. Husbands' lower educational attainment appears to be negatively associated with their wives' global satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects of the relationship, personal commitment, and divorce proneness. As suggested by Amato and Booth (1997) less education is associated with individual and family characteristics that promote poor marital quality. However, in this study, women's educational attainment had virtually no bearing on their spouses' marital quality. This is consistent with one of the previously mentioned findings about educational attainment and stress. Recall in Study 2 that less educated husbands also have wives who perceive more stress in their lives, but not vice versa.

Stressful Events

The role of stressful events on adaptive processes. The amount of stress that spouses perceive is directly related to how they communicate with one another. Both wives and husbands who perceive work, family, and job-home interference stress personally engage in less mutual problem solving with their spouses. This is consistent with past research that has reported that daily work stress is linked to negative marital behavior such as withdrawing from conversations (Schulz et al., 2004; Story & Repetti, 2006). It appears that emotional spillover over from stressful events influences marital interactions.

Further, wives' job-home interference stress plays a role in their husbands' lack of mutual problem solving. When wives are experiencing stressful demands at work and home, husbands are less likely to discuss their concerns or feel that talking to their

spouses will be beneficial. Again, this finding is also supported by past research. Schulz et al. (2004) reported that wives' negative emotional arousal due to work results in increased withdrawal from the husbands. Additionally, Neff and Karney (2005a) found that when wives are more stressed, they report greater amounts of negative behaviors from their husbands. It could be that women are more extensively socialized to communicate and provide social support when their husbands are under a lot of stress but the same is not expected nor executed by men. Growing evidence supports the notion that wives are more likely to provide support during stressful times than husbands (Neff & Karney, 2005a). Overall, these findings suggest that perceived stress is a better indicator of peoples' own communication behavior rather than their partners' communication.

The role of stressful events on marital quality. Stressful events play a role in wives' and husbands' marital quality. On an individual level, spouses who experience higher levels of perceived work and family stress are generally less satisfied, less committed, and are more prone to divorce. This is consistent with Neff and Karney's (2007) finding that newlyweds report less marital satisfaction when they are under higher levels of stress. Their longitudinal study reported that this stress spillover is evident even after 3.5 years of marriage. Perceived stress, whether it is from work or family, is something that affects other aspects of peoples' lives. The current research finds that to be true in regard to global relationship satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects of the marriage, personal commitment, and divorce proneness.

There was also support for partner effects of stress. This was most evident with family stress. Wives' and husbands' higher levels of perceived family stress are

associated with lower satisfaction, less personal commitment, and higher likelihood of divorce in their spouses. Revenson, Kayser, and Bodenmann (2005) argue that stress is not an isolated event rather it infiltrates its surroundings and affects the lives of others. Here, stress may act as a contagion and influence both spouses' marital experience.

Marital Quality

The role of marital quality on adaptive processes. Marital quality is a good indicator of whether or not spouses engage in positive communication exchanges. Specifically, people who are more satisfied, committed and less likely to divorce use more open communication themselves. Further, satisfied spouses also engage in more positive problem solving and less negatively toned conflict resolution styles with their partners. It appears that marital quality and positive communication are reflective of one another. Recall a previous finding from the current research. Specifically, both studies indicated that positive communication (i.e., positively toned conflict resolution styles and mutual problem solving) was predictive of more marital quality in terms of satisfaction. These findings taken together suggest that marital quality and positive communication function similarly in relationships. They both yield positive outcomes.

From a dyadic standpoint, wives' marital quality makes a larger impact on their spouses than husbands' marital quality. For example, husbands will engage in more mutual problem solving to the extent that their wives are satisfied, committed, and less likely to see divorce as a viable option. This finding is consistent with past research that states that spouses' perceptions of marital quality are capable of changing their partners' marital behavior (Huston & Vangelisti, 1991). Karney and Bradbury (1995) note that this

path of the VSA model has been understudied and that the predictors of adaptive processes are sparse. The current research supports the validity of this path and suggests that global satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects of the marriage, personal commitment, and divorce proneness can all influence the amount of positive communication or mutual problem solving spouses engage in.

The role of marital quality on stressful events. In general, wives' and husbands' marital quality is a reliable predictor of their own perceived stress, whether it is work, family, and/or job-home interference stress. This suggests that wives and husbands who are in dissatisfying and unhappy marriages are more prone to adverse situations and are more likely to perceive work and family domains as stressful. This is consistent with the stress transfer effect which posits that a negative environment, in this case a dissatisfying relationship, can transfer to irritability or perceived stress at work (Perry-Jenkins, Reppeti, & Crouter, 2000). It should be noted that most research examines the effect of stress on marital quality and not vice versa. Additionally, spouses' marital quality is predictive of their partners' increased perception of family stress, in particular. If a spouse is unsatisfied and less personally committed to the marriage it might be that their partner is more stressed out at home, in comparison to work, because he/she is moody and/or constantly complaining, thus, creating an unpleasant environment. In essence, spouses' poor marital quality results in family stress (i.e., feeling a lack of emotional support, criticized, and unappreciated) for their partners.

Adaptive Processes

The role of adaptive processes on stressful events. Mutual problem solving appears to mitigate the perception of stress for wives and husbands. Virtually in all scenarios, wives and husbands who openly discuss their problems perceive less work, family, and job-home interference stress. Active engagement in dyadic coping is associated with effective stress management and couple functioning (Story & Bradbury, 2004). The current research supports this proposition as mutual problem solving is a form of dyadic coping.

The role of adaptive processes on marital quality. Wives' and husbands' use of conflict resolution styles and mutual problem solving influences all aspects of marital quality. This is in accordance with the VSA model of marital development which posits that adaptive processes might have the most direct effect on marital quality (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). In general, wives and husbands who engage in less negatively toned conflict resolution styles and mutual problem solving are more satisfied, committed, and less likely to divorce. The role of effective communication processes in leading to positive outcomes has been well documented in the marriage literature (Johnson et al., 2005; Caughlin & Huston, 2002). For example, Cohan and Bradbury (1997) report that talking about problems effectively leads to better marital adjustment. The current study supports the notion that marital outcomes (i.e., marital satisfaction) are, in part, a function of rewarding exchanges between partners.

There appears to be more dyadic influence from wives' use of conflict resolution styles than from husbands'. Wives' enactment of positively toned conflict resolution styles results in more global satisfaction and personal commitment in their husbands.

However, the marital quality of wives is unaltered regardless of the conflict resolution styles their husbands endorse. One reason for this might be because men are more likely to rely on their wives for support than vice versa and when this support is not provided, men become less satisfied in their relationship. Traditionally, women are conditioned and socialized to be peacekeepers in interpersonal relationships and marriage is no different. If a wife endorses negatively toned conflict resolution styles (i.e., conflict engagement and withdrawal), this might create tension for the husband and result in poorer marital quality. Ultimately, it comes down to a couple's ideology. When wives violate the expectation of being deferent and verbally submissive, this threatens traditional gender roles and possibly marital success (Eagly 1997). However, it should be noted that some couples do not hold traditional ideologies and therefore have different expectations about marriage. Fitzpatrick (1988) has uncovered different types of marriages based ideologies of relational and family life, autonomy and interdependence, and conflict engagement. She notes that some people assume nonconventional values and beliefs about marriage. Therefore, more research should be done on the dyadic effect of conflict resolution to better understand the role of wives' communication processes in marriage.

Conversely, husbands' use of mutual problem solving is more influential on the relationship than wives' communication. When husbands discuss issues and seek the advice of their wives, wives are more satisfied, committed, and less likely to view divorce as a viable option. Wives' mutual problem solving does not yield the same results. Whether wives openly discuss problems with their husbands or keep to themselves, it does not appear to impact husbands' marital quality. This finding is

consistent with results of previous studies conducted on supportive dyadic coping and marital quality. For example, Bodenmann, Pihet, and Kayser (2006) also found that openly discussing issues and providing support was more beneficial for the wives in regard to their marital quality than to husbands. Again, this is in accordance with traditional gender roles. Women are socialized to engage in more relational maintenance. Additionally, mutual problem solving is one maintenance behavior that women are reported to use more often than men (Stafford, Dainton, & Haas, 2000). Therefore, it is not surprising that wives report greater marital quality when they are able to discuss things with their spouse in a reciprocal manner. As stated previously, not all couples hold traditional ideologies and in order to fully understand the dyadic influence of husbands' communication processes on marriage, more research must be conducted.

