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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

MARITAL SATISFACTION  
AND  
CHEROKEE LANGUAGE FLUENCY

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

ROCKEY R. ROBBINS

Norman, Oklahoma

1999

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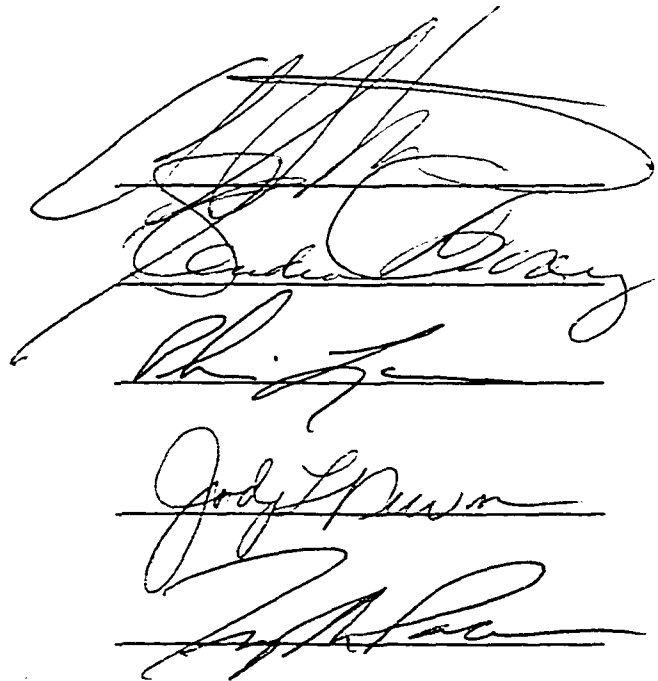
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Marital Satisfaction  
And  
Cherokee Language fluency

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY



The image shows four handwritten signatures, each written on a horizontal line. From top to bottom, the signatures are: 1) A large, stylized signature that appears to be 'C. B. Gray'. 2) A signature that appears to be 'R. J. ...'. 3) A signature that appears to be 'Jody L. ...'. 4) A signature that appears to be 'S. A. ...'.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Most of all I thank you Sharla for all your direct and indirect support in the dissertation process. I love you. Thank you Nesh, Jess, and Lindz for your forgiveness for the time I missed being with you the past couple of years pursuing this goal. Thank you Cal, Sandy, Bill, Terry, Jody, and Phil for the corrections and suggestions you made on the text. Wa-do to the Cherokees and Keetoowahs for their participation, especially Nancy. Thank you Dr. Taylor of NSU and Patti for helping to gather data. Thank you classmates and friends, especially, Sean, Elise, Don, Linda, George, Stuart, and Dirk. Wa-do to the Great One and Mom, Dad, Mickey and Stoney.

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## Abstract

The Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised norms were compared with scores for 162 volunteer Cherokee participants. In addition, aspects of marital satisfaction were examined for participants classified as fluent or non-fluent in the Cherokee language. Data was collected through a demographic form and the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised. Differences occurred on four of the thirteen scales on the MSI-R norms for the Cherokee participants. Differences were also found on the main effect of fluency on two scales. Differences were also detected on two interaction factors on personal fluency and spousal fluency.

## **Marital Satisfaction and Cherokee Language Fluency**

Marital satisfaction has been researched extensively in recent decades, yielding valuable information for therapists to utilize in their practices. Understandably, the vast majority of the studies conducted in the United States have been with participants who belong to mainstream culture. Marital satisfaction for members of minority cultures in the United States has remained for the large part an "uninvestigated sub-area" of marital therapy (Ying, 1991). A literature review revealed that issues of marriage satisfaction among American Indians in general, as well as specifically with Cherokee couples, has not been investigated. In addition, the Marital Satisfaction Inventory Revised Edition (MSI-R) currently used by Oklahoma Cherokee Behavioral Health Services and other agencies providing marital therapy has not been normed for American Indians, including Cherokees.

### **Statement of Problem**

The purpose of this study was to examine the norms established for the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised Edition (MSI-R) for married Cherokees\* and to examine differences between fluent and non-fluent Cherokees with the standardized norms. The effects of gender, education, and

household income were taken into account. The elements of marital satisfaction includes: 1) Inconsistency; 2) Conventionalization; 3) Global Distress; 4) Affective Communication; 5) Problem-Solving Communication; 6) Aggression; 7) Time Together; 8) Disagreement about Finances; 9) Sexual Dissatisfaction; 10) Role Orientation; 11) Family History; 12) Dissatisfaction with Children; and 13) Conflict over Childrearing.

#### **Hypotheses Tested in the Study**

In order to achieve the purposes of the study, the following non-directional hypotheses were tested for significance.

1. Mean differences will exist between the MSI-R normative values (T-score=50) and mean T-scores of the Cherokee group, across each of the MSI-R validity and clinical scales.

2. Mean differences will exist between respondents who are fluent in Cherokee and those who are not fluent in the Cherokee language across validity and clinical scales.

3. Respondents who are in mixed marriages, marriages defined by having one spouse who is fluent in Cherokee and one who is not, will differ from respondents who are in matched marriages, defined as marriages which include spouses who are both fluent in Cherokee or both non-fluent.

## Review of the Literature

### History of Cherokee Marriages

In order to have a fuller understanding of the contemporary experience of Northeastern Oklahoma Cherokee married couples, it is helpful to have some knowledge of Cherokee marital relationships through history as well as their current socio-economic political situation. This broader description of the milieu in which the participants of this study find themselves will shed light on their responses to the scales of the MSI-R.

The reader may have false stereotypes concerning Cherokee couple relationships. French and Hornbuckle (as quoted by Kupferer, 1966) describe first encounters with the Cherokees, who were seen as being adept farmers and hunters. Families, consisting of grandmother, her husband, her married daughters and their husbands and children shared the same house. The houses were not tepees but dwellings constructed with vertically set logs, roofed with bark and insulated with clay. Men were said to provide meat for their families, to be responsible for long hours of training boys in the areas of shooting bow and arrows and blowguns, wrestling, and running. They also dug canoes and made and repaired fences. Women farmed the fields, cooked, made

clothes, tanned animal skins, made dyes and paints for their families, and trained girls in these areas.

Cherokee society was matriarchal. That is, descent was traced strictly through the mother's side of the family. Eighteenth-century Euro-American writers were baffled by customs that dictated Cherokee men and women relationships, especially those concerning marriage. Cherokee women had more independence, respect, power, and security within their tribal structures than their Euro-American female counterparts. The social interactions between women and men were so starkly in contrast to what Whites were accustomed that James Adair accused Cherokee men of living under "petticoat government" (Woodward, 1963). He found several customs incomprehensible: women were required to be at every war council to make recommendations to the Red (War) chief about strategies, time of attack and other matters, and women decided the fate of prisoners. Simply "waving a swan's wing" would deliver a condemned person. Women also fought in battle and went out on hunts that lasted several months, leaving children under the care of the old. They participated in very rough games of stickball with men (Kupferer, 1966). Courtship and marriage ceremonies had several variations. Unlike popular Indian stereotypes, brides were not bought, given away or bargained for.

Cherokees practiced free mate selection. Courtships were carried out with love incantations and persuasion by the male. Then the groom sent the bride venison as a pledge of ample food supply. The bride would in turn send him a container of corn, a token that she would help tend the fields. Each person entered the arrangement on an equal basis with something to give. Another type of ceremony involved the man placing wood at the woman's door. If she took it in and made a fire and a meal for the man, the marriage was confirmed. The woman, and sometimes her mother, held the power to consent or reject a prospective groom.

Woodward (1963) describes Cherokee wives as having had great power in a marriage. Both women and men owned weapons and ceremonial articles (unlike most tribes where men owned these articles exclusively). Women owned articles for cultivating the soil, preparing foods, cleaning skins, and making clothes. They also owned the dwelling in which the family lived. Wives owned other properties over which husbands had no control. On a detestable note, but an example of the power of Cherokee wives, "The Cherokee mother could destroy any surplus or unwanted baby at or soon after birth. If the father killed his child, even accidentally, he was liable for the consequences of homicide" (Woodward,

1963).

There are historically contradictory accounts concerning some of the bonds between Cherokee husbands and wives. On the one hand, Adair wrote in The History of the American Indians, "The Cherokee are an exception to all civilized or savage nations, in having no laws against adultery; they have been a considerable while under petticoat government, and allow their women full liberty to plant their brows and horns as often as they please, without fear of punishment...Husbands and wives were permitted sexual freedom, and polygamy and polyandry was accepted as viable, though neither was widespread. Sometimes women would change spouses as many as four times a year" (Woodward, 1963). In order to acquire a divorce, a husband need only stop furnishing food or simply move out of the home. A wife merely placed her husband's belongings outside the dwelling to achieve divorce. On the other hand, my own communications with traditional Cherokee people suggests that histories are sometimes misleading and that many Cherokee couple in the past probably had sustained marital relationships. In fact, Henry Malone wrote, "the Indian women gave lately a proof of fidelity, not to be equaled by politer ladies, bound by all the sacred ties of marriage... many marriages last until death" (Woodward, 1963).



Over the past three centuries, Cherokees' attitudes have been influenced considerably by Christianity. Nonetheless, it is conjectured that those Cherokees who retain ties to their traditions possess different attitudes regarding sex than those who do not. Research has consistently shown that discrepancies in sexual attitudes among couples predict incompatibility (Fisher, 1988; Smith, 1993). Historically, traditional Cherokees had different views of sexuality than Euro-Americans. One would expect divergent acculturation levels in Cherokee couples to predict discord within the relationship.

Marriages were regulated by women in the village. Women punished both male and female marital offenders when they violated sacred clan taboos. The most serious transgressions involved a husband's neglect of wife and children. As punishment, the husband was publicly beaten by female members of the community" (French & Hornbuckle, 1981).

After a divorce occurred, the children were cared for by the wife's clan.

Though many 18th and 19th century values and customs have persisted even to this day, vast changes have occurred in the Cherokee social structure. In 1808, the Cherokee National council enacted the first written law. The Five Social goals directly impacted marital relationships. They

urged and warned: "love of family and desire to strengthen the family as a social unit; fear of tribal land passing into control of noncitizen whites; determination to prevent inter-marriage between Cherokees and their Negro slaves; a strong belief in equality of women; and resistance of a portion of the tribe to migration to Arkansas" (Carlile, 1938).

