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UNEMPLOYMENT AND MARITAL QUALITY IN  
SINGLE- AND TWO-EARNER MARRIAGES

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## ABSTRACT

A need was recognized for a broad-based quantitative study on the impact of unemployment upon marital relationship quality in light of recent societal changes and the current economic climate. Recently, researchers have suggested that unemployment is less severe in partnerships that reflect progressive shifts in values and expectations within marital relationships. It was worth exploring whether this claim generalized across a broader sample of contemporary marriages, including those that uphold more traditional values.

An *ex post facto* correlational design was used to assess how unemployment impacts marital quality in single breadwinner vs. dual-earner couples in the current economy. Participants were recruited nationwide to complete an online questionnaire consisting of a demographic questionnaire and two measures of marital quality, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale and the Revised Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale. A canonical correlation analysis was utilized to assess the degree to which participants' beliefs about marital roles, levels of education, duration of marriage, duration of unemployment, and frequency of unemployment affected marital quality when a spouse loses work.

The canonical correlation model was not significant. The results of follow-up repeated measures ANOVAs suggested that most participants were under-satisfied with their marriages at present; however, faith in and commitment to the relationship (as evidenced by a high degree of satisfaction with how the relationship developed since it began) seemed to sustain marriages despite short-term obstacles. In addition, Pearson product moment correlations suggested that generational and socioeconomic differences may have impacted the model.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Historically, unemployment has been identified as detrimental to American marriages (Aubry, Tefft, & Kingsbury, 1990; Kinnunen & Feldt, 2004; Vinokur, Price, & Caplan, 1996). However, with social and institutional changes in recent years, it seems that for some couples the impact may be less severe (Lane, 2009). This study explored how unemployment impacts marital quality in couples based on their position on a continuum from more traditional to more progressive marriages.

The *traditional* position (Scanzoni, 1982; Scanzoni & Szinovacz, 1980) includes marriages comprising, by choice, a clearly-defined provider (the husband) and homemaker (the wife). The traditional position has been prominent in the literature on unemployment and marriage for several decades (Aubry et al., 1990; Hoffman, Carpentier-Alting, Thomas, Hamilton, & Broman, 1991; Penkower, Bromet, & Dew, 1988; Vinokur et al., 1996; Westman, Etzion, & Horovitz, 2004). Unemployment triggers marital conflicts and psychological distress in both partners, and it therefore can be a critical risk factor for separation and divorce (Kraft, 2001).

On the other side of the continuum, the *progressive* position has emerged in recent decades (Lane, 2009; Pfau-Effinger, 1999; Scanzoni, 1982; Scanzoni & Szinovacz, 1980; Silberstein, 1992). This position came about in response to the increasing acceptability and

expectation of dual-earner partnerships in American society, along with concomitant shifts in marital relationship theories and accompanying research. In contrast with the traditional position, proponents of the progressive position suggest that unemployment can actually strengthen marriages insofar as it compels the couple to work and grow together through mutual crises.

Both of these positions are present in contemporary American society. In this chapter, I will compare and contrast them using theoretical and research data. I will give attention to the impact of unemployment on married couples' (a) family roles, (b) communication and interaction patterns, (c) children, (d) sexual functioning, and (e) likelihood of separation or divorce. While existing research supporting each position is relevant in the current American social and economic climate, I argue that the conceptual, contextual, and methodological limitations of existing studies prevent them from being altogether conclusive. My motivation behind the present study was to help bring the research canon up to date both with the times and with emerging conceptual shifts in marriage theory.

## **The Politics of Unemployment and Marriage**

### **The Traditional Position**

In a *Washington Post* editorial, M. Gerson (2010) described America's recent economic crisis as the "mancession" (p. A15). Citing a 20% unemployment rate in Martinsville, VA, he suggested that the traditional position still is common in working class American communities. The majority of jobs cut—primarily construction and manufacturing—have been largely held by men, and alternative employment opportunities are slim. Many people in these communities regard continuing education or training as a burden insofar as the long-term benefits of returning to school are overshadowed by their inability to pay the bills today. Whereas historically a

middle school education sufficed to secure a position in a factory, foundry, or farm, today many of these men may experience difficulty securing new work without a high school diploma or GED. Meantime, Gerson argued, unemployment makes working-class men feel incompetent as they are unable to provide for their families: “This will undercut marriage . . . and leave men more rootless and socially disconnected” (p. A15).

The logic in this argument has been expressed for several decades in the psychological literature on unemployment and marital adjustment. A theoretical model by Kinnunen and Feldt (2004)—expanding upon work by Conger et al. (1990) and Conger, Reuter, and Elder (1999)—proposed that poor economic circumstances produce economic strain in relationships. This results in increased psychological distress, which then manifests into negative marital adjustment. In time, the situational anxiety and depression initially experienced by husbands upon becoming unemployed crosses over to their wives (Hoffman et al., 1991; Westman et al., 2004) and even to their children (McLoyd, 1989), resulting in vicious cycles of poor communication and unconstructive attitudes and behavior among all involved.

The literature reflecting the traditional position also purports that unemployment correlates with conflicts regarding marital roles, with husbands feeling threatened when their wives offer to take up employment (Aubry et al., 1990). Meanwhile, as rifts and hurt feelings ensue, wives’ capacities to provide support for their husbands wane, making the marriages increasingly vulnerable to social undermining among both partners (Vinokur et al., 1996). Moreover, men’s sexual functioning (which, like their roles as providers, is regarded as an expression of masculine potency) tends to become impaired, further exacerbating strain in and between each partner (Morokoff & Gilliland, 1993; Rubin, 1998). Finally, as anxiety and depression worsen, avolition increases, and unemployment becomes prolonged as motivation for

job-seeking diminishes. With this in mind, Kraft (2001) noted that the probability of separation or divorce increases with duration of unemployment.

### **The Progressive Position**

On the other hand, changing times have spawned changes in attitudes regarding gender and marital roles in America (Aronson & Buchholz, 2001; Chandras, 1991; Rosin, 2010). Based on their analysis of survey data collected longitudinally during the last four decades of the 20th century, Thornton and Young-DeMarco (2001) reported that many Americans have increasingly come to favor equality and egalitarian decision-making between women and men. Women's involvement in previously male-dominated roles, including that of provider, has also taken on increasing acceptability. The authors acknowledged that a reasonable degree of conflict is to be expected with these attitudinal shifts and the economic, social, and logistical adjustments they entail. However, in light of other data that relationship commitment also is on the rise and valued equally with egalitarianism, Thornton and Young-DeMarco suggested that the macro-level societal changes will become reflected "in the actual division of labor and decision-making within families" (p. 1032). The authors concluded that value systems will continue to shift from those in earlier generations as children are born into families where egalitarian gender ideology is the norm.

Beginning around the 1990s, an emerging body of literature deemphasized deficits as the central theme in psychological theories of marriage. Rather, authors highlighted the significance of marriage as a platform for social support and for mutual ownership and solving of problems (Afifi & Nussbaum, 2006). The previous focus upon conflict and conflict reduction within marriages became replaced with an emphasis upon transformative processes in marriage (Fincham, Stanley, & Beach, 2007; Gottman, Murray, Swanson, Tyson, & Swanson, 2002).

Commitment, sacrifice, and forgiveness became identified as features that sustain marriages as collaborative partnerships, with each partner contributing to the other's personal growth rather than merely surviving together as separate individuals in rigidly-defined roles.

This conceptual shift has been supplemented empirically by qualitative studies (for example, see Lane, 2009) that explored the impact of unemployment on dual-career marriages. Whereas only a generation ago marriage guides offered professional advice for what to do "when wives want outside jobs" (Singer, 1980, p. 184), today two-earner partnerships not only have become more acceptable but also an economic necessity for many couples (Olds & Schwartz, 2009; Schlosser, 2001). With family roles becoming less clearly defined in these relationships, one partner is expected to readily take up the financial slack while the other manages the responsibilities at home until he or she is able to return to the workforce.

Among progressive marriages, unemployment is deemed less a crisis of masculinity and male self-sufficiency. Rather, men regard themselves as successful when they are able to "get by as part of a couple, rather than as an individual breadwinner" (Lane, 2009, p. 687). In approaching the marriage as a collaborative partnership, men operate on the belief that their restructured family roles are "evidence of their masculinity, rather than a challenge to it" (Lane, 2009, p. 687). With this shift comes a new series of challenges and changes in perspective. In particular, women increasingly regard their own unemployment as problematic. Some women believe that they do not contribute enough to the partnership, but others express concern that their unemployment keeps their husbands frozen in unhappy work positions. These "feelings of dwindling self-worth and insecurity" (Lane, 2009, p. 689) resemble those of the men in older research. On the other hand, the crisis of women's job loss is not approached in the same way as

men's, but rather it is "decidedly nuanced [with] gender-specific roots and implications" (Lane, 2009, p. 689).

In contrast with studies involving traditional marriages that accentuated children's behavior problems as an outcome of parents' unemployment, Newman, MacDougall, and Baum's (2009) qualitative study in Australia suggested that the children of parents who have been laid off did not regard the unemployment as a major problem. Instead, they recognized it as an opportunity for their parents to spend more time with them and to seek a better opportunity elsewhere. In addition, they tended to appreciate remaining in their home communities without having to leave their established social relationships behind if the family was forced to seek employment elsewhere.

Furthermore, some researchers have suggested that couples who adopt the progressive position may experience and exhibit greater marital quality. For example, in regard to sexual functioning, supportive relationships "neutralize the effects of unemployment stress" (Morokoff & Gilliland, 1993, p. 51) in such a way that erectile functioning remains unimpaired. Concerning unemployment as a risk factor for relationship termination, "a well-functioning family is able to accommodate the . . . unemployment, but an endangered relationship will not be able to mediate the stress and then the result is divorce" (Kraft, 2001, p. 73).

### **Concerns About the Existing Research**

The traditional vs. progressive distinction is not new. Scanzoni's (1982; Scanzoni & Szinovacz, 1980) theoretical model of marital reciprocity placed role differentiation on a continuum from rigid (traditional marriages) to flexible (modern marriages), with instrumental components of marriage (economic and status contributions, decision-making, and household task performance) and expressive components of marriage (companionship, communication,

understanding, and sexual relations) as mediating factors. Scanzoni's model served as the basis for Aubry et al.'s (1990) study on the impact of unemployment upon marital satisfaction in blue-collar families. Although their study yielded results consistent with those presented in the above discussion on the traditional position, the authors' emphasis on marital satisfaction did not adequately acknowledge couples' ability to productively work together through healthy struggles. It is therefore worth exploring whether the added focus on transformative processes in marriage might reveal any substantial alternative findings. That is, did limited conceptual foundations and assumptions affect the types of responses that were possible for participants to provide as they responded to survey items? Did these results confirm deeply-rooted cultural beliefs and, advertently or not, prevent alternative explanations?

The qualitative studies presented above in the discussion on the progressive position allowed plenty of room for the participants to speak for themselves and therefore for alternative conceptual formulations to be given credence. However, the question remains as to whether these findings are generalizable to the greater population. First, by virtue of their qualitative methodology, the sample sizes in these studies were quite small. Second, the participants in Lane's (2009) study consisted primarily of people on the West Coast whose careers involved computer programming and other highly-specialized white-collar work. Third, given that the stated purpose of qualitative research is to give voice to minority populations and perspectives (M. Q. Patton, 2002), it cannot be assumed that emerging conceptual understandings are necessarily applicable or acceptable to America's working class families. Hodge (2005) pointed out that academics tend to be more progressively minded and that consequently their conceptualizations tend to pose bias against the values and realities of conservatives. In turn, the researchers who supported the progressive position may have failed to acknowledge and account

for the degree that the traditional position (and research based upon it) remains valid in contemporary society. Although increasing numbers of American men embrace an egalitarian attitude, the importance of the man's role as family provider appears to have remained unchanged (Koball, 2004; Loscocco & Spitze, 2007; Wilkie, 1993) because a legitimate and sustainable alternative has yet to take its place (Bly, 1996; Riley, 2003).

Another issue among all of the existing research is its age. Taking into account the temporal realities of journal publishing, one must proceed with caution when approaching the data presented in the aforementioned studies, which came from the Bush Jr., Clinton, Bush Sr., and even Reagan years. Obama's presidency, the Tea Party Movement, the Big Three automotive corporate spending crisis, the 401k crisis, the housing foreclosure crisis, the Social Security and Medicaid/Medicare meltdowns and the Affordable Care Act, and the Wall Street protests, while all arguably predictable, had not yet come into fruition. In turn, one cannot say for certain that the same conclusions can be drawn in the context of the present American economic and ecological climate (characterized by rapid change and continuing shifts in social and organizational structures, values, and dynamics). At the level of marital relationships, as economic necessity meets collective transitions in attitudes and beliefs, changes of mind are a reasonable possibility. Therefore, a reappraisal was necessary for the research canon to remain valid.

### **Purpose of This Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore whether unemployment impacts marital quality differently in traditional and progressive partnerships. Although this is not an altogether new topic, the motivation behind this study was to bring the literature up to date, given (a) the staggeringly higher unemployment rates in the United States in comparison with the periods

when the existing research was conducted and (b) the realities of paradigm shifts and the consequences they hold for marriage relationships in changing times.

At all levels of the socioeconomic scale, the workplace of the 21st century may be described just as Bridges (1994) predicted in his book, *JobShift*. The corporate mindset that dominated American businesses in the 20th century is obsolete. It is no longer accurate to assume that companies will take care of their employees for life and that putting in several years of hard work beginning in one's late teens or early 20s will be rewarded 40 years later with a generous retirement pension. Today's marketable employees are those with transferrable skill sets, and promotions take place between—not within—employers. Meantime, one's 40-hour work week may likely involve a consortium of two or more part-time jobs. A particular advantage to being married in this climate is that, even if both partners each work just one part-time job and split their home responsibilities accordingly, they may be financially on par with a couple consisting of one clearly-established full-time breadwinner and one homemaker. An assumption behind this research is that many married couples, even those who historically have espoused a more traditional attitude, are to some degree likely to have made the switch to a two-earner partnership out of necessity. My intention in completing this research was to explore whether this has prompted shifts in the ways these couples tackle the stress associated with unemployment.

In addition, whereas several of the more recent studies on unemployment utilized samples in Western Europe and Australia, I collected data in mainland America to ascertain the validity of the emerging progressive theories proposed by American psychologists. Moreover, whereas the qualitative research that served as an inspiration for this study necessarily involved small sample sizes, in this study I utilized an *ex post facto* correlational design to analyze data

collected from a larger sample to help test the generalizability of the emerging progressive theories to the greater American population in the current economic context.

Given this refreshed conceptual foundation, I aimed to identify some of the specific factors involved in couples favoring a more traditional or more progressive position and how these factors also may play a role in couples' marital quality. For example, as stated above, it seemed more likely that those who adhere more to the traditional perspective tend to work blue-collar jobs. This also seems to tie in with a lower level of education (which historically has been associated with lower socioeconomic status, Aubry et al., 1990; Penkower et al., 1988), whereas college or graduate level training may be necessary for the professional careers more often associated with the progressive attitude. Even still, this generalization becomes complicated by the degree to which (a) today's college graduates (especially those in liberal arts fields) experience trouble entering immediately into professional positions following graduation and (b) college students drop out of school out of financial necessity. This study examined the impact of level of education as a mediating factor.

In addition, Kraft (2001) reported (a) that marriages of longer duration are at a lower risk of separation as a result of unemployment and (b) that unemployment does not impact marriages until after about six months, that marriages worsen as unemployment endures, and then they quickly improve once work resumes. This study tested the replicability of these findings. It also explored how frequency of unemployment affects the relationship between unemployment and marital quality. This came in response to this question being left unaddressed in existing studies.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Based on this existing theory and research, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. Does attitude about marital roles (i.e., more traditional or more progressive position) make a difference in the reported level of marital quality in response to unemployment?
2. Does level of education make a difference in reported level of marital quality in response to unemployment?
3. Does duration of marriage make a difference in reported level of marital quality in response to unemployment?
4. Does duration and frequency of unemployment make a difference in reported level of marital quality in response to unemployment?

Based on these research questions and the findings presented above, the following hypotheses were tested in this study:

1. Couples who espouse and intentionally engage in progressive two-earner marriage partnerships will report higher levels of marital quality in response to unemployment than those in traditional one-earner marriage partnerships.
2. There will be a positive relationship between level of education and reported level of marital quality in response to unemployment.
3. There will be a positive relationship between duration of marriage and reported level of marital quality in response to unemployment.
4. There will be a negative relationship between duration of unemployment and reported level of marital quality in response to unemployment.
5. There will be no significant relationship between frequency of unemployment and reported level of marital quality in response to unemployment.

Regarding the final variable, because no studies (to my knowledge) have broached the subject of frequency of unemployment and marital quality, I defaulted to the null. However, given the current economy, I believed it was worth exploring whether clearer patterns may emerge from the data I collected.

### **Conclusion**

A need was recognized for a broad-based quantitative study on the impact of unemployment upon marital relationship quality in light of recent societal changes and the current economic climate. Recently, researchers have suggested that unemployment is less severe in partnerships that reflect progressive shifts in values and expectations within marital relationships. It was worth exploring whether this claim generalized across a broader sample of contemporary marriages, including those that uphold more traditional values. In the next chapter, I will present a review of the literature pertaining to the variables examined in this study.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The previous chapter introduced evidence pertaining to how unemployment affects American married couples' family roles, communication and interaction patterns, children, sexual functioning, and likelihood of separation and/or divorce along the traditional–progressive marriage continuum. This chapter gives further attention to family roles and to communication and interaction patterns. It begins with operational definitions of the key variables in this study, followed by a theoretical discussion regarding the psychological significance of marriage and of work. Then it addresses how unemployment affects marriage and families. Next, marital quality is conceptualized, with emphasis given to how the definition utilized in this study evolved across several decades with concurrent shifts in psychological theory and in societal norms. Then the relationship between unemployment and marital quality is explored with respect to the specific variables in this study (marital roles and gender, education, duration of marriage, and duration and frequency of unemployment). Finally, the measures of marital quality utilized in this study are introduced.

#### **Definitions of Variables**

##### **Marital Quality**

Xu (1996) defined marital quality as the combination of objective characteristics of a successful marriage partnership (including commitment, communication, expressions of

affection and concern, and handling of disagreements/conflicts) and couples' subjective impressions of their relationships (including degree of marital satisfaction). This definition is based in part on Spanier's (1979) work, whose Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) was utilized to measure marital quality in this study.

### **Unemployment**

Unemployment refers to the absence of paid employment. For the purpose of this study, individuals who were laid off their "real jobs" but managed to find part-time work elsewhere to cover expenses were not regarded as unemployed. This is not always the case in research on how unemployment affects marriages. For example, Lane (2009) included several such individuals in her sample.

### **Marital Roles (Position on the Traditional–Progressive Continuum)**

In this study, participants who identified as strongly espousing husbands' role as provider were regarded as more *traditional* whereas those who did not were regarded as more *progressive*. Given that the husband-as-provider role is still valued strongly in certain regions of the United States and among some religious and ethnic groups (Diemer, 2002; Haynes, 2000; Taylor, Tucker, & Mitchell-Kernan, 1999), it would be questionable to categorize wives' going to work out of economic necessity while their husbands stay at home as *progressive* couples when in actuality both partners' beliefs more accurately align with a more traditional value system. Finally, because I emphasized gender-based marital roles in this study, I included only heterosexual couples to avoid introducing a potentially confounding variable.

### **Education**

In this study, I explored whether postsecondary education is associated with marital quality following unemployment. Because the need for credentialing and additional training has

become necessary for individuals in numerous fields in the current economy, I defined education not by highest level completed but rather by highest attempted. That is, if participants received a high school diploma years ago but were undergoing an associate's degree program at the time of the study, I wanted to count that training in their level of education. For the analysis, I operationally defined this variable as participants' and their partners' total level of education as a couple.