It should be noted that the aforementioned sex differences discussed throughout this section were not based on formal tests of significance. These sex differences were merely explaining the significant partner effects found in both studies. Although sex differences can be formally examined using APIM, they were outside the scope of this study's hypotheses and these analyses were therefore not conducted. However, examining sex differences in the future should be of consideration.

The mediating role of adaptive processes. The current research has found that adaptive processes are a key contributor to explaining the various relationships of the VSA model of marital development. First, both studies found that adaptive processes help explain the relationship between enduring vulnerabilities and marital quality. It has been well-documented that enduring vulnerabilities such as negative affectivity are related to

poorer marital quality (Karney & Bradbury, 2000; Russell & Wells, 1994). The current research sought to explain this relationship by examining the role of communication. Study 1 indicated that conflict resolution styles, in particular positive problem solving, was the only variable that partially mediated the relationship between negative affectivity and satisfaction for both wives and husbands. Two additional conflict resolution styles (i.e., conflict engagement and withdrawal) were able to partially mediate the relationship for husbands only. The findings for wives and husbands suggest that the lack of positive communication plays an integral role in marital outcomes, especially for people high in negative affectivity. Further, the lack of positive communication, not the presence of negative communication (i.e., conflict engagement), seems to explain the relationship between negative affectivity and marital satisfaction better for women. Conversely, both types of communication (positive and negative) explain why husbands high in negative affectivity perceive less satisfaction in their marriage. These findings are consistent with a broader literature indicating that negative affectivity can manifest in negative interactions and thus, is associated with less marital satisfaction (Davila et al., 2003; McCrae, 1990). The current research is able to identify at least two of these negative interactions (i.e., lack of positive problem solving, conflict engagement, and withdrawal).

Second, mutual problem solving was also found to partially mediate the relationship between negative affectivity and marital quality for wives. There has already been an established link between negative affectivity and decreased marital quality (Karney & Bradbury, 1997) and the current findings strengthen past research (e.g., Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000; Fitzpatrick & Badzinski, 1994) by suggesting this

relationship is in part a function of poor dyadic problem solving among spouses. The lack of mutual problem solving was able to explain, in part, all aspects of marital quality for wives. In other words, wives high in negative affectivity experience less relationship satisfaction, lower personal commitment, and are more prone to divorce if they engage in less mutual problem solving with their husbands. Although nearing significance, mutual problem solving was not able to significantly explain the relationship between negative affectivity and marital quality for husbands. Recall (from Study 2) that partner effects were only significant for husbands in regard to mutual problem solving and marital quality. Specifically, positive exchanges from husbands were predictive of all aspects of marital quality (i.e., global satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects of the relationship, personal commitment, and divorce proneness) for wives. This suggests that having open discussions and positive interactions play an important role in marital quality for wives and to a lesser degree for husbands.

The next relationship that was examined was that of negative affectivity and stressful events. Mutual problem solving either fully or partially mediated this relationship for wives. Research has reported a strong connection between negative affectivity and an increased perception of stress (e.g., Eaton & Bradley, 2008) and that wives tend to experience and report more psychological stress and strain than husbands (Roxburgh, 1996). The current findings are in accordance with past research that explains the inverse relationship between negative affectivity and stress (Eaton & Bradley, 2008) and suggest that people who are emotionally reactive engage in poor problem solving strategies to deal with adverse situations, and thus, experience more stress. One

possibility is that wives high in negative affectivity are unable to effectively communicate their problems and therefore focus on their distress instead of dealing with the issue at hand. This technique is called emotion-focused coping and has been reported to be used more by women than men (Tamres, Janicki, & Helgeson, 2002). In regard to the current research, it could be that wives' mutual problem solving is disguised by their incessant complaining of their stressful experiences. Therefore, it becomes plausible why wives high in negative affectivity experience more work, family, and job-home interference stress, it is due to their lack of mutual problem solving with their husbands.

Last, mutual problem solving was found to significantly mediate the relationship between perceived stress and all indicators of marital quality for wives and husbands. Wives and husbands who perceive work, family, and job-home interference stress were more likely to report lower levels of satisfaction and commitment and increased divorce proneness. The current research suggests that this relationship exists, in part, because spouses are poor problem solvers. This can be explained a couple of different ways. First, mutual problem solving might have been operating against spouses in this scenario. It is possible that spouses were talking about their issues in a negative manner and therefore, perpetuating the stress and decreasing marital satisfaction. Research has suggested that distressed people are more likely to complain (Revensdorf, Hahlweg, Schindler, & Vogel, 1984) and less able to constructively verbalize their problems (Birchler, Clopton, & Adams, 1984). It might also be the case that spouses were not seeking enough support and were withholding the stressful experiences inside, ultimately resulting in less marital satisfaction and commitment. Affifi and Caughlin (2006) note that ruminating about

certain issues can lead to negative outcomes. In regard to the current research, spouses might withhold information about their stress levels from one another because they don't think it will help the situation or possibly because they are afraid of portraying a negative image about the marriage.

Implications of Current Research

Practical implications. First and foremost, the results of studies 1 and 2 imply that positive communication exchanges are invaluable to marital relationships. If wives and husbands engage in positive exchanges, such as discussing important topics and using positively toned conflict resolution strategies (i.e., positive problem solving) their marriage would benefit in many ways. First, both of these adaptive processes are direct, positive in nature, and allow for more agreement among spouses. Second, these interaction patterns promote lower levels of perceived stress and higher marital quality, two variables that have been well documented as lowering the probability of divorce (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Last, positive communication serves a dyadic function. Wives' and husbands' positive exchanges not only benefit themselves, they result in more satisfied and committed spouses. Therefore, it would be beneficial for newlywed couples to enter premarital counseling to learn about the benefits of positive communication exchanges. Further, counseling would also be able to teach couples how to engage in constructive mutual problem solving if they don't already know how to be proactive and successful in their marriage. Family life education programs in high school and college could also teach such vital communication processes.

This research also implies that wives' marital quality is more predictive of husbands' marital outcomes (interaction styles and perceived stress), whereas husbands' enduring vulnerabilities are more predictive of wives' marital outcomes (i.e., perceived stress, interaction styles, and marital quality). Wives' marital quality directly affects how husbands interact with them. If wives are satisfied with the marriage, husbands engage in more open communication. Additionally, wives' marital quality is also indicative of husbands' perceived family stress. This suggests that as long as wives are satisfied and committed to the marriage, husbands are more likely to respond in a positive manner and benefit from less family stress. Conversely, husbands' enduring vulnerabilities play an integral role in wives' marital quality. Low educational attainment and negative affectivity appear to contaminate all aspects of wives' marital quality. This suggests that negative affectivity is most destructive in marriages when husbands have this personality trait. These findings could benefit people during mate selection and courtship stages. For example, the current research would benefit men and women if they knew how detrimental the personality trait of negative affectivity is and how to identify this trait in a partner. Not only is it a stable trait that is not likely to change over time, it is one that affects multiple aspects of wives' marital quality (i.e., satisfaction, personal commitment, and divorce proneness). Larson (1988) noted that a popular marriage myth such as, "I can change my spouse by pointing out his/her inadequacies" (p. 5) is an unrealistic expectation to have. Although this myth is unrealistic, people still get married with high hopes of changing their partner. Therefore, people should understand that they cannot change their partners in regard to personality. Even the concept of 'enduring

vulnerability' suggests that this trait should be evident premaritally. Additionally, spouses, in particular husbands, should note that having a satisfied partner results in more positive communication and less family stress. Therefore, it is especially important for men to engage in less negatively toned conflict resolution styles and learn to reciprocate open communication with their wives because wives respond most positively to these behaviors.

Theoretical implications. The VSA model of marital development yielded a number of similarities between the findings of studies 1 and 2. For example, enduring vulnerabilities were unreliable in predicting adaptive processes, but consistent in predicting marital quality. Additionally, both studies found direct effects of adaptive processes on marital quality. This suggests that the components of the model do, in fact, systematically work together to achieve various marital outcomes. It should be noted that the results might have been more consistent if the same measures were used for adaptive processes. The measure used in study 1 included predominantly negatively-toned conflict resolution styles whereas the measure used in study 2 was based on open communication.