After the majority of Cherokees were moved west to what is now Northeastern Oklahoma, along what Cherokees called, "the trail where he cried blood," many became convinced that only through the adoption of many of the white man's ways would they be able to survive. In 1839, the Cherokee Council in their Constitution created an inheritance system along the father's bloodlines. Still, Cherokees resisted the inequality for women that they saw in mainstream society. Again, they reiterated their belief in the equality of women with men. They also required all lands to go to the wife in case of divorce (Strickland 1975).

Strickland (1975) argues that the large class of mixed-blood Cherokees that emerged in the beginning of the 19th century had a considerable impact upon marital relations. On the one hand, the mixed bloods identified with the Cherokee culture because of the strong role of the mother in the family and "the trader's inattention of their children"

(Strickland quoting Hawkin's 1806 Letters). Nonetheless, the mix blood evidenced more respect for White men, often united with Christian missionaries and gradually undermined the matriarchy.

The Cherokees' allegiance to the Confederacy during the Civil War opened the door for the United States Government's active attempts to dissolve the Cherokee government and dismantle tribal ways. Nonetheless, within their communities and families, Cherokee husbands and wives retained many of their traditional roles and values. More and more Cherokees became Methodist and Baptist Christians.

While many of their beliefs were altered having become Christians, the church also became and continues to be a vehicle where many traditional beliefs and values are passed down from one generation to the next. Some Cherokees went further into Northeastern Oklahoma hills where they continue to live as independently as possible by traditional ways (Milam, 1978).

While the balance of power between men and women has weighed more and more toward men among Cherokees, Cherokee women continue to play important and influential roles in government and family. In 1991, Wilma Mankiller won her third term in office, receiving 82 percent of the vote. Such a margin of victory may suggest that Cherokees have

different perspectives toward women than do Euro-Americans.

How long will it be before Democrats or Republicans think it feasible to nominate a woman for president?

### Relevant Demographics

#### Employment and Finances

Today, the Oklahoma Cherokee Nation extends over fifteen counties in Northeast Oklahoma. The Cherokee Nation Office of Research and Analysis (1990) study showed the highest concentration of Cherokees to live at the center of the Cherokee Nation in Cherokee, Adair, Sequoyah and Delaware counties. The counties are populated by just over 25,000 Cherokees and compose over 27 percent of the population. These counties rank as four of the poorest counties in the United States. Fifty-five percent of Cherokees live in rural areas outside of towns, where poverty and unemployment is especially high. In 1990, in Cherokee County, 37% of Cherokee households lived below the poverty line, while Adair, Delaware, and Sequoyah counties reported only slightly higher earnings. The Cherokee Nation study indicated that most Cherokee families have either three or four children. Consequently, while many Cherokee families have low incomes, they also tend to be large. The Cherokee homes also tend to be of less value than other races. The Cherokee Nation Office of Research and Analysis

(1994) reported that "the median value of Cherokee) homes is \$34,400, 28% less than the statewide median value" and 20% less than "all races" within the 15 counties within Cherokee jurisdiction. In 1986, 60 percent of Cherokees who were 25 years or older in these counties had not completed high school and 34 percent had not completed the eighth grade. "Literacy rate among Cherokees was approximately 54 percent, (Cherokee Nation Base Study)." The low level of education contributes to a lack of marketable skills.

There have been differential findings in regard to couples' satisfaction and financial resources. Teachman, Polonko and Scanzoni (1987) reported positive correlations between couples' socioeconomic resources and satisfaction. He argued that additional income allows a married couple to better cope with marital conflicts, through diversion of attention by leisure activities and avoidance of chores by purchasing various services. Wilson (1986) found that the wife's marital satisfaction is related to the household income, but the husband's satisfaction is not. One wonders, however, about the multitude of factors involved in this reported satisfaction. For instance, one could speculate on the effects of a woman's work status on her self-esteem and consequently upon her marital satisfaction.

"Thirty-five percent of rural Indian women (nationally)

are employed in service occupations and 22 percent work as semiskilled operatives. These proportions are more than 50 percent higher than the national averages for women (Scheirbeck, 1984)." Undoubtedly, Cherokee women equal or exceed this statistic. A large number work in the many chicken factories in the area. Also, there remains a considerable number who use Cherokee as their primary language, which may detract from employment opportunities as well as affect their academic achievement.

One wonders how Cherokee women's frequent employment at jobs of hard labor as well as the high unemployment rate among Cherokees in general affects the division of labor regarding household chores. Further, Cherokee cultural norms may effect what is considered fair. While many traditional Cherokees have advocated women's equality in the realm of politics, there has been historically a division of labor in the household. Have they, like Euro-American couples, lagged behind in equality in household labor? Spouses are likely to be happier the more work the other spouse does and the less is his/her own share (Spitze, 1988). Suitor (1991) suggests that greater satisfaction with division of labor is associated with higher marital satisfaction, emphasizing that less disproportionate burdens in household tasks for wives may partly account for greater

marital satisfaction. Nonetheless, while wives appear to be affected by the fairness of the division of household labor, husbands appear unaffected (Keith & Wacker, 1990; Robinson & Spitze, 1992; Thompson & Walker, 1991).

To what extent might one expect low levels of education to effect Cherokee marital satisfaction? Campbell (1976) reported that those without high school educations reported greater marital satisfaction than those who had completed high school educations. There were no further differences for couples with fewer than 12 years of education. He cites previous studies (Gurin, 1960; Hicks & Platt, 1970) showing education to be positively related to marital satisfaction. Campbell speculates that more educated people may be more willing to admit to problems in their marriage than less educated people. Gurin (1960) had suggested that educated people are more introspective and more critical of themselves and their situation. Snyder (1997) reported that individuals with 12 or fewer years of education indicated significantly more distress than those who had completed 12 years of education on 8 of the MSI-R scales. This effect was especially pronounced with Hispanics and African-Americans who had attained low educational levels.

### Cherokee Population

American Indians have had the largest percentage

population increase of all races in the United States over the past three censuses. In many of the Cherokee Nation counties the Cherokee population is growing considerably faster than the White population. (For example, it is reported to be growing 15% faster in Craig county.) In Delaware County the median age of Whites is 45.2 while for Indians it is 26.6. There are slightly more Cherokee women than men, a ratio of 100 to 95, yet in rural areas of the Cherokee Nation men outnumber women until age 25. After this age the trend is for the woman to be the older spouse (1990). While no studies were found concerning the effects on marital satisfaction when wives are older, high marital satisfaction has been found among newly married couples and in old couples in the empty nest and retirement stages (Glen, 1991). Could the possible youthful participants affect this study?

#### Intermarriages and Ethnic Marriages

Many American Indians are mixed blood. On the last marital census which recorded race (1970) more than 1/3 of all American Indians were married to non-Indians (Sanderfur, 1986). Though the Northeastern Oklahoma Cherokees live primarily in rural areas, a long history of inter-marriage may suggest high levels of inter-marriage will continue. Consequently, some of the Cherokees in this study are mixed



blood while others are full blood. It is hypothesized that highly divergent acculturation levels influence marital satisfaction.

Divergence in racial inheritance and culture may be related to racial and religious inter-marriage. Inter-marriage studies in the United States have generally examined black-white, Christian-Jewish or Catholic-Protestant marriages. Most studies indicate that inter-marriages are less stable and show less marital satisfaction than homogeneous marriages. Among others, Alston, McIntosh, and Wright (1976) and Glenn (1982) found this true with regard to religious groups, while Heer (1974) and Lind (1964) with ethnic groups. There have been a few exceptions. Monahan (1970) found black-white marriages more stable than black-black marriages and black husbands with white wives had a lower divorce rate than did white couples. All of these studies employed separation and divorce as their measurement, except for the 1982 study by Glenn which employed one question to assess marital satisfaction. However, an ethnic marital satisfaction study done in Israel by Weller and Rofe (1988) used the Orden and Bradburn's satisfaction and tension scale and a modified Rofe's marital happiness scale to find marital satisfaction among husbands and wives of contrasting Eastern and Western descent. Their

findings were similar to the American studies except that once the variable of social class was removed there was little difference in marital satisfaction. They found that education was the most important factor affecting marital satisfaction.

Few studies of marital satisfaction have used people of color as sample populations. There have been two notable studies with African Americans. Ball and Robbins (1986) found that African American wives' age, social participation, health, and income related positively to marital satisfaction. For African American men, health and income related to marital satisfaction. Broman (1988) found that age, education, and rural residence are predictors of higher marital satisfaction.

In a study with Chinese-Americans, agreement on life aims and moral behavior emerged as the most important predictor of marital quality (Ying, 1991). Men reported that agreement in relating to in-laws and friends is also a significant predictor. Men reported significantly higher satisfaction levels than women.

In a comparative study of American and Japanese spouses, Kamo (1991) reported that expressive (interaction) aspects seemed more important in the United States while instrumental (socio-economic) aspects were more important in

Japan. Kamo contends that different ideals and conceptions about marriage in each country partly explain these differences. Religious differences and social interaction could negatively impact Cherokee\Euro-American marital relationships. Most Cherokees are Christian, but many continue to attend stomp dances and practice other rituals which may cause strife between divergent couples.

### Elements of Marriage

1) Inconsistency Scale (INC). This scale attempts to address the issue of response validity by identifying whether similar items are responded to in a consistent manner. T-scores over 65 on this scale may indicate random, careless, or non-reflective responses (Snyder, 1997). For this study, one should consider how respondents whose primary language is Cherokee may view items which are subtly different to be vague or ambiguous.

2) Conventionalization Scale (CNV). This scale assesses individuals' tendencies to distort the appraisal of their relationship in an unrealistically positive or negative manner. When one considers that Cherokees have long been taken advantage of when exposing their vulnerabilities, one should not be surprised if many Cherokees respond in a guarded fashion.

3) Global Distress Scale (GDS). This scale measures

individuals general relationship dissatisfaction, negative feelings about the future of the relationship, and how unfavorable his/her relationship is in comparison to other relationships. It is the single best indicator of global relationship affect (Snyder, 1997). Important to a profound interpretation for Cherokees on this scale would require an understanding of traditional Cherokee belief systems, which includes unique perspectives about humility and fatalism which will be examined in the discussion section.