### **Duration of Marriage**

Despite increasing acceptability and incidence of premarital cohabitation in recent decades (Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001), in this study I delineated the wedding as the beginning of a marital relationship to avoid inadvertently introducing a potentially confounding variable. In addition, I included only married (vs. cohabiting) couples in my analysis, given that researchers (Kurdek & Schmitt, 1986; Moore, McCabe, & Brink, 2001) have noted differences in relationship quality between the two groups at various stages within couples' relationships when utilizing measures such as the DAS.

### **Duration of Unemployment**

Kraft (2001) noted that the effects of unemployment do not impact marriages until partners have been out of work for about six months. Therefore, I delineated the date of layoff or termination as the beginning of unemployment rather than the date of an employer or employee's announcement thereof. For the analysis, I operationally defined this variable as participants' and their partners' total duration of unemployment as a couple.

### **Frequency of Unemployment**

No studies have broached the subject of frequency of unemployment and marital quality. However, I believed it was worth exploring whether a clear pattern may emerge from the data I

collected in the current economy. For the analysis, I operationally defined this variable as participants' and their partners' total frequency of unemployment as a couple.

### **The Psychological Significance of Marriage and of Work**

To contextualize the existing literature on unemployment and marital quality and to provide a basis for understanding this study's contribution, it is important to first consider the roles that marriage and work play in human development.

#### **Marriage: Co-Creating People**

In his classic paper, "Marriage as a Psychological Relationship," Jung (1925/1954) suggested that marriage is more than an economic arrangement or a social relationship (nurture function) or a means of facilitating species survival via reproduction (nature function). Rather, marriage also serves a psycho-spiritual function, an opportunity for partners to collaborate in the transformative process of facilitating each other's growth. Marriage partnerships are not ordinary friendships. Rather, although physical and trait attraction does play a finite role in bringing partners together, a necessary degree of mystery is also involved.

As marriages unfold, partners come to recognize areas in which the other draws forth underdeveloped personal qualities in themselves and unresolved conflicts leftover from their families of origin and other areas of formative community life. Healthy tensions ensue between the partners during the course of this process. The primary developmental tasks of marriage, therefore, are for each partner to utilize and respond to these tensions in the service of working toward personal wholeness through the course of the lifespan and to hold the other accountable to that process. Thus, marriages serve the function of co-creating each partner in a way that neither can do on his or her own.

### **Work: Self-Development and Self-Transcendence by Making a Contribution**

The role of work as a primary life task has been a central component of psychology—particularly counseling psychology (Blocher, 2000)—since its inception. Adler (1931/1998) suggested that work serves to unify the personality and to develop people’s social interest (a) by providing a platform by which people may reconcile their internal struggles between inferiority and superiority and (b) by making meaningful contributions to their communities. Similarly, Fromm (1947) characterized productive personalities (the *telos* of his developmental model) as those who are able to transcend the traps of inactivity (on one hand) and compulsive activity (on the other) and meaningfully express their powers with the intent and purpose of benefitting and relating with others.

Expanding upon Jung’s (1931/1969) model of the stages of life (which concerned the development and transcendence of a healthy ego), Erikson’s (1959/1995) theory of lifespan development emphasized the dual role of work as a means of establishing and guiding generations to come. Likewise, according to Maslow (1962/1999), psychological health involves the ability to recognize and act upon such contributions to future generations as intrinsically rewarding and self-reinforcing. Consequently, work at its best not only serves the purpose of providing for oneself and one’s immediate family but also of helping people develop and act on a transcendent and interdependent awareness.

### **How Unemployment Affects Marriages**

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the national unemployment rate in May 2011 (when data collection commenced) averaged 9.7% across the 50 United States, with the most severe unemployment centralized in the Midwestern, Southern, and West Coast states (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011). Duration of unemployment steadily increased from the 1990s into

the 2000s (Kalil, 2005). Perceived financial hardship associated with unemployment tended to be greater among married individuals, who tended to have greater house payments, savings, and children's expenses (Hoffman et al., 1991).

Among traditional marriages, the typical initial reaction to husbands' unemployment is for a family to come together to offer support. According to Rubin (1998), husbands may feel a sense of relief in having more opportunities to take care of household responsibilities; however, "the good times usually don't last long" (p. 536). Unemployment—and consequent inability to provide for one's family—generates frustration and irritability and hopelessness in the husbands, which negatively impacts others in the household. Distress arises among their wives and children on account of the stigma of long-term unemployment, which heightens the potential for conflict, arguments, and violence among family members (W. Patton & Donohue, 2001). In fact, some researchers (Kinnunen & Feldt, 2004) have found that women report more psychological distress in response to their husbands' unemployment than the men themselves. Meanwhile, as families' economic resources become increasingly limited and unstable, unemployed parents tend to become increasingly disengaged and erratic, which triggers poor adjustment and motivation in their children (Kalil, 2005).

Among progressive couples, on the other hand, unemployment is associated "not with failure but with self-reliance and a willingness to rise to the occasion, both traits that soften the allegedly emasculating effects of unemployment" (Lane, 2009, p. 684). Such couples are able to weather the storm of unemployment by drawing on savings to meet financial needs and by continually drawing on each other for social support. In addition, these couples tend to value egalitarianism not only in provider roles outside the home, but also in household responsibilities (Crouter, Perry-Jenkins, Huston, & McHale, 1987; Zuo, 1997). In contrast, in some cases men

may become less involved at home and reassert traditional roles as external circumstances arise that would reduce their pay (Hill et al., 2008) or as their wives' incomes exceed their own (Hartwell-Walker, 2006) or both.

### **Marital Quality**

Moving to how psychologists conceptualize the quality of marital relationships, some researchers (Heyman, Sayers, & Bellack, 1994; Powell, 1995) have argued that there is little substantial difference among terms such as *marital quality*, *marital satisfaction*, *marital interaction*, and *marital adjustment*. Others (for example, see Trost, 1985) have suggested that marriage theorists should dispose of such arbitrary terms altogether. However, given the psychological significance of marriage (as outlined above), it is important to explore the finer characteristics of these terms and their operationalization. Doing so will help establish a better sense of the assumptions involved in this study and the decisions made in preparing it.

### **Marital Satisfaction, Marital Interaction, and Marital Adjustment**

For several decades during the early to mid-20th century, marriage researchers utilized the term *marital satisfaction* (or *marital happiness*) in reference to individuals' personal contentment with their marriages and *marital interaction* to describe couples' communication patterns and their joint participation in daily activities (D. R. Johnson, White, Edwards, & Booth, 1986; Xu, 1996). *Marital adjustment* denoted the process by which couples adapted to avoid or resolve conflicts to maintain a level of satisfaction with the marriage and each other (Locke, 1951).

In light of the psychological significance of marriage (as outlined above), there are two principal limitations in these conceptualizations. First, while they acknowledged the importance of healthy communication and of working through conflicts, they seemed to do so with the aim

of tolerating the other, of getting by without the marriage becoming disappointing or dysfunctional. Second, they seemed to fall short of adequately addressing the role of marriage as an actively transformative process of co-creating each partner.

It is worth noting the degree to which these formulations were socially constructed. During the mid-20th century, achievement, material acquisition, and social status were valued in mainstream American life at the expense of or as a defense against psychological growth (Fromm, 1976; May, 1967; Watts, 1951). It should not be a surprise, then, that early American marriage theory (which arose out of that period) emphasized economic gain (from shared expenses, affection, and a sexual relationship) and a sense of security (from overcoming the loneliness of single life) as primary motivators for marriage (Nielsen, 2005).

However, with changing times came changing values and changing realities. As the social, economic, and ecological consequences of idealizing the affluent society became increasingly apparent and inescapable, Americans could no longer take for granted the stability of the traditional marriage partnership to maintain it. Meanwhile, women were among the numerous disenfranchised groups who came forward during the 1960s and 1970s to insist that American society's wealth and power become more equally distributed. By the 1980s and 1990s, a combination of economic necessity and of societal efforts to generate a better sense of gender equality prompted women to become increasingly involved in the workplace to help sustain the demands that came with maintaining the American lifestyle (K. Gerson, 1988; Schlosser, 2001). In turn, many American women regarded themselves not only as their husbands' wives, but also as individuals making contributions unto themselves.

### **Toward Marital Quality**

During the final decades of the 20th century, marriage theorists began to reconsider their formulations for assessing the functionality of marriages. First, marital adjustment became revised to include couples' ability to productively deal with healthy tension (Gray-Little, Baucom, & Hamby, 1996). Second, the construct of *marital quality* emerged to encompass the interplay among marital satisfaction, interaction, and adjustment (Spanier, 1979). Third, a paradigmatic shift toward dyadic assessment (considering both husbands' and wives' individual appraisals of their marriages in tandem rather than drawing inferences from a singular test score or observation) lent itself to more accurate assessment of marital interaction (Gottman & Notarius, 2002; Lucas & Dean, 1976). Results of initial empirical studies indicated that wives typically reported lower levels of marital satisfaction than husbands (Schumm, Webb, & Bollman, 1998). However, it still took some time for both of these conceptual and methodological issues to catch on and to become appropriately implemented.

### **Marital Quality Today**

These formulations were further revised during the 1990s and into the 21st century as marriage therapists and theorists (Fincham & Linfield, 1997; Gottman & Notarius, 2002; S. Johnson, 2005; Xu, 1996) heeded D. R. Johnson et al.'s (1986) call to broaden conceptualizations of marriages to encompass both positive and negative dimensions (rather than operate upon a uni-axial construct). In so doing, they made a stronger case for Spanier's (1979) original conceptualization of marital quality as "the general concept which encompasses the more specific meanings [of marital satisfaction, interaction, adjustment, disagreement, and instability]" (p. 290). This resulted in further theory development, which culminated into the stress and adaptation models of marriage (Afifi & Nussbaum, 2006) and marked a turning point

whereby American marriage theory came to more fully embody and build upon the totality of Jung's (1925/1954) model.

The quality marriage came to be defined less by absence of conflict but rather by couples' commitment to actively sharing the responsibilities of raising children, of contributing to the community, or of maintaining family or spiritual traditions in a contemporary context (Fowers, 2000). Subsequent empirical research demonstrated that positive vs. negative marital attributions moderate the relationship between external stressors and marital quality (Graham & Conoley, 2006). That said, for the purpose of this study, marital quality involved couples' ability to embrace and become transformed by both external and internal change. Spanier (1976, 1979, 2001) defined marital quality according to four factors that enable and determine the outcome of this process: (a) Dyadic Consensus (adequate agreement on common ground within the marriage including goals, household tasks, and spirituality); (b) Dyadic Satisfaction (interpersonal behavior patterns and commitment to the marriage); (c) an adequate level of Affectional Expression (absence of problems regarding sexuality and physical touch); and (d) Dyadic Cohesion (adequate communication and shared activities between partners).

### **Marital Roles**

Researchers have suggested that marital quality in response to unemployment ranks higher among progressive marriages (Amato, Johnson, Booth, & Rogers, 2003; Gray-Little et al., 1996; Lane, 2009; Rogers & Amato, 2000; Stoltz-Loike, 1992). This section will provide further details on the nature of traditional vs. progressive marriages.

### **Traditional Marriages**

In traditional marriages, family roles mediate the relationship between work roles and marital adjustment (Piotrkowski & Crits-Cristoph, 1981). In blue-collar families, two-earner

partnerships make no difference in level of marital satisfaction (Aubry et al., 1990). Piotrkowski (1979) noted that traditional couples live out a “myth of separate worlds” (p. 275) between work and home life, keeping the impact that work plays on spousal and family interactions out of conscious awareness. Instead, a husband’s psychological distress crosses over to his wife, perpetuating a vicious cycle of distress that negatively impacts their marital adjustment (Kinnunen & Feldt, 2004).

Applying this principle to unemployment, Penkower et al. (1988) noted that the impact of husbands’ unemployment is most severe on women in traditional marriages who did not have strong support from their families of origin. The authors suggested that this has to do with the fact that women in some working-class families tend to rely on their mothers and sisters more so than their husbands or even their friends for intimate communication. Without this social support, the psychological distress experienced by these women becomes exacerbated and marital relationships become further complicated.

### **Evolution of the Progressive Position**

The egalitarian decision-making associated with the progressive position positively correlates with high marital adjustment and negatively with marital discord (Gray-Little et al., 1996; Stoltz-Loike, 1992). However, it is important to note that such a contrast does not occur in a vacuum.

The first wave of dual-career marriage research (Holmstrom, 1973) emphasized the difficulties that (a) women encountered in the 1960s and 1970s as they attempted to cut through their husbands’ traditional attitudes and (b) two-earner couples faced in disrupting the societal status quo. By the 1990s, as the progressive perspective became increasingly accepted, dual-career couples no longer regarded themselves as deviant and the income gap between husbands

and wives contracted. Wives who did not work became the exception, and working spouses began to openly articulate feelings of competition and comparison (Silberstein, 1992). Working wives came to embrace their employment as part of their own identities distinct from their husbands' (Potuchek, 1997), which directly challenged the function of work as a core aspect of men's identity (Rubin, 1998). Among unemployed men with working spouses, feelings of resentment over their loss of the breadwinner role became exacerbated by their wives' preference that husbands remain out of the kitchen and the garden because they lacked the proper skills (Lobo & Watkins, 1995). It is interesting to note the similarities between these marital dynamics and those described by Jung (1927/1970) of the emerging class of working women in post-World War I Europe.

The progressive position further evolved in the 21st century. Marital quality appeared to improve as couples took on increasingly egalitarian roles, as wives contributed more to family income, and as husbands performed a greater share of housework (Amato et al., 2003; Rogers & Amato, 2000). This androgynous attitude became reinforced by the current economic climate whereby 40% of America's labor force work during nonstandard times, further impelling both partners to role-share (Presser, 2007). Today's dual-earner couples regard themselves not merely as two married individuals who both work by day (with more or less traditional roles at home) but rather as a dynamic team who engages in an active process of role sharing on all fronts (Lane, 2009). For some men, masculinity and self-worth are not threatened by being out of work; caring for the children and the house has its own merits. Meantime, women report feelings of guilt and incompetence when they perceive the contributions to their families from employment as lacking.

Regarding partners' agreement on relationship priorities (an indication of the general relationship between marital roles and marital quality), Nielsen (2005) noted that highly satisfied couples agree on almost all aspects of marriage (particularly roles, decision-making, communication, and partner's personality traits). Moderately satisfied couples have fewer areas of agreement (with parenting, religion and values, relationships with others, and partner's personality traits as most commonly agreed-upon priorities). Finally, least satisfied couples have few areas of agreement (with religion and values, relationships with others, parenting, and finances being those upon which they most agree). Overall, highly satisfied couples place the marital dyad first, whereas least satisfied couples still give more attention to relationships with others. This helps explain Penkower et al.'s (1988) finding (above) regarding women's mental health being lowest when husbands are unemployed and when ties with family of origin are weak.

### **Variables in This Study**

The dynamics involved in the shift toward acceptance of egalitarian marriages help contextualize the existing literature on the impact of unemployment upon marital quality with respect to the variables in this study. This section begins with continued discussion on marital roles and gender, followed by education, duration of marriages, and duration and frequency of unemployment.

#### **Marital Roles**

During the 1990s, researchers suggested that marital quality decreased as women's roles became less traditional and their presence in the workforce increased. Some women felt disadvantaged or exploited in their new roles, and husbands felt threatened in theirs. Although women who were financially dependent upon their husbands tended to stay in their marriages

(Whyte, 1990), some who could afford a self-sufficient lifestyle were more likely to divorce (Cherlin, 1992).

Spousal incongruence in attitudes about marital roles tended to result in lower marital satisfaction (Aubry et al., 1990). This seemed to be rooted in (a) imbalance of time devoted to work vs. home, (b) crossover of symptoms such as fatigue or irritability from one role to another, and (c) incompatibility between the behavior of one role and those expected in another (Stoltz-Loike, 1992). Work-family conflict affected marital satisfaction but not work satisfaction (Perrone, Webb, & Blalock, 2005), and competition between partners lowered marital quality (Stoltz-Loike, 1992).

During the 1990s, workplaces became safe havens for both men and women to escape and gain independence from the emotional havoc of family life (Hochschild, 1998). Non-traditional family behavior became associated with lower levels of marital satisfaction in the increasing emphasis given to personal gratification (Lye & Biblarz, 1993). With this in mind, Gray-Little et al. (1996) explored marital satisfaction according to degree of marital power, using four categories: *egalitarian*, *wife-led*, *husband-led*, and *anarchic*. Prior to a treatment intervention, egalitarian marriages reported the highest marital satisfaction and anarchic the lowest. Following treatment, wife-led marriages joined egalitarian in high marital satisfaction (accounted for by improved communication), but husband-led and anarchic remained the same. However, marital quality improved once husbands also took on an egalitarian approach (Amato & Booth, 1995). Such a shift needed to be intrinsic rather than extrinsically influenced by their wives (Potuchek, 1997).

For women in historically traditional marriages, the shift toward the progressive position has been slow. In response to the results of their Welsh study, Charles and James (2005)

suggested that “the strength of male breadwinner ideology may be waning [but] definitions of who is the main breadwinner are more pragmatic than ideological” (p. 499). The authors reported that women from lower-income families who took on employment did so out of necessity, without regard to personal or gender empowerment. Meantime, the minority of people who embraced a more gender-equal dual earner/dual career lifestyle tended to come from a higher-income lifestyle that did not involve children. This phenomenon was also present in Lane’s (2009) study of American couples.

Pfau-Effinger (1999) proposed a series of “gender cultural models” (p. 62) to describe how married couples may identify themselves in modern industrialized societies. First, the *male breadwinner/female home career* model “conforms to the idea of the basic differentiation of society into public and private spheres” (Pfau-Effinger, 1999, p. 63). As breadwinners, men earn income for their families in the public sphere, women care for their children in the private household, and it is assumed that children require special care to be supported as individuals. Second, the *male breadwinner/female part-time career* model involves some work for women without children. However, “during the phases of active motherhood it is seen as adequate for women to combine waged work and caring by working part-time, whereas the role of fathers is the breadwinner” (Pfau-Effinger, 1999, p. 63). Third, the *dual breadwinner/state career* model involves both partners regarded as individual breadwinners “who earn income for their own living and that of their children” (Pfau-Effinger, 1999, p. 63). Fourth, the *dual breadwinner/dual career* model “reflects the notion of a symmetrical and equitable integration of both sexes into society [whereby] childrearing is to a large extent seen as a responsibility of the family” (Pfau-Effinger, 1999, p. 63).

Reflecting on the current economic climate in the United States, Peck (2010) described life in American society as becoming “more matriarchal” (p. 53). As of November 2009, unemployment among men aged 25 to 54 was 19.4%, “the highest since the Bureau of Labor Statistics began tracking the statistic in 1948” (Peck, 2010, p. 52). Jobs that traditionally have been held primarily by men (such as construction and manufacturing) have been on the decline. Service sector jobs (traditionally held more by women) are on the rise (Judy & D’Amico, 1997) and are increasingly pushing women into the workforce to help cover expenses (Schlosser, 2001). Peck (2010) pointed out that many men respond to these changes by staying home upon becoming unemployed but refusing to do housework (which he regarded as a form of passive aggression). This contrasts with researchers’ reports in the late 1980s and early 1990s that men coped with unemployment via job searching (Leana & Feldman, 1991). As Kraft (2001) noted, in more recent times, husbands’ unemployment may have more severe consequences upon mental health than wives’ unemployment. However, based on the results of their study, Wooten and Valenti (2008) emphasized that gender responses to job loss are dependent upon occupation, cultural context, and gender values, and that today some women may respond to their unemployment the same way as men.