Additionally, the model used in this research was very receptive to various measures of each component. This was demonstrated by using various scales for each component in both studies. In fact, Karney and Bradbury (1995) note that most research aimed at predicting marital outcomes can fall within one of the three components (i.e., enduring vulnerabilities, stressful events, and adaptive processes). This suggests that the VSA model is very practical in its utility and has good predictive validity.

Although the VSA model of marital development is proposed by two psychologists, they note that the most direct effect on marital quality may be adaptive processes or how people communicate and exchange information. This implies that the model serves as a bridge between psychological and communication research. Therefore, this model has a lot of potential to be tapped with communication variables and to demonstrate direct links, via the paths of the model, between social psychological phenomena.

Limitations of Current Research

Considering the cross-sectional nature of this study, it is important to note that causal relationships can not be made with certainty among the variables. All of the variables examined in this 2-study investigation are reflective of one snapshot in time. It should also be noted that both samples were exclusively comprised of newlyweds and although it is common for new marriages to be in flux and engaging in behaviors predictive of divorce, it would be beneficial to see if these patterns hold for longer term marriages.

Another limitation to the current research is the homogeneity of the samples. Both studies were predominantly comprised of White participants. Although specific measures were taken to increase ethnic diversity in Study 2, the sample was still largely White (78%). This ultimately limits the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, a majority of both samples came from a student referral method. It is possible that I over sampled from more highly educated and affluent marriages because those are the type of people in the students' social networks.

Last, the procedure used in this study might also limit the validity of the results. Although individuals were specifically instructed to complete the questionnaires on their own and not consult their spouse, there was no supervision over the completion of the questionnaire. Therefore, it is possible that spouses filled out the questionnaires together instead of individually, thus resulting in reporting bias. Additionally, the questionnaire examined many topics that could potentially lead to marital distress (i.e., issues of stress, satisfaction, and divorce proneness) and spouses might have completed the questionnaire in a way that would not threaten the current state of the relationship. Therefore, participants might have been motivated to give socially desirable answers and respond in accordance with implicit theories of marriage.

Directions for Future Research

Future research should be directed at examining different and a wider range of variables that fall under each component of the VSA model of marriage. For example, educational attainment and negative affectivity are two of the most widely studied enduring vulnerabilities. It would be interesting to study other stable characteristics that people bring into marriage. These characteristics might include dating history or family of origin variables such as the intergenerational transmission of conflict/aggression, divorce, and/or mental health disorders. As of yet, these variables have not been fully integrated into the VSA model of marital development. This is a strength of the VSA model because it yields heuristic value for generating additional research.

As for stressful events, it would be beneficial to examine the role of chronic versus acute stressors and expand the literature pertaining to dyadic stress in marriage.

Neff and Karney (2007) have approached the notion of crossover stress in marriage and this clearly warrants more research as stress virtually always affects both spouses in a marriage.

Adaptive processes clearly play an integral role in the VSA model and marital outcomes. Therefore, it would be advantageous for scholars to identify and expand upon the list of communication exchanges that are most detrimental and/or beneficial for newlyweds. For example, certain communication behaviors might be beneficial for wives or husbands to endorse if their spouses have a particular enduring vulnerability that they brought to the marriage. Additionally, specific stressors might be dealt with more successfully if spouses are capable of using certain coping mechanisms.

The current research was able to examine multiple facets of marital quality (i.e., global relationship satisfaction, satisfaction with specific aspects of the relationship, personal commitment, and divorce proneness). Future research should also include various indicators of marital quality, in addition to satisfaction, in an attempt to uncover additional marital outcomes people strive for. By replicating the various predictors of marital quality, the paths of the VSA model will only become better understood.

Future research should also be aimed at understanding the distinct characteristics of each component in the VSA model. For example, the conditions under which variables function as which factors should be identified. This is especially pertinent to the enduring vulnerabilities and adaptive processes components. Karney and Bradbury (1995) designed this model to be comprised of mutually exclusive components, but it should be noted that some factors can be conceptually and operationally categorized into more than

one component. For example, the way people cope with stressful situations can be viewed as an adaptive process as well as an enduring vulnerability, especially if they learned these coping mechanisms in their family of origin.

Last, the only path the current research was unable to examine was between marital quality and marital stability. This relationship requires longitudinal data (Karney & Bradbury, 1995) and would yield benefits for scholars, clinicians, and people who are thinking about getting married someday. Research has documented that many of the problems that forecast divorce are thought to be present throughout courtship and the first years of marriage. Therefore, longitudinal data are clearly warranted in order to examine how communication behaviors unfold over time between partners.

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations for Variables in Study 1

Variable	M (SD)	
	Husbands	Wives
Negative Affectivity	1.61 (.51)	1.65 (.53)
Educational Attainment	15.21 (2.33)	15.73 (2.12)
Positive Problem Solving	3.87 (.57)	3.88 (.57)
Conflict Engagement	2.10 (.65)	2.22 (.71)
Compliance	2.18 (.76)	2.00 (.69)
Withdrawal	2.22 (.75)	2.29 (.72)
Global Satisfaction	9.20 (1.10)	9.07 (1.28)
Personal Commitment	1.30 (.70)	1.19 (.55)

Table 2
Within Dyad Correlations for Study 1

	Negative Affectivity	Educational Attainment	Positive Problem Solving	Conflict Engagement	Compliance	Withdrawal	Global Satisfaction	Personal Commitment
Negative Affectivity	.44***	-.07	-.21**	.31***	.17*	.24**	-.27***	-.131
Educational Attainment	.04	.45***	.02	-.03	.02	.01	.14	-.03
Positive Problem Solving	-.15*	.14	.41***	-.13	-.04	-.18*	.15*	.13
Conflict Engagement	.26***	-.07	-.17*	.36***	-.04	.22**	-.25***	-.14*
Compliance	.13	-.01	-.05	.10	.02	.10	-.10	-.02
Withdrawal	.27***	-.01	-.18*	.30***	-.04	.09	-.26***	-.12
Global Satisfaction	-.36***	.07	.28***	-.25***	-.06	-.22**	.59***	.37***
Personal Commitment	-.34***	.08	.23**	-.24**	-.23**	-.13	.27***	.36***

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 3
APIM Results for Enduring Vulnerabilities and Adaptive Processes

Hypothesis 1: Actor and Partner Effects

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Dyadic Interdependence	Actor Effect		Partner Effect	
			Wife	Husband	Wife → Hus	Hus → Wife
Negative Affectivity	Positive Problem Solving	.44***	-.35***	-.25**	-.05	-.06
	Conflict Engagement	.44***	.46***	.35***	.10	.11
	Compliance	.45***	.18*	.20*	.04	.08
	Withdrawal	.44***	.25**	.35***	.12	.14

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Table values are standardized regression coefficients.

Table 4
APIM Results for Enduring Vulnerabilities and Marital Quality

Hypothesis 2: Actor and Partner Effects

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Dyadic Interdependence	Actor Effect		Partner Effect	
			Wife	Husband	Wife → Hus	Hus → Wife
Negative Affectivity	Global Satisfaction	.45***	-.37***	-.29***	-.23**	-.12
	Personal Commitment	.45***	-.29***	-.13	-.28***	-.03

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Table values are standardized regression coefficients.

Table 5
APIM Results for Adaptive Processes and Marital Quality

Hypothesis 3: Actor and Partner Effects

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Dyadic Interdependence	Actor Effect		Partner Effect	
			Wife	Husband	Wife → Hus	Hus → Wife
Positive Problem Solving	Global Satisfaction	.41***	.27***	.21**	.19*	.04
		.36***	-.25***	-.22**	-.18*	-.16*
		.02	-.19**	-.15*	-.05	-.10
		.09	-.20**	-.31***	-.19**	-.24***
Positive Problem Solving	Personal Commitment	.41***	.34***	.05	.21**	-.01
		.36***	-.23**	.10	-.28***	-.06
		.02	-.29***	-.09	-.23**	-.01
		.09	-.21**	-.06	-.13	-.10

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Table values are standardized regression coefficients.