4) Affective Communication Scale (AFC). This scale evaluates the individual's dissatisfaction with the amount of affection and understanding expressed by his or her partner (Snyder, 1997). Historically, Cherokee couples have been said to exhibit little public display of affection. If true this may be due to the separation of the sexes in many work tasks as well as in ceremonies, the internalization of this segregation in everyday life, as well as the crowded living quarters in which poor Cherokees have dwelt for 150 years. Even today, an outsider may mistakenly attribute observed interactions between spouses as lack of emotion. For Cherokees, however, emotional bonds may be close but may be exhibited in ways too subtle for an outsider to perceive. Nonetheless, one should not ignore the possibility that the free expression of emotion may be blocked for many Cherokees

in a way that is unhealthy. Some Cherokee spouses (especially wives) have complained to this researcher about a lack of emotional connection in their relationships and have stated that it may be a result of their spouse's too inflexibly clinging to Cherokee traditional sex roles. Indian people may have concealed emotion as a form of protection against generations of hostile oppression.

Several research studies have reported that affect or emotion is an integral component of marital satisfaction. Gottman (1994) studied the interaction in marriages which he labeled as hostile and hostile/detached. He reported that in hostile marriages husbands were more interested in wives and showed more affection and showed less disgust and contempt than husbands in hostile/detached marriages. Wives in hostile marriages whined more, but showed more interest in their husbands and expressed less disgust and contempt than wives in hostile/detached marriages. Griffin (1993) researched what keeps couples in a negative absorbing state, and what is related to their transitions out of it. He reported that wives had fewer, but longer episodes of negative affect than husbands did. Wives' education increased the longevity of the negative state. Husbands' education shortened the durations of negative affect.

Whether the MSI-R can inform psychologists about the

meaning of Indian styles of affective communication remains to be seen. There may be nuances of emotional expression that cannot be encapsulated by the words and phrases in the MSI-R. A cursory look may communicate as powerful a storm as an angry barrage of words, or a holding of one's fist against the chest may communicate more than an "I love you."

Affective communication may come in glancing references or in subtle gestures among downtrodden societies. To be outwardly sentimental may be equated with softness.

5) Problem Solving Communication Scale (PSC). An individual's opinions about the general ineffectiveness in resolving differences is measured on this scale (Snyder, 1997). Good problem solving abilities and good communication have long been linked with marital satisfaction (Hansen & Schuldt 1984). Kaslow & Robison (1996), in a comparative assessment, found that the couples' ability to solve problems in stressful situations utilizing more cooperative, supportive and flexible ways of resolving problems rather than more impulsive approaches was correlated to greater marital satisfaction. For years, Gottman and Levenson (1992) have tried to identify constructive and destructive problem resolution styles utilized by couples during conflict. They argue that a concurrent link between conflict resolution styles and

marital satisfaction indicate that each spouse's marital satisfaction is positively related to the frequency with which each spouse uses agreement, compromise and humor and negatively with conflict engagement, withdrawal and defensiveness. Wallerstein (1996), after reporting her findings from a pilot study on "psychological tasks of marriage," argued that Gottman and his colleagues emphasis on "mere style of conflict" is less salient than its psychological meaning within the overall context of the relationship such as crises related to unemployment and other catastrophes. Kurdek (1995) studied the synergistic influence of spouse's problem solving communication and found that low marital satisfaction was associated with wives' conflict engagement style and husbands' withdrawal style. Secondly, he found that the husbands' negative effect of withdrawal on their marital satisfaction depended on their wives' level of compliance, conflict engagement, and withdrawal. On the other hand, wives' withdrawal was negatively related to their own marital satisfaction independent of how their husbands tended to resolve conflict.

Again, traditional Cherokees may communicate about their problems differently than most mainstream Americans. Direct communication concerning conflicts is typically

discouraged. When the problem becomes intolerable often a third party is brought in for a resolution (Ho, 1987). An outsider may call it patience or avoidance, but he/she will be struck by many traditional Cherokees' lack of discussion about many problems. I have heard many counselors comment on American Indians' Cherokees' reticence in regard to a spouse's alcohol abuse and reluctance to challenge children's' irresponsible behavior. Traditional Cherokees have a deep belief in every individual's right to direct one's own life (Tracks, 1973). People are to learn responsibility from social modeling, ceremonies, stories and experience of consequences. The examiner has heard Cherokees speak fatalistically when a problem is clarified in an effort to prepare for change. Acceptance of the hardest situations and wanting nothing different is often seen as the essence of nobility. The same difficult situation may be viewed as a challenging problem solving dilemma by many confident non traditional Indians. There is a fine line between the genuine nobility of resignation to fate and resignation in living day to day because one has lost all hope and longs for nothing but oblivion. Direct communication about problems may feel awkward, or even undignified to many traditional Cherokees. If you have to work too hard for something maybe you are unnaturally



grasping for something. On the other hand, yielding to fate may at times be an excuse for irresponsibility.

5) Aggression Scale (AGG). This scale measures the level of intimidation and physical aggression experienced by respondents from their partners (Snyder, 1997). This is a scale that was not on the MSI. Murphy & O'Leary (1989) report that verbal aggression and psychological intimidation are precursors of physical aggression in couples.

6) Time Together Scale (TTO). The time together scale reflects the respondents dissatisfaction concerning the time they spend together in leisure activity (Snyder, 1997). Kaslow and Robison (1996) quotes Family Therapy News (1990) as reporting that clinicians agree that quality and quantity of time together is one of the most basic dimensions of a quality marriage. Gottman (1994) reported that "avoidant" couples (those who live parallel but separate lives while sharing the same domicile) report marital dissatisfaction. Brunstein, Danglelmayer, and Schultheiss (1996) reported that "relationship goals" as well as support of spouses' personal goals contributed to positive affective relationship satisfaction.

Traditional Cherokees' interests and shared activities have different costumes than mainstream Americans but the above categories of shared time are applicable. In some

ways the times Cherokee spouses spend with each other at Stomp Dances and at the Cherokee Baptist Church may have a cementing effect upon their relationships. These experiences may offer validation for their relationship, as well as offer them a binding identity within the Cherokee society. Experience with Cherokee couples suggests that traditional couples are very domestic but non-traditional husbands are often less domestic than most main stream husbands.

7) Disagreement about Finances Scale (FIN). This scale measures discord regarding the management of finances. Vinokur, Price, and Caplan (1996) argue that financial strain does not directly effect marital satisfaction but the depression that is associated with it does negatively affect marital satisfaction. Berkowitz (1989) reported that economic hardship may give rise to negative life events contributing to growing frustration that may trigger and sustain a variety of destructive interaction patterns among family members. Unemployment has been linked to decreases in marital quality (Liem & Liem, 1988). Blair (1993) reported that a husband's perceptions of the likelihood of divorce are strongly affected by the wife's belief that money is unfairly controlled at home. The more the wife believes money is unfairly controlled, the greater the likelihood of divorce as perceived by the husband. The

strongest effect on wives' consideration of divorce is whether they consider the control of money in the marriage to be inequitable.

As mentioned above, Cherokees make considerably less money on average than the larger American population. The hardships related to economic scarcity are bound to result in stress for many Cherokee marital relationships.

8) Sexual Satisfaction Scale (SEX). This scale measures the individual's level of discontent with the frequency and the quality of sexual activity between the couple. Sexual satisfaction in marriage is often complex. Few would argue that it does not hold a central place in marriage, but its place is far from invulnerable. Illness, depression, boredom, stress at the workplace, and children can effect sexual interaction. Byrne (1971) conducted several studies in which he links spouses' attitudes upon sexual interaction. He reported that individuals are more sexually attracted to those who have similar attitudes about sex than do those who have dissimilar attitudes. Fisher, Byrne, White, & Kelley (1988) reported that husbands rate sex as a more desirable recreational activity than do wives and have more sexual fantasies than do women. They even contend that if men tend to be more interested in sex than women, we can expect them to respond positively to women with positive

attitudes about sex. On the other hand, women may prefer men with relatively negative attitudes about sex since they report significantly more negative attitudes about sex than do men. Smith, Becker, Byrne & Przybyla (1993) conducted a study measuring erotophobia (extremely negative attitudes about sex) and erotophilia (extremely positive attitudes about sex) in relation to sexual satisfaction among couples.

They reported that the greatest sexual discontent is found among couples where husbands are more erotophilic than are their wives. The most sexually satisfied couples were those where both spouses were erotophilic. Though erotophobia was associated with dissatisfaction, it was preferable for the couple to be similar rather than dissimilar to experience satisfaction.

9) Role Orientation Scale (ROR). This scale does not measure distress. High scores indicate nontraditional egalitarian orientations, while low score indicate more traditional orientations.

Even in recent studies which show female increased labor-force participation and even attitudinal support for sharing household tasks, many husbands continue to spend little time in housework (Spitze, 1988; Thompson & Walker, 1991). Robinson & Spitze (1992) claim that while there is little evidence that the division of household labor affects

marriage happiness for husbands, household fairness does affect marriage happiness for wives.

Some studies (Bielby & Bielby, 1989; Perry-Jenkins & Crouter, 1990) have reported higher levels of life satisfaction when both spouses occupy traditional gender roles, both at home and the workplace. Jorgensen (1979) found that wives' perceptions of husbands as good providers is a significant determinant of marital quality. Lueptow (1989) reports that while men's sex role ideology is not significantly related to marital happiness, women with traditional gender values are slightly happier than women with nontraditional gender values. Perry-Jenkins and Crouter (1990) suggest that husbands who espouse traditional sex role attitudes, but whose wives are employed, will report lower levels of satisfaction with their marriage. In contrast, there are some studies that contradict these findings. For instance, research suggests that involvement in household tasks may increase well being for older men (Dorfman, 1992). A woman's employment may enhance her psychological well being (Adams, 1987). Some studies suggest that for wives, marital satisfaction is often dependent on how equitable they perceive the family work to be divided (Suitor, 1990). We are researching sex roles at a time of transition. The information we get in this area

will need to be constantly renewed.

One wonders how the traditional Cherokee notions concerning roles of the sexes affect responses to the MSI-R.

At stomp dances as well as at other tribal gatherings, Cherokee women and men have distinct roles. The female principal, Selu, is the Corn-Mother who gives her life to feed, nurture, and for physical proximity and whispering comfort (the wind through the corn stems) to her people. While Cherokee women also hunted and have always had great liberty in their outdoor roles, they have also been the bearers and nurturers of life. Kanati, the male principle, the Lucky Hunter, is the mythic father of the Cherokee, who is a meat provider, a protector, and offers woodlore to his people to illuminate their lives' journeys. The woods is the stage on which men act out their adventures in this life. Even today the Cherokee man's domain is often considered to be outdoors. Both of these principles are within both male and females, though males and females may typically emphasize the principle consistent with their sex.