### **Education**

Moving now to other variables, the impact of unemployment upon mental health seems to be less severe in people with higher (postsecondary) educational attainment (Scutella & Wooden, 2008). Kraft (2001) found that, whereas blue-collar workers were at higher risk of abandoning or being abandoned by their spouses, having a university degree was associated with a lower degree of separation or divorce. In a cohort analysis of the relationship between education and divorce from the end of World War II through the beginning of the 21st century, Ono (2009)

found that higher level of education in both partners has been associated with marital success for several decades. Although in previous generations likelihood of divorce seemed connected only with husbands' level of education, both spouses' level of education has increasingly become an influencing factor, especially since the 1980s.

Although between 1980 and 2000 women's educational attainment was associated with lower marital satisfaction and poorer communication and with greater proneness to divorce (Amato et al., 2003), today women with college degrees are just as likely as less-educated women to marry and stay married (Fry, 2010). On the whole, Americans tend to marry people with the same level of education (Hou & Myles, 2008). Couples with a similar level of education are less likely to divorce (Groot & Van Den Brink, 2002), and marriages that cross educational boundaries are more likely to end in divorce (C. R. Schwartz, 2010).

However, Rose's (2004) cohort analysis revealed that in comparison with previous decades, women are more likely to marry men with a higher level of education. That said, it may be premature to dismiss Amato et al.'s (2003) proposition that women's exposure to alternative perspectives challenges their conventional beliefs and can create rifts in marital relationships as they take action to empower themselves. Considering the degree to which Americans are entering or returning to college and/or training programs in an effort to make themselves more marketable in the current economy, it is possible that post-secondary educational attainment could still negatively impact marriages for some (particularly blue-collar marriages) while helping safeguard against marital difficulty for others (particularly when both partners value education).

### **Duration of Marriage and Marriage Stages**

Marriages undergo a series of healthy developmental crises that parallel those of individual lifespan development (Jung, 1925/1954; Singer, 1980; Waldman, 1983). Partners' initial attraction involves a degree of mystery, rooted in unconscious motivation. They do not fall in love with each other as whole people, but rather with the images they project onto one another. As marriages mature, these images become deconstructed and the partners work toward accepting and affirming each other as they really are, on the other's own terms. This involves embracing and valuing (not just tolerating) perceived imperfections as part of the other's totality (R. A. Johnson, 1983).

This theoretical perspective was empirically supported by Waldman (1983), who predicted and confirmed that (a) reported marital satisfaction decreases as marital expectations increase, (b) the highest level of discrepancy between marital expectations and marital satisfaction occurs in couples married between 8 and 12 years, and (c) unrealistic marital expectations decrease (and marital satisfaction increases once again) as marriages mature. In addition, Powell (1995) noted that partners' reported levels of marital satisfaction tend to be low when they share the belief that disagreement in marriage is destructive. Leggett, Fonseca, and Byczek (2010) reported that marital quality tends to be higher when (a) each partner accepts the other's individual flaws and (b) marriage partners can adapt to what they each can contribute to the relationship without dwelling upon what they cannot. Finally, marriage partners reporting higher levels of marital quality tended to acknowledge that the qualities they valued most in their partners emerged from the relationship, rather than those that initially attracted each partner to the other (Thompson-Hayes & Webb, 2008). In turn, higher levels of positive marital quality

and lower levels of negative marital quality are associated with higher levels of perceived locus of control over events within the marriage (Myers & Booth, 1999).

The process of working toward synergy and complementarity among partners is key to marital quality (Beachkofsky, 2009; Malmaud, 1984). Contemporary theorists (Harrar & DeMaria, 2007; Minirth et al., 1991) have updated developmental models of marriage to take into account both partners juggling their own careers and sharing decision-making at home while navigating marriage tasks. Mounting tensions can be expected following the initial honeymoon phase of marriage. This pertains to the healthy crisis of coming to terms with the reality of the other while negotiating and renegotiating their roles within the marriage. With time, healthy couples' ability to work through such a crisis becomes self-reinforcing, resulting in an increased sense of commitment to each other and to the marriage relationship (Fowers, 2000; D. R. Johnson et al., 1986). Consequently, risk of separation and divorce in response to unemployment tends to decrease with age and as marriages mature (Kraft, 2001). The results of Leggett et al.'s (2010) qualitative inquiry suggested that shared goals early in marriage followed by cooperative behaviors that place partners' needs before one's own correlate with both marital duration and marital quality.

### **Duration and Frequency of Unemployment**

Final variables considered in this study are the duration and frequency of marital partners' unemployment. The effects of unemployment upon marital quality do not usually emerge until about six months, then worsen as unemployment endures, and quickly cease once new work begins (Kraft, 2001). Similarly, Penkower et al. (1988) reported a delay of cross-over effects of unemployment-related stress onto spouses.

In a study of long-term unemployment (over 12 months) upon family relationships, W. Patton and Donohue (2001) discovered associations between longer duration of unemployment and (a) potential for marital conflict, (b) potential for one spouse to blame the other for continued unemployment, (c) arguments with children that result in physical aggression, (d) feelings of embarrassment and stigma in other family members, (e) feelings of inadequacy and incompetence as parents and concerns that children will be more prone to unemployment, (f) difficulty in adapting to family role exchange (outside of traditional roles), and (g) potential for decreased social contact with family members (which exacerbates feelings of isolation). Similarly, whereas there is some evidence of adaptation to unemployment over time at the individual level, especially among men (Scutella & Wooden, 2008), the likelihood of state anxiety crossover from unemployed family members (regardless of gender) to their spouses increases and becomes sustained with long-term unemployment (Scutella & Wooden, 2008; Westman et al., 2004).

Finally, few (if any) studies have addressed the question of how frequency of unemployment mediates the relationship between unemployment and marital quality. Whether either spouse worked full-time or part-time before or after a period of unemployment makes minimal impact on partnership stability (Kraft, 2001).

### **Assessment of Marital Quality**

Having reviewed data regarding how unemployment impacts the quality of marriages, it is important to understand how researchers assess marital quality. This literature review concludes with an overview of the scales that I utilized in this study and a discussion about why I selected them.

## **Marital Quality Assessment**

Assessment of marital quality can involve several formats. Self-report measures (two of which I utilized in this study) are common and are described below. Additional measures involve researchers or therapists observing and coding couples' interaction patterns and/or analyzing couples' subjective narrative descriptions (Gottman & Notarius, 2002). Attention is given to emotional and power dynamics within the relationship, as well as to each partner's "responsiveness [to the other's] need for connection and caring" (S. Johnson, 2005, p. 539). In this study, I utilized the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) and the Revised Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (RKMS). I selected these instruments based on their documented reputation among marital researchers and therapists as valid measures that yield reliable scores.

### **Dyadic Adjustment Scale**

The DAS is a 32-item self-report measure of marital quality developed by Spanier (1976, 2001). The scale originated as an effort to improve upon measures such as Terman's (1938) Marital Happiness Index and Locke's (1951) Marital Adjustment Test. Rather than utilize a unitary report from couples (or external observations about them), the DAS appraises marital quality from the point of view of individual partners. It can be utilized both as a snapshot of marital quality at a particular moment in time or as an appraisal of dynamic shifts when administered longitudinally.

The scale encompasses four main areas of marital quality, which constitute its subscales (Kurdek, 1992; South, Krueger, & Iacono, 2009; Spanier, 1976):

- Dyadic Consensus (13 items measuring high degree of agreement on matters of importance to the relationship);

- Dyadic Satisfaction (10 items assessing how couples handle disagreements and their perceived marital stability);
- Affectional Expression (four items assessing affection and sexuality); and
- Dyadic Cohesion (five items measuring closeness, shared activities, and positive interactions).

The DAS is independently administered to individual partners. Items involve two dichotomous items and 30 items on five- to seven-point Likert scales. Spanier (2001) suggested that the DAS is best interpreted by its four subscales rather than by its total score because (a) the individual items are unevenly distributed and un-weighted and (b) the subscales provide more specific interpretive data. Spanier (2001) provided *T*-scores and interpretive guidelines for each subscale. See Table 1. Low subscale scores (below 30) suggest marital distress, whereas high subscale scores indicate the absence of a problem.

Table 1

*Interpretive Guidelines for DAS Subscale T-scores*

Range	Guideline
71 +	Markedly atypical (High)
66-70	Moderately atypical (High)
61-65	Mildly atypical (High)
56-60	Slightly atypical (High)
45-55	Average (Typical score; no concern)
40-44	Slightly atypical (Borderline; possible concern)
35-39	Mildly atypical (Indicates significant problem)
≤ 34	Moderately atypical (Indicates significant problem)

(Spanier, 2001, p. 14)

Construction of the DAS involved a process of pooling, screening, and consolidating items from then-existing measures of marital satisfaction and/or adjustment. After revising some items and writing new ones, Spanier (1976) generated a composite measure consisting of 40 items in five categories. He normed this draft scale with a sample of 218 married individuals, 94 divorced individuals, and a small sample of unmarried cohabiting couples in Pennsylvania. Following a factor analysis, he removed eight items deemed unverifiable and restructured four other items into a new category. A panel of judges reviewed the 32-item scale for content validity according to Spanier's (1979) definition of dyadic adjustment: "A process, the outcome of which is determined by the degree of troublesome dyadic differences, interpersonal tensions and personal anxiety, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, and consensus on matters of importance to dyadic functioning" (p. 294).

Spanier (1976) assessed criterion validity by a series of *t*-tests comparing the sample means of the married group against those of the divorced group; these were significant at  $p < .001$ . He assessed construct validity by correlating the 32-item DAS with the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale (the most frequently used scale at that time), which yielded a correlation coefficient of .86 for married and .88 for divorced couples. He assessed internal consistency reliability via Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a total score coefficient of .96. Meantime, the four subscale reliability coefficients ranged from .73 to .94. Subsequently, researchers who have tested the test-retest reliability of the DAS found similar results as Spanier's original alpha scores. Graham, Liu, and Jeziorski's (2006) meta-analysis revealed a mean total score reliability coefficient of .92 and mean subscale scores ranging from .71 to .88. The Affectional Expression subscale consistently yielded the lowest coefficient, which can be accounted for by the scale consisting only of four items. South et al. (2009) established factor

invariance across men and women. Finally, Kurdek (1992) noted the generalizability of the DAS across both heterosexual and homosexual couples and its longitudinal stability.

Overall, Spanier (1979) suggested that the primary advantages of the DAS are (a) it provides a good general indicator of couples' marital quality, (b) partners' responses can be compared, and (c) specific problem areas can be identified by clinicians and/or researchers. The DAS has been cited by researchers (L. Thompson, 1988) as highly generalizable based on its factor analysis involving diverse groups. The scale has been translated into numerous languages from French and Italian to Turkish and Chinese (Graham et al., 2006) and has been used in thousands of research studies (South et al., 2009). It has been identified as a meaningful measure of marital quality over mere marital satisfaction (Graham et al., 2006).

### **Revised Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale**

In response to (a) emerging conceptualizations of marital quality that include both positive and negative dimensions (Akagi, Schumm, & Bergen, 2003) and (b) remarks made by Spanier (1976) about the importance of treating partners' reflections on their spouses, on their relationships with their spouses, and on their marriages themselves as separate dimensions, the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) emerged in the mid-1980s to provide researchers with a "valid but brief measure" (Schumm et al., 1986, p. 381) of global marital satisfaction. The KMSS consisted of three self-report items that explored the three dimensions outlined above. A Cronbach's alpha score of .92 was obtained from a survey of 51 women in Manhattan, Kansas (Grover, Paff-Bergen, Russell, & Schumm, 1984). Researchers (Crane, Middleton, & Bean, 2000; Schumm et al., 1986) noted a strong degree of concurrent validity between the KMSS and the DAS. Crane et al. (2000) found minimal variability between husbands' and wives' responses on the instrument and identified a score of 17 or below on the KMSS as indicative of marital

distress. In the early 2000s, the scale's items became reworded (but retained the same underlying factor structure) to better reflect partners' thoughts on the marriage as a process, thereby revealing couples' levels of strength rather than dysfunction (Akagi et al., 2003). Thus, the RKMSS in conjunction with the DAS provided a comprehensive portrait of both the positive and negative attributions of marital quality to suit the needs of this study.

### **Justification for Utilizing the DAS and RKMSS**

Together, the DAS and the RKMSS constituted an ideal measure of marital quality for the purpose of this study. The DAS provided a detailed snapshot of several domains of couples' relational quality during a moment in time. Meantime, the RKMSS offered a more global measure of marital satisfaction, which provided context for how unemployment may have affected marital quality longitudinally. In addition, it helped measure the extent to which couples manage despite financial hardships. Together, both measures were concise (totaling 35 items altogether), with the intention of retaining participants' attention and focus for the duration of the questionnaire.

Several marital quality measures (introduced below) have emerged since the DAS and the RKMSS that utilize scoring procedures that yield a more accurate numeric representation of marital quality. However, for this study I chose to use these classic measures because (a) the DAS has a solid track record as a reliable and valid general measure of marital quality (Carey, Spector, Lantinga, & Krauss, 1993), whereas several recent studies on marriage and unemployment have utilized under-tested measures with alpha coefficients of as low as .40 (well below the standard minimum of .70-.80, Field, 2009), and (b) the two scales in tandem (in conjunction with the demographic items) presented a balanced set of items that neither over- nor under-emphasized particular areas of marital quality.

### **Other Measures Not Utilized**

Several measures have emerged since the DAS and RKMS that reflect some of the refinements in marital quality conceptualization that I presented above. These include Snyder's Marital Satisfaction Inventory - Revised (MSI-R, Snyder & Alkman, 1999), the Positive and Negative Quality in Marriage Scale (PNQMS, Fincham & Linfield, 1997), and the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMSS, Fowers & Olson, 1993). However, I chose not to utilize them for methodological reasons.

The MSI-R consists of 150 items, several of which were too redundant for the purpose of this study. (They would be more appropriate in a clinical context.) Meantime, using the MSI-R's Global Distress subscale alone would have been insufficient in that it focuses on the negative dimensions of marriage at the expense of the positive ones. In addition, Welfare (n.d.) pointed out the lack of appropriate factor analysis data for the MSI-R.

Two newer scales assess marital quality via bi-dimensional scoring (adding points for items reflecting positive dimensions of marital quality and subtracting points for those associated with negative dimensions). However, their limitations stood in the way of making them effective in this study. First, in spite of its improved construct validity over previous measures (Mattson, Paldino, & Johnson, 2007), the PNQMS is an observational measure, whereas a pencil-and-paper self-report measure was necessary here. Second, although the EMSS offers a robust scoring procedure, since its inception it has not been adequately reviewed and tested by researchers aside from its authors. This stood in contrast to the "massive database" (Heyman et al., 1994, p. 442) affiliated with the DAS. In addition, it is concerning that the larger parent measure (the ENRICH Marital Inventory) from which the briefer EMSS was derived did not have a

statistically significant egalitarian roles scale (Fowers & Olson, 1989), given the relevance of that variable in this study.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I reviewed existing research pertaining to the variables explored in this study. The purpose of this study was to explore how unemployment may impact marital quality differently in today's economy according to participants' position along the traditional-progressive continuum, in conjunction with education, duration of marriage, and duration and frequency of unemployment. Prior to data collection and analysis, I emphasized that evolving conceptualizations of marital quality have accompanied societal changes regarding women's roles in marriage and their transition into the workplace. I also stressed how some attributes of the current economy, such as extended periods of unemployment, make marriages more vulnerable to problems. Increasing demands for continuing education may negatively impact marriages for some (particularly marriages between partners with less educational background) and help safeguard against marital difficulty for others (particularly when both partners have more education). In the meantime, I stated that it remained to be seen whether marriages are affected by how often either partner is out of work. In the next chapter, I will discuss specifically how I utilized the marital quality measures introduced at the end of this chapter to assess the exogenous variables covered in depth throughout this chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study, which was inspired in part by Lane's (2009) qualitative research, was to explore how unemployment impacts marital quality in the current economy according to participants' positions along the traditional–progressive continuum. Like Lane's phenomenological study, this study involved an *ex post facto* design to explore participants' reflections on their experiences with unemployment.

However, whereas qualitative research necessarily involves small sample sizes, in this study I utilized a correlational design to analyze data collected from a larger sample to help test the generalizability of the emerging progressive theories to the greater American population in the current economic context. Rather than seek out causal predictions, the intention behind correlational research is to discover relationships between variables, with the assumption that these relationships can be generalized to other samples (Heppner, Wampold, & Kivlighan, 2008). I collected data from participants of various ages and backgrounds via an online questionnaire and utilized a canonical correlation analysis to determine how specific dimensions related to unemployment incrementally predicted dimensions of their marital quality.

This chapter includes information about the study's participants, variables and the instrumentation involved in assessing them, procedure, and statistical analysis.

### **Canonical Correlation**

I chose a canonical correlation analysis based on its ability to “honor the nature of the reality that most researchers want to study” (B. Thompson, 2000, p. 285) wherein multiple causes relate with multiple effects. By “examining patterns of interrelationships between sets of variables” (Levine, 1977, p. 5), canonical correlation helps preserve “the complexity of the constructs examined” (Sherry & Henson, 2005, p. 38). In this case, rather than explore marital quality according to only a total scale score—which, in the case of the DAS, is discouraged by its author on methodological grounds (Spanier, 2001)—its various dimensions could be held as separate endogenous variables. This lent itself to decreasing the risk of inflated experiment-wise Type I error inherent in conducting multiple ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analyses (Sherry & Henson, 2005; B. Thompson, 2000).

### **Participants**

I invited married people who were unemployed or whose partners were unemployed to complete an online questionnaire. To recruit participants, I obtained permission to post paper flyers in a public library, a grocery store, a community mental health center, and a birthing/parent education center in two rural Midwestern communities. I also obtained permission to post electronic announcements on numerous unemployment- and marriage-related blog sites and Yahoo groups nationwide. In addition, I posted announcements in the *Community* section of the Craig’s List pages for American cities/towns identified by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011) as having high unemployment rates. Finally, I e-mailed recruitment messages (see Appendix A) to the designated contacts for work/career and marriage ministries, employment agencies, labor unions, and professional organizations across the United States. I

encouraged snowball sampling by asking contacts and participants to disseminate the questionnaire link via e-mail, Facebook, web pages, paper bulletins, etc.

### **Sample**

For a canonical correlation analysis, a sample of at least 10 to 20 participants per endogenous variable (in this case, 50 to 100 participants) is adequate to avoid obscuring meaningful relationships while also circumventing results with statistical significance at the expense of practical significance (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010; B. Thompson, 2000). After data cleaning, my sample consisted of 129 participants.

Although random sampling is nearly impossible in applied social science research (Heppner et al., 2008), it was favorable to involve as diverse a sample as possible to adequately address the topic with appropriate variability. To attain this, I contacted a variety of sites to potentially recruit participants of a substantial range of ages, occupations, and backgrounds.

### **Individual and Couples Forms**

The original study design involved couples completing an online questionnaire one partner at a time. However, following an unsatisfactory response rate during the opening two weeks, I received approval from my committee members to launch an individual version of the questionnaire. The individual form consisted of the same items as the original couples form, but with extra demographic items added to collect information about participants' partners. The online questionnaire was programmed to give participants a choice between the couples and individual versions. My response rate thrived thereafter, with the majority of participants choosing the individual version.

## **Variables**

I conceptualized the individual form as the default form for the study, with individual respondents reporting about the quality of their marriages, their positions along the traditional–progressive continuum and their perceptions of their partners’ positions, and the duration of their marriages. In the case of participants who completed the couples’ form of the questionnaire, information about partners was extracted from the partners’ self-reports. Meanwhile, I calculated the remaining variables (education, duration of unemployment, and frequency of unemployment) as a couple.

### **Endogenous Variables: Dimensions of Marital Quality**

Five dimensions of marital quality were measured by the four subscales of the DAS (Consensus, Satisfaction, Affectional, and Cohesion) and by the RKMSS. The DAS subscales provided a snapshot measure of marital quality in the face of unemployment. Spanier (2001) suggested that the DAS is best interpreted by its subscales rather than by its total score because (a) the individual items are unevenly distributed and un-weighted and (b) the subscales provide more specific interpretive data. In contrast, the RKMSS provided a global measure that contextualized marital quality in terms of participants’ satisfaction with their marriages at present, their future vision of the marriages, and the overall development of the marriages since they began.

