

THE RELATIONSHIP OF MARITAL SATISFACTION  
TO WOMEN'S ATTITUDES TOWARD GENDER  
ROLE CONFLICT

By

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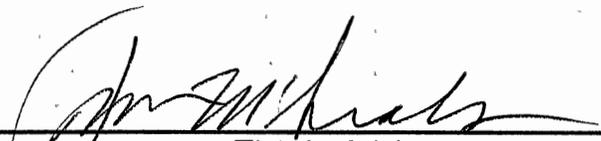
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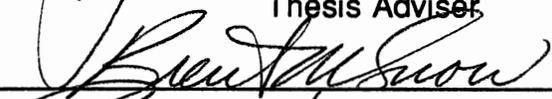
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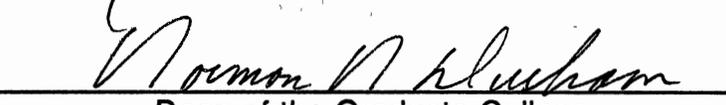
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background of the Problem

Women's attitudes toward gender role conflict affect social and cultural issues in the workplace, the home, the schools, and the family. Gender role conflict occurs when restrictive gender roles suppress personal development. It can further be described as a psychological state wherein two dissonant roles conflict within a single personality: a real self and an ideal self concept that is culturally associated with gender (Garnets and Pleck, 1979). Gender role strain is therefore an intrapsychic process leading to poor psychological adjustment, particularly low self-esteem.

When restrictive or inflexible gender role norms establish patterns that do not allow free expression, people often choose to reinforce rigid behaviors in themselves and in others. Sometimes these people punish and devalue others who deviate from traditional behaviors. Devaluation of others by definition is an outcome of gender role conflict and is one form of sexism between people (O'Neil, 1981). Individuals can also resist the devaluation of their gender behavior by freely expressing themselves, regardless of others' gender role expectations or reactions. This response is difficult because there are few rewards in our culture for transcending traditional gender roles. Yet another outcome of deviation from traditional gender roles is intense emotion toward

people who restrict another's gender values, attitudes and behaviors. When these emotions cannot be expressed, anger, anxiety, and depression may result from that experience of low self esteem. In any case, those who restrict others' gender behaviors or are restricted themselves may experience gender role conflict and strain (O'Neil, 1981).

The 1970's were times of sweeping gender role change and thoughtful evaluations. With the change, came increased anger and conflict between men and women as each had a heightened awareness of gender role conflict and sexism. By the middle 1970's, constructive definitions of key concepts had emerged. Concepts such as sex differences, sex role, gender, sexism, and androgyny became common terminology in the social sciences, education, and psychology. By the late 70's, gender role conflict was believed to be responsible for sexism and the tensions between the sexes (O'Neil, 1981).

Social and political indicators that gender role conflict and strain were prevalent in the late 1970's were evident: T.V. programming ("All in the Family's theme song ". . . when girls were girls and men were men"); the Equal Rights Amendment; and Title IX legislation, affecting secondary and higher education (O'Neil, 1981). Many movies portrayed gender role conflicts; daytime soaps picked up the theme, and unisex clothing became popular. As sociologists and psychologists and others gave professional attention to male gender role conflict, there emerged new professional organizations committed to understanding gender roles and equality between the sexes. Sex Roles, American Women in Psychology, Signs, Journal of Women in Culture and Society, Psychology of Women's Quarterly, are among the journals that address gender roles from the women's stance.

These events demonstrate a greater need to understand gender role conflict and how societal and technological changes have affected our views of

masculinity and femininity. The events also posed challenges to counselors and psychologists working with clients struggling with gender role change and evaluation (O'Neil 1981).

Violence, injustice, indignities, and cruelty, inspired the search for underlying causes. The influence of gender as it relates to these acts has increased in the literature during the past twenty years. Gender is a reality that shapes our perception of the world and our behavior (Scher and Good, 1990). Gender seems to be a central organizing principle in society and in everyday social interactions.

As Basow (1986) describes it, gender, as a complex construct, appears to be a learned phenomenon. Historically, psychological observations of sex differences focused upon sex-typed personality traits, attitudes and behaviors. These traits are labeled feminine and masculine. In general, femininity includes such characteristics as emotional sensitivity, nurturance, and interdependence. Masculinity denotes assertion, independence, dominance, and goal directedness (Cook, 1990).

As a result of gender socialization, failure to develop adaptive characteristics and skills seems to be a precondition for psychological problems. As O'neil (1981) stated it: "Men and women have each learned only about one-half of the attitudes, skills, and behaviors necessary to cope with life" (p. 64).