For many Cherokees the traditional roles have been upset. A traditional Cherokee mother at a family conference I attended remarked, "Things have gotten out of balance between Selu and Kanati. Many of our men drink too much and instead of protecting and providing for their families, they

are beating their wives." A rapidly changing society and the double bind traditional Cherokees find themselves in if they enter the market economy (loss of traditional way of life or on the other hand poverty) has thrown many into seemingly no win situations. Cherokee women often do hard labor and bring money back into the home. Many Cherokee men and women are unemployed and alcohol abuse abounds. Nonetheless, there are still many who are drawing from the ancient Selu and Kanati principles and utilizing them in new ways in our changing society.

11) Family History of Distress Scale (FAM). This scale assesses the individuals' distresses in his or her family of origin. Many of the problems that exist in Cherokee families are the direct consequence of generations of separating children from parents. Because of being forced into boarding schools as children, many adult Cherokees have never had spousal interaction modeling. Young couples typically started their lives together in the wife's mother's home. They were typically not formally married but lived together in common law. Today young Cherokee couples still often begin their relationships in one of their parents' homes, though not necessarily with the wife's mother. Within the same household there may be a surviving grandparent. There may be even three generations in the same

household. In some of the households the guidance from the grandparents and parents may be very strong though typically indirect. The new couple may be taught harmonious living through role modeling and participation in spiritual activities. Today it is not uncommon for young couples to separate and enter into multiple relationships with and without offspring.

The interactions among many Cherokee couples today are often chaotic. Poverty, decreasing accessibility of traditional teachings, alcohol abuse, difficulty of putting to practice traditional beliefs in modern industrial capitalism, and lack of education have resulted in much family distress and destructive behavior between spouses. According to Minuchin's (1974) family systems dynamics (creation, modification, and maintenance of boundaries) analysis, many Cherokee families would be characterized as dangerously diffuse. When economic and social conditions for Cherokees are as intimidating and complex as described previously in this manuscript, Cherokee spouses and parents may displace their anger toward spouses and children who serve as tangible, though illusory, substitutes.

12) Dissatisfaction with Children Scale (DSC).

Dissatisfaction with children complicates the marital relationship. This dissatisfaction connotes the negative



impact of child rearing demands reflected in the MSI-R. Mott (1994) and Biller (1994) found that the presence of a male child in a family is associated with lower divorce rates in part because fathers are more involved with sons than daughters. Temperament research has found that difficult child behavior predicted lower marital satisfaction (Easterbrooks & Emde, 1988). Parents with adolescent children report lower marital satisfaction (Belsky, 1990, Montemayor, 1983). Studies have shown that the presence of children in the family lowers the level of marital happiness (Glenn & McLanahan, 1982; White, Booth, & Edwards, 1986).

Having completed many studies with American Indian families Roger Herring (1989) classified them as, "chaotically disengaged family type...displaying extreme levels of emotional separateness, lack of family loyalty, and very poor communication." The Oklahoma Census (1993) reported the rate of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome as 10.5 per 1,000 live births (the general population's rate is 1 to 3 in 1,000 births). American Indian children aged one to four years have an injury-related mortality rate three times higher than the general population. High school drop out rate reaches 60%. Adolescent suicide rates have increased 1,000% over the past 20 years. Arrest rates are 10 times as high as Whites and 2 times as that of African Americans.

13) Conflict Over Child Rearing (CCR). This scale assesses the extent of conflict between spouses over child rearing practices (Snyder, 1997). Minuchin (1974) discussed how the strength of "executive functioning" affects child rearing. Marital dissatisfaction may precipitate behavior problems in a child or a child's problems may place untoward stress on the marital relationship. When stepparents join a family, child-rearing distress is likely.

#### Summary

In summary, research suggests that culture as well as many other factors affect couple satisfaction. Some studies have reported correlations between socioeconomic resources and marital satisfaction. Cherokees tend to make considerably less money than the average American. Cherokees in general are also less educated than mainstream Americans, but research has not consistently reported this to be a decisive factor in couple's satisfaction. Many Cherokees have white spouses. Most research suggests that interracial marriages tend to be less satisfactory. This may be due to influences of acculturation on marital satisfaction.

A review of the research on the independent scales of the MSI-R offers information that will help to interpret results with Cherokee couples. 1) Affective communication.

Detachment may be predictive of marital dissatisfaction, while tenderness has been found to predict marital satisfaction. 2) Problem solving communication. Couples who utilize cooperative, supportive, and flexible ways of solving problems tend to have greater marital satisfaction while couples who use conflict engagement, withdrawal, and defensiveness are less satisfied in their marriages. 3) Aggression. Though historically aggression and violence may not have been common in Cherokee marriages, the prevalent alcohol abuse may have eroded non-violent boundaries. 4) Time together. Avoidant couples report dissatisfaction while couples who participate in activities together and support each other report higher levels of satisfaction. 5) Disagreement about Finances. Studies report that economic hardship triggers interactive patterns that may result in marital dissatisfaction. Additionally, when wives believe that money is unfairly controlled, marital satisfaction is relatively effected. 6) Sexual satisfaction. Persons with similar sexual attitudes are more attracted to each other than persons with dissimilar attitudes. One study alluded to above suggests that women who tend to have more negative attitudes toward sex may prefer men with relatively negative attitudes toward sex. 7) Role orientation. Many studies report greater satisfaction among couples who espouse

traditional sex role attitudes, but several studies contradict these findings. Wives report that household fairness affects marriage happiness. 8) Family history of distress. A history of oppression has contributed to a high percentage of American Indian families being in chaotic states. Many Cherokee families may be characterized as having diffuse boundaries. 9) Dissatisfaction with Children. Studies report that the presence of children in the family lowers the level of happiness. Cherokee families tend to have more children than mainstream families. 10) Conflict over Child Rearing. Because the extended family plays a more primary role in raising Cherokee children and traditional attitudes concerning childrearing may differ from mainstream attitudes, the conflicts between a couple may take on different aspects. For instance, a grandmother's crucial childrearing role may deflect some of the conflicts.

Significant cultural differences strongly affect human interactions. Traditional Cherokee culture has been shown to be very different from mainstream culture. Research as well as anecdotal information suggests that the global dissatisfaction scale and each of the thirteen subscales may be elevated for Cherokees participants in general and that Cherokees who do not speak the Cherokee language differ from Cherokee speaking Cherokees. Further,

the review of related research suggests that Cherokee speakers who are married to a Cherokee spouse who speaks Cherokee are likely to differ from Cherokee speaking spouses who are not married to Cherokee speaking spouses.

## METHOD

### Participants

The participants included 162 Northeastern Oklahoma Cherokee married adults, 87 women and 75 men. Unlike many previous psychological studies with American Indians, the participants were not self-identified American Indians at a college campus. Further a large proportion were Cherokees who the spoke Cherokee language (66). Many others reported that they understood Cherokee, though could not speak it. That is to say, many demonstrated an integral aspect of their culture rather than rate themselves on an acculturation instrument. In addition, the researcher went to the participants in their own tribal communities, further insuring that the participants were somehow connected to their cultures.

### Instruments

Demographic Form. Participants completed a standard demographic form that requested information about age, sex, education, employment, income, number of marriages, years in

current marriage, and number of children. They were also asked to sign an informed consent form and to complete Snyder's (1997) Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised (MSI-R).

Acculturation Level. Rather than utilizing self-report instruments to determine acculturation level, this study will simply attempt to determine if participants speak and understand the Cherokee language or not to determine acculturation level. This will be accomplished by first asking participants to describe their fluency and then by testing the limits of this self-report by asking them to speak briefly about their marriage in the Cherokee language.

This aspect of culture was chosen because language is the surest sign of a Cherokee's connection to his or her culture. Without a doubt, the capacity to communicate in Cherokee is the characteristic identified by most Cherokees as the most salient ingredient for fully participating in traditional Cherokee culture.

Fluency in the Cherokee language and non-fluency Cherokee were the two comparisons used with the 13 scales on Snyder's Marital Satisfaction Inventory - Revised (MSI-R). Snyder's Marital Satisfaction Inventory Revised Edition (MSI-R) was used as the central instrument in this study because the MSI-R has been utilized by Cherokee Behavioral

Health as their marital assessment instrument and because it is universally recognized by psychologists as a valuable marital assessment tool. The MSI-R is simple to use.

Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised. The original Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) was developed by Snyder (1979) to provide researchers and clinicians with an objective self-report technique for assessing individual attitudes and beliefs regarding specific areas of the marital relationship (Sabatelli, 1988). There are now 13 dimensions of marital and family life covered by 150 true/false, fill in the dot, items. The key features of the MSI were retained, though the number of items was reduced and a scale assessing aggression was added. The subscales do not encapsulate every aspect of marital interaction, though they do cover the areas of marital satisfaction most researched. For instance, missing factors might include trust, adaptive abilities, commitment, social connectedness, spirituality, philosophy of life, and humor. However, the MSI-R factors have been shown to be crucial, if not comprehensive, in marital adjustment. Let us now turn our attention to the MSI-R subscales to be examined in this study and discuss the importance of these underlying constructs for marital satisfaction among Cherokee couples.

The 13 dimensions of the MSI-R include: 1)

Inconsistency; 2) Conventionalization; 3) Global Distress (overall dissatisfaction with the marriage); 4) Affective Communication (how well couples convey affect verbally and nonverbal); 5) Problem-Solving Communication; 6) Aggression; 7) Time Together (level of common interests and dissatisfaction with the quality and quantity of leisure time together); 8) Disagreement about Finances; 9) Sexual Dissatisfaction; 10) Role Orientation (degree to which an individual adopts a traditional versus nontraditional orientation toward marital and parental sex roles); 11) Family History of Distress; 12) Dissatisfaction with Children; and 13) Conflict over Child Rearing.

The MSI-R scales were judged to be adequate because they were found to be internally consistent (alpha range from .70 (DSC) to .93 (GDS), with a mean coefficient of .82. Test-retest coefficients generally confirm the temporal stability of individual scales, ranging from .74 (Global Distress, Disagreement about Finances, Conflict over Child Rearing) to .88 (ROR) with a mean coefficient of .79. Inter-correlations among MSI-R scales indicate a high degree of inter-relatedness, particularly those assessing more global or affective components. A strong affective component runs throughout the inventory and accounts for most of the common variance among scales. The MSI had demonstrated an ability



to discriminate between couples from the general population and couples in therapy on each of the scales. There is a high interrelation between the original and the revised scales, with correlations ranging from .94 to .98 (median=.955). The number of correlates specific per scale ranged from 3 (CNV) to 20 (Global Distress), with a mean of 8.6 correlates), indicating scale validity (Snyder, 1979). Specifically, the general tendency is for the Affective Communication, Problem Solving, and Time Together to perform as the best predictors of global satisfaction( $r = .77, .76, .73$  respectively) (Sabatelli, 1988). As an overall measure of relationship accord, the GDS scale has been found to correlate highly with both the Locke-Wallace (1959), Marital Adjustment Test (Snyder, 1979), and with Spanier's (1976) Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Snyder, 1997).