### **Exogenous Variables**

Participants were asked to report about themselves and their partners. In the case of participants who completed the couples’ form of the questionnaire, information about partners was extracted from the partners’ self-reports. Participants reported their beliefs about marital roles and their perceptions of their partners’ beliefs. They also provided information about (a)

how much education they and their partners had attempted and completed (combined into a single score measured in years for the analysis), (b) how long they had been married to their partners, and (c) how long and how often they and/or their partners had been out of work (combined into single scores for the analysis).

**Marital role.** Marital role (position on the traditional–progressive continuum) was treated as an interval variable. To identify their positions on the traditional–progressive continuum, participants were asked, “Some people believe that it is principally the husband’s role to work outside the home to provide for his family. To what extent do you embrace this attitude?” Participants rated their beliefs on a scale from 0 to 9, with higher scores indicating more traditional and lower scores indicating more progressive as illustrated below:

<i>Not at all</i>		<i>Somewhat</i>			<i>Considerably</i>			<i>Totally</i>	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

In addition, participants were asked, “To what extent does your partner seem to embrace that attitude?” A paired samples *t*-test measured the degree to which participants’ scores differed from perceived partners’ scores.

Furthermore, a difference in marital role position variable was created from participants’ responses to further explore the degree and directionality of discrepancy between participants’ reported beliefs about marital roles and their perceptions of their partners’ beliefs. Partners’ belief scores were subtracted from participants’ belief scores, and then a constant of 10 was added, which resulted in a continuum of possible scores ranging from 1 to 18. A score of 10 meant no difference between participants’ beliefs and their perceptions of their partners’ beliefs. A score of 1 indicated a strong discrepancy whereby participants identified themselves as most progressive (reporting that they do not embrace the husband-as-provider attitude at all) and their

partners as most traditional (reporting that they totally embrace the husband-as-provider attitude). A score of 18 indicated a strong discrepancy whereby participants identified themselves as most traditional and their partners as most progressive.

**Education.** Education was measured in multiple ways. For the analysis, participants' and their partners' total education was measured in years. For descriptive purposes, participants were also asked to identify their and their partner's highest degrees earned and attempted. For the analysis, education was operationally defined as the sum of participants' and their partners' years of education. This ensured that all completed years of education were counted although one or both partners may have been involved in an educational program at the time of the study or needed to drop from such a program without completing a degree or certificate. Cases where participants' stated numbers did not match the descriptive information they provided on the follow-up descriptive items were recoded (e.g., if a participant completed a bachelor's degree but reported only "4" years' education, that number was recoded as "16" to also include 12 years of high school). A paired samples *t*-test compared the mean years of education between partners.

For descriptive purposes, participants were also asked to identify their highest level of education earned as follows:

- Did not complete high school
- GED
- High school diploma
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree

- Specialist's degree
- Doctoral degree

In addition, further descriptive information was collected about participants' highest level of education attempted as follows:

- Less than high school, no GED
- Less than high school, GED in progress
- Less than high school, GED completed
- High school diploma
- Some Associate's/technical training (dropped out to work)
- Some Associate's/technical training (dropped out for other reasons)
- Some Associate's/technical training (in progress)
- Completed Associate's/technical training
- Some four-year college (dropped out to work)
- Some four-year college (dropped out for other reasons)
- Some four-year college (in progress)
- Completed four-year college degree
- Some graduate school (dropped out to work)
- Some graduate school (dropped out for other reasons)
- Some graduate school (in progress)
- Earned Master's degree
- Earned Master's degree, involved in further graduate training
- Earned Specialist's degree
- Earned Doctoral degree

**Duration of marriage.** Duration of marriage was measured in years. Participants identified how long they had been married to their current partners in years and months. These responses were converted into years to two decimal places.

**Duration of unemployment.** Participants were asked to identify how long they and their partners had been out of work in years and months. Participants could also specify that they or their partners were either currently employed or had not worked since the marriage began. Such cases were coded as “0.” Responses were converted into years to two decimal places. For the analysis, I operationally defined duration of unemployment as the sum of participants’ and their partners’ amount of time out of work.

**Frequency of unemployment.** Participants were asked to identify how many times they and their partners had been out of work during the last five years. Participants could also specify that they or their partners were either currently employed or had not worked since the marriage began. Such cases were coded as “0.” For the analysis, participants’ and partners’ frequency of unemployment was summed to determine the total frequency of unemployment for each couple. Cases where neither partner had worked since they were married were coded as “1” time unemployed.

### **Descriptive Information**

Several items were included on the demographic questionnaire to furnish a sense of contextual detail and are detailed below.

**Sex.** Participants were asked to identify themselves as husbands or wives.

**Age.** Participants reported their and their partners’ ages in years. For descriptive purposes, these were recoded into age ranges with increments of five years.

**Race/Ethnicity.** Participants were asked how they and their partners identify racially/ethnically as follows:

- White/European-American
- African-American
- Latino/Hispanic-American
- Asian-American
- Native American/American Indian
- Mixed/multiracial (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_ )
- Other (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_ )

**Number of marriages.** Participants were asked their and their partners' number of marriages as follows:

- Only marriage
- Divorced and remarried once
- Divorced and remarried twice
- Divorced and remarried three or more times
- Widowed and remarried
- Both widowed and divorced prior to this marriage

**Occupation.** Participants identified their and their partners' occupations using the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) System (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). They selected from a list of 22 categories as follows:

- Management
- Business and Financial Operations
- Computer and Mathematical Science

- Architecture and Engineering
- Life, Physical, and Social Sciences
- Community and Social Services
- Legal
- Education, Training, and Library
- Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media
- Health Care Practitioner
- Health Care Support
- Protective Service
- Food Preparation/Serving
- Building and Grounds Cleaning/Maintenance
- Personal Care and Service
- Sales
- Office and Administrative Support
- Farming, Fishing, and Forestry
- Construction and Extraction
- Installation/Maintenance/Repair
- Production
- Transportation/Material Moving
- I/Partner is the primary provider in our family.

Participants' income was not measured in this study because of the increasingly uneven distribution of salaries in the current economy.

### **Instruments**

Participants completed the DAS and RKMSS to provide a comprehensive portrait of both the positive and negative dimensions of their marital quality and of both a snapshot and a global measure of marital quality.

The DAS consists of 32 Likert-type items divided into four factored subscales. The first factor, Dyadic Satisfaction, consists of 10 items that assess how couples handle disagreements and their perceived marital stability. Examples include questions about how often partners believe that the relationship is going well, how often they have considered terminating the relationship, and how they describe the future of the relationship. The second factor, Dyadic Cohesion, consists of five items measuring closeness, shared activities, and positive interactions. Examples include questions about how often partners engage together in outside interests, discussions, and laughter. The third factor, Dyadic Consensus, consists of 13 items measuring high degree of agreement on matters of importance to the relationship. Examples include questions about the topics of partners' disagreements regarding finances, career decisions, household responsibilities, time spent together, extended family issues, philosophy of life, etc. Finally, the Affectional Expression factor consists of four items assessing duration and frequency of and partners' feelings about their sexuality and demonstrations of affection.

The RKMSS consists of three items measuring the degree to which partners are satisfied with (a) the way their relationship is developing, (b) their present relationship, and (c) the way their relationship has developed since it began on a scale from 1 to 7.

### **Procedures**

Participants completed an online questionnaire hosted by the Qualtrics web-based survey program.

### **Online Questionnaire**

I chose the online format because of its advantages over traditional pencil-and-paper questionnaires in contemporary counseling research. These advantages include reduced turnaround time, lower cost, and ease and accuracy of automatic data entry (Granello & Wheaton, 2003).

### **Institutional Review Board**

I applied for and received determination of exempt status from the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) on May 13, 2011. Per IRB instructions, I requested permission and obtained a written signature from the director of one recruitment site (Georg'ann Cattelona, Bloomington Area Birth Services, Bloomington, IN) to post recruitment messages via paper flyers and postings on her center's blog page.

### **Recruitment**

I recruited participants from the locations specified above. Appendix B contains the text of my recruitment message, which was distributed both online and in formatted text on paper flyers. In instances where permission was needed to recruit participants, I e-mailed the contact person specified on the recruitment site's web page. See Appendix A for the content of my message. Per correspondence with the IRB, permission via e-mail was sufficient; further written signatures were not necessary.

### **Informed Consent and Completing the Questionnaire**

Participants accessed the online questionnaire via the URL provided on the recruitment message. To make the URL more accessible and memorable for snowball sampling, I utilized a redirection service whereby participants accessed the questionnaire via

[www.tinyurl.com/unemployment-marriage](http://www.tinyurl.com/unemployment-marriage) instead of  
[https://indstate.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_em8L1x2qzOoEbg8](https://indstate.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_em8L1x2qzOoEbg8).

In an opening screen (see Appendix C), participants were thanked for their participation and informed that their anticipated participation time was 10 to 20 minutes. Participants were offered a choice between the couples form (“Both partners are willing to participate”) and the individual form (“Only one partner is willing to complete the questionnaire”). Participants who chose the couples form were instructed to complete the questionnaire one partner at a time, with each partner working alone (see Appendix E).

Next, participants read and electronically signed an informed consent form (see Appendix D). I programmed the questionnaire for active consent, in that before they could begin the questionnaire, participants were required to check an electronic signature box adjacent to text reading, “I agree to participate in this research study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and confidential.” Otherwise, they were sent automatically to the final screen. Henceforth, on subsequent instructional screens (see Appendix E for the couples form and Appendix F for the individual form), participants were required to check boxes acknowledging their desire to complete and submit their questionnaires.

Participants completed the demographic questionnaire first, then the DAS, then the RKMSS.

The debriefing and checkout screen (see Appendix G) informed participants about the purpose of the study and referred them to their local mental health centers if they encountered distress following completion of the questionnaire. Finally, on a default Qualtrics screen, participants were thanked for their time and asked to close their browser windows.

**Confidentiality**

Participants' responses (including electronic agreement to the informed consent form) were kept confidential and stored in a password-protected database associated with Qualtrics. Participants' identifying information was unavailable to me. Participants' completed questionnaires were assigned a number. For participants who completed the couples form, the first participant's form was labeled A and the second B (i.e., "12-A" and "12-B"). Participants who completed the individual form were assigned a number only. Throughout the analysis, participants were identified only according to their assigned number. Per IRB guidelines, upon completion of the study, all data will be held for three years and then destroyed.

**Incentives**

Due to limited funding, and to preserve anonymity to the greatest extent possible, this study was conducted without the use of material incentives.

**Statistical Analysis**

The study design involved couples as the unit of analysis. This was based on Honeycutt and Norton's (1982) emphasizing the value of assessing the interdependence of couples' relationships as a super-individual unit: "More information is disseminated about functioning within the relationship between partners and the functioning of the couple relative to supra-systemic elements outside of the marriage" (p. 18).

Because of an unsatisfactory response rate an individual form became necessary and was used as the default form for the study based on the fact that the majority of participants chose it over the couples form. Individual respondents reported about the quality of their marriages, their beliefs about marital roles and their perception of their partners', and the duration of their marriages. In the case of participants who completed the couples' form of the questionnaire,

information about partners was extracted from the partners' self-reports. Meanwhile, I calculated education, duration of unemployment, and frequency of unemployment as a couple.

I utilized the SPSS/PASW (GradPack Version 17) program (SPSS, 2009) to complete the statistical analyses. First, I compiled descriptive data. Second, I tested the multivariate assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. I also tested for outliers and the presence of multicollinearity. Third, I conducted the canonical correlation analysis using procedural and interpretive guidelines set forth by Sherry and Henson (2005), Hair et al. (2010), and Levine (1977). Fourth, I conducted follow-up repeated measures ANOVAs and Pearson product moment correlations to assess specific relationships between and within the demographic, exogenous, and endogenous variables. Specific information about and rationales behind each analysis are provided in Chapter 4.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I outlined how I used an *ex post facto* correlational design to assess how unemployment impacts marital quality in single breadwinner vs. dual-earner couples in the current economy. Demographic heterogeneity was desired. Participants were recruited nationwide to complete an online questionnaire consisting of a demographic questionnaire and two measures of marital quality, the DAS and the RKMSS. I utilized a canonical correlation analysis to assess the degree to which participants' beliefs about marital roles, levels of education, duration of marriage, duration of unemployment, and frequency of unemployment affected marital quality when a spouse loses work.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine whether unemployment impacts marital quality differently based on participants' position along the traditional–progressive continuum. In the previous chapter, I explained how a canonical correlation analysis was utilized to assess the degree to which marital roles, education, duration of marriage, duration of unemployment, and frequency of unemployment affect marital quality (as measured by the four subscales of the DAS as a snapshot measure and by the RKMSS as a global measure) when a spouse loses work. This chapter presents the results of my analysis, including information about the sample and data cleaning, demographic data, interpretation of the mean DAS and RKMSS *T*-scores, tests of multivariate assumptions, the canonical correlation analysis, and follow-up analyses.

#### **Sample**

Participants completed an online questionnaire over a period of 11 weeks between May and July 2011. The questionnaire web page was visited 344 times. After receiving over 200 completed questionnaires, I downloaded the data from Qualtrics to SPSS. After converting couples questionnaires to individual forms there were a total of 455 questionnaires. A list-wise deletion of cases of missing data followed.

#### **Data Cleaning**

Table 2 details the number of cases removed during the data cleaning procedure. Cases were eliminated in the following order:

1. Informed consent was signed but no data were provided ( $n = 170$ , 37%).
2. Participants stopped early, as evidenced by all ( $n = 54$ , 11%) or almost all ( $n = 13$ , 3%) of the DAS and/or RKMSS items left unanswered.
3. Participants did not identify their belief about husband as provider ( $n = 17$ , 4%).
4. Participants did not clearly identify their ( $n = 6$ , 1%) or their partner's ( $n = 4$ , 1%) level of education.
5. Participants did not identify how long they had been married ( $n = 4$ , 1%).
6. Participants did not identify how long they had been out of work ( $n = 1$ ).
7. Participants did not identify how often their partners had been out of work ( $n = 5$ , 1%).
8. Participants were not unemployed according to the definition specified for this study. Rather, they (a) identified themselves or their partners (including husbands) as homemakers by choice and the other worked full-time ( $n = 14$ , 3%), (b) received disability or veteran's income ( $n = 5$ , 1%), or (c) had been previously unemployed but were working again at the time of the study ( $n = 15$ , 3%).
9. Participants left one or more DAS and/or RKMSS items blank ( $n = 16$ , 4%). In the *DAS User's Manual*, Spanier (2001) emphasized the importance of ensuring "that all items are rated" (p. 7).
10. There were outliers. I discovered and removed two cases in which participants had been out of work for over a decade. Because this was well above the mean of less than two years, it was reasonable to assume these two participants were from a different population than the others.

Table 2

*Data Cleaning*

Reason for Removal	Participants Removed <i>n</i> (%)	Partners Removed <i>n</i> (%)
Informed Consent Only	170 (37%)	--
Stopped Early		
Missing All DAS Items	54 (11%)	--
Missing Partial DAS Items	13 (3%)	--
Missing X-Variable Data		
Missing Marital Role Item	17 (4%)	--
Missing or Unclear Education Item	6 (1%)	4 (4%)
Missing Duration of Marriage Item	4 (1%)	--
Missing Duration of Unemployment Item	1 (0.2%)	--
Missing Frequency of Unemployment Item	--	5 (1%)
Did Not Qualify		
Homemaker by Choice	14 (3%)	--
Disabled or Veteran	5 (1%)	--
Previously Unemployed	15 (3%)	--
Missing One or More DAS Items	16 (4%)	--
Outliers (Duration of Unemployment variable)	2 (0.4%)	--

*Note.* Final *n* = 129

Upon investigating the cases containing missing data, no substantial patterns were found among specific items or among demographic groups, indicating the cases were missing more or less completely at random.

### **Demographic Data**

The study sample consisted of 129 participants, including 57 husbands (44%) and 72 wives (56%). A total of 103 participants (80%) completed the individual form, and 26 (20%) completed the couples form.

## Age

Participants' ages ranged from 22 to 67 years ( $M = 44.93$ ,  $SD = 11.10$ ). Partners' ages ranged from 24 to 71 years ( $M = 45.02$ ,  $SD = 10.72$ ). See Table 3. The majority of the sample ( $n = 76$ , 59%) consisted of people in middle adulthood (between 40 and 60 years old). Only 9% ( $n = 12$ ) of the sample consisted of people below 30 years old.

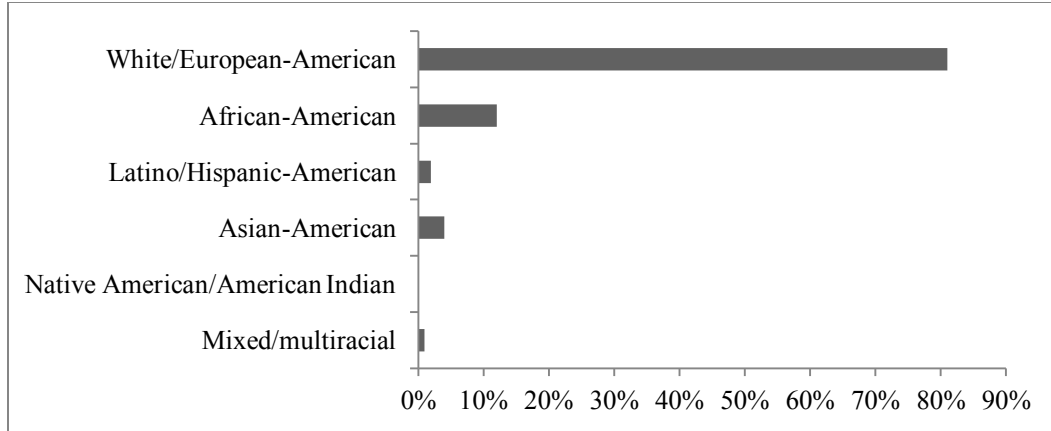
Table 3

### *Participants' and Partners' Ages*

Age (years)	Participant $n$ (%)	Partner $n$ (%)
20 to 24	5 (4%)	3 (2%)
25 to 29	7 (5%)	8 (6%)
30 to 34	17 (13%)	12 (9%)
35 to 39	14 (11%)	22 (17%)
40 to 44	12 (9%)	14 (11%)
45 to 49	18 (14%)	16 (12%)
50 to 54	24 (19%)	25 (20%)
55 to 59	22 (17%)	18 (14%)
60 to 64	9 (7%)	10 (8%)
65 +	1 (1%)	1 (1%)

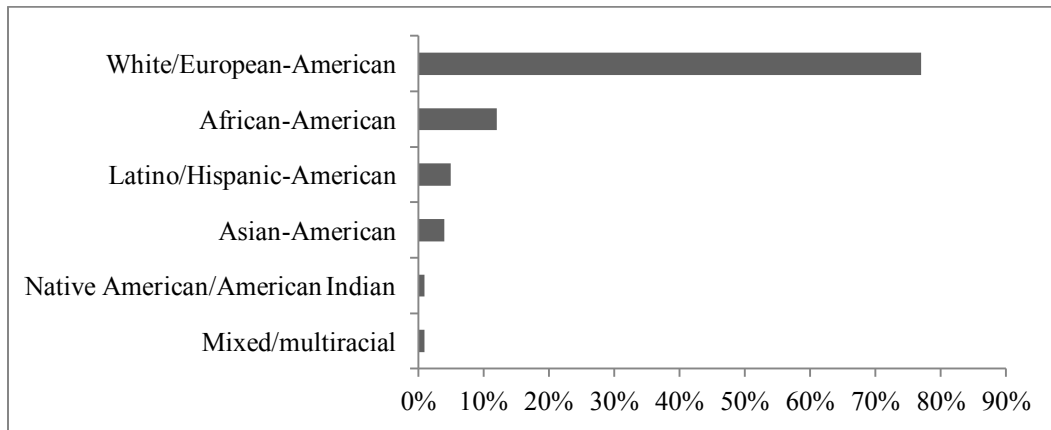
## Race/Ethnicity

The majority of the participants ( $n = 104$ , 81%) were White/European-American, and 16 (12%) identified as African-American, 3 (2%) as Latino/Hispanic-American, 5 (4%) as Asian-American, and 1 (1%) as mixed/multiracial ("Black and Latino"). See Figure 1.