Table 6
APIM Results for Marital Quality and Adaptive Processes

Hypothesis 4: Actor and Partner Effects

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Dyadic Interdependence	Actor Effect		Partner Effect	
			Wife	Husband	Wife → Hus	Hus → Wife
Global Satisfaction	Positive Problem Solving	.59***	.19*	.31**	-.04	.16
	Conflict Engagement	.59***	-.24**	-.20*	-.13	-.11
	Compliance	.59***	-.25**	-.13	-.03	.09
	Withdrawal	.59***	-.14	-.27**	-.10	-.14
Personal Commitment	Positive Problem Solving	.36***	.29***	.10	.09	.12
	Conflict Engagement	.36***	-.18*	.05	-.16*	-.18*
	Compliance	.36***	-.24**	.02	-.10	-.14
	Withdrawal	.36***	-.20*	-.03	-.11	-.06

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Table values are standardized regression coefficients.

Table 7
Correlations among Enduring Vulnerabilities, Adaptive Processes, and Marital Quality for Wives

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Negative Affectivity	----							
Educational Attainment	-.05	----						
Positive Prob. Solving	-.38***	.11	----					
Conflict Engagement	.50***	-.10	-.46***	----				
Compliance	.22**	.00	-.17*	.04	----			
Withdrawal	.31***	-.01	-.44***	.32***	.25**	----		
Global Satisfaction	-.42***	.15*	.29**	-.31**	-.20**	-.22**	----	
Personal Commitment	-.31***	-.03	.34**	-.25**	-.29***	-.22**	.33***	----

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 8
Enduring Vulnerabilities and Marital Quality as Mediated by Adaptive Processes for Wives

IV	DV	Before Mediation		Potential Mediators	After Mediation		z score
		β	B(SE)		β	B(SE)	
Negative Affectivity	Global Satisfaction	-.42***	.72 (.11)	Positive Problem Solving	-.37***	.62 (.12)	2.04*
				Conflict Engagement	-.36***	.62 (.13)	1.62
				Compliance	-.40***	.68 (.11)	1.36
				Withdrawal	-.39***	.66 (.12)	1.40
Negative Affectivity	Personal Commitment	-.31***	.30 (.07)	Positive Problem Solving	-.21**	.21 (.07)	3.01**
				Conflict Engagement	-.25**	.25 (.08)	1.54
				Compliance	-.26***	.25 (.07)	2.50**
				Withdrawal	-.26***	.26 (.07)	1.82

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 9
Correlations among Enduring Vulnerabilities, Adaptive Processes, and Marital Quality for Husbands

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Negative Affectivity	----							
Educational Attainment	-.02	----						
Positive Prob. Solving	-.28***	.10	----					
Conflict Engagement	.40***	-.03	-.29***	----				
Compliance	.21**	-.12	-.18**	-.04	----			
Withdrawal	.41***	.11	-.39***	.40***	.20**	----		
Global Satisfaction	-.39***	.00	.29**	-.28***	-.15*	-.33***	----	
Personal Commitment	-.23***	.05	.13	-.01	-.09	-.07	.40***	----

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 10
Enduring Vulnerabilities and Marital Quality as Mediated by Adaptive Processes for Husbands

IV	DV	Before Mediation		Potential Mediators	After Mediation		z score
		β	B(SE)		β	B(SE)	
Negative Affectivity	Global Satisfaction	-.39***	.62 (.11)	Positive Problem Solving	-.32***	.51 (.11)	2.66**
				Conflict Engagement	-.31***	.50 (.12)	2.33*
				Compliance	-.38***	.60 (.11)	.741
				Withdrawal	-.29***	.46 (.11)	2.96**

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 11
Zip Codes, Median Household Incomes and Ethnicity Reports for Study 2

Zip Code	Median Household Income	Percentage of Non-White Population
85701	\$19,337	55%
85705	\$23,047	43%
85706	\$27,369	77%
85708	\$35,336	40%
85710	\$35,296	24%
85711	\$30,909	40%
85713	\$26,884	73%
85714	\$24,835	91%
85719	\$23,324	32%

U.S. Census Bureau 2003

Table 12
Means and Standard Deviations for Variables in Study 2

Variable	M (SD)	
	Husbands	Wives
Negative Affect	17.88 (5.94)	19.27 (6.94)
Neuroticism	19.24 (5.68)	24.22 (5.40)
Educational Attainment	4.56 (1.40)	4.65 (1.18)
Mutual Problem Solving	22.58 (7.46)	20.41 (6.31)
Work Stress	29.71 (9.01)	29.16 (8.97)
Family Stress	19.39 (7.07)	18.78 (6.14)
Job-Home Interference Stress	15.01 (5.72)	15.09 (6.29)
Global Satisfaction	41.77 (3.99)	41.30 (4.77)
Satisfaction of Specific Aspects	72.06 (17.64)	70.64 (15.39)
Personal Commitment	61.62 (3.19)	62.03 (3.16)
Divorce Proneness	10.61 (2.76)	10.91 (3.25)

Table 13
Within Dyad Correlations for Study 2

Wives → ↓ Husbands	Negative Affect	Neuroticism	Educational Attainment	Mutual Problem Solving	Work Stress	Family Stress	Job-Home Interference	Marital Satisfaction	Satisfaction of Specific Aspects	Personal Commitment	Divorce Proneness
Negative Affect	.32***	.14*	-.08	-.23**	.21**	.20**	.14*	-.19**	-.15*	-.22**	.29***
Neuroticism	.11	-.06	-.05	-.28***	.07	.24***	.27***	-.20**	-.14	-.15*	.20**
Educational Attainment	-.05	-.12	.32***	.22**	-.20**	-.26***	-.12	.20**	.23***	.20**	-.24***
Mutual Problem Solving	-.02	-.05	.05	.35***	.06	-.32***	-.20**	.36***	.26***	.36***	-.49***
Work Stress	.06	.06	-.07	-.02	.17*	.02	.14	-.09	.00	-.12	.17*
Family Stress	.10	.09	-.13	-.25***	.07	.41***	.26***	-.36***	-.24***	-.37***	.33***
Job-Home Interference Stress	.06	.13	-.12	-.10	.17*	.21**	.26***	-.21**	-.12	-.04	.16*
Global Satisfaction	-.13	-.16*	.01	.22**	.01	-.29***	-.17*	.49***	.23***	.27***	-.36***
Satisfaction of Specific Aspects	-.06	-.07	.06	.10	-.08	-.19*	-.07	.14	.35***	.20**	-.15*
Personal Commitment	-.03	-.04	.10	.27***	-.08	-.35***	-.19**	.36***	.06	.52***	-.42***
Divorce Proneness	.16*	.13	-.23**	-.32***	.07	.38***	.28	-.50***	-.23***	-.50***	.64***

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 14
APIM Results for Enduring Vulnerabilities and Adaptive Processes

Hypothesis 1: Actor and Partner Effects

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Dyadic Interdependence	Actor Effect		Partner Effect	
			Wife	Husband	Wife → Hus	Hus → Wife
Negative Affect	Mutual Problem Solving	.32***	-.11	-.14	.02	-.20*
Neuroticism		-.06	-.11	-.17*	-.06	-.28***
Educational Attainment		.32***	-.02	.20**	.02	.21**

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Table values are standardized regression coefficients.

Table 15
APIM Results for Enduring Vulnerabilities and Stressful Events

Hypothesis 2: Actor and Partner Effects

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Dyadic Interdependence	Actor Effect		Partner Effect	
			Wife	Husband	Wife → Hus	Hus → Wife
Negative Affect	Work Stress	.32***	.14	.27***	-.02	.17*
	Family Stress	.32***	.11	.21**	.03	.16*
	Job-Home	.32***	.20**	.38***	-.06	.07
Neuroticism	Work Stress	-.06	.15*	.20**	.08	.08
	Family Stress	-.06	.18*	.26***	.10	.25***
	Job-Home	-.06	.19**	.35***	.15*	.28***
Educational Attainment	Work Stress	.32***	-.11	.05	-.08	-.17*
	Family Stress	.32***	.02	-.13	-.09	-.26***
	Job-Home	.32***	.04	.09	-.15*	-.13

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Table values are standardized regression coefficients.