In 1979 Snyder acknowledged that additional research will be required to determine the proportion of group differences on the MSI with the standardization sample that is attributable to test bias and that which reflects actual group differences along relevant external criteria. Specifically, he says that a controlled study would be necessary that compares racial groups while controlling for socioeconomic status and other factors. The need is still with us. Nonetheless, he argues that there have been few

studies with any tests or measurements to assess their validity and reliability concerning marital satisfaction.

The MSI-R was standardized on a sample of 2,040 persons. The sample was geographically diverse and was representative of most educational levels and occupations. Nonetheless, there were not any American Indians listed among the ethnic populations represented. The mean age for women was 38.8 and for men was 40.7. Couples in the sample averaged 14.9 years of marriage. The modal number of children was 2 (M=1.9).

### Procedure

The sample recruitment procedure was opportunistic, rather than random. The sample consisted of participants who chose to respond to poster advertisements at a grocery store in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, a political rally in Stilwell, and a convenience store in Marble City, Oklahoma. The manager at the grocery store in Tahlequah allowed the researcher to set up a table and a poster ("\$15 to complete Marital Satisfaction Inventory...Must be a Cherokee citizen") just inside the front door. A table and the same poster were set up in the back of the small convenience store in Marble City. At the Stilwell political rally a speaker simply announced the research study from the podium and referred interested participants to the researcher who was in the

audience.

There was an attempt to get 15 male and 15 female participants in each category (fluent Cherokee men married to fluent Cherokee women; fluent Cherokee women married to fluent Cherokee men; fluent Cherokee men to non-fluent Cherokee women; fluent Cherokee women to non-fluent Cherokee men; non-fluent Cherokee men to fluent Cherokee women; non-fluent Cherokee women to fluent Cherokee men; non-fluent Cherokee men to non-fluent Cherokee women; non-fluent Cherokee women to non-fluent Cherokee men; and, used only in the first hypothesis, non-fluent Cherokee men married to White women; and non-fluent Cherokee women to White men. Participants were informed about the nature of the research as well as their rights regarding participation. They were told that their responses to the instruments would be kept confidential.

### Test Administration

The MSI-R is a self-administered inventory. Before beginning the inventory, respondents were informed of the purpose of the research study, the format and content of the MSI-R, and given instructions for marking and changing responses. There were a few participants who indicated that they needed help in understanding the items on the

questionnaires and the inventory. All of these had family members present to facilitate understanding of the language, though none were allowed to see the respondents' answers. Completion of the demographic form and the MSI-R took respondents from 25 to 55 minutes to complete.

## **RESULTS**

Demographic characteristics of the 162 Cherokee participants are presented in Table 1.

The mean age for the respondents was 38.25. The average length of current marriage was 13.23 years. The average number of children living at home was 1.31, and the average household consisted of 5.73 persons. Participants averaged 12.07 years of education.

### **Key Findings on Basic Norms**

Hypothesis 1: Mean differences will exist between the MSI-R normative values (T-score=50) and mean T-scores of the Cherokee group, across each of the MSI-R validity and clinical scales.

The mean T scores on the 13 basic scales of the MSI-R for Cherokees were compared to the MSI-R normative T-scores using a one-sample t-test. The experiment-wise alpha with the Bonferonni adjustment = .004 was used.

Results of the one-sample t-tests for the mean

T-score comparisons with the overall normal standard revealed significant findings. Significant differences were found for the following four scales: Inconsistency (INC), Conventionalization (CNV), Global Distress (GDS), Aggression (AGG).

For the second hypothesis (mean differences will exist between respondents who are fluent in Cherokee and those who are not fluent in the Cherokee language across validity and clinical scales) analysis was carried out with a one-way MANOVA. Results confirmed differences existed on the Fluency factor [ $F(13, 87)=3.07, p=.001$ ]. Univariate follow up tests, using ANOVAs, indicated differences on the factors of Inconsistency and Family History of Distress between those respondents who spoke Cherokee and those who did not speak Cherokee. For the main effect of Fluency, on the Inconsistency variable, Fluent respondents' ratings (57.5) were higher than the Non-fluent (53.2), [ $F(1, 103)=6.8, p=.011$ ]. On the Family dimension, the Fluent rated their Family History of Distress lower (49.0) than the Non-fluent, [ $F(1, 103)=8.03, p=.006$ ].

On the second effect, which dealt with the third hypothesis, respondents who are in mixed marriages differed from respondents who are in matched marriages ( $F(13, 91)=1.448, p=.153$ ). The variables showed significant

differences on Conventionalization ( $F(1, 103)=5.65, p=.02$ ) and Time Together, [ $F(1, 103)=4.83, p=.03$ ]. On the Conventionalization Scale (CNV), respondents who were themselves fluent and married to a person who was also fluent rated CNV at 51.7, but those married to a non fluent spouse rated it at 52.9. For those who did not claim fluency, participants who were married to a fluent spouse rated their CNV at 54.8, while those married to a non-fluent spouse rated it at 47.8. Thus, while spousal fluency decreased their Conventionalization rating for those personally fluent, that same factor increased the rating for those who were not personally fluent. On the Time Together Scale (TTO), fluent respondents married to a fluent spouse rated TTO higher (51.9) compared to those with a non-fluent spouse (48.8), whereas non-fluent respondents with a fluent spouse rated TTO lower (49.7) compared to the non-fluent couple (54.4).

In addition to the main-effect result on personal Fluency indicated by the MANOVA, there were individual variable differences detected by follow-up ANOVAs. The third hypothesis predicted that respondents who are in mixed marriages would differ from respondents who are in matched marriages. The first was in the interaction between Gender and spousal Fluency. A difference appeared on the variable

of Conflict in Child Rearing, [ $F(1, 99)=4.81, p=.03$ ]. The evidence suggests that women married to Non-Cherokee speaking spouses rate Conflict in Childrearing higher (54.2) than women married to Cherokee-speaking men (49.9). Cherokee men married to Non-Cherokee speaking women (52.4) rate Conflict in Childrearing lower than those married to Cherokee-speaking women (56.4).

### Secondary Findings

Without the Bonferoni adjustment, at alpha =.05, three additional scales were significant when comparing the MSI-R norms with the Cherokee norms on the validity and basic scales: Disagreement About Finances (FIN) [ $t(161)=2.57$ ], Sexual Dissatisfaction (SEX) [ $t(161)=-2.40$ ], and Conflict over Childrearing (CCR) [ $t(130)=2.88$ ]. For purpose of thoroughness, these will be discussed later.

In addition, a Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was used to determine incremental increases in explained variance. In addition to gender the following demographic variables were examined: age, employment, household income level, educational attainment, number of children in household, number of persons in the household, number of years married, previous marriages, and occupation. No significant relationships were detected in this analysis.

## Discussion

### Considerations

To summarize the results of this study, differences from MSI-R norms were obtained on scales (INC), (CNV), (GDS), and (AGG). On each of the scales these T-scores were elevated above 50. Mean differences were between respondents who are fluent in Cherokee and those who were not fluent on scales (INC) and (FAM). As far as spousal fluency was concerned, on the (CCR) scale, women married to non-fluent men were more distressed than those married to fluent spouses, while men married to fluent women were more distressed than those married to non-fluent spouses. Lastly, persons in mixed marriages (fluent to non-fluent) were significantly more distressed than persons in matched marriages (fluent to fluent) on the (CON) while persons in matched marriages were more distressed than persons in mixed marriages on the (TTO) scale.

In regard to the mean differences between Cherokees and the MSI-R normative values, the differences may suggest that married Cherokees were distressed in several areas of their marriages. But the reader should keep in mind that that these differential T-scores do not necessarily indicate **clinically** significant distress levels. Even the scales that approach clinical significance do not necessarily show



distress. The following considerations offer explanations as to why married Cherokees may experience distress in their marriages as well as alternative speculations as to the meaning of the differences.

The Inconsistency scale (INC) was the most elevated. This scale is more closely connected to the understanding of Standard English than the other scales. Consistent responses demand an understanding of subtle meanings of the language.

Elevated scores could indicate either mixed feelings concerning the issues addressed or that word referents for certain feelings are ambiguous to Cherokees, or both. During a counseling session with the writer of this dissertation, a Creek couple admitted that they did not say, "I love you" to each other. The husband said it sounded sort of like "I want to cut you up" in their language. They said a more appropriate way of speaking would be to say, "I admire you."

As with this Creek couple, words used in the MSI-R may have different connotations for Cherokees. Cherokee English is creative. One easily notices simple differences in subject verb relations as well as unique phrasings. To give in to "standard" meanings is to yield politically to whatever and whoever determines Standard English. It may represent acquiescence to an external authority that may not understand or sanction unique expressions of differing

cultures. Instead of interpreting high Inconsistency scores negatively, one may speculate about hidden strengths imbedded in inconsistent responses.

High scores on the Conventional Scale may indicate feelings of defensiveness that some Cherokees may have in revealing information on personal matters. One Cherokee-speaking woman told me after completing the inventory, "Remember that traditional Cherokees are a very private people. They don't like sharing their problems." I think she was suggesting that Cherokee people are likely to offer positive appraisals about matters that they feel are personal. Making themselves vulnerable to American institutions has not always benefited Cherokee people.

The Global Distress Scale differed. An elevated score reflects general dissatisfaction in the relationship, unfavorable comparison to other relationships, and negative expectations about the future of the relationship. On the one hand, the elevations of the other three scales offer interpretation for this general scale. On the other hand, one should keep in mind that the items correspond with general experiences and certain values of Cherokee people. Humility may be more emphasized in Cherokee cultures than in mainstream cultures. Cherokees may be less likely to extol their relationships. Comparing their relationship favorably

in relation to others may be prideful. Second, pessimism regarding the future of their relationships may be interpreted as a fatalism that is part of many Cherokee belief systems. To expect a favorable future may be tempting God. Married Cherokees differed on the Aggression (AGG) scale. Typically I believe Cherokee people utilize avoidance in conflict situations, but extremely high rates of drug and alcohol use has contributed to an atrophy of Cherokee cultures and has impacted the interaction of marital relations. Gioncola (1998) reported that acute alcohol consumption is positively related to physical aggression. Physical abuse is probably directly related to the high rate of alcohol abuse among Cherokees.