*Figure 1.* Participants' race/ethnicity.

Most of the participants ( $n = 99$ , 77%) identified their partners as White/European-American, and 16 (12%) of partners were African-American, 7 (5%) were Latino/Hispanic-American, 5 (4%) were Asian-American, 1 (1%) was Native American/American Indian, and 1 (1%) was mixed/multiracial (“Black and Italian”). See Figure 2.



*Figure 2.* Partners' race/ethnicity.

### **Number of Marriages**

The majority of the participants ( $n = 101$ , 78%) reported that their current marriage was their only marriage, and about 19% ( $n = 24$ ) reported that they had been divorced and remarried

once, 2% ( $n = 3$ ) divorced and remarried twice, and 1% ( $n = 1$ ) divorced and remarried three or more times. See Figure 3.

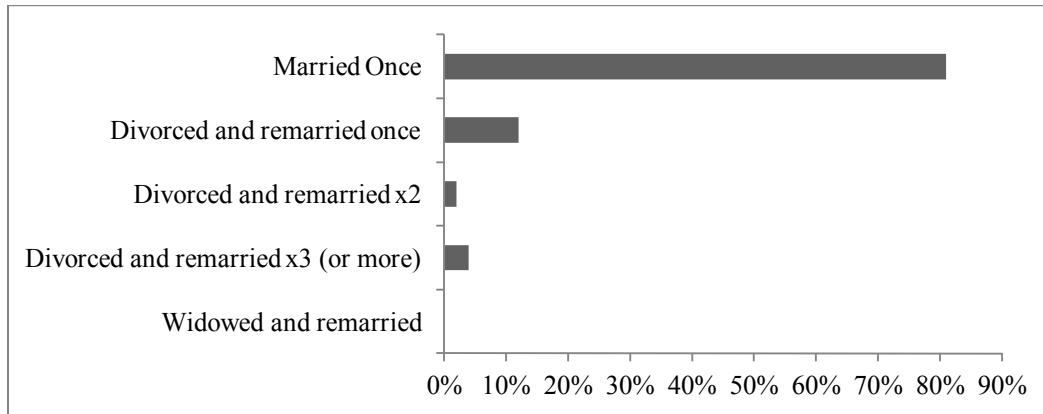


Figure 3. Participants' number of marriages.

Most of the participants ( $n = 98$ , 76%) reported that this was their partner's only marriage, and about 19% ( $n = 24$ ) reported that their partner had been divorced and remarried once, about 4% ( $n = 5$ ) divorced and remarried twice, 1% ( $n = 1$ ) divorced and remarried three or more times, and 1% ( $n = 1$ ) widowed and remarried. See Figure 4.

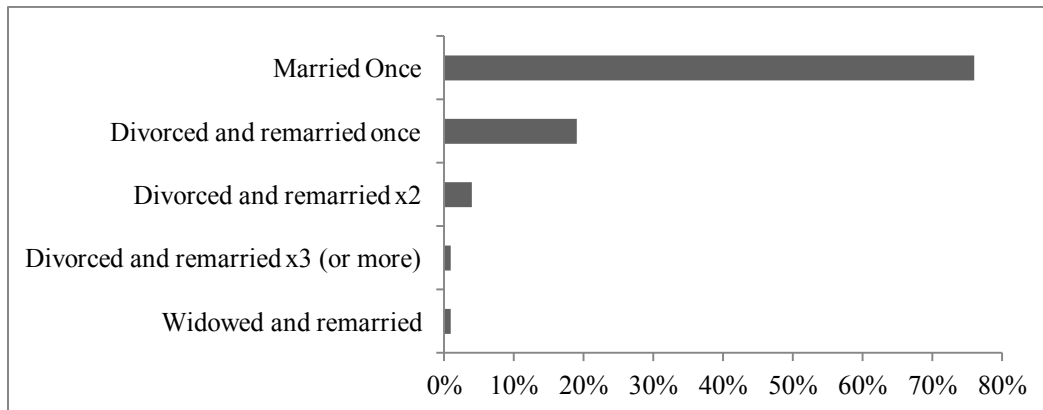


Figure 4. Partners' number of marriages.

## Occupation

Participants identified their and their partner's occupation using the SOC System (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). There were a variety of occupations reported. Educators, executives,

and business personnel comprised the top three occupations for both partners and participants. It is worth noting that teacher layoffs were of particular concern nationwide during the time of the study (Chivvis, 2011), and that the rate of unemployment in the domain of entrepreneurship was also at a record high (“Start-up Rate,” 2011). Comparably, the proportion of people in blue-collar professions (i.e., construction, farming, production, etc.) in the sample was low, and they were mostly represented by their partners who chose to complete the questionnaire.

Table 4

*Participants' and Partners' Occupations*

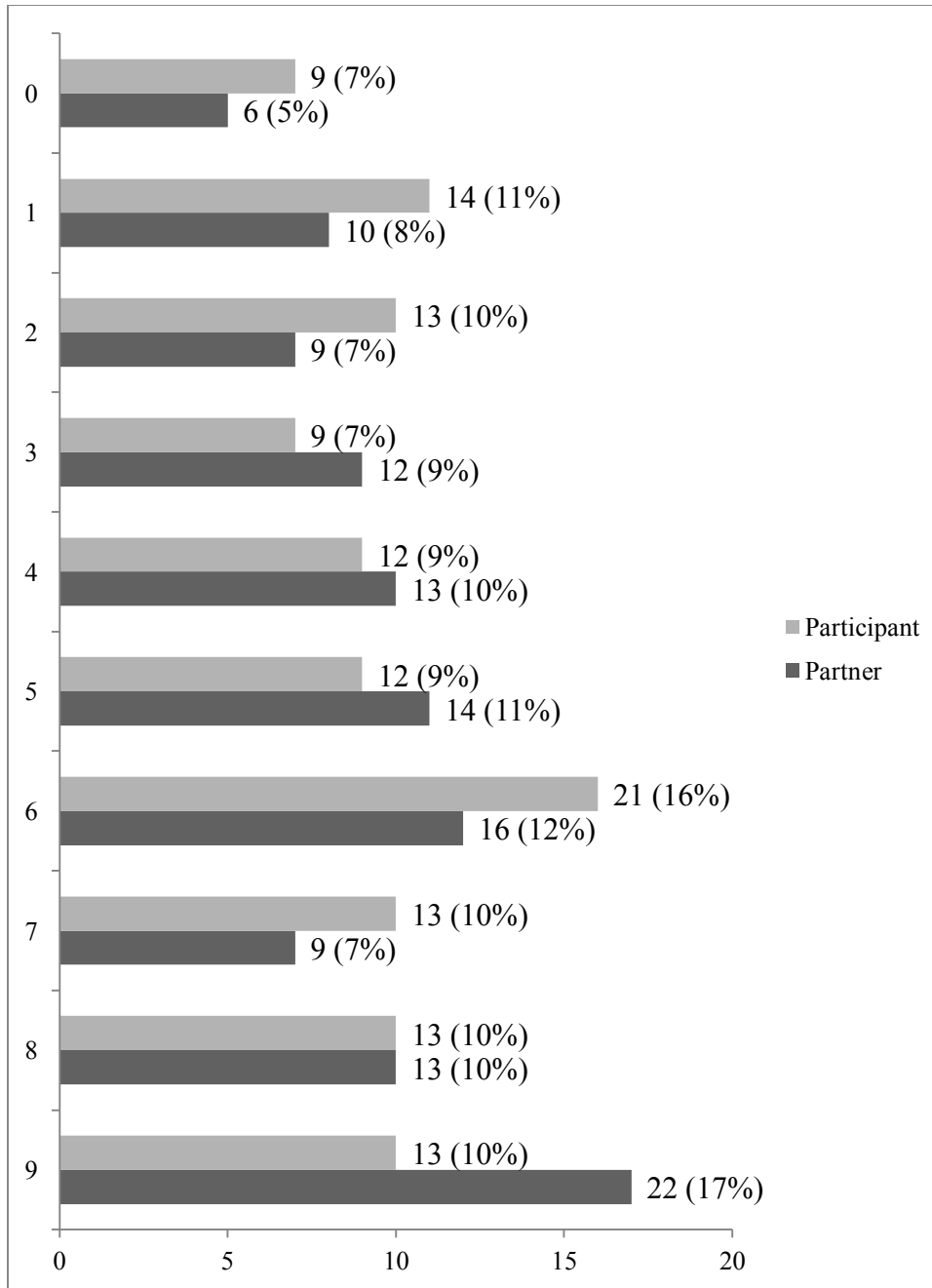
Occupation	Participant <i>n</i> (%)	Partner <i>n</i> (%)
Management	22 (17%)	11 (9%)
Business and Financial Operations	12 (9%)	8 (6%)
Computer and Mathematical Science	7 (5%)	8 (6%)
Architecture and Engineering	7 (5%)	4 (3%)
Life, Physical, and Social Sciences	2 (2%)	4 (3%)
Community and Social Services	3 (2%)	6 (5%)
Legal	5 (4%)	3 (2%)
Education, Training, and Library	13 (10%)	13 (10%)
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	2 (2%)	5 (4%)
Health Care Practitioner	6 (5%)	4 (3%)
Health Care Support	4 (3%)	5 (4%)
Protective Service	1 (1%)	2 (2%)
Food Preparation/Serving	--	2 (2%)
Building and Grounds Cleaning/Maintenance	--	3 (2%)
Personal Care and Service	3 (2%)	3 (2%)
Sales	6 (5%)	7 (5%)
Office and Administrative Support	10 (8%)	7 (5%)
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	1 (1%)	--
Construction and Extraction	--	5 (4%)
Installation/Maintenance/Repair	1 (1%)	5 (4%)
Production	2 (2%)	1 (1%)
Transportation/Material Moving	2 (2%)	4 (3%)
Presently out of work force (by choice)	17 (13%)	17 (13%)
Did not report	3 (2%)	2 (2%)

### **Exogenous Variables**

Participants reported their beliefs about marital roles and their perceptions of their partners' beliefs. They also provided information about (a) how much education they and their partners had attempted and completed (because the couple was the unit of analysis, participants' and partners' years of education were summed for the total years of education for the couple), (b) how long they had been married to their partners, and (c) how long and how often they and/or their partners had been out of work (again summed for the total duration and frequency of unemployment for the couple).

#### **Marital Role**

Participants' positions on the traditional–progressive continuum ranged from 0 to 9 ( $M = 4.75$ ,  $SD = 2.80$ ). Participants were also asked to identify the extent to which their partners seemed to embrace the attitude that it is principally the husband's role to work outside the home to provide for his family. Perceived partner scores ranged from 0 to 9 ( $M = 5.22$ ,  $SD = 2.80$ ). Data were unavailable for five partners. See Figure 5.



*Figure 5.* Participants' positions on traditional–progressive continuum and perception of partners' positions.

On average, participants perceived their partners' beliefs about marital roles to be slightly more traditional ( $M = 5.22$ ,  $SD = 2.80$ ) than their own ( $M = 4.74$ ,  $SD = 2.77$ ),  $t(123) = -1.87$ ,  $p = .06$ , two-tailed,  $d = .17$ . According to Cohen's (1988) guidelines, this is a very small effect.

This suggests that, in general, most participants perceived their partner's beliefs as aligned more or less with their own.

Difference in marital role position ranged from 1 to 18 ( $M = 9.52$ ,  $SD = 2.84$ ). Table 5 outlines the degree and direction of discrepancy between participants' beliefs and their perceptions of their partners' beliefs. The majority of participants reported that their partners had the same ( $n = 33$ , 26%) or about the same ( $n = 53$ , 41%) beliefs as their own (as evidenced by a difference of 2 or less on the traditional–progressive continuum). Only 4% ( $n = 5$ ) reported strong discrepancies (a difference of 7 or more) in either direction. About 15% ( $n = 20$ ) reported a mild to moderate discrepancy (a difference of 3 to 6) whereby participants were more progressive and partners were more traditional. About 10% ( $n = 13$ ) reported a mild to moderate discrepancy whereby participants were traditional and partners were more progressive.

Table 5

*Reported Difference in Beliefs about Marital Role*

Difference in Marital Role	<i>n</i> (%)
Participant more progressive, partner more traditional	
Strong discrepancy (Difference of 7-9)	3 (2%)
Moderate discrepancy (Difference of 5-6)	7 (5%)
Mild discrepancy (Difference of 3-4)	13 (10%)
Moderate consensus (Difference of 1-2)	31 (24%)
No difference	33 (26%)
Participant more traditional, partner more progressive	
Moderate consensus (Difference of 1-2)	22 (17%)
Mild discrepancy (Difference of 3-4)	10 (8%)
Moderate discrepancy (Difference of 5-6)	3 (2%)
Strong discrepancy (Difference of 7-9)	2 (2%)
Partner data not reported	5 (4%)

## Education

Participants' education ranged from 12 to 25 years ( $M = 16.42$ ,  $SD = 2.36$ ), while partners' education ranged from 5 to 25 years ( $M = 15.46$ ,  $SD = 2.88$ ). For the analysis, education was operationally defined as the sum of participants' and their partners' years of education (because the couple was the unit of analysis). Total education for each couple ranged from 21 to 44 years ( $M = 31.88$ ,  $SD = 4.26$ ).

On average, participants had slightly more education ( $M = 16.42$ ,  $SD = 2.36$ ) than their partners ( $M = 15.46$ ,  $SD = 2.88$ ),  $t(128) = 3.52$ ,  $p = .001$ , two-tailed,  $d = .36$ . According to Cohen's (1988) guidelines, this is a small to moderate effect.

Participants were also asked to identify their and their partners' highest levels of education completed (see Table 6) and attempted (see Table 7). One third of participants ( $n = 42$ ) and 30% of partners ( $n = 38$ ) had earned a bachelor's degree. A smaller portion held a master's degree (participants:  $n = 21$ , 16%; partners:  $n = 14$ , 11%). An even smaller portion were either working toward or had completed an associate's degree (participants:  $n = 16$ , 12%; partners:  $n = 14$ , 11%). Finally, a minority of participants and their partners had either a high school education or less (participants:  $n = 4$ , 3%; partners:  $n = 8$ , 6%) or a post-master's graduate education (participants:  $n = 14$ , 11%; partners:  $n = 11$ , 9%).

Table 6

*Participants' and Partners' Levels of Education Completed*

Education Completed	Participant <i>n</i> (%)	Partner <i>n</i> (%)
Did not complete high school	--	4 (3%)
GED	3 (2%)	4 (3%)
High school diploma	24 (19%)	30 (23%)
Associate's degree	15 (12%)	19 (15%)
Bachelor's degree	52 (40%)	46 (36%)
Master's degree	29 (23%)	21 (16%)
Specialist's degree	2 (2%)	1 (1%)
Doctoral degree	4 (3%)	4 (3%)

Table 7

*Participants' and Partners' Level of Education Attempted*

	Education Attempted	Participant <i>n</i> (%)	Partner <i>n</i> (%)
Less than high school			
	No GED	--	3 (2%)
	GED in progress	--	1 (1%)
	GED completed	1 (1%)	4 (3%)
High school diploma			
Associate's/technical training			
	In progress	3 (2%)	--
	Dropped out to work	6 (5%)	8 (6%)
	Dropped out for other reasons	2 (2%)	6 (5%)
	Completed	13 (10%)	14 (11%)
Four-year college			
	In progress	3 (2%)	1 (1%)
	Dropped out to work	4 (3%)	3 (2%)
	Dropped out for other reasons	7 (5%)	7 (5%)
	Completed	42 (33%)	38 (30%)
Graduate school			
	In progress	7 (5%)	6 (5%)
	Dropped out to work	1 (1%)	1 (1%)
	Dropped out for other reasons	2 (1%)	2 (2%)
	Earned master's degree	21 (16%)	14 (11%)
	Earned master's degree, involved in further graduate training	8 (6%)	6 (5%)
	Earned specialist's degree	2 (2%)	1 (1%)
	Earned doctoral degree	4 (3%)	4 (3%)

### Duration of Marriage

Duration of marriage ranged from 0.21 to 40 years ( $M = 16.35$ ,  $SD = 11.25$ ). See Table 8. Twenty percent of participants ( $n = 26$ ) had been married to their partners for four years or less. A smaller portion ( $n = 23$ , 18%) had been married 10 to 14 years. A minority ( $n = 11$ , 8%) had been married for 35 years or more.

Table 8

#### *Participants' Duration of Marriage*

Number of Years	$n$ (%)
$\leq 4$	26 (20%)
5 to 9	17 (13%)
10 to 14	23 (18%)
15 to 19	14 (11%)
20 to 24	17 (13%)
25 to 29	12 (9%)
30 to 34	9 (7%)
35 to 39	8 (6%)
40 +	3 (2%)

### Duration of Unemployment

Because the couple was the unit of analysis, duration of unemployment was operationally defined as the sum of participants' and their partners' amount of time out of work. Total duration of couples' unemployment ranged from 0.8 to 8.17 years ( $M = 1.88$ ,  $SD = 1.85$ ). See Table 9.

The majority of participants ( $n = 72$ , 56%) had partners who worked at the time of the study. About 20% ( $n = 26$ ) were employed with their partners out of work. Of those participants who were out of work themselves, 23% ( $n = 29$ ) had been unemployed for less than six months

and 43% ( $n = 42$ ) were unemployed for over one year. Of the partners who were out of work, 12% ( $n = 15$ ) had been unemployed for less than six months and 23% ( $n = 29$ ) were unemployed for over one year. About 26% ( $n = 33$ ) of couples' total unemployment was six months or less, whereas 60% ( $n = 78$ ) of couples' total unemployment was a year or more.

Table 9

*Participants and Partners' Duration of Unemployment*

Duration of Unemployment	Participant $n$ (%)	Partner $n$ (%)	Total $n$ (%)
< 6 months	29 (23%)	15 (12%)	33 (26%)
6 months to 1 year	16 (12%)	6 (5%)	18 (14%)
1 to 1.49 years	13 (10%)	9 (7%)	16 (12%)
1.5 to 1.99 years	11 (9%)	4 (3%)	12 (9%)
2 to 2.49 years	16 (12%)	4 (3%)	18 (14%)
2.5 to 2.99 years	3 (2%)	3 (2%)	8 (6%)
3 to 3.49 years	3 (2%)	2 (2%)	2 (2%)
3.5 to 3.99 years	2 (2%)	--	4 (3%)
4 to 4.49 years	2 (2%)	2 (2%)	6 (5%)
4.5 to 4.99 years	--	--	--
5 years +	5 (4%)	5 (4%)	12 (9%)
Employed but partner out of work	26 (20%)	72 (56%)	--
Not worked since married	3 (2%)	7 (5%)	--

**Frequency of Unemployment**

Participants were asked to identify how many times they and their partners had been out of work during the last five years. Participants' frequency of unemployment ranged from 0 to 5 ( $M = 1.58$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ). Partners' frequency of unemployment ranged from 0 to 4 times ( $M = 0.87$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ). See Table 10. Almost 40% of participants ( $n = 50$ ) had been out of work once,

while 41% of partners ( $n = 53$ ) had not been unemployed. About 16% ( $n = 21$ ) of participants and 11% ( $n = 9$ ) of partners had been out of work three or more times.