Describing the socialization of women's sex-roles, Hoffman (1972) found that girls, compared to boys, received both less encouragement for independence and more parental protectiveness. Women are more likely to be motivated to succeed in areas which contemporary western culture has designated as socially appropriate for them, that is, in being skillful in social situations and in relationships.

Social psychologists Petro and Putnam (1979) have studied attitudes of males and females toward cultural stereotypes and have identified systematic beliefs. More recently, their research confirms the persistence of sex-role stereotypes and their pervasive impact upon the system of social rewards. Attitudes exert profound influences on the social system because they dictate, first, how children will be reared and, ultimately, how power, work, and resources will be distributed.

In general, stereotypes provide a system of classification to organize observations about human behavior. Since these ideas provide perspectives for understanding the complexity of human events and interactional patterns, they are most difficult to change. However, as Petro and Putnam (1979) observed, if we are to discover how people shed roles ascribed to them by society, we need to first observe trends toward change and factors that effect a social belief system made up of sex-associated behavior.

In addition to socialization, sexist interactions affect childhood and adult behavior. The feminist movement of the 1970's identified oppression of women due to a combination of restrictive gender role socialization and sexism (O'Neil, 1981).

Gender role socialization assumes gender role conflict. Gender role conflict and sexism produce psychological stress. Neither gender by itself is responsible for learned sexism. Both men and women contribute to the maintenance of rigid gender role boundaries and both men and women need to take a personal responsibility for how gender role conflict and sexism constrict their own or another's human potential. O'Neil (1981) suggested that these conflicts can be better understood by continuing to assess how gender role conflict, gender role socialization, and sexism interact, affecting our relationships with each other.

Attitudes toward women's roles have a powerful effect on how women see themselves. Women's perceptions of themselves have, in turn, a profound impact on vocational choice. As recently as the Victorian era, femininity and employment were considered mutually exclusive. This separation of work from the stereotype of the ideal female led to hiring household help. A woman at home raising children was an indicator of her husband's prosperity; her traditionalized role was that of giving devoted attention to husband, children and home ( Dudden,1983). Maule (1941) expressed the dilemma of the working woman: 'girls' who work must do so in addition to the still sacred duties of the housewife and mother.

According to Cox and Cox (1984), participation of women in the labor force has grown from 38% to 55% of the total female population over the past fifty years. Over the same time period, participation of married women in the labor force has risen from 11% to 49% of the married female population, an increase of 380%. Research on women's issues and the family in recent years has reflected this change.

Hoffman (1972) has found that when women experience conflict between investment in marriage and family and successful competitive achievement, achievement striving is usually suppressed. When consequently adjusting their behaviors to an internalized sex-role stereotype, women face an additional barrier to achieving in nontraditional roles: fear of success. Even when success is likely, some women block positive striving for achievement because they are socialized to negative consequences.

The structure, functioning, and organization of the contemporary family is in a state of flux (Campbell, 1981). In particular, large numbers of married women entering the labor force changes marital and family relationships (Suchet and Barling, 1986). Hall and Gordon (1973) have observed that

mothers' roles seem to operate simultaneously rather than sequentially (as is the case with fathers'). This seems to intensify even the ordinary demands to be faced and the conflicts experienced. The extent to which the family as a whole accommodates the wife's employment is most important in determining subsequent marital adjustment (Houseknecht and Macke, 1981).

Age is another variable which affects attitudes towards women. Neugarten (1964), has studied the adult personality and the aging process finding that changes in personality are often associated with chronological age and thus suggest a developmental view of adult personality. Adult development therefore affects attitudes and marital satisfaction. Levinson's (1978) theory of adult development suggests periods of stability and periods of transition throughout the adult years, each period having its fundamental tasks. Tasks managed during stable periods are concerned with making firm choices, enhancing, and rebuilding. In contrast, those tasks managed during a transitional period are questioning, reappraising, searching, and modifying. It is presumed in the present research that many of the respondents are in transition.

Suitor (1987) has looked at similarities between wives' participation in the labor force and their enrollment in school. Factors affecting marital happiness when wives are employed may also affect marital happiness when wives return to school. Full time students need to devote more time to their student role than part-time students, thus their commitment of time is greater on campus and off campus as well.

### Statement of the Problem

The challenge for women in the 1990's will be to integrate changing attitudes with continuing concerns related to motherhood, parenting, and

marriage (Lindsey, 1990). Social changes that impact attitudes (Spence & Helmreich, 1981; Lindsey, 1990) and actions regarding gender and roles of men and women force people either to resist change or to pursue new directions. Understanding the myth and the reality of gender issues can lead to informed decision-making in relationships, in families, and in the workplace.