The second hypothesis stated that mean differences will exist between respondents who are fluent in Cherokee and those who are not fluent in Cherokee across validity and clinical scales. Participants who were fluent in Cherokee were found to be significantly different from other participants on (INC) and (FAM). Again, on the Inconsistency scale lack of familiarity with Standard English may account for the fluent respondents' higher scores. As for the non-fluent Cherokees' higher scores on the Family History of Distress, acculturation stress may be an attributing factor. Cherokees are constantly pressured

to assimilate in order to succeed in school and the workplace. One of the prices of assimilation and loss of the Cherokee language is less communication and possible estrangement on many levels with one's Cherokee speaking family.

The third hypothesis stated that respondents who are in mixed marriages, defined by having one spouse who is fluent in Cherokee and one who is not, will differ from respondents who are in matched marriages, defined as marriages which include spouses who are both fluent in Cherokee or both non-fluent. While the differences were not reflected on the omnibus analysis, two scales were significant on the univariate. There were significant differences between fluent respondents married to fluent spouses on CNV and TTO in comparison to fluent respondents married to non-fluent persons. Those respondents who were in "mixed" marriages, whether they themselves or their spouse spoke Cherokee, had higher ratings on the Conventionalization scale than did those who matched in language fluency or non-fluency. High Conventionalization (CNV) suggests that the participant tended to distort his or her answers in an unrealistically or positive manner. This may reflect defensiveness in discussing relationship conflict. Cherokees who in their choice of marriage partners take a major step into another

culture, may find themselves frequently criticized by members of the culture in which they have been a participant. Maybe their "defensive" responses are a form of healthy resistance toward what they may feel to be another example of outsiders prying into their affairs.

Time Together (TTO) was also significantly different between those participants who were fluent when compared to those who were not. Fluent respondents married to fluent spouses were more distressed than fluent respondents married to non-fluent spouses, but, complicating things, non-fluent respondents married to fluent spouses were more distressed than non-fluent respondents married to non-fluent spouses. This is to say, in regard to Time Together, whether respondents matched in fluency or non-fluency they were less distressed than respondents who did not match with their spouse in fluency or non-fluency. Could it be that crossing over into a different culture in marriage often results in couples finding more quality time to spend with each other?

Is there a need in us as human beings to create new social connections when we have chosen to step away from our culture in a major aspect of our lives such as marriage? Does quality time together in the marriage replace part of the previous culturally specific social interactions that may have existed before the marriage? For example, does a

fluent husband choose to spend more time with a wife who does not speak Cherokee and less time with his family of origin because his wife may not feel comfortable with his family who speaks Cherokee in the home. Does his family cause he and his wife to feel uncomfortable when they visit?

It could be that this uncomfortable situation results in the couple creating more quality time together for themselves.

### **Secondary Findings**

Married Cherokees showed significant differences with the norms on the Disagreement over Finances Scale. As mentioned above, Cherokees live far below the average standard of living. Conger (1990) contends that economic hardship increases marital instability and hostile interaction and decreases warm styles of marital interaction. When one's basic needs are not getting met, fights are probably more likely to break out in any culture. Lack of resources produces apathy. The poor become inert, unable to generate enough hope and energy to make plans. Without the power to dream of a more secure future may negatively affect couples' relationships.

Cherokee participants reported significantly less Sexual Dissatisfaction than the norm population. Low scores indicate a generally positive attitude about the quality and

frequency of intercourse. On the other hand, a reticence concerning revealing of sexual problems among Cherokee people could account for the low scores. After completing the MSI-R a Cherokee speaking woman told me, "Those questions about sex are too personal."

The Conflict over Childrearing Scale (CCR) was significant for Cherokee respondents. Many Cherokee children and their parents periodically live in the grandparent's home. Cherokee couples who raise children will often have the support of an extended family. Most husbands remain fairly distant from the children, allowing wives to do most of the child rearing. Often an uncle will handle some of the discipline with the children. As the traditional structures are not available or are not utilized by Cherokee parents, increased conflict over parenting style will increase, as mothers will expect more direct child rearing support from fathers.

There was a significant result for the general group and those Non-Fluent Cherokees who were married to Fluent Cherokees (CCR) on Conflict over in Childrearing (CCR). If we can assume Non-Fluent Cherokees are less likely to be traditional than their Fluent partners, we speculate that there may be a difference in their ideas about discipline and the roles and relationships of members of the extended

family. Since children are often the focus of intense emotions for parents the different values may result in distress. Non-Fluent parents may be more likely to utilize direct methods of guidance and discipline. Fluent parents may be more indirect in their approaches. Non-Fluent parents may resent the influence of the extended family on their children.

Traditional Cherokee parents are often criticized for being too permissive with their children. They may seem to be leaving too many choices up to the child. McNickle (1973) contended that some tribes emphasize that newborn children enter the world with two identities, a human form and an animal form. He or she is allowed the choice of either identity. Family members want the child to choose to reside with them in human form, but will not coerce the child with punishment into humanness. The child can decide to die and assume his or her animal identity. One fluent Cherokee woman in the study explained that Cherokee families must be very "kind" with their infants, else the spirits can take them back.

The numerous relatives who are in the role of parents all have a place in the education and rearing of a child. When there is agreement regarding appropriate behavior and proper discipline, there is probably little conflict. But



if parents do not share common perspectives concerning the relations their child has to extended family members, distress between parents is likely (Lee, 1976).

### Methodological Considerations

In collecting data from a wide spectrum of Cherokees, the researcher ran into difficulties finding participants who were fluent in Cherokee and married to white persons. Consequently, empty cells made certain statistical analyses problematic.

Another issue stemmed from the probability that the Cherokee population was financially much poorer than the MSI-R normed population. Snyder did not utilize finances as a demographic variable in analyzing his data so we do not have a number to compare, but it is doubtful that 56% of the MSI-R normed sample lived in households where the annual income was less than \$20,000. As cited previously, some studies suggested that lower income may be associated with greater marital distress (Scanzoni, 1975).

Finally, this study relied on volunteer participants. It is impossible to know how they may differ from others who chose not to participate.

### Limitations of the Study

There are many assumptions and limitations to this

study. How factual can psychological research outcomes be when "participants evidence discrepancies in their shared assumptions, experiences, beliefs, values, expectations, and goals" (Manson & Trimble, 1982)?" This study assumes that even the most traditional Cherokees have values and goals similar enough to mainstream American society that the questionnaires they complete are relevant, comprehensible, and interpretable. The high score on the Inconsistency scale suggests problems with comprehensibility. On the other hand, ideally the questionnaires reveal some of the similarities as well as the disparities between northeastern Oklahoma Cherokee cultures and the cultures of the normed population. Most traditional Cherokees that I have met speak much about universal human characteristics that Cherokees have with other races as they do about racial differences.

The MSI-R is one of the best marital assessment instruments, but should it be used with Cherokees? Should it be used with discretion? Perhaps, the many similar scores between the normed scores and those of the Cherokee participants suggest that the MSI-R can still serve the Cherokees with whom it is currently being used if it is used with caution and sensitivity.

#### **Strengths of the Study**

The primary contribution of this study is that it may

provide information on norms for the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised for Cherokees. Therapists who work with Cherokee couples and mixed Oklahoma Cherokee couples may utilize this knowledge to increase the efficacy of assessment and therapy with this population. Additionally, the study's methods and procedures may also be replicated with other tribes. The author is pleased to have been able to include a large percentage of "traditional" Cherokees in this study. Another important factor to be considered from the onset is the Cherokee peoples' attitude toward research.

Former Oklahoma Cherokee Chief Wilma Mankiller has repeatedly criticized past research for not recognizing differences between tribes. For too long, generalized references to "American Indians" or "Indian culture" has obliterated the enormous diversity of ceremonies, world views, political and social organizations, life-styles, language, and art. By focusing on a specific tribe, Northeastern Oklahoma Cherokees, and by limiting interpretations and generalizations to it, stereotypes, typical of many studies about American Indians, will be minimized. Too often, research about American Indians is guilty of making unfounded generalizations about American Indians from non-representative participants. Traditional marriage roles vary among the 517 tribal units (recognized

by the United States Government) who speak 150 different languages and maintain different cultural backgrounds (Stewart, 1977).

The results of the study may be directly relevant to marriage enrichment programs for Cherokees. Married Cherokees' increased awareness about shared problem areas in their marriages may provide a basis to explore and develop their relationships. Psycho-educational programs could involve couples in education about deficits as well as strengths that they may have in their relationships and opportunities for marital skills training. The psycho-educational approach may be less threatening to traditional Cherokees because they would not be expected to make themselves as emotionally vulnerable as in a marital therapy setting. Further, the program might be set up in a "safe" place in their community.

Within couples' therapy, this study has assessment implications. Therapists should take into account that scores should be interpreted with caution. Whether the scales indicate distress levels or not, discussion of MSI-R responses can still provide an excellent means to open communications for a couple to discuss relationship dissatisfaction in order to obtain an excellent assessment of the relationship.

Lastly, it is hoped that these findings may provide a cultural perspective that can enrich our understanding of marital assessment and therapy with different populations.

#### Considerations of Future Research

Hopefully, the differences found in this study will cause other researchers to replicate this study and to test the validity of other instruments used across cultures. Validity testing of psychological instruments with American Indian participants is especially urgent since they are often not included in the original samples. As stated before, it is imperative that a special effort be made to include "traditional" Indians in these samples.

A possible use of the current data as well as future use of data gathered from the MSI-R study with American Indians might consist of item analysis. Not only might an item analysis help better define differences from standard norms, it may identify different patterns of relationship interaction.

A natural follow up to this study would be a qualitative investigation that might provide a more refined understanding of the differences found. This qualitative study would be likely to be open and only incidentally related to an MSI-R study. It might consist of interviews with several traditional Cherokee couples.

To summarize, the results of this study suggest that Cherokees experience higher levels of distress in their marriages than the MSI-R normed group, though they fall short of statistical significance in all but four scales. Further, none of the mean T-scores approach clinical significance. Additionally, there were two scale differences between fluent Cherokees and non-fluent Cherokees as well as two scale differences between mixed marriages and matched marriages. On the one hand, the lack of differences in the data may support the contention that the MSI-R is a useful instrument for assessment with married Cherokees. On the other hand, there were enough differences to suggest that it be used with caution or/and that Cherokees may attribute different meanings or values about some of their experiences together as marriage partners. This study is only a scratch on the surface in an effort to helping therapists to develop a better understanding of the determinates of marital satisfaction for Cherokee couples.