Table 16
APIM Results for Enduring Vulnerabilities and Marital Quality (1)

Hypothesis 3: Actor and Partner Effects

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Dyadic Interdependence	Actor Effect		Partner Effect	
			Wife	Husband	Wife → Hus	Hus → Wife
Negative Affect	Global Satisfaction	.32***	-.31***	-.16*	-.09	-.09
	Sat. Specific Aspects	.32***	-.22**	-.15*	-.02	-.08
	Personal Commitment	.32***	-.23**	-.13	.02	-.15*
	Divorce Proneness	.32***	.26***	.27***	.07	.20**

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Table values are standardized regression coefficients.

Table 17
APIM Results for Enduring Vulnerabilities and Marital Quality (2)

Hypothesis 3: Actor and Partner Effects

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Dyadic Interdependence	Actor Effect		Partner Effect	
			Wife	Husband	Wife → Hus	Hus → Wife
Neuroticism	Global Satisfaction	-.06	-.25***	-.22**	-.17*	-.21**
	Sat. Specific Aspects	-.06	-.29***	-.18**	-.08	-.16*
	Personal Commitment	-.06	-.14	-.10	-.04	-.15*
	Divorce Proneness	-.06	.22**	.23**	.14	.21**

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Table values are standardized regression coefficients.

Table 18
APIM Results for Enduring Vulnerabilities and Marital Quality (3)

Hypothesis 3: Actor and Partner Effects

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Dyadic Interdependence	Actor Effect		Partner Effect	
			Wife	Husband	Wife → Hus	Hus → Wife
Educational Attainment	Global Satisfaction	.32***	.03	.06	-.01	.19*
	Sat. Specific Aspects	.32***	.11	.07	.04	.20*
	Personal Commitment	.32***	.15*	.18*	.04	.15*
	Divorce Proneness	.32***	-.12	-.16*	-.18*	-.19*

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Table values are standardized regression coefficients.

Table 19
APIM Results for Stressful Events and Adaptive Processes

Hypothesis 4: Actor and Partner Effects

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Dyadic Interdependence	Actor Effect		Partner Effect	
			Wife	Husband	Wife → Hus	Hus → Wife
Work Stress	Mutual Problem Solving	.17*	-.33***	-.26***	.11	.03
Family Stress		.41***	-.55***	-.50***	-.12	-.02
Job-Home		.26***	-.35***	-.21**	-.15*	-.01

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Table values are standardized regression coefficients.

Table 20
APIM Results for Stressful Events and Marital Quality (1)

Hypothesis 5: Actor and Partner Effects

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Dyadic Interdependence	Actor Effect		Partner Effect	
			Wife	Husband	Wife → Hus	Hus → Wife
Work Stress	Global Satisfaction	.17*	-.19**	-.16*	.04	-.06
	Sat. Specific Aspects	.17*	-.24***	-.17*	-.05	.04
	Personal Commitment	.17*	-.19**	-.15*	-.05	-.08
	Divorce Proneness	.17*	.02	.19*	.04	.16*

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Table values are standardized regression coefficients.

Table 21
APIM Results for Stressful Events and Marital Quality (2)

Hypothesis 5: Actor and Partner Effects

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Dyadic Interdependence	Actor Effect		Partner Effect	
			Wife	Husband	Wife → Hus	Hus → Wife
Family Stress	Global Satisfaction	.41***	-.38***	-.35***	-.15*	-.21**
	Sat. Specific Aspects	.41***	-.24**	-.20**	-.10	-.14
	Personal Commitment	.41***	-.27***	-.35***	-.20**	-.26***
	Divorce Proneness	.41***	.26***	.44***	.20**	.22**

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Table values are standardized regression coefficients.

Table 22
APIM Results for Stressful Events and Marital Quality (3)

Hypothesis 5: Actor and Partner Effects

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Dyadic Interdependence	Actor Effect		Partner Effect	
			Wife	Husband	Wife → Hus	Hus → Wife
Job-Home	Global Satisfaction	.26***	-.33***	-.21**	-.12	-.12
	Sat. Specific Aspects	.26***	-.13	-.05	-.06	-.09
	Personal Commitment	.26***	-.22**	-.10	-.17*	.02
	Divorce Proneness	.26***	.28***	.22**	.22**	.10

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Table values are standardized regression coefficients.

Table 23
APIM Results for Adaptive Processes and Stressful Events

Hypothesis 6: Actor and Partner Effects

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Dyadic Interdependence	Actor Effect		Partner Effect	
			Wife	Husband	Wife → Hus	Hus → Wife
Mutual Problem Solving	Work Stress	.35***	-.40***	-.27***	.07	.21**
	Family Stress	.35***	-.51***	-.53***	-.07	-.15**
	Job-Home	.35***	-.32***	-.24**	-.02	-.09

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Table values are standardized regression coefficients.

Table 24
APIM Results for Adaptive Processes and Marital Quality

Hypothesis 7: Actor and Partner Effects

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Dyadic Interdependence	Actor Effect		Partner Effect	
			Wife	Husband	Wife → Hus	Hus → Wife
Mutual Problem Solving	Global Satisfaction	.35***	.34***	.39***	.09	.24***
	Sat. Specific Aspects	.35***	.20**	.24**	.02	.19**
	Personal Commitment	.35***	.33***	.44***	.12	.25***
	Divorce Proneness	.35***	-.25***	-.46***	-.16*	-.40***

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Table values are standardized regression coefficients.

Table 25
APIM Results for Marital Quality and Adaptive Processes

Hypothesis 8: Actor and Partner Effects

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Dyadic Interdependence	Actor Effect		Partner Effect	
			Wife	Husband	Wife → Hus	Hus → Wife
Global Satisfaction	Mutual Problem Solving	.49***	.42***	.33***	.20**	.02
Sat. Specific Aspects		.34***	.26***	.18*	.20**	.02
Personal Commitment		.52***	.37***	.41***	.15*	.08
Divorce Proneness		.64***	-.32***	-.34***	-.27***	-.11

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Table values are standardized regression coefficients.

Table 26
APIM Results for Marital Quality and Stressful Events (1)

Hypothesis 9: Actor and Partner Effects

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Dyadic Interdependence	Actor Effect		Partner Effect	
			Wife	Husband	Wife → Hus	Hus → Wife
Global Satisfaction	Work Stress	.49***	-.28***	-.15	-.02	.15
	Family Stress	.49***	-.42***	-.30***	-.21**	-.09
	Job-Home	.49***	-.37***	-.19*	-.11	.01
Sat. Specific Aspects	Work Stress	.34***	-.24**	-.21**	.07	.00
	Family Stress	.34***	-.27***	-.18*	-.17*	-.09
	Job-Home	.34***	-.14	-.03	-.11	-.03

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Table values are standardized regression coefficients.

Table 27
APIM Results for Marital Quality and Stressful Events (2)

Hypothesis 9: Actor and Partner Effects

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Dyadic Interdependence	Actor Effect		Partner Effect	
			Wife	Husband	Wife → Hus	Hus → Wife
Personal Commitment	Work Stress	.52***	-.22**	-.13	-.05	.04
	Family Stress	.52***	-.27***	-.33***	-.20**	-.21**
	Job-Home	.52***	-.17	-.17	.05	-.11
Divorce Proneness	Work Stress	.65***	-.01	.15	.07	.07
	Family Stress	.65***	.19*	.52***	-.01	.26**
	Job-Home	.65***	.21*	.28**	-.01	.14

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. Table values are standardized regression coefficients.