Table 10

*Participants' and Partners' Frequency of Unemployment*

Times Unemployed	Participant $n$ (%)	Partner $n$ (%)
One	50 (39%)	39 (30%)
Two	39 (30%)	19 (15%)
Three	10 (8%)	9 (7%)
Four	7 (5%)	2 (2%)
Five or more	4 (3%)	--
Has not been out of work	16 (12%)	53 (41%)
Not worked since married	3 (2%)	7 (5%)

Because the couple was the unit of analysis in the canonical correlation, I summed participants' and their partners' frequency of unemployment to determine the total frequency of unemployment for each couple. I recoded cases where neither partner had worked since the beginning of their marriage as "1" time. Couples' total frequency of unemployment ranged from 1 to 8 times ( $M = 2.46$ ,  $SD = 1.60$ ). See Table 11. One third of couples ( $n = 43$ ) had been collectively unemployed once, including some in which neither partner had worked since the marriage began. About 13% ( $n = 16$ ) had been collectively unemployed five or more times.

Table 11

*Couples' Total Frequency of Unemployment*

Times Unemployed	<i>n</i> (%)
One	43 (33%)
Two	39 (30%)
Three	21 (16%)
Four	10 (8%)
Five	9 (7%)
Six	3 (2%)
Seven	2 (2%)
Eight	2 (2%)

**Endogenous Variables**

Five dimensions of marital quality were measured by the four subscales of the DAS (Consensus, Satisfaction, Affectional, and Cohesion) and by the RKMSS. The DAS subscales provided a snapshot measure of marital quality in the face of unemployment, and the RKMSS provided a more global measure of the development of the marital relationship.

**DAS Subscales**

The four DAS subscales were treated as separate endogenous variables in the canonical correlation analysis. Participants' responses to individual items were summed into subscale scores, which were converted into *T*-scores in accordance with the procedures and parameters provided in the *DAS User's Manual* (Spanier, 2001). *T*-scores below 30 suggest marital distress. Spanier (2001) emphasized the importance of considering cultural context when interpreting these *T*-scores. Given that the sample for this study consisted primarily of White middle-class Americans, it seems appropriate to assume that the scores are culturally valid.

Participants' *T*-scores on the DAS Consensus subscale ranged from 20 to 62 ( $M = 42.96$ ,  $SD = 10.73$ ), on the DAS Satisfaction subscale from 20 to 62 ( $M = 42.43$ ,  $SD = 11.49$ ), on the DAS Affectional subscale from 20 to 63 ( $M = 43.36$ ,  $SD = 13.09$ ), on the DAS Cohesion subscale from 20 to 73 ( $M = 52.07$ ,  $SD = 12.28$ ). See Table 12.

Using Spanier's (2001) interpretive guidelines (see Chapter 2), on the DAS Consensus subscale, 34% ( $n = 43$ ) of participants had *T*-scores in the low range, 12% ( $n = 15$ ) in the slightly to mildly atypically high range, and 32% ( $n = 41$ ) in the average range. On the DAS Satisfaction subscale, 33% ( $n = 42$ ) of participants had *T*-scores in the low range, 11% ( $n = 14$ ) in the slightly to mildly atypically high range, and 38% ( $n = 49$ ) in the average range. On the DAS Affectional subscale, 38% ( $n = 48$ ) of participants had *T*-scores in the low range, 15% ( $n = 20$ ) in the slightly to mildly atypically high range, and 41% ( $n = 53$ ) in the average range. On the DAS Cohesion subscale, 14% ( $n = 18$ ) had *T*-scores in the low range, 28% ( $n = 36$ ) in the slightly to mildly atypically high range, 17% ( $n = 21$ ) in the moderately to markedly high range, and 24% ( $n = 31$ ) in the average range. The high DAS Cohesion *T*-scores may reflect more time spent together following unemployment.

Table 12

*Range of Participants' DAS Subscales*

Range*	Consensus <i>n</i> (%)	Satisfaction <i>n</i> (%)	Affectional <i>n</i> (%)	Cohesion <i>n</i> (%)
<b>High</b>				
71 + (Markedly atypical)	--	--	--	6 (5%)
66-70 (Moderately atypical)	--	--	--	15 (12%)
61-65 (Mildly atypical)	5 (4%)	1 (1%)	12 (9%)	15 (12%)
56-60 (Slightly atypical)	10 (8%)	13 (10%)	8 (6%)	21 (16%)
Average (Typical score, no concern)				
45-55	41 (32%)	49 (38%)	53 (41%)	31 (24%)
Borderline (Possible concern)				
40-44 (Slightly atypical)	30 (23%)	24 (19%)	8 (6%)	23 (18%)
Significant problem				
35-39 (Mildly atypical)	20 (16%)	9 (7%)	11 (9%)	7 (5%)
≤ 34 (Moderately atypical)	23 (18%)	33 (26%)	37 (29%)	11 (9%)

\* Interpretive guidelines from Spanier (2001, p. 14)

**RKMSS**

The RKMSS served as the fifth endogenous variable. It is scored on a scale from 1 to 21. Crane et al. (2000) suggested a cutoff score of 17 or below to indicate the potential for marital distress. RKMSS scores were converted to *T*-scores to make them more compatible with the DAS subscales when examining variance. Using Crane et al.'s criteria, *T*-scores of 56 or below suggest marital distress. Participants' RKMSS *T*-scores ranged from 30 to 63 ( $M = 50.03$ ,  $SD = 10.10$ ). See Table 13. About 36% ( $n = 46$ ) of the participants reported that they were satisfied with the overall development, present status, and future vision of their marriage. The scores for about 64% ( $n = 83$ ) of participants suggested some degree of distress in their marriage.

Table 13

*Range of Participants' RKMSS Scores*

Raw Score Range	T-Score Range	<i>n</i> (%)
18-21	58-63	46 (36%)
14-17	50-56	26 (20%)
10-13	43-49	25 (19%)
6-9	36-41	20 (16%)
≤ 5	≤ 34	12 (9%)

*Note.* Raw score ≤ 17, T-score ≤ 56 = Potential for distress (Crane et al., 2000)

### Tests for Multivariate Assumptions

For a canonical correlation analysis to be valid, it is important that the multivariate assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity are met, that outliers do not influence the model, and that the model is not weakened by multicollinearity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

#### Normality

The likelihood of multivariate normality is increased if all variables are normally distributed. Because there is no accepted way to test for multivariate normality, univariate normality of the individual variables is a necessary but sufficient criteria for normality (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). I calculated a *t*-statistic by dividing the skewness value by the standard error of skew for each variable and the kurtosis value by the standard error of kurtosis for each variable. All tests of significance for normality were conducted at  $\alpha = .01$ , two tailed. See Table 14.

The marital role variable had significant negative kurtosis (kurtosis = -1.17,  $t = -2.78$ ,  $p < .01$ ). However, I judged that this would be acceptable given the high degree of variability desired for this variable. The duration of unemployment and frequency of unemployment

variables were both positively skewed ( $t = 7.24$  and  $t = 6.57$ , respectively). Following a natural log transformation, the distributions of these variables tested as normal.

Table 14

*Tests of Significance for Normality*

Variable	Skew (SE Skew)	Kurtosis (SE Kurtosis)
Marital Role	-.14 (.21)	-1.17 (.42)*
Education	.26 (.21)	.21 (.42)
Duration of Marriage	.37 (.21)	-.98 (.42)
Dur. of Unemp. (Nat. Log Trans.)	.38 (.21)	-.63 (.42)
Freq. of Unemp. (Nat. Log Trans.)	.28 (.21)	-.94 (.42)
DAS Consensus ( <i>T</i> -score)	-.39 (.21)	-.33 (.42)
DAS Satisfaction ( <i>T</i> -score)	-.50 (.21)	-.79 (.42)
DAS Affectional ( <i>T</i> -score)	-.33 (.21)	-.98 (.42)
DAS Cohesion ( <i>T</i> -score)	-.40 (.21)	-.27 (.42)
RKMSS ( <i>T</i> -score)	-.39 (.21)	-.97 (.42)

*Note.* \*  $p < .01$ , two tailed;  $t_{\text{skew}} = \text{skew}/\text{SE skew}$ ;  $t_{\text{kurtosis}} = \text{kurtosis}/\text{SE kurtosis}$

**Linearity**

Linearity is crucial for canonical correlation analysis because the analysis is only able to capture linear relationships. As a result, meaningful relationships masked by curvilinearity could become overlooked or underestimated (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). An examination of residual scatterplots from five OLS Regression analyses that tested the five *X* variables against each *Y* variable (Figures 6 through 10) revealed nothing to indicate non-linearity.

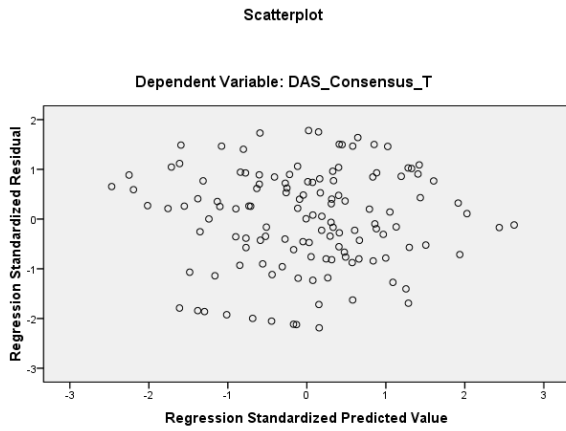


Figure 6. Residual scatterplot for DAS Consensus.

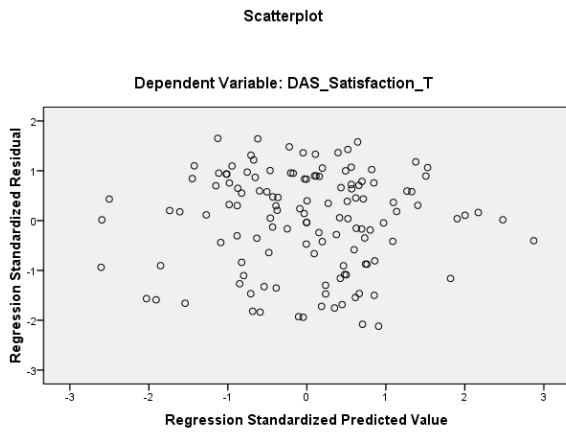


Figure 7. Residual scatterplot for DAS Satisfaction.

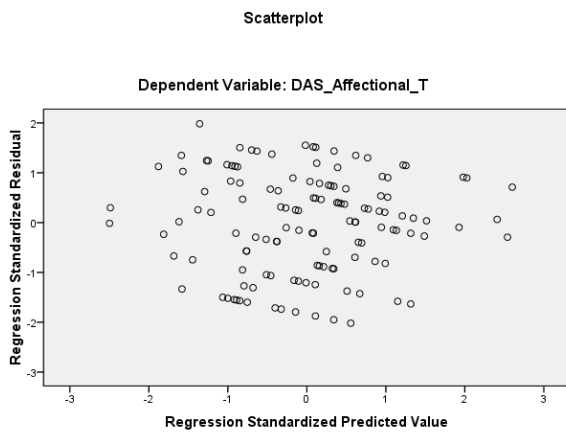
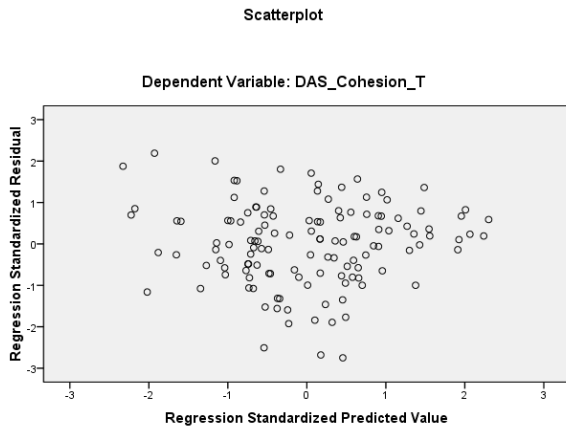
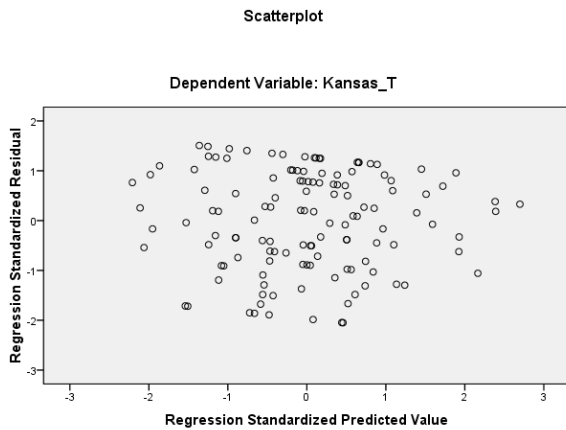


Figure 8. Residual scatterplot for DAS Affectional.



*Figure 9.* Residual scatterplot for DAS Cohesion.



*Figure 10.* Residual scatterplot for RKMSS.

## **Homoscedasticity**

Heteroscedasticity does not invalidate canonical correlation analysis but does weaken it (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). An examination of residual scatterplots from the five OLS regressions (Figures 5 through 9) revealed a fair amount of consistency in the variance among the variables.

## Outliers

The standardized residuals from the five OLS regressions were assessed for outliers. According to Field (2009), more than 5% of cases with standardized residuals greater than  $|2|$  and more than 1% of cases with standardized residuals greater than  $|2.5|$  are indicative of a model that poorly represents the actual data.

- For DAS Consensus: Four cases (3.1%) had standardized residuals  $> |2|$  and none  $> |2.5|$ .
- For DAS Satisfaction: Two cases (1.6%) had standardized residuals  $> |2|$  and none  $> |2.5|$ .
- For DAS Affectional: One case (0.7%) had standardized residuals  $> |2|$  and none  $> |2.5|$ .
- For DAS Cohesion: Five cases (3.9%) had standardized residuals  $> |2|$ , but three (2.3%) of which had standardized residuals  $> |2.5|$ .
- For RKMSS: Two cases (1.6%) had standardized residuals  $> |2|$  and none  $> |2.5|$ .

Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) and Field (2009) suggested follow-up procedures to assess for multivariate outliers. First, no cases were found with a significant Mahalanobis distance value (measuring the distance of a case from the intersection of the means of all the variables for the remaining cases) at  $p < .001$ , two-tailed. Second, no cases with a leverage value (gauging the influence of the observed value of the outcome variable over the predicted values) three times the average leverage value were found. Third, no cases with a Cook's distance value (measuring the degree of an outlying case's influence on the model) over  $|1|$  were found. Therefore, there was not sufficient evidence to suggest that the model was unduly influenced by exceptional cases.

## **Multicollinearity**

Multicollinearity impedes the reliability of interpretation in multivariate analyses across samples (Hair et al., 2010). Field (2009) identified the variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance values as the primary tests for multicollinearity. The VIF indicates whether one X variable has a strong linear relationship with the other X variables. Values of 10 or more are cause for concern. Meantime, the tolerance statistic is the reciprocal of the VIF. Values over .2 are problematic. In my sample, there were no VIF values higher than 1.06 or tolerance values below .95.

In addition, Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) identified the condition index (CI, a measure of dependency of one X variable upon the others) and the variance proportions (VP, a measure of variance inflation in the standard error of the estimate for an X variable) as further tests for multicollinearity in multivariate models. A CI greater than .30 for a given dimension of the multivariate model and/or at least two VPs greater than .50 for the same X variable are cause for concern. There were no such instances in my data.

## **Correlation Coefficients**

Table 15 presents Pearson  $r$  correlations among the five X variables and the five Y variables. The education variable seemed to have the greatest amount of impact across the board (among the four DAS subscales and the RKMSS), with the only significant correlation being between education and DAS Affectional ( $r[127] = .25, p = .005$ , two-tailed).

For some participants, (a) a traditional attitude about marital roles correlated with DAS Consensus (suggesting more agreement regarding household tasks, philosophy of life, finances, decision-making, etc.), (b) less time married and/or more experiences with unemployment

correlated with more time spent together following unemployment, and (c) sexuality became less impaired the longer a partner was unemployed.

Table 15

*Inter-correlations Among X and Y Variables*

X Variable	DAS Consensus	DAS Satisfaction	DAS Affectional	DAS Cohesion	RKMSS
Marital Role	.11	-.04	.06	-.02	-.01
Education	.16	.15	.25*	.14	.15
Duration of Marriage	.05	.05	-.02	-.13	-.01
Duration of Unemployment	.07	-.04	.11	.02	-.01
Freq of Unemployment	.01	.06	.04	.11	.05

*Note.* \*  $p \leq .01$  level, two-tailed.

Table 16 outlines Pearson  $r$  correlations within the X and Y variables. None of the X variables were significantly correlated with each other. However, all of the Y variables had strong intercorrelations.

Table 16

*Inter-correlations Within X and Y Variables*

	Marital Role	Educ.	Dur. of Mar.	Dur. of Unemp.	Freq. of Unemp.	DAS Consensus	DAS Satisfac.	DAS Affect.	DAS Cohesion	RKMSS
Marital Role	--									
Education	-.12	--								
Dur. of Marriage	.13	.05	--							
Dur. of Unemp.	.04	-.10	.15	--						
Freq. of Unemp.	.13	-.16	-.06	-.05	--					
DAS Consensus	.11	.16	.05	.07	.01	--				
DAS Satisfaction	-.04	.15	.05	-.04	.06	.76*	--			
DAS Affectional	.06	.25*	-.02	.11	.04	.64*	.56*	--		
DAS Cohesion	-.02	.14	-.13	.02	.11	.67*	.68*	.54*	--	
RKMSS	-.01	.15	-.01	-.01	.05	.76*	.84*	.66*	.69*	--

Note. \*  $p \leq .01$  level, two-tailed.

### Canonical Correlation Analysis

A canonical correlation analysis was conducted using the five exogenous variables (marital role, education, duration of marriage, duration of unemployment, and frequency of unemployment) as predictors of the five endogenous variables (four DAS subscales and the RKMSS) to evaluate the multivariate shared relationship between the two variable sets (marital characteristics and marital quality among couples with an unemployed partner).

Collectively, the full model was not statistically significant,  $\Lambda = .751$ ,  $F(25, 443.57) = 1.42$ ,  $p = .09$ , two-tailed. Because Wilks'  $\Lambda$  represents the variance not explained by the model,  $1 - \Lambda$  yielded the amount of variance explained by the full model. Hence, the full set of the five canonical functions explained approximately 25% of the variance shared among sets of the five Y variables.

Although the overall model was not statistically significant, each canonical variate and the dimension reduction analysis were examined to determine if there was any practical significance worthy of note. The analysis yielded five functions with squared canonical correlations ( $R_c^2$ ) of .129, .088, .050, .004, and .001 for each successive function. One "should only interpret those functions that explain a reasonable amount of variance between the variable sets or risk interpreting an effect that may not be noteworthy or replicable in further studies" (Sherry & Henson, 2005, p. 42). Given the  $R_c^2$  for each function, none of the functions were considered noteworthy in the context of the study. Specifically, they only explained 12.9%, 8.8%, 5%, 0.4%, and 0.1%, respectively, of the variance within their functions. Because the functions are orthogonal, the second function explains the variance left over after the first function, the third function explains the variance left over after the second function, and so on. A dimension reduction analysis tests the statistical significance of the hierarchical arrangement

of the functions (Sherry & Henson, 2005). None of the five canonical functions was significant at alpha  $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

### **Follow-Up Statistical Procedures**

Follow-up analyses were conducted to explore further possibilities.

#### **Repeated Measures ANOVAs for Five Y Variables and for Individual RKMSS Items**

First, in light of the high degree of intercorrelation among the endogenous variables, two repeated measures ANOVAs were computed to compare their means. One ANOVA assessed for significant differences among the five Y variables. Upon discovering that the RKMSS scores were significantly higher than three of the DAS subscales that suggested acute/situational marital distress for some participants, a second ANOVA assessed whether significant differences existed among the individual RKMSS items that could distinguish between acute/situational distress and participants' satisfaction with the relationship overall.