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Table 1: Participant Demographics

	<i>Number of Parts.</i>	<i>Ave. Age</i>	<i>Years Married</i>	<i>Number of Children</i>	<i>Number in House- hold</i>	<i>Ave. Years of Educ.</i>
<b>Total Population</b>	162	38.25	13.23	1.31	3.73	12.07
N-Fl Male (White)	15	38.80	14.73	1.03	3.47	12.33
N-Fl Female (White)	15	34.69	11.13	0.88	3.25	12.31
N-Fl Male (N-Fl)	14	31.93	4.53	0.88	3.80	12.40
N-Fl Female (N-Fl)	15	37.33	13.39	1.11	3.94	12.05
N-Fl Male (Fl)	16	35.71	10.43	1.27	3.64	11.64
N-Fl Female (Fl)	20	29.11	8.95	0.90	4.37	12.16
Fl Male (N-Fl)	16	42.29	15.79	1.30	3.36	11.64
Fl Female (N-Fl)	18	38.00	14.13	1.16	3.67	12.33
Fl Male (Fl)	14	48.88	21.69	1.26	3.88	10.50
Fl Female (Fl)	19	45.55	16.93	1.24	3.75	13.36

N-Fl=Participant is non-fluent in the Cherokee language.

Fl=Participant is fluent in the Cherokee language.

(White/N-Fl/Fl)=Spouse is white, or spouse is Cherokee but not fluent in the Cherokee language, or spouse is Cherokee and fluent in the Cherokee language, respectively.

Table 2: Household Income

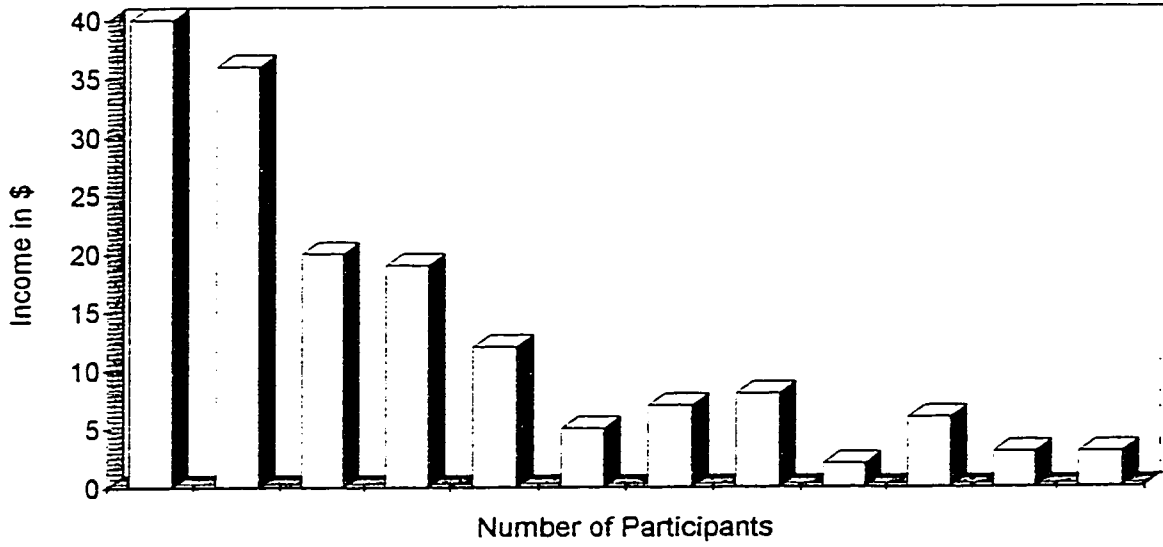


Table 3: Education by Grade Levels

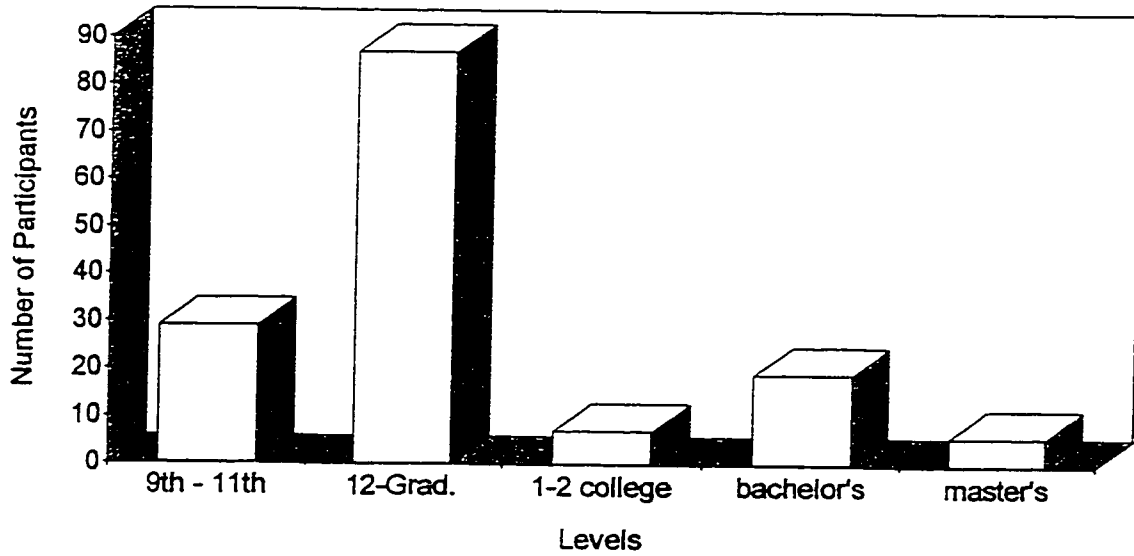


Table 4: Mean Profiles of Cherokee MSI-R Samples

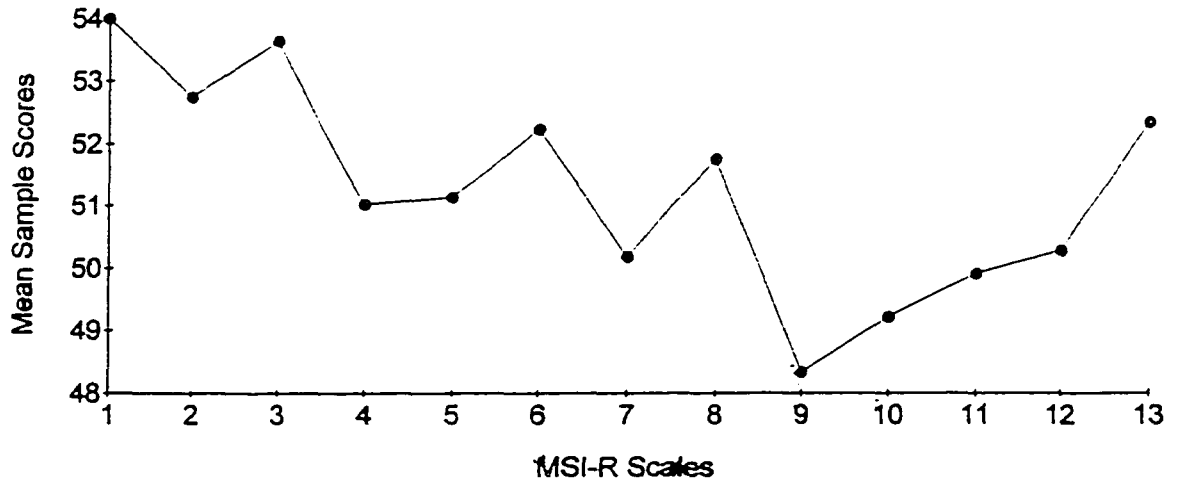
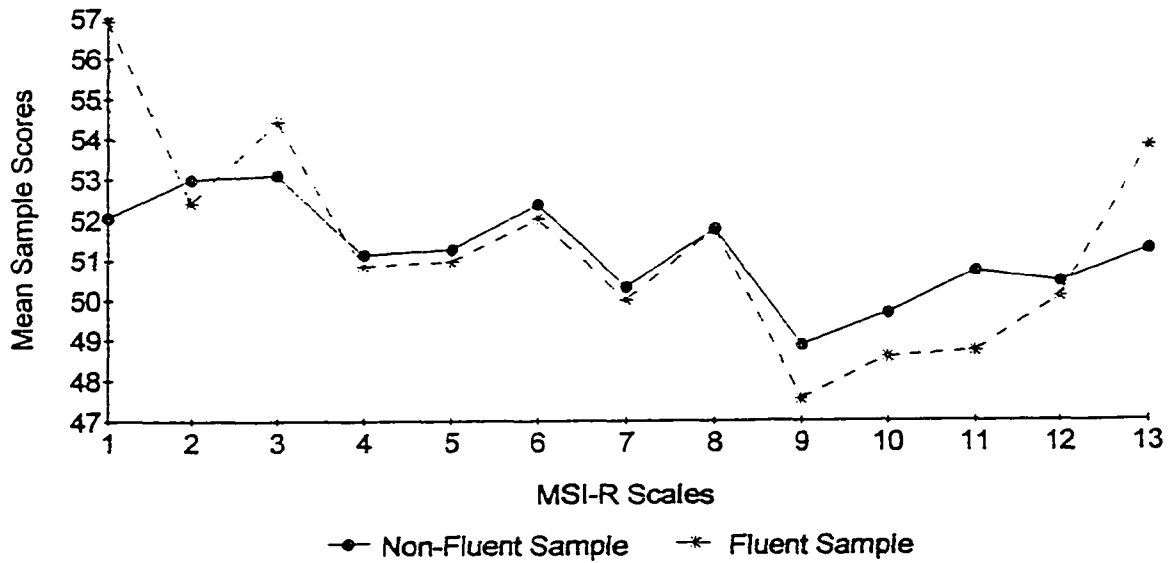


Table 5: Fluent and Non-Fluent Mean Profiles



**Table 6:**  
**Between-Subject Effects of Interest**

<i>Source</i>	<i>Dependent Variable</i>	<i>Type III Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Fluent	INC	578.33	1	578.33	6.76	.011
	FAM	635.99	1	635.99	8.03	.006
Gender*Spouse Fluent	CCR	431.82	1	431.82	4.81	.031
Fluent*Spouse Fluent	CNV	488.43	1	488.43	6.29	.014
	TTO	399.96	1	399.96	4.83	.030