Table 28
Correlations among Enduring Vulnerabilities, Adaptive Processes, and Marital Quality for Wives

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Negative Affect	----							
Neuroticism	.46***	----						
Educational Attainment	.03	.03	----					
Mutual Problem Solving	-.17*	-.10	.09	----				
Global Satisfaction	-.33***	-.24***	.09	.43**	----			
Sat. Specific Aspects	-.25***	-.28***	.17*	.26***	.30***	----		
Personal Commitment	-.28***	-.13	.20**	.41***	.50***	.19**	----	
Divorce Proneness	.32***	.21**	-.18*	-.40***	-.60***	-.27***	-.58***	----

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 29
Enduring Vulnerabilities and Marital Quality as Mediated by Adaptive Processes for Wives

IV	DV	Before Mediation		Potential Mediator	After Mediation		Sobel z score
		β	B(SE)		β	B(SE)	
Negative Affect	Global Satisfaction	-.33***	-.94 (.20)	Mutual Problem Solving	-.26***	.62 (.12)	-2.29*
	Sat. Specific Aspects	-.25***	-26.75 (7.81)		-.21**	-22.50 (7.78)	-1.96*
	Personal Commitment	-.28***	-.56 (.14)		-.21**	-.43 (.13)	-2.28*
	Divorce Proneness	.32***	.24 (.05)		.26***	.19 (.05)	2.24*

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 30
Correlations among Enduring Vulnerabilities, Adaptive Processes, and Marital Quality for Husbands

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Negative Affect	----							
Neuroticism	.44***	----						
Educational Attainment	-.09	.05	----					
Mutual Problem Solving	-.13	-.16*	.19**	----				
Global Satisfaction	-.19**	-.21***	.06	.43**	----			
Sat. Specific Aspects	-.16*	-.17*	.08	.26***	.33***	----		
Personal Commitment	-.13	-.10	.19**	.41***	.38***	.26**	----	
Divorce Proneness	.30***	.22**	-.21***	-.40***	-.60***	-.22***	-.46***	----

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 31
Enduring Vulnerabilities and Marital Quality as Mediated by Adaptive Processes for Husbands

IV	DV	Before Mediation		Potential Mediator	After Mediation		Sobel z score
		β	B(SE)		β	B(SE)	
Neuroticism	Global Satisfaction	-.21**	-.01 (.01)	Mutual Problem Solving	-.15*	-.01 (.00)	-1.90
	Sat. Specific Aspects	-.17*	-.54 (.23)		-.14	-.43 (.22)	-1.68
	Divorce Proneness	.22**	.00 (.00)		.15*	.00 (.00)	1.92
Educational Attainment	Personal Commitment	.19**	.05 (.02)	Mutual Problem Solving	.10	.03 (.02)	1.91
	Divorce Proneness	-.21**	-.01 (.01)		-.12	-.01 (.00)	-1.92

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 32
Correlations among Enduring Vulnerabilities, Adaptive Processes, and Stressful Events for Wives

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Negative Affect	----						
Neuroticism	.46***	----					
Educational Attainment	.03	.03	----				
Mutual Problem Solving	.05	-.13	-.11	----			
Work Stress	.19**	.15*	-.16*	.19*	----		
Family Stress	.17*	.17*	-.06	.49***	.36***	----	
Job-Home	.23**	.17*	-.00	.21**	.36***	.37***	----

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 33
Enduring Vulnerabilities and Stressful Events as Mediated by Adaptive Processes for Wives

IV	DV	Before Mediation		Potential Mediator	After Mediation		Sobel z score
		β	B(SE)		β	B(SE)	
Negative Affect	Work Stress	.19**	11.92 (4.65)	Mutual Problem Solving	.14	8.71 (4.53)	2.16*
	Family Stress	.17*	7.35 (3.17)		.08	3.26 (2.70)	2.41*
	Job-Home	.23**	10.20 (3.23)		.17*	7.58 (3.10)	2.21*

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 34
Correlations among Enduring Vulnerabilities, Adaptive Processes, and Stressful Events for Husbands

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Negative Affect	----						
Neuroticism	.44***	----					
Educational Attainment	-.09	.05	----				
Mutual Problem Solving	-.13	-.16*	.19**	----			
Work Stress	.26***	.20**	.03	-.24**	----		
Family Stress	.22**	.26***	-.16*	-.55***	.41***	----	
Job-Home	.37***	.35***	.05	-.25**	.40***	.34***	----

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 35
Enduring Vulnerabilities and Stressful Events as Mediated by Adaptive Processes for Husbands

IV	DV	Before Mediation		Potential Mediator	After Mediation		Sobel z score
		β	B(SE)		β	B(SE)	
Neuroticism	Work Stress	.20**	.31 (.12)	Mutual Problem Solving	.16*	.26 (.11)	1.67
	Family Stress	.26***	.32 (.09)		.17**	.21 (.08)	1.95
	Job-Home	.35***	.35 (.07)		.31***	.32 (.07)	1.63
Educational Attainment	Family Stress	-.16*	-.81 (.37)	Mutual Problem Solving	-.06	-.28 (.32)	1.95

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 36
Correlations among Stressful Events, Adaptive Processes, and Marital Quality for Wives

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Work Stress	----							
Family Stress	.36***	----						
Job-Home	.36***	.37***	----					
Mutual Problem Solving	-.32***	-.57***	-.36***	----				
Global Satisfaction	-.20**	-.46***	-.36***	.43***	----			
Sat. Specific Aspects	-.24***	-.30***	-.15*	.26***	.30***	----		
Personal Commitment	-.20**	-.38***	-.22**	.41***	.49***	.19*	----	
Divorce Proneness	.04	.35***	.30***	-.39***	-.60***	-.27***	-.58***	----

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 37
Stressful Events and Marital Quality as Mediated by Adaptive Processes for Wives

IV	DV	Before Mediation		Potential Mediator	After Mediation		Sobel z score
		β	B(SE)		β	B(SE)	
Work Stress	Global Sat.	-.20**	-.01 (.003)	Mutual Problem Solving	-.06	-.003 (.003)	-3.23***
	Sat. Specific	-.24***	-.41 (.12)		-.16*	-.28 (.13)	-2.30*
	Per. Commit	-.20***	-.01 (.002)		-.07	-.002 (.002)	-3.22***
Family Stress	Global Sat.	-.46***	-.03 (.004)	Mutual Problem Solving	-.35***	-.02 (.01)	-2.77**
	Sat. Specific	-.30***	-.75 (.18)		-.24**	-.61 (.21)	-1.44
	Per. Commit	-.38***	-.02 (.003)		-.22**	-.01 (.004)	-3.37***
	Divorce Prone	.35***	.01 (.001)		.21**	.003 (.001)	3.12**
Job-Home	Global Sat.	-.36***	-.02 (.004)	Mutual Problem Solving	-.25***	-.02 (.004)	-4.31***
	Sat. Specific	-.15*	-.37 (.18)		-.08	-.19 (.19)	-2.94**
	Per. Commit	-.22**	-.01 (.003)		-.09	-.004 (.003)	-4.64***
	Divorce Prone	.30***	.01 (.001)		.19**	.003 (.001)	4.10***

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 38
Correlations among Stressful Events, Adaptive Processes, and Marital Quality for Husbands

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Work Stress	----							
Family Stress	.41***	----						
Job-Home	.40***	.34***	----					
Mutual Problem Solving	-.24***	-.55***	-.25***	----				
Global Satisfaction	-.15*	-.41***	-.24***	.43***	----			
Sat. Specific Aspects	-.18*	-.24***	-.07	.24***	.33***	----		
Personal Commitment	-.16*	-.44***	-.14	.48***	.38***	.26***	----	
Divorce Proneness	.20**	.52***	.27***	-.51***	-.60***	-.22**	-.46***	----

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 39
Stressful Events and Marital Quality as Mediated by Adaptive Processes for Husbands

IV	DV	Before Mediation		Potential Mediator	After Mediation		Sobel z score
		β	B(SE)		β	B(SE)	
Work Stress	Global Sat.	-.15*	-.01 (.003)	Mutual Problem Solving	-.05	-.002 (.003)	-3.32***
	Sat. Specific	-.18*	-.36 (.14)		-.13	-.26 (.14)	-2.35*
	Per. Commit	-.16*	-.01 (.003)		-.04	-.001 (.002)	-3.47***
	Divorce Prone	.20**	.002 (.001)		.08	.001 (.001)	3.47***
Family Stress	Global Sat.	-.41***	-.02 (.004)	Mutual Problem Solving	-.25**	-.01 (.004)	-3.39***
	Sat. Specific	-.24***	-.61 (.18)		-.16	-.39 (.21)	-1.82
	Per. Commit	-.44***	-.02 (.003)		-.25**	-.01 (.004)	-4.2***
	Divorce Prone	.52***	.01 (.001)		.34***	.004 (.001)	4.18***
Job-Home	Global Sat.	-.24***	-.02 (.01)	Mutual Problem Solving	-.15*	-.01 (.004)	-3.73***
	Divorce Prone	.27***	.004 (.001)		.16*	.003 (.001)	4.03***

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

APPENDIX A

Subject Consent Form (Marriage License Consent) (Study 1)

SUBJECT 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 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 project 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 Country, AZ. A total of around 200 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 you completed survey.