New families based on a companionate rather than an institutional model (Lindsey, 1990) reflect change. For many women there exists a clash of values regarding gender issues. Often, due to external pressures from family, the workplace, the marriage, or children, these clashes can also arise from internal conflicts, transitions, life-stage development, education, and personal growth (Goldner, 1985).

Over the past one hundred years, the family (i.e. marriage) has evolved from a social institution, heavy with public responsibilities, to a retreat from public life. Components of the family picture changed. Work shifted to the factory, education to the school, religion to the churches, and childbirth to the hospital. What was left of the once busy institution of the family were the vicissitudes of interpersonal relations without the diversion of tasks and duties.

This study examines the relationship between scores on the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B) (Schutz, 1978) and the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS) (Spence & Helmreich, 1972) among married women graduate students in psychology and education programs. The FIRO-B attempts to measure inclusion, affection, and control as those constructs affect interrelationships and describe personal characteristics. Affection, inclusion, and control speak to core concerns of gender role conflict, particularly in the context of the marriage dyad. The FIRO-B was selected to specifically address those issues. To date there has been increasing research attention given to the impact of male and female gender role conflict, strain, and

identity on women in management, women who work at homemaking, women in the professions, and working women with children. There is a need for more study in the area of gender role conflict in the context of marital satisfaction.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship of women's attitudes toward female gender role conflict and their perceived marital satisfaction.

### Hypothesis

**Null Hypothesis:** There will be no significant relationship between a linear combination of the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B) scores and the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS) scores.

### Significance of the Study

A primary significance of this study is to expand the understanding of women's concepts of gender role conflicts and marital satisfaction. As a result of gender socialization, failure to develop adaptive characteristics and skills seems to be a precondition for psychological problems. Women and men each have learned only half of the attitudes, behaviors, and skills necessary to coping with life.

Attitudes have a great impact on the social system because they determine how children will be reared, and how work and power resources will be distributed. Though stereotyping allows a system of classification to order ideas about human behavior, those ideas are difficult and slow to change.

This study investigates the relationship between women's attitudes toward any inherent gender role conflict and marital satisfaction. One of the factors that

might contribute to marital satisfaction is the age of the respondent. Spence and Helmreich (1981) found that parents of college age students tend to be significantly more conservative than their children. Both men and women have contributed to rigid gender role boundaries, and both need to take responsibility for seeing how gender role conflict and sexism restrict the development of human potential.

Attitudes toward women's roles have a powerful effect on how women see themselves. This study may lend support to the supposition that a good self-concept enhances the quality of relationships and intimacy with others, especially in the marriage dyad.

The relationship between gender role conflict and marital satisfaction is significant to educators and counselors not only in light of current, endemic marital and identity crises but also as an effective means of designing interventions and enhancing human development. Curriculum may be developed that provides information on gender role awareness, decision-making and marriage. Women and men can become more knowledgeable about attitudes toward women and their own interpersonal styles of relating. If attitudes could be measured or tracked earlier in life, and resources and interventions developed for maladaptive aspects, perhaps choice of and adjustment to a marriage partner could be enhanced. This study is designed to shed light on women's attitudes toward their gender role conflicts and the way it impacts their marital satisfaction.

To measure marriage satisfaction, the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B) was used. It attempts to measure a person's characteristic behavior toward others in three areas: control, affection, and inclusion. Beyond measuring individual characteristics, it also evaluates the relationship between people in the area of compatibility. The three areas

describe the fundamental interpersonal dimensions of the FIRO theory, and are behaviorally defined. The control area refers to the decision making process between people. The interpersonal need for affection is the need to establish and continue a satisfactory relationship based on love and affection. The interpersonal need for inclusion establishes and maintains a relationship around association and interaction. The present study valued those constructs as measures of marital satisfaction particularly in relationship to gender role conflict.

### Definition of Terms

Marital satisfaction . Roach, Frazier, and Bowden (1981), described this as "an attitude of greater or lesser favorability toward one's own marital relationship" (p. 537). It is the degree to which needs, expectations, and desires are met in marriage. It is perceived as a "subjective evaluation of the overall quality of marriage" (Bahr, Chappell, and Leigh, 1983, p. 795). The Fundamental Interpersonal Relationship Orientation (FIRO-B) will be used in this study to measure marital satisfaction due to its focus on the constructs of affection, control, and inclusion.