**Table 7: For Hypothesis 1**

	<i>T</i>	<i>Significance (2-tailed)</i>
INC	5.124	.000
CNV	3.843	.000
GDS	6.143	.000
AFC	1.368	.173
PSC	1.713	.089
AGG	3.031	.003
TTO	.245	.807
FIN	2.570	.011
SEX	-2.398	.018
ROR	-1.455	.148
FAM	-0.136	.892
DSC	.303	.762
CCR	2.882	.005

Table 8: For Hypothesis 2

	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
INC	6.120	.015
CNV	.364	.547
GDS	.003	.958
AFC	.947	.333
PSC	.668	.415
AGG	.398	.529
TTO	.939	.335
FIN	1.628	.205
SEX	1.214	.273
ROR	.551	.460
FAM	7.079	.009
DSC	.374	.542
CCR	.656	.420

Omnibus *F* =Wilks' Lambda, *F*=3.051

Table 9: For Hypothesis 3

	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
INC	6.120	.598
CNV	.364	.019
GDS	.003	.396
AFC	.947	.279
PSC	.668	.272
AGG	.398	.758
TTO	.939	.030
FIN	1.628	.930
SEX	1.214	.727
ROR	.551	.675
FAM	7.079	.594
DSC	.374	.261
CCR	.656	.845

Omnibus *F*=Wilks' Lambda, *F*=3.051

**Informed Consent Form  
University of Oklahoma-Norman Campus  
Agreement to Participate in a Research Project**

I, (Print your name) \_\_\_\_\_  
hereby voluntarily agree to participate in the research project entitled "Marital Satisfaction of Cherokee Couples." The persons responsible for this project are Rocky Robbins, M.Ed., Doctoral student at the University of Oklahoma, and Dr. Cal Stoltenberg, Director of Training, Counseling Psychology Program. If you have questions about the research itself, Rocky Robbins can be reached at (405)366-7214. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please call the University of Oklahoma Research Administration office at (405)325-4757.

The purpose of the study is to explore the relationship of certain demographic/personological variables (e.g., age, sex, income, impact of acculturation, and number of people in household) to marital satisfaction. You will be asked to complete a research packet consisting of this consent form, the demographics questionnaire, and the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised for this study. The packet should take no longer than one hour and fifteen minutes to complete. You will receive a \$15 money order when the researcher receives the packet and confirms completion.

There are no known or anticipated psychological or physical risks associated with participating in this research project; however, absolutely no compensation of any kind will be given to you should you incur any type of distress or injury while participating in this study. You may choose to discontinue your participation in the study at any time, but will not receive the \$15 money order unless you complete the packet. All reasonable steps will be taken to insure confidentiality of the research materials you complete, including storing them in a filing cabinet in a locked office with restricted access. No one except the principal investigator and his research assistants will have access to the research materials you complete. Results will be reported in group form; no individuals will ever be identified as participants. This information represents complete disclosure of the intent of this study; there is no deception involved in this study whatsoever.

Your assistance with this study will provide valuable information to assist Cherokee couples in future marital/couples counseling. Thank you.

**I have read, understand, and agree to all of the above, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness/Investigator's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Demographics

Gender: M F

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Cherokee \_\_\_\_\_ and/or Other Tribal Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_  
Non-Indian \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status: \_\_\_ First Marriage \_\_\_ Second Marriage \_\_\_ Third  
Marriage \_\_\_ Other

Number of Years Married \_\_\_\_\_ Number of years Married Previously \_\_\_\_\_

Is your current spouse Cherokee? \_\_\_\_\_ Does he/she speak  
Cherokee? \_\_\_\_\_

Is your current spouse a member of a tribe other than Cherokee? \_\_\_\_\_

Does he/she speak that tribal language? \_\_\_\_\_

Number of sons \_\_\_\_\_ (List ages \_\_\_\_\_) Number of daughters \_\_\_\_\_  
(List ages \_\_\_\_\_)

Total number of people living in your household \_\_\_\_\_

Y N Do you have other family members living in your house?

- If yes, list their relation to you  
 \_\_\_ Your children \_\_\_ Your parent(s) \_\_\_ Other  
 \_\_\_ Your grandchildren \_\_\_ Your sibling(s)

List relation:

Y N Do you have others not mentioned above who are financially  
dependent upon  
You?

Y N Are you currently employed?

- If yes, your occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Your spouse's occupation  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Household Income:

___ Below 10,000	___ 20,001 to 25,000	___ 35,001 to 40,000
___ 10,001 to 15,000	___ 25,001 to 30,000	___ 40,001 to 45,000
___ 15,001 to 20,000	___ 30,001 to 35,000	___ 45,001 to 50,000
___ 50,001 to 55,000		
___ Above 60,000		

Education: Grade completed \_\_\_\_\_ (high school degree=12, Bachelor's  
degree=16, Master's degree=18, Doctoral degree=21)

Y N Do you speak the Cherokee language fluently?

- If yes, where do you speak it?  
 \_\_\_ at home \_\_\_ at parent's \_\_\_ at church \_\_\_ at  
 ceremonies  
 \_\_\_ Other (Explain: \_\_\_\_\_)

Y N Did you speak **only** English at home when you were growing  
up?

Y N Do you speak **only** English at home now?

Y N Is your spouse fluent in the Cherokee language?





*The University of Oklahoma*

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

October 23, 1998

Mr. Rockey Robbins  
1406 Amhurst Avenue  
Norman OK 73071

Dear Mr. Rockey Robbins:

Your research proposal, "Marital Satisfaction of Cherokee Couples," has been reviewed by Dr. E. Laurette Taylor, Chair of the Institutional Review Board, and found to be exempt from the requirements for full board review and approval under the regulations of the University of Oklahoma-Norman Campus Policies and Procedures for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research Activities.

Should you wish to deviate from the described protocol, you must notify me and obtain prior approval from the Board for the changes. If the research is to extend beyond 12 months, you must contact this office, in writing, noting any changes or revisions in the protocol and/or informed consent form, and request an extension of this ruling.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

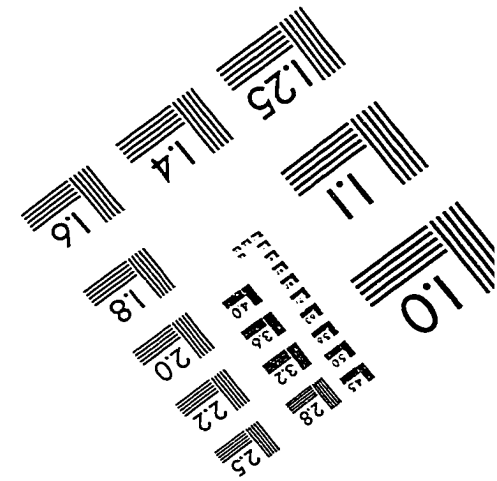
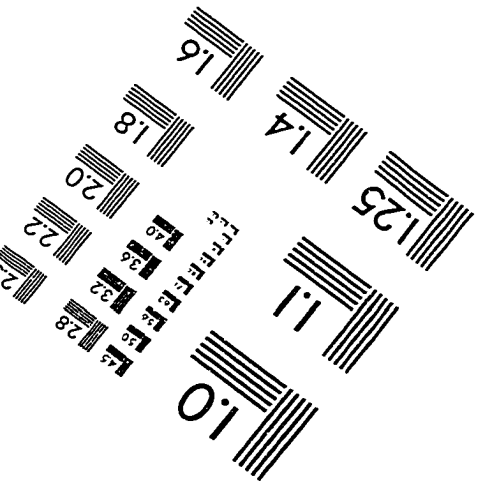
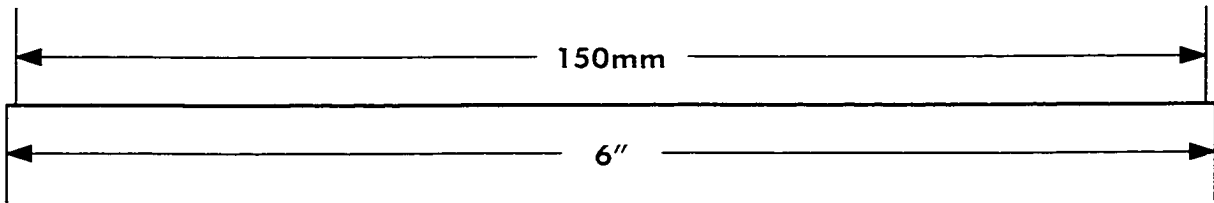
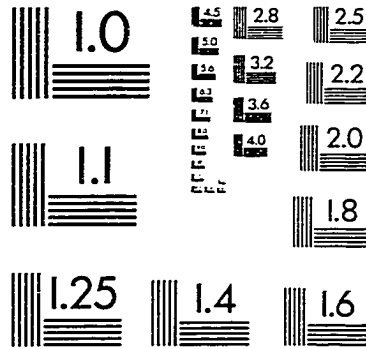
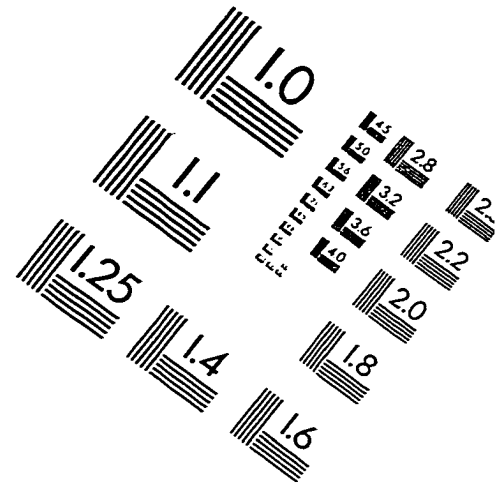
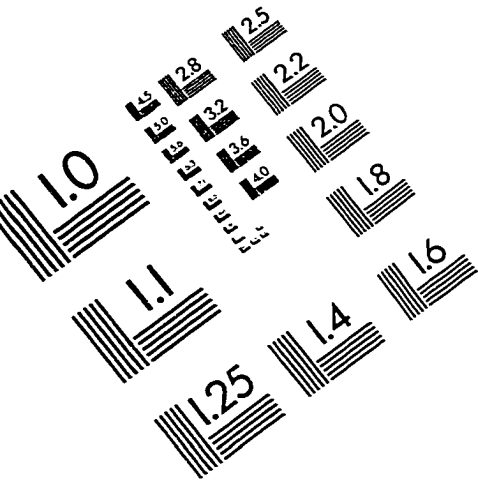
Sincerely yours,

Karen M. Petry  
Administrative Officer  
Institutional Review Board

KMP:pw  
FY99-69

cc: Dr. E. Laurette Taylor, Chair, IRB  
Dr. Cal Stoltenberg, Educational Psychology

# IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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