CONTACTS

You can obtain further information from the principal investigator Chris Segrin, Ph.D. at (520) 621-7079. If you have questions about 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 of 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 to the principle 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 is signing this consent form was informed of the nature, demands, benefits, and risks involved in his/her participation.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Subject Consent Form (Student Referral Consent) (Study 1)

SUBJECT 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 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 project 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 you were given information about the study by an acquaintance or family member who is a student at the University of Arizona. A total of around 200 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, and no direct compensation for participating.

CONTACTS

You can obtain further information from the principal investigator Chris Segrin, Ph.D. at (520) 621-7079. If you have questions about 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 of 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 to the principle 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 is signing this consent form was informed of the nature, demands, benefits, and risks involved in his/her participation.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Subject Consent Form (Study 2)

Newlywed 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 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 project is to better understand the nature of marriage and the communication patterns couples use.

SELECTION CRITERIA

You are being invited to participate because you are married and between the ages of 18-64. Approximately 400 participants (200 couples) will be enrolled in this study.

PROCEDURE(S)

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to consent to fill out a questionnaire that asks about your marriage and feelings about your relationship. The entire study should not take more than 20 minutes to complete.

RISKS

Some of the items on the questionnaire might address sensitive issues for some people and possibly remind people of disagreements that they have in their present relationship.

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 various aspects and styles of people's marriages are associated with feelings of commitment in such relationships.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The principle investigator of this study (Alesia Hanzal) will have access to your questionnaire. Your name will not be associated with this questionnaire in any way and your information will not be shared with your spouse. Also, the representatives of regulatory agencies (including the University of Arizona Human Subjects Protection Program) may access your records.

PARTICIPATION COSTS AND SUBJECT COMPENSATION

Aside from the 20 minutes of time it takes to participate in this study, there are no costs to you. If you are a student, you will be compensated with extra credit in the amount of 0.5-1.0% extra credit in your communication course. This amount of extra credit will vary depending on the course instructor. If you are a student referral, there is no direct compensation other than helping the student who referred you to receive extra credit in his/her communication course. If you have been recruited through the Pima County Courthouse, you and your spouse will receive a gift card for \$25 upon completion of the surveys.

CONTACTS

You can obtain further information about the research or voice concerns or complaints about the research by calling the Principal Investigator; Alesia Hanzal, Ph.D. candidate at 520-621-5819. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, have questions, complaints, or concerns and can't reach the Principal Investigator, or you want to talk with someone other than the Investigator, 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 of 866-278-1455. If you would like to contact the Human Subjects Protection Program via the web, please use the following website: <http://www.irb.arizona.edu/suggestionspp>.

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 OR SKIP ITEMS ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE THAT I DO NOT WISH TO ANSWER. 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 TO THE PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR, ALESIA HANZAL, MA OR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT. 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 is signing this consent form understands clearly the nature, demands, benefits, and risks involved in his/her participation and his/her signature is legally valid. A media problem or language or educational barrier has not precluded this understanding.

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX B

Survey Instrument (Study 1)

EARLY MARRIAGE STUDY

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of our study. We are interested in learning more about early marriages, and the information you provide will help researchers to understand how couples experience and sustain their marriage during the early years. This survey takes about 20 minutes to complete. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. We are only interested in your opinions and your experiences. You do not have to put your name anywhere on this survey. When you have completed the survey, please put it in the attached postage paid envelope and mail it back. Thanks you so much for agreeing to participate in this research.

Code # ____ ____ ____

The University of Arizona
Department of Communication

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of our study. We are interested in learning more about early marriages, and the information to give us will be very helpful. Please fill out the following survey independently of your spouse or partner, and be sure to seal it in the enclosed envelope to ensure your confidentiality.

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

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
14. Launching personal attacks.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Focusing on the problem at hand.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Remaining silent for long periods of time.	1	2	3	4	5

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
17. Not being willing to stick up for myself.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Exploding and getting out of control.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Sitting down and discussing differences constructively.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Reaching a limit, "shutting down," and refusing to talk any further.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Being too compliant.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Getting carried away and saying things that aren't really meant.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Finding alternatives that are acceptable to each of us.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Tuning the other person out.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Not defending my position.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Throwing insults and digs.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Negotiating and compromising.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Withdrawing, acting distant and not interested.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Giving in with little attempt to present your side of the issue.	1	2	3	4	5

Instructions: This scale consists of numbers and words that describe different feelings and emotions. Using the following scale, indicate to what extent you have felt this way during the course of your marriage by writing in a number. For example, if you have felt extremely interested during the course of your marriage, write in the number 5 on the line next to *interested*.

1	2	3	4	5
Very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	Extremely
30. _____ interested	31. _____ irritable	32. _____ afraid		
33. _____ alert	34. _____ excited	35. _____ distressed		
36. _____ upset	37. _____ inspired	38. _____ ashamed		
39. _____ nervous	40. _____ strong	41. _____ scared		
42. _____ guilty	43. _____ determined	44. _____ jittery		
45. _____ attentive	46. _____ hostile	47. _____ proud		
48. _____ enthusiastic	49. _____ active			

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

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

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

52. 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

53. Are you currently: _____ married _____ unmarried

53a. If married, what date was your wedding? (mm/dd/yyyy) ____ / ____ / _____

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

55. 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

56. What is today's date? (mm/dd/yyyy) ___ ___ / ___ ___ / ___ ___ ___ ___

Thank you for completing this survey!

Survey Instrument (Study 2)

NEWLYWED MARRIAGE STUDY (NMS)

This survey contains questions that ask about yourself and your feelings about your work and family life, communication in your relationship, and your marriage. Please read all of the instructions and questions carefully and try to answer each to the best of your ability. There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer all of the questions as honestly as possible. Please answer the questions without help from your partner. Your partner should not see your answers, nor try to help you with them. When you have finished the questionnaire, please double check to make sure that you have answered all of the questions and then place it in the postage paid return envelope, along with your signed consent form, that you received with this survey. Thank you very much for participating in this study.

CODE # _____

Please answer the following demographic questions.

1. Age: _____ (write in number)
2. Sex (check response) Male Female
3. What was the date you were married? ___ / ___ / _____
4. Have you ever been divorced? (check response) Yes No
5. Have your parents ever been divorced? (check response) Yes No
 If yes, have you ever lived with a step-parent? Yes No
6. Highest level of education completed (check all those that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Less than high school	<input type="checkbox"/> Finished college (BA/BS Degree)
<input type="checkbox"/> Finished high school or equivalent	<input type="checkbox"/> Master's Degree
<input type="checkbox"/> Associate of Arts Degree	<input type="checkbox"/> Ph.D.
<input type="checkbox"/> Some college	<input type="checkbox"/> Other advanced degree
7. Ethnic or Racial Group Membership (please check)

<input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian or Euro-American	<input type="checkbox"/> Native American
<input type="checkbox"/> Black or African American	<input type="checkbox"/> Hawaiian Islander
<input type="checkbox"/> Asian American	<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic/Latino American
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
8. Current personal annual income (please check)

<input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$10,000	<input type="checkbox"/> Between \$90,000 and \$110,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Between \$10,000 and \$30,000	<input type="checkbox"/> Between \$110,000 and \$130,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Between \$30,000 and \$50,000	<input type="checkbox"/> Between \$130,000 and \$150,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Between \$50,000 and \$70,000	<input type="checkbox"/> Above \$150,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Between \$70,000 and \$90,000	
9. How many children do you have? _____ (write in number)
 Please list the age and sex of each child:

Age _____	Sex (please check)	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female
Age _____	Sex (please check)	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female
Age _____	Sex (please check)	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female
Age _____	Sex (please check)	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female

Here are a number of behavioral characteristics that may or may not apply to you. For example, do you agree that you are someone who likes to spend time with others? Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that each of the following statements reflects your personality.

I see myself as someone who.....