**ANOVA for five Y variables.** A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of unemployment upon each of the DAS subscales and the RKMSS. Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated,  $\chi^2(9) = 77.12, p < .01$ . Therefore, degrees of freedom were corrected using Greenhouse-Geisser estimates of sphericity. The results indicated that statistically significant differences existed among the five Y variables,  $F(3.13, 400.15) = 58.43, p < .01, \omega^2 = .64$ . According to Kirk's (1996) guidelines, this is a large effect. A Bonferroni post hoc test revealed that the mean DAS Cohesion  $T$ -score ( $M = 52.07$ ) was significantly greater than the mean  $T$ -scores for DAS Consensus ( $M = 42.96$ , difference = 9.11), DAS Satisfaction ( $M = 42.43$ , difference = 9.64), and DAS Affectional ( $M = 43.36$ , difference = 8.71). In addition, the RKMSS  $T$ -score ( $M = 50.01$ ) was significantly greater

than the mean *T*-scores for DAS Consensus ( $M = 42.96$ , difference = 7.05), DAS Satisfaction ( $M = 42.43$ , difference = 7.57), and DAS Affectional ( $M = 43.36$ , difference = 6.64).

**ANOVA for individual RKMSS items.** A second one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of unemployment upon each of the three RKMSS items. Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated,  $\chi^2(2) = 29.91$ ,  $p < .01$ . Therefore, degrees of freedom were corrected using Greenhouse-Geisser estimates of sphericity. The results indicated that statistically significant differences existed among the five Y variables,  $F(1.65, 211.60) = 8.68$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\omega^2 = .11$ . According to Kirk's (1996) guidelines, this is a moderate to large effect. A Bonferroni post hoc test revealed that the mean score depicting participants' satisfaction with the way their relationships developed since they began ( $M = 4.81$ ) was significantly greater than their satisfaction with their relationships at this time ( $M = 4.48$ , difference = .33) or with the way their relationships are developing ( $M = 4.53$ , difference = .28).

### **Second Canonical Correlation Analysis with Three Y Variables**

Upon discovering that the mean scores for DAS Cohesion and RKMSS were significantly higher than DAS Cohesion, DAS Satisfaction, and DAS Affectional, a second canonical correlation analysis was conducted. This time, only the first three DAS subscales (those with lower means in the face of unemployment) were included as endogenous variables. I thought that the global view of the RKMSS might have confounded the original canonical correlation model, as did the DAS Cohesion scores (which seemed contextually inflated because participants were spending more time with their partners while unemployed). I hypothesized that removing these two variables could bolster the ability of the model to determine whether and how the five

exogenous variables related more directly to acute/situational distress in the participants' marriages.

Collectively, the full model was statistically significant,  $\Lambda = .814$ ,  $F(15, 334.43) = 1.73$ ,  $p = .05$ , two tailed. However,  $1 - \Lambda$  indicated that less than 19% of the variance explained by the full model was shared among the three Y variables. Although this was less than the first canonical correlation, the analysis yielded no substantial canonical functions as measured by the squared canonical functions. Therefore, it was apparent that none of the exogenous variables was strongly and directly related to couples' distress (or lack thereof) in the face of unemployment as measured by the DAS Consensus, Satisfaction, and Affectional subscales.

### **Correlations Between X Variables and Individual DAS and RKMS Items**

Pearson product moment correlations were computed to assess specific relationships between and within the five X variables, demographic variables (sex and age), the difference in marital role, and individual items on the DAS and RKMS. All correlations had  $df = 127$  and were two-tailed.

**Sex.** Husbands tended to be older ( $r = -.25$ ,  $p = .004$ ), to espouse more traditional beliefs about marital roles ( $r = -.43$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and to perceive their partners' beliefs as more traditional ( $r = -.22$ ,  $p = .015$ ). In addition, wives tended more than husbands to espouse agreement about sexual relationships ( $r = .22$ ,  $p = .013$ ), to confide in their partners ( $r = .21$ ,  $p = .019$ ), and to report that they engaged in outside interests with their partners ( $r = .19$ ,  $p = .032$ ).

**Age.** Participants tended to have similar aged partners ( $r = .89$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Older participants tended to be married longer ( $r = .76$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and to report more agreement on religious matters ( $r = .17$ ,  $p = .050$ ) and on matters of conventionality ( $r = .18$ ,  $p = .042$ ). They tended to have lower mean scores on the DAS Cohesion scale ( $r = -.17$ ,  $p = .049$ ), suggesting

that they relied less on their partners as a primary support in the face of unemployment. They seldom laughed together with their partners ( $r = -.20, p = .021$ ) and reported that they had considered separation or divorce ( $r = .19, p = .028$ ). Finally, they were less likely to leave the house after an argument ( $r = .23, p = .010$ ). In light of the above correlations, it is difficult to gauge whether this was due to improved coping with age or to less interaction and more isolation in the marriage.

**Marital role and duration of marriage.** Significant correlations were noted between participants who espoused more traditional beliefs about marital roles and (a) perception of one's partner as also having more traditional beliefs ( $r = .48, p < .001$ ) and (b) agreement on religious matters ( $r = .32, p < .001$ ) and matters of conventionality ( $r = .19, p = .036$ ). Similarly, participants who were married longer reported more agreement on religious matters ( $r = .18, p = .049$ ) and matters of conventionality ( $r = .22, p = .011$ ). They also were less likely to leave the house after an argument ( $r = .22, p = .014$ ). It seems conceivable, then, that these generational issues could have impacted the model.

In cases where participants reported strong traditional beliefs but their partners were perceived as more progressive, participants tended (a) to be husbands ( $r = -.20, p = .026$ ) and older ( $r = .19, p = .037$ ), (b) to report strong agreement on religious matters ( $r = .24, p = .007$ ) and friends ( $r = .18, p = .046$ ), and (c) to report high degrees of discrepancy with their partners along the traditional–progressive continuum ( $r = .48, p < .001$ ).

Meanwhile, participants who reported that their partners held more progressive beliefs about marital roles tended to (a) think more often that their marriages are going well ( $r = -.18, p = .045$ ) and (b) confide in their partners ( $r = -.19, p = .039$ ).

**Education.** The education variable correlated significantly with (a) agreement about philosophy of life ( $r = .21, p = .018$ ) and about making major decisions ( $r = .26, p = .003$ ); (b) agreement about friends ( $r = .19, p = .033$ ); (c) agreement about sexual relations ( $r = .25, p = .004$ ) and about demonstrations of affection ( $r = .20, p = .025$ ), with fewer accusations of partners not showing love ( $r = .19, p = .033$ ); (d) fewer quarrels ( $r = .18, p = .042$ ) and leaving the house thereafter ( $r = .18, p = .040$ ); (e) more confiding in one's partner ( $r = .19, p = .033$ ); (f) more frequent conversations involving a stimulating exchange of ideas ( $r = .23, p = .010$ ); and (g) higher levels of satisfaction with the way the relationship has developed since it began ( $r = .23, p = .009$ ).

**Duration of unemployment.** Duration of unemployment was significantly correlated with age ( $r = .21, p = .018$ ), suggesting that older participants were unemployed longer than younger participants.

**Frequency of unemployment.** No significant correlations were noted between frequency of unemployment and the other variables or questionnaire items.

Although the correlations were generally small, it is worth noting that on the whole (a) education seemed to provide a buffer against barriers to marital quality that have been cited previously in the literature and (b) older male participants who espoused traditional marital role beliefs tended to report strong shared beliefs about religion and conventionality with their partners, as well as lower marital quality in some areas of their marriages, particularly communication. These seem to reflect generational patterns regarding the impact of unemployment upon marriages found in the existing literature.

## Conclusion

My sample consisted of 129 participants, primarily middle-aged, White, and married once. The majority of the sample consisted of teachers and people in entrepreneurial enterprises; both professions had record high rates of unemployment at the time of the study. There was a high degree of variability along the traditional–progressive continuum. Most participants reported that their partners held similar beliefs as their own. The majority of participants and partners had some post-secondary education. Almost half of the participants had been married four years or less or between 10 and 14 years. The majority of couples' combined unemployment had been for one year or more and two times or fewer.

On the whole, participants reported short-term marital stress as indicated by their mean scores on the DAS Consensus, Satisfaction, and Affectional subscales being lower than mean DAS Cohesion scores (which suggested that couples spent more time together in the face of unemployment). This observation was reinforced by the mean responses to individual RKMS items, which suggested that the majority of participants experienced some degree of marital distress.

The canonical correlation model was tested for multivariate assumptions. Following a natural log transformation of two variables, all X and Y variables tested as normal. There was nothing to suggest non-linearity or heteroscedasticity. There were no outliers influencing the model.

The canonical correlation model was not significant. The results of two follow-up repeated measures ANOVAs suggested that most participants were under-satisfied with their marriage at present; however, faith in and commitment to the relationship (as evidenced by a high degree of satisfaction with how the relationship developed since it began) seemed to sustain

marriages despite obstacles in the short term. Also, Pearson product moment correlations between and within demographic, exogenous, and endogenous variables seemed to indicate that generational and socioeconomic differences may have impacted the model.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

As discussed in the previous chapter, my sample consisted of 129 participants, primarily middle-aged, White, and married once. Most were teachers or in entrepreneurial enterprises. There was a high degree of variability along the traditional–progressive continuum. Most participants reported that their partners held similar beliefs as their own. The majority of participants and partners had some postsecondary education. Almost half of the participants had been married four years or less or between 10 and 14 years. The majority of couples' combined unemployment had been for one year or more and two times or fewer. Although the canonical correlation analysis was not significant, the results of follow-up statistical procedures suggested that most participants experienced some degree of marital distress. However, faith in and commitment to the relationship seemed to sustain marriages despite unemployment being an acute obstacle. Also, generational and socioeconomic differences may have impacted the model.

This chapter begins with a discussion about the extent to which this study's hypotheses were supported by the results and provides possible explanations based on existing theory and research. Next, I outline the study's limitations, particularly with regards to sampling and measurement. Finally, I conclude with general suggestions for future research and implications for psychologists, marital therapists, and researchers. Recommendations pertaining to specific topic areas are included throughout the chapter.

### **Research Hypotheses Revisited**

This study tested five hypotheses. Because the canonical correlation analysis was not significant and because correlations between and within exogenous and endogenous variables were typically small to moderate, no definitive conclusions could be drawn. However, some discernable patterns were noted that reflect existing literature on marriage and unemployment, whereas other patterns seem to indicate emerging trends in the current economy and social climate.

#### **Traditional–Progressive Marital Role**

Results did not clearly support the hypothesis that participants who espoused and intentionally engaged in more progressive two-earner marriage partnerships would report higher levels of marital quality in response to unemployment than participants in more traditional one-earner marriage partnerships. Rather, marital quality varied for participants across both sides of the traditional–progressive continuum. This suggests that beliefs about marital roles today may not impact marital quality as dichotomously as has been suggested in existing research (i.e., Lane, 2009).

This may be due in part to dual-earner families becoming increasingly prominent and acceptable by necessity, by choice, or both (Olds & Schwartz, 2009; Schlosser, 2001; Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001). Whereas in previous generations conflicts arose more readily when wives expressed their desire to work (Singer, 1980), today the initial shock has worn off, and a generation of Americans has grown into adulthood—and marriage—accustomed to both partners working as the norm. On the other hand, it remains difficult to determine the extent to which the shift is pragmatic and to which it is ideological (Charles & James, 2005; Koball, 2004; Loscocco & Spitze, 2007; Riley, 2003; Wilkie, 1993). Despite recent assertions that American society is

becoming increasingly matriarchic (i.e., Rosin, 2010), arguments have been made from both women's (Hua, 2009; Wu, n.d.) and men's (Bly, 1996; M. Gerson, 2010) perspectives that deeply-rooted cultural and societal values involving men's role as family provider are still active and that it is both premature and precarious to assume that ample time and transition have transpired for a legitimate and sustainable alternative to take its place in a global context.

It is worth noting that some of the patterns regarding the impact of unemployment upon marriages found in the existing literature (i.e., Kinnunen & Feldt, 2004; W. Patton & Donohue, 2001) were present in my sample but to a more limited degree than hypothesized. For example, productive communication between partners was lower for some participants who held traditional marital role beliefs, particularly those participants who were older and male. In contrast, younger participants who reported that their partners held more progressive beliefs about marital roles tended to (a) think more often that their marriages were going well and (b) report more confiding in their partners. These findings seem to indicate a generational effect whereby "spouses become isolated from each other when shame [associated with men's unemployment] inhibits open discussion within the couple or masks itself with irritability and anger" (R. Schwartz & Olds, 2000, p. 91).

Moreover, some of the older male participants also perceived their wives' beliefs about marital role as more progressive than their own more traditional beliefs. This echoes Aubry et al.'s (1990) finding that spousal incongruence regarding marital roles results in lower marital satisfaction. Furthermore, these participants tended to be unemployed longer (which will be discussed further below) and reported that they had considered separation or divorce. This reflects Kraft's (2001) finding that the probability of separation or divorce increases with duration of unemployment in more traditional marriages.

On the other hand, some other participants who were older, married longer, and espoused more traditional beliefs about marital roles (irrespective of their perception of their partners' beliefs) reported strong agreement on religious matters and on matters of conventionality. It is worth considering that some of these participants may come from a culture of poverty where relationships and religion are important to survival and where "a 'good' woman is expected to take care of and rescue her man and her children as needed" (Payne, 2005, p. 52). Among such marriages, marital quality may have hinged on the value placed on the marital relationship by participants who saw it as a defense against the problems of unemployment and of limited resources. This seems to reflect emerging definitions of marital quality wherein emphasis upon transformative processes involving commitment and sacrifice trumps absence of conflict (Fincham et al., 2007) and the relationship is regarded as a platform for mutual ownership and solving of problems (Afifi & Nussbaum, 2006).

Still other participants—those who espoused more progressive beliefs about marital roles—may have reported lower degrees of marital quality because the strains placed on marriages when both partners work full-time may have been illuminated or intensified by unemployment. Olds and Schwartz (2009) argued that the frantic pace of contemporary life has prompted many Americans to become increasingly isolated and that both partners working full-time may exacerbate this alienation (and its effects on marital quality) as much as both partners being unemployed. Individuals who rely on their marriages as their primary sources of social support run the risk upon unemployment of placing too much weight on the marital relationship. On the other hand, the authors contended that the flexibility of part-time work may promote more social engagement both within and outside marriages and family life simply because it allows for more time for meaningful interactions to take place. Therefore, further research is

needed to determine the extent to which partners' employment status impacts marital quality in the current economy and to which trends of married people using work as a means of escaping the pressures of family life (Hochschild, 1998) may be reversing in the current social climate.

To reiterate, the hypothesized trends did hold true for some participants—particularly older husbands whose traditional beliefs about marital roles were markedly different from their perception of their wives' beliefs, which they saw as being more progressive. However, no clear-cut patterns were discernable on the whole. This seemingly has to do with the heterogeneity of the sample. I have speculated that the value of marital roles may have served different purposes for different sub-populations within the sample. For some, personal sacrifices inherent in traditional marital roles may have served as a safeguard against personal disillusion (Laing, 1969) in the face of unemployment. For others, marital problems may have arisen as a by-product of both partners working in an increasingly isolating social environment, and these problems may have become apparent or aggravated by spending more time together following unemployment.

Further research could explore the extent to which difference in opinion about marital role impacts marital quality when partners are out of work. This would help clarify whether the trends outlined above were more generational (as I suggested) or if they continue to generalize across a broader population. Such a distinction was difficult in the present study because the majority of participants reported that they and their partners had relatively similar beliefs about marital roles; a follow-up analysis using the small portion that reported substantial discrepancies would not have been adequate to draw a satisfactory conclusion.

## **Education**

As hypothesized, results indicated a positive relationship between level of education and reported level of marital quality in response to unemployment for some participants. It is worth noting that the education variable had the strongest correlations among all of the exogenous variables. Education provides not only the practical advantage of increased vocational opportunities but also tools for coping with change and “preparation to walk into a future not yet determined” (Hart, 2009, p. 5).

It seems possible that some of the trends specified in previous research on unemployment may actually be more indicative of education and socioeconomic status than marital role, at least in the current economy. Several of the existing studies reflecting the traditional position utilized blue-collar samples (who historically have had less education), whereas more contemporary research on progressive couples utilized more white-collar samples (who tend to have more education).

In this study, for example, participants with lower levels of education reported more quarrels and less confiding, while participants with higher levels of education reported less quarrels and more confiding. This echoes existing observations that (a) working-class wives tend to rely less on their husbands than their families of origin for intimate communication (Payne, 2005; Penkower et al., 1988) and (b) lack of supportive communication in the face of unemployment leads to social undermining between partners (Vinokur et al., 1996).

Moreover, participants in this study with higher levels of education scored higher on the DAS Affectional scale, reported greater agreement about sexual relations and about demonstrations of affection, and reported fewer accusations of partners not showing love. This reflects research by Morokoff and Gilliland (1993) that sexuality becomes impaired among

blue-collar couples in the face of unemployment and that supportive communication serves as a buffer against the strain of unemployment and related sexual problems. Furthermore, in this study, participants with higher levels of education also reported greater levels of agreement about philosophy of life and in making major decisions. This seems to reflect the egalitarian roles and decision-making associated with the progressive perspective (Lane, 2009; Scanzoni, 1982; Scanzoni & Szinovacz, 1980; Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001).

Further research is needed to explore the extent to which education may be more salient than beliefs about marital roles in addressing the impact of unemployment upon marital quality in the current economy. It is possible that older assumptions about gender roles (which have been prevalent in the existing literature on the topic) may not be as valid today as in previous generations. A renewed conceptualization may be in order and could emphasize education as key to (a) replacing feelings of helplessness with awareness of and motivation to act on possible alternatives, (b) improving communication and support within marital relationships, and (c) promoting a self-reinforcing reciprocal relationship between these two.

In addition, further research and education is needed to help reduce bias in addressing the “homing instinct” (Galbraith, 1958, p. 253) associated with generational poverty, in which people from poor communities tend not to stray far from their hometowns and their upbringings. It seems possible that previous researchers may have (a) mistaken unemployed husbands’ feelings of anxiety and ambivalence about leaving the culture and “getting above [one’s] raisings” (Payne, 2005, p. 52) by pursuing a higher degree of education for avolition and (b) misunderstood marital conflicts as being rooted in unemployment when in actuality they may have arisen as a result of typical gender interaction patterns becoming disrupted by more time spent together.

### **Duration of Marriage**

Results indicated that there was some positive relationship between duration of marriage and reported level of marital quality in response to unemployment. On one hand, for some participants, duration of marriage correlated negatively with the DAS Cohesion subscale (which included items such as how often partners collaborated on projects, laughed together, had stimulating exchanges of ideas, and had calm discussions). On the other hand, participants who had been married longer were less likely to leave the house after an argument. Taken together, these seem to reflect developmental theories of marriage which suggest that the later phases of marriage are characterized by increasing degrees of individuality (R. A. Johnson, 1983; Jung, 1925/1954) and of individual space (Harrar & DeMaria, 2007; Minirth et al., 1991) within marriages, coupled with improved resilience from experience and time spent together.

### **Duration of Unemployment**

Results indicated a slight negative relationship between duration of unemployment and reported level of marital quality in response to unemployment, particularly in the areas of acute distress. While the results did not necessarily replicate Kraft's (2001) assertion that marital quality drops increasingly after six months of unemployment and restablizes when one or the other partner finds work, it should be considered that several participants in this sample had working partners whereas Kraft's did not.

It is also interesting that duration of unemployment increased as participants' ages increased. It seems possible that this could have to do with older individuals potentially having more savings to draw from in the face of unemployment. It could also reflect a generational difference in approaching work. Whereas having transferrable skills and pursuing promotions between jobs (Bridges, 1994) and understanding one's career as a series of choices made over a

lifespan (Fouad & Bynner, 2008) may be taken for granted among younger generations, these notions may be more difficult to grasp for older individuals who are accustomed to a less flexible, more corporate role-oriented work identity negotiated early in life. On the other hand, it is also important to acknowledge that ageism also affects older individuals' ability to secure employment in the current economy (Roscigno, Mong, Byron, & Tester, 2007; Wolgemuth, 2009).

### **Frequency of Unemployment**

As hypothesized, results indicated that there was no significant relationship between frequency of unemployment and reported level of marital quality in response to unemployment. In addition, no significant correlations were noted between the frequency of unemployment variable and the other variables or questionnaire items. Because no studies (to my knowledge) have broached the subject of frequency of unemployment and marital quality, I believed it was worth exploring whether clearer patterns may have emerged from the data I collected in the current economic context. In retrospect, it seems possible that the dearth of existing data on the subject may stem from the fact that frequency of unemployment simply has little to no impact upon marital quality when partners are out of work. For better or worse, non-significant findings rarely appear in research journals.

### **Limitations**

As implied above, it was beyond the scope of this study to adequately decipher between large-scale shifts in values and adjustments made out of necessity in the current economy. Also, a study not confined to the financial and practical limitations of a doctoral dissertation might have extended to a wider range of potential participants. Finally, some measurement issues were discovered during the course of the study that lent themselves to further research questions.

## **Sampling Issues**

It is important to consider numerous sampling issues in this study lest the results become over-generalized. First, the sample consisted of individuals who were computer literate and who likely utilized the internet for marriage and/or unemployment support.

Second, in comparison with existing studies that reflected a more single-earner job market led by husbands, this study took place during a time in which demographic diversity stretched beyond the nuclear family as the norm in American society. Therefore, it is possible that contextual differences other than generation could have affected the results. These include differences in job availability across occupations; the influence of increasing numbers of women, single parents, and ethnically diverse individuals in the work force; etc.

Third, the majority of the sample consisted of people in middle adulthood, with fewer than 10% under 30 years old. Taking into consideration the generational issues identified above, it is worth questioning whether unemployment impacts younger people in the same way today as it did in previous generations. It also seems possible that, by virtue of socially constructed values reflecting an amplified work ethic (Olds & Schwartz, 2009), some of the older adults in this sample—especially those who were involved in entrepreneurial enterprises—could have had their identities still wrapped up in work because this task of early adulthood potentially had not been adequately transcended during the midlife transition (Erikson, 1959/1995).

Fourth, the majority of my sample consisted of White Americans. It is important to consider that taboos exist among several other ethnic populations regarding the discussion of marital issues outside the family (Sue & Sue, 2008). Nonetheless, several of these ethnic groups continue to hold the husband-as-provider role in high regard (Diemer, 2002; Haynes, 2000; Taylor et al., 1999), and their participation could have impacted the results of the study.

Fifth, regarding position on the traditional–progressive continuum and education, whereas the existing literature on the traditional perspective focused primarily on blue-collar families (who historically have held an associate’s degree or less), my sample consisted mainly of people with bachelor’s degrees or higher. In addition, it is worth noting that fewer blue-collar jobs exist in America today than in earlier decades (Judy & D’Amico, 1997) and that those who work them are less likely to be married but rather single or cohabiting (Paulson, 2010). Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that few blue-collar workers actually participated in this study but were represented by their partners who chose to participate. Therefore, it is difficult to say whether a different result may be generated by their actual participation rather than by proxy.

Sixth, despite my best efforts to include couples in my original study design, my results were derived primarily from individual partners’ responses. Consequently, the majority of my sample consisted of participants who reported that their beliefs about marital roles aligned with their perceptions of their partners’ beliefs. Further research could compare participants’ perceptions of their partner’s beliefs with the partners’ actual self-reports and could compare scores on marital quality measures between partners.

### **Measurement Issues**

Despite the arguably sound conceptual basis for selecting the DAS in conjunction with the RKMSS to measure marital quality in this study, there remains the possibility of measurement error among the endogenous variables. That is, marital quality may have been over- or underestimated in this study due to limitations in the DAS that have been addressed in more recent measures.

I selected the DAS because of its solid track record in marital research. However, in retrospect, it seems better suited as a clinical than a research instrument. Whereas therapists can ask follow-up questions, in this case I was left only with participants' self-reports. Therefore, it was difficult to assess for possible over-reporting in light of the high degree of distress indicated by the RKMSS.

Moreover, the wording and scoring of some DAS items seems questionable in light of contemporary developments in marital theory. For example, marital quality was rated higher among couples who agreed strongly in most life domains, who had few conflicts, and who engaged in most activities together. In contrast, Fowers (2000) emphasized that quality marriages are characterized less by absence of conflict so much as the ability for couples to work together through healthy crises. Moreover, Schwartz and Olds (2000) cautioned against the phenomenon of cocooning in American marriages, whereby couples spend most of their time together at the expense of other meaningful relationships. Finally, when asked about the future of their marriages, participants who responded, "I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and I would go to almost any length to see that it does" scored higher than those who responded, "I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do all I can to see that it does." This is concerning insofar as the former response could be interpreted as showing problematic dependency whereas the latter seems more balanced.

It is also worth noting that in the *DAS User's Manual*, Spanier (2001) cited research findings which were replicated in this study. For example, androgynous (progressive) couples reported better adjustment than stereotypic (traditional) ones (Davidson & Sollie, 1987; Murstein & Williams, 1985), and couples with similar sex-role orientations (little difference between participants' beliefs about marital roles and their perceptions of their partners' beliefs) reported

better adjustment than those with complementary orientations (Antill, 1983). In light of the canonical correlation analysis not being significant in this study, it seems possible that subtle patterns between the exogenous variables and the DAS subscales as endogenous variables could have affected the outcome. This begs the question of whether a different measure of marital quality might have yielded a different result.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

The results of a lone analysis (or set of analyses) are insufficient to draw a final conclusion. Replicability of findings must be tested with different samples (B. Thompson, 2000). In this case, not only would a repeat of the same study be beneficial, but also replications with modifications. For example, a new analysis with a different measure of marital quality to replace the DAS seems in order. Fowers and Olson's (1993) EMSS seems a good contender, given that its conceptual foundations reflect improvements over the concerns expressed above about the DAS. Although it was not selected for this study in part because its items did not adequately cover egalitarian roles, it is worth noting retrospectively that DAS items pertaining to such did not have significant correlations.

In addition, because of the lack of follow-up, self-report measures are not conducive of the greatest accuracy in marital research (Gottman et al., 2002). To adequately address the depth of the topic of how unemployment impacts marital quality in the current economy, a qualitative inquiry (or series of inquiries) involving both partners is recommended. Researchers could (a) compare each partner's input with the other's; (b) compare input from interviews conducted with individual partners and with the couple together; and (c) utilize observations of participant behavior, affect, and interpersonal patterns in conjunction with researcher's subjective responses to the participants' input to synthesize a more comprehensive portrait of the dynamics involved

in marital relationships and of how couples make meaning of their experiences together in the face of multiple layers of social change. In addition, participants would have the opportunity to elaborate on what their marital quality was like prior to unemployment.

Finally, given that the canonical correlation analysis was not significant, it is worth asking whether unemployment and marital quality are actually directly correlated. For some, it seems possible that unemployment is correlated with existential anxiety—a loss of significance caused by a threat to values that individuals hold as essential to their existence as a person (May, 1967, 1977)—and that the outcomes and symptoms thereof affect marriages. Perhaps some of the generational effects noted above, whether among single- or dual-earner couples, could reflect an individual striving for identity through work “not due to any frustration of the goal of individual success” but rather “to the state of psychological isolation and the lack of the positive value of community, both results of excessive individualism” (May, 1977, p. 183). Similarly, Olds and Schwartz (2009) identified “Calvinism, capitalism, and competitiveness” (p. 29) as three primary forces that impede social interest and contribute to loneliness and isolation in contemporary American society. As work takes on an increasingly addictive quality, social interest (including one’s marriage) becomes impaired. It may not be until the frenzy of overwork ceases that its impact becomes experienced most fully, as couples then have more free time together.

Whereas existing literature focuses on avolition, social undermining, and passive aggression among married couples in the face of unemployment, for some a possible alternative explanation could be that unemployment causes a loss of personal significance, which results in embarrassment and avoidance (which could be regarded by the external observer as loss of motivation). Feelings of shame and guilt ensue as partners take up the slack, which result in

conflictual communication (regarded as undermining) and in further decreases in effort to procure new employment (regarded as passive aggression). Further research could explore whether unemployment more directly impacts individuals whose affect and behavior then trigger marital difficulties.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

Although the canonical correlation analysis was not significant, follow-up statistical procedures provided insight into areas in which the exogenous variables may have impacted marital quality among sub-populations within the sample. The results of this study suggested that, with some generational effects aside, marital quality may not be affected by partners' beliefs about marital roles so much as education and socioeconomic cultural concerns. However, this is only a tentative conclusion given that the correlations among variables were moderate at best.

The results of this study also suggest that, irrespective of beliefs about marital role, participants did experience some degree of acute/situational marital distress in the face of their or their partners' unemployment (as evidenced by lower DAS Consensus, Satisfaction, and Affectional scores). With the exception of some older individuals, most also tended to spend more time together (as evidenced by elevated DAS Cohesion scores). Meanwhile, it is conceivable that, despite the acute/situational distress, most participants' satisfaction with the way the relationship developed since it began (as evidenced by elevated scores on that RKMS item) may serve as a means of weathering the challenge of unemployment.

It is worth noting that although DAS Cohesion was increased, overall the RKMS scores suggested that most participants were in marital distress. With this in mind, Olds and Schwartz (2009) cautioned that although marriages are an important support, it is equally essential that

individuals not rely solely on them lest placing too much strain on the marriage as one's primary social interaction can trigger fragility in the marital relationship. The authors concluded that "resilient marriages usually achieve a balance between restorative intimacy and outward-looking engagement" (p. 132). Therefore, psychologists and marital therapists are encouraged to remind clients of this necessary balance. Moreover, by emphasizing that the crisis of unemployment is both a danger and an opportunity, clients can be reminded that marital partners working together through a meaningful challenge may become self-reinforcing. This promotes an increased sense of commitment to each other and to the marriage (Fowers, 2000).

Additional implications include a message to employers that marriages serve as a vital support for individuals. Despite unfavorable economic conditions and the necessity of making more with less, it is imperative that as unemployed individuals return to work, ample opportunities are allotted for social interaction within and outside of the workplace to sustain relationships both within and outside married employees' marital relationships. Otherwise, poor social interest and isolation will impede productivity for all involved.

Suggestions for future research and theory development include (a) a similar study utilizing a different marital quality measure to replace the DAS and a qualitative methodology to better assess dynamics and meaning-making processes within marital relationships not adequately covered in self-report assessments, (b) a shift in focus toward difference in marital partners' beliefs about marital roles rather than the beliefs themselves, (c) further inquiry into whether education may be a more salient variable than marital role, and (d) an exploration into whether in some cases unemployment impacts individuals more so than marriages.

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APPENDIX A: LETTER TO RECRUITMENT SITES

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Andrew Bland. I am a doctoral candidate in the counseling psychology program at Indiana State University. I am preparing dissertation research on the impact of unemployment on marital relationships in the current economy.

I am writing to request your assistance in recruiting participants for this research. I am seeking as many as 500 married couples of diverse ethnic, occupational, and socio-economic backgrounds to complete an online questionnaire pertaining to the quality of their marriage.

I am hoping that you can disseminate this link to your clientele.

[www.tinyurl.com/unemployment-marriage](http://www.tinyurl.com/unemployment-marriage)

Below is the text for an electronic announcement that I would appreciate your distributing via list-serves, Facebook/message boards, e-mail, and in paper bulletins. Upon request, I can also provide hard copies of paper flyers.

Please also forward this message to anyone else who may be able to distribute the link and ask them to forward it as appropriate.

If questions should arise, assure your clientele that: (a) this is for a student research study involving an online questionnaire, (b) their responses will be kept confidential and no one will have access to their identifying information, and (c) neither their decision to participate nor their responses to questionnaire items will have any impact on the services they receive from your organization (if applicable).

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me at [abland3@indstate.edu](mailto:abland3@indstate.edu) or 812-872-2429. I also will be happy to meet with you in person.

Thank you,

Andrew Bland  
Counseling Psychology Ph.D. Candidate  
Department of Communication Disorders and Counseling, School, and Educational Psychology  
Indiana State University  
Terre Haute, IN 47809

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT MESSAGE

ARE YOU OR YOUR SPOUSE OUT OF WORK? Participants Needed!

I am seeking married people from a variety of backgrounds to complete a brief online questionnaire on how unemployment impacts their marital quality in the current economy.

It should take about 10-20 minutes for you to complete.  
Your participation and your responses will be kept confidential.

*Interested in Participating?*

Please go to [www.tinyurl.com/unemployment-marriage](http://www.tinyurl.com/unemployment-marriage)

*Have Questions?*

Please contact Andrew Bland, M.A.: [abland3@indstate.edu](mailto:abland3@indstate.edu)

## APPENDIX C: OPENING SCREEN

Dear Participants,

I am a doctoral candidate in the Counseling Psychology program at Indiana State University. I am conducting a study on how unemployment impacts marital quality in the current economy.

Following is a brief questionnaire that asks a variety of questions about your marital quality and demographic context. You will complete the survey on your own without your partner present. It should take about 10-20 minutes for you to complete.

Below are two options. Please choose “Couples Version” if both you and your partner are willing to participate (in a single session, partners working one at a time). Please choose “Individual Version” if you are willing to participate but your partner is not.

If you choose to participate, you will not be asked to provide your partner’s or your name. I do not need to know who you are. No one will know whether you participated in this study. Your responses will not be identified with you personally, nor will anyone be able to determine which company you work (or have worked) for and/or services you have sought (if applicable). Nothing you say on the questionnaire will in any way influence your present or future employment with your company or any services you receive.

I hope you will take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Your participation is voluntary, and there is no penalty if you choose not to participate or withdraw early. Your participation will help further research on marital quality.

If you have any questions or concerns about completing the questionnaire or about participating in this study, you may contact me at [abland3@indstate.edu](mailto:abland3@indstate.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) by mail at Indiana State University, Office of Sponsored Programs, Terre Haute, IN 47809, by phone at (812) 237-8217, or by e-mail at [irb@indstate.edu](mailto:irb@indstate.edu). This study (IRB #11-118) was determined as “exempt” by the IRB on May 13, 2011.

Sincerely,

Andrew Bland, M.A.  
Counseling Psychology Ph.D. Candidate  
Department of Communication Disorders and Counseling, School, and Educational Psychology  
Indiana State University  
Terre Haute, IN 47809

*To continue, choose the couples or individual version, then press the “>>” tab below.*

- COUPLES VERSION (Both partners are willing to participate. Partners will complete the questionnaire one at a time.)
- INDIVIDUAL VERSION (Only one partner is willing to complete the questionnaire.)

## APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

You are being invited to participate in a research study about how unemployment impacts marriages. This study is being conducted by Andrew Bland, M.A. and Debra Leggett, Ph.D., from the Department of Communication Disorders and Counseling, School, and Educational Psychology at Indiana State University. This study is being conducted as part of a doctoral dissertation.

There are no known risks if you decide to participate in this research study. There are no costs to you for participating in the study. The information you provide will help psychologists better understand how unemployment affects marriages. The questionnaire will take about 10-20 minutes for each spouse to complete. Should you choose to participate, you will complete a questionnaire online. The information collected may not benefit you directly, but the information learned in this study should provide more general benefits.

While absolute anonymity cannot be guaranteed over the Internet, several steps will be taken to protect the confidentiality of your information. Your name, IP address, or other identifying information will not be collected. You will be identified only according to an assigned number. No one will be able to identify you or your answers, and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study. Individuals from the Institutional Review Board may inspect these records. Should the data be published, no individual information will be disclosed.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. By completing and electronically submitting the completed questionnaire, you are voluntarily agreeing to participate. You are free to decline to answer any particular question you do not wish to answer for any reason.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact Andrew Bland (Bayh College of Education, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, IN 47809 / [abland3@indstate.edu](mailto:abland3@indstate.edu) / 812-872-2429) or Debra Leggett (Bayh College of Education, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, IN 47809 / [debra.leggett@indstate.edu](mailto:debra.leggett@indstate.edu) / 812-237-7762).

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject or if you feel you've been placed at risk, you may contact the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) by mail at Indiana State University, Office of Sponsored Programs, Terre Haute, IN 47809, by phone at (812) 237-8217, or by e-mail at [irb@indstate.edu](mailto:irb@indstate.edu).

Date of IRB Determination of Exempt Status: May 13, 2011  
IRB Number: 11-118

**Couples Form**

*To begin the questionnaire, both partners need to check below. Then press the “>>” tab.*

I agree to participate in this research study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and confidential.

Husband

Wife

**Individual Form**

*To begin the questionnaire, please check below. Then press the “>>” tab.*

I agree to participate in this research study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and confidential.

## APPENDIX E: INSTRUCTIONAL SCREENS (COUPLES FORM)

**Before First Partner**

## INSTRUCTIONS

Please complete the questionnaire one partner at a time, each person working alone. The questionnaire should take each of you about 10 to 20 minutes to complete.

Each partner's section of the questionnaire consists of 19 demographic items, plus 35 questions about your marriage.

At this time, please decide who will complete the questionnaire first. It does not matter if the husband or wife goes first.

*FIRST PARTNER:* Ask your partner to step out of the room. Please complete the questionnaire carefully. You will not be able to go back to change your responses.

When your section of the questionnaire is complete, a screen will appear that will ask you to bring your partner back in and for you to leave while he/she completes his/her section of the questionnaire.

• *FIRST PARTNER:* When you are ready to begin, check the button to the left, then click the “>>” tab below.

**Before Second Partner**

## INSTRUCTIONS

*FIRST PARTNER:* Your section of the questionnaire is finished. Ask your partner to come back in to complete his/her section of the questionnaire.

*SECOND PARTNER:* Ask your partner to step out of the room. Please complete the questionnaire carefully. You will not be able to go back to change your responses.

When your section of the questionnaire is complete, a screen will appear that will ask you to bring your partner back in for the check out screens.

• **SECOND PARTNER:** *When you are ready to begin, check the button to the left, then click the “>>” tab below.*

### **Before Debriefing and Checkout**

#### INSTRUCTIONS

*SECOND PARTNER:* Your section of the questionnaire is finished. Ask your partner to come back in for the check out screen.

• *To continue, check the button to the left, then click the “>>” tab below.*

## APPENDIX F: INSTRUCTIONAL SCREEN (INDIVIDUAL FORM)

## INSTRUCTIONS

This questionnaire consists of 34 demographic items (19 about you plus 15 about your partner) and 35 questions about your marriage. It should take you about 10-20 minutes to complete.

- *When you are ready to begin, check the button to the left, then click the “ >> ” tab below.*

## APPENDIX G: DEBRIEFING AND CHECKOUT SCREEN

Thank you for participating in this study, which is designed to help psychologists understand how unemployment affects marital quality in the current economy.

Psychologists have found that marital quality tends to be associated with couples' ability to embrace changes both outside and within their marriages. By deepening emotional responsiveness to each other's needs for connection and caring, couples can build sustainable bonds to work through healthy challenges.

In the event that you or your partner has experienced psychological distress on account of your participation in this study, you are encouraged to seek individual and/or marital counseling at a mental health center in your area.

Please invite others you know who are married and out of work (or whose spouse is out of work) to complete this questionnaire. [www.tinyurl.com/unemployment-marriage](http://www.tinyurl.com/unemployment-marriage)

• *To submit your questionnaire, click the button (to the left), then press the “>>” tab below.*