Gender roles . These are learned behaviors, expectations, and role sets defined by society as masculine or feminine "which are embodied in the behavior of the individual man or woman and culturally regarded as appropriate to males or females" (O'Neil, 1981, p. 203).

Gender role conflict . Conflict here is seen as a psychological state in which "gender roles have negative consequences or impact on the person or others. The ultimate outcome of this conflict is the restriction of the person's ability to actualize her or his human potential or the restriction of someone else's potential" (O'Neil, 1981, p. 203; O'Neil and Carroll, 1988, p. 193).

Gender role conflict in this study will be measured by the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS).

Role conflict. According to Goldenson (1984) role conflict is "a state of tension or conflict that arises when an individual fills two or more functions that clash or compete" (p. 644).

Attitudes. Rokeach (1968) asserted that attitudes are enduring patterns of beliefs around an object or a situation that predisposes the believer to respond in some preferential manner. The concept of attitude is utilized for particularly enduring, sets of predispositions formed by past experiences.

### Limitations and Assumptions

The study was carried out with a volunteer sample taken from selected, available classes, and is therefore not random. Non-random selection and limited population size restricts generalizability of the results to specified characteristics of the volunteers.

Potential for self-selection based on some conflict, problem or other stressor related to the parameters of the study also limits representation. The participants in this study were assumed to be honest and sincere in their responses. They were under no overt nor implied coercion to volunteer.

### Organization of the Study

Chapter I includes background of the problem, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, hypothesis, significance of the problem, limitations and assumptions of the study. In Chapter II related research is presented and discussed, followed in Chapter III with an explanation of the methods used. This chapter also includes a discussion of the sample, of the instrumentation, and of the procedure and research design. The results and discussion of the

data analysis are presented in Chapter IV. Chapter V presents a summary of the research findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Attitudes Toward Women

One of the most consequential social forces of the last thirty years has been the reevaluation of sex roles with the aim of bringing about greater equality for women. Derived from numerous social changes, the search for equalitarian sex roles has become a major tenet of the "Women's Movement". The ideological beliefs strain toward reducing sex role stereotypes, and sharing responsibilities for home, family, and work. A study undertaken by Kirsch, Shore, and Kyle (1976) looked at middle class adolescent boys and girls with strong attitudes for and against the sex role ideology of the Women's Movement. They were administered a Q-sort to study two aspects the researchers believed were related to identity formation: flexibility-rigidity and independence-dependence. The results supported beliefs in equalitarian sex role behaviors were related to aspects of identity formation among the sample. Additionally, Thornton, Alwin, Camburn (1983) stated that mothers' sex role attitudes and experiences play an important role in shaping the attitudes of their offspring.

The American feminist movement has stimulated growing interest in the life goals and sex role attitudes of college women. Changes in women's life goals and attitudes during the past thirty years and comparisons between women who choose nontraditional life goals and those who are seemingly content with

traditional women's roles have been the major emphasis of Zuckerman's (1980) research:

Overall, the findings demonstrate that college men and women who plan to pursue nontraditional careers or lifestyles describe themselves differently than their more traditional classmates. An important finding is that women's self acceptance tends to be differentially associated with feminist attitudes depending on father's educational level, and that intellectual self confidence predicts women's and men's nontraditional sex role attitudes and women's nontraditional goals (p. 160).

As a consequence, homemaking and traditional careers are often seen as *options* for women (and men) rather than the requirements of tradition.

Age is another variable which affects attitudes toward women. The Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS) has been utilized to track multigenerational differences in the area of sex role orientations (Spence, Helmreich, & Gibson, 1982). In the early to mid seventies, parents of college age students were significantly more conservative than their children. Morgan and Walker (1983) found that well educated women are less supportive of the traditional role. That traditional role is defined as one in which the wife attains her major satisfaction from the family, putting the interests of her husband and children first.

Hare-Mustin and Lamb (1984) stated there have been few, if any, systematic studies conducted to explore the attitudes toward women of clinicians specializing in family therapy. They had observed and become concerned that those who work with families tended to reinforce, in the family, traditional sex role stereotypes and expectations. Therapists with less than ten years experience have been found to be more involved in family therapy than their colleagues with more expertise they suggest that a younger, and, possibly more liberal, cohort may be coming into the field. In an effort to investigate this possibility, Hare-Mustin and Lamb (1984) surveyed the attitudes toward women

and motherhood of mental health workers who were just out of school and newly entering the field. Using the Attitudes Toward Women Scale, a "significant difference in the mean AWS scores for family and non-family counselors was found, indicating that family counselors' attitudes were the more liberal ones " (p. 420).

With women increasingly entering the work place, they are taking on more roles. This appears to be the result of certain societal changes. One such change is the availability of labor-saving devices which make it unnecessary for a woman to spend the entire day taking care of the needs of her family and home. Houser and Beckman (1980) suggested that women might be seeking an identity for themselves other than that of wife and mother. They may feel a compulsion to utilize the education they have earned; and, economic pressure forces many women into the workplace. However, Houser and Beckman pointed out that in spite of growing numbers of women in the labor force, women's attitudes toward female employment still show a strong variation ranging from full support to complete disapproval.

Research (Houser and Beckman, 1980) directed at the relationship between women's dual-role attitudes and demographic characteristics has been contradictory and/or inconclusive. However, it has generally supported that certain basic background characteristics differentiate women with favorable attitudes toward dual-role involvement from those with unfavorable attitudes. One variable which appears to be related consistently to a woman's attitude regarding dual-role performance is her employment status. Houser and Beckman found that currently employed women display more favorable attitudes toward married women's employment than did those women who are not currently employed or who have never worked outside the home. Other variables which seem to be related positively to women's attitudes regarding

dual role involvement are (1) length of employment since marriage and (2) husband's level of educational attainment. The variables which have been observed to be unrelated to a woman's dual-role attitudes are age at marriage, social class, and marriage duration.

Drawing items from both Spence and Helmreich's (1972) work and Mason and Bumpass' (1975) sex-role scale, Houser and Beckman (1980) developed a Likert type scale to measure dual-role attitudes. The findings illustrated that a woman's personal experience with specific life events, particularly education and employment, affect her support for traditional sex roles. They also examined the extent to which women's attitudes regarding dual role performance were a group phenomenon, hinging on collectively held perceptions of a woman's social niche or group norms. The findings suggested that it may be women's individual circumstances, personalities, and experiences which determine, to a large extent, their dual-role attitudes.

In a study of the married professional woman, doctors, lawyers and professors were surveyed by Gray (1983) about their attitudes toward their multiple roles and how they handled role conflicts. A majority of these women reported they often experience strains between the roles of career and family. Today women in the professions are more apt to marry than in the past. Studies conducted in the 1970's (Roark, 1977), show a higher proportion of divorce among married female professionals compared to divorce either among male professionals or among the population in general. This would indicate that among this population, many women are having difficulty combining marriage and a demanding career (Gray, 1983).

## Summary

Research confirms that mother's sex-role attitudes and experiences have a significant impact in shaping the attitudes of their children (Thornton, Alwin, & Camburn, 1983). Zuckerman's (1980) research found that women's self acceptance is more often differentially associated with feminist attitudes (depending on educational level of father) and that intellectual self confidence predicts women's sex role attitudes and nontraditional goals. Although age is a factor (Spence, Helmreich, & Gibson, 1982), changes in life goals and sex role attitudes among women now make homemaking and traditional careers an option not merely a requirement of tradition.

Women's attitudes toward multiple roles and role conflict range from full support of the working woman to complete disapproval (Houser & Beckman, 1980). Whether the woman is working or not is the variable consistently related to women's attitudes about dual role performance. Those employed have more favorable attitudes.

## Marital Satisfaction

Attitude congruency is recognized as an important correlate of attraction to another person and one's subsequent relationship satisfaction. Bowen and Orthner (1983) have studied the congruency of sex-role attitudes of husbands and wives and have made assessment about how these attitudes are related to the quality of the couple's relationship. Attitudinal congruence actually operates as a reward: ". . . it leads to liking because it provides consensual validation for one's point of view" (p.223). This study attempted to see the couple as the unit of analysis, not just the individual's adjustment to the marriage. Bowen and Orthner (1983) concluded that sex-roles are more crystallized than many other

issues in the minds of individuals. Changes in demographics, the structure of the family, and the role profiles of women have received much publicity in the press. This has had the effect of increasing the visibility and intensity of sex role opinion.

Chadwick, Albrecht, and Kunz (1976) have discussed the difficulties in measuring and conceptualizing marital satisfaction and in developing a global measure of marital satisfaction. They measured marital satisfaction as a willingness to marry the same spouse again and as that satisfaction derived from being part of specific family activities.

Rhyme (1981) explored the basis of marital satisfaction among men and women concurring with some researchers "that men tend to be more satisfied with their marriages than women" (p. 941). Male-female differences in levels of marital satisfaction have also been linked to the specific objective conditions