	Disagree strongly	Disagree a little	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree a little	Agree strongly
	1	2	3	4	5
17.is reserved	1	2	3	4	5
18.can be tense	1	2	3	4	5
19.is generally trusting	1	2	3	4	5
20.gets nervous easily	1	2	3	4	5
21.tends to be lazy	1	2	3	4	5
22.has few artistic interests	1	2	3	4	5
23.can be moody	1	2	3	4	5
24.is outgoing, sociable	1	2	3	4	5
25.tends to find fault with others	1	2	3	4	5
26.remains calm in tense situations	1	2	3	4	5
27.does a thorough job	1	2	3	4	5
28.has an active imagination	1	2	3	4	5
29.is depressed, blue	1	2	3	4	5
30.is relaxed, handles stress well	1	2	3	4	5
31.....worries a lot	1	2	3	4	5
32.is emotionally stable, not easily upset	1	2	3	4	5

Please circle your responses to the following questions about your marriage.

33. Sometimes married people think they would enjoy living apart from their spouse.
How often do you feel this way?

Never Occasionally Often Very often

34. Even people who get along quite well with their spouse sometimes wonder whether their marriage is working out. How often have you thought your marriage might be in trouble?

Never Occasionally Often Very often

35. As far as you know, how often has your spouse ever thought your marriage was in trouble?

Never Occasionally Often Very often

36. How often have you talked with family members, friends, clergy, counselors, or social workers about problems in your marriage?

Never Occasionally Often Very often

37. As far as you know, how often has your (husband/wife) talked with relatives, friends, or a counselor about problems either of you were having with your marriage?

Never Occasionally Often Very often

38. Has the thought of getting a divorce or separation crossed you mind?

Never Occasionally Often Very often

39. As far as you know, has the thought of divorce or separation crossed your (husband's/wife's) mind?

Never Occasionally Often Very often

40. How often have you or your spouse seriously suggested the idea of divorce?

Never Occasionally Often Very often

The following is a list of statements that represent the way people sometimes feel about their marriage or close relationship. Please indicate to what extent you agree with each of the statements. Circle your answers using the following scale where 1 = Completely disagree, 5 = Neither disagree nor agree, 9 = completely agree.

41. I want our relationship to last for a very long time.

Completely										Completely
Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Agree

42. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner.

Completely										Completely
Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Agree

43. I would not feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future.

Completely										Completely
Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Agree

44. It is likely that I will date someone other than my partner within the next year.

Completely										Completely
Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Agree

45. I feel very attached to our relationship – very strongly linked to my partner.

Completely										Completely
Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Agree

46. I want our relationship to last forever.

Completely										Completely
Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Agree

47. I am oriented toward the long-term future of my relationship (for example, I imagine being with my partner several years from now).

Completely										Completely
Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Agree

Please read the following statements pertaining to your family. Using the following scale, write the number that best answers each statement.

- 1 = Disagree strongly
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Somewhat disagree
- 4 = Neither disagree nor agree
- 5 = Somewhat agree
- 6 = Agree
- 7 = Agree strongly

- _____ 48. My spouse and I cooperate with each other to get the household chores done.
- _____ 49. The things I do at home don't seem to be very meaningful.
- _____ 50. I do not have enough time to do what my family expects of me.
- _____ 51. I am asked to do excessive amounts of work at home.
- _____ 52. My spouse really cares about me.

- 1 = Disagree strongly
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Somewhat disagree
- 4 = Neither disagree nor agree
- 5 = Somewhat agree
- 6 = Agree
- 7 = Agree strongly

- _____ 53. My work at home is boring.
- _____ 54. My spouse is always criticizing me.
- _____ 55. I believe I am doing something important at home.

Please answer the following questions pertaining to your paid work. If you are currently unemployed or seeking employment, please refer to your role as a homemaker, part/full-time student. Use the following scale to answer each statement.

- 1 = Disagree strongly
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Somewhat disagree
- 4 = Neither disagree nor agree
- 5 = Somewhat agree
- 6 = Agree
- 7 = Agree strongly

- _____ 56. I am not given enough time to do what others expect of me.
- _____ 57. I do not feel my job is meaningful.
- _____ 58. I do not receive enough help and equipment to get the job done.
- _____ 59. The physical work environment is both uncomfortable and unpleasant.
- _____ 60. I am asked to do excessive amounts of work.
- _____ 61. I believe that I am doing something important.
- _____ 62. My job exposes me to dangerous or unhealthy conditions.
- _____ 63. My work is boring.
- _____ 64. I am frequently interrupted at work.
- _____ 65. I can see the results of my work.
- _____ 66. I cannot complete jobs due to a lack of adequate tools, information, or other resources.

Please answer the following statements regarding your work and family life. Use the following scale to answer each statement.

- 1 = Disagree strongly
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Somewhat disagree
- 4 = Neither disagree nor agree
- 5 = Somewhat agree
- 6 = Agree
- 7 = Agree strongly

- _____ 67. I feel my home life interferes with my performance at work.
- _____ 68. I think about family problems during working hours.
- _____ 69. There is conflict between my responsibilities on the job and at home.
- _____ 70. I worry about work-related problems when I am at home.
- _____ 71. I feel that my job tends to interfere with my home life.

If you have children, please answer the following statements using the following scale. If you do not have children, please skip to the next section (question 83).

- 1 = Disagree strongly
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Somewhat disagree
- 4 = Neither disagree nor agree
- 5 = Somewhat agree
- 6 = Agree
- 7 = Agree strongly

- _____ 72. My spouse is not sufficiently involved in raising the child or children.
- _____ 73. My child or children think I am pretty terrific.
- _____ 74. I don't think my child or children give me enough love and affection.

Please read the following statements regarding the communication between you and your spouse when you are discussing stressful situations. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement. Circle your responses.

	Disagree strongly	Disagree a little	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree a little	Agree strongly
	1	2	3	4	5
75. Talking things over with my partner seems to make them better.	1	2	3	4	5
76. I'd rather just keep things to myself.	1	2	3	4	5
77. I am a very private person about my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
78. When I am in a bad mood, I'd much rather just go off by myself.	1	2	3	4	5
79. I don't see much point in discussing my troubles with my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
80. Talking about our problems only gets them more muddled.	1	2	3	4	5
81. There are some people you just can't talk to, and my partner's one of them.	1	2	3	4	5

	Disagree strongly	Disagree a little	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree a little	Agree strongly
	1	2	3	4	5
82. I'd rather try to work out our marital problems together.	1	2	3	4	5
83. Our conversations about our problems never seem to get anywhere.	1	2	3	4	5
84. I don't place a lot of faith in delving into my problems with my spouse.	1	2	3	4	5
85. I have given up on trying to talk things out.	1	2	3	4	5
86. I don't see any potential gain in trying to talk things over with my partner.	1	2	3	4	5

This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then circle the appropriate answer next to that word. Indicate to what extent you have felt this way during the past week. Use the following scale to record your answers.

	Very slightly or not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
	1	2	3	4	5
87. Interested	1	2	3	4	5
88. Distressed	1	2	3	4	5
89. Excited	1	2	3	4	5
90. Upset	1	2	3	4	5
91. Strong	1	2	3	4	5
92. Guilty	1	2	3	4	5
93. Scared	1	2	3	4	5
94. Hostile	1	2	3	4	5
95. Enthusiastic	1	2	3	4	5
96. Proud	1	2	3	4	5
97. Irritable	1	2	3	4	5
98. Alert	1	2	3	4	5
99. Ashamed	1	2	3	4	5
100. Inspired	1	2	3	4	5
101. Nervous	1	2	3	4	5
102. Determined	1	2	3	4	5
103. Attentive	1	2	3	4	5
104. Jittery	1	2	3	4	5
105. Active	1	2	3	4	5
106. Afraid	1	2	3	4	5

Some people feel that their spouse should possess certain abilities and traits. First, please rate how personally important each of these abilities and traits are to you. Next, indicate the degree to which your spouse currently has the following abilities and traits. Use the following scales to rate each statement.

- 1 = Extremely unimportant
- 2 = Unimportant
- 3 = Unsure
- 4 = Important
- 5 = Extremely important

107. How personally important are each of the following domains?

- _____ Intellectual capability
- _____ Physical attractiveness
- _____ Athletic ability
- _____ Social skills
- _____ Organization
- _____ Tidiness

- 1 = Strongly disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Unsure
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly agree

108. To what extent do you agree your spouse currently has each of these abilities and traits?

- _____ Intellectual capability
- _____ Physical attractiveness
- _____ Athletic ability
- _____ Social skills
- _____ Organization
- _____ Tidiness

109. What is today's date? ___ ___ / ___ ___ / ___ ___ ___ ___

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS RESEARCH

Have a great day!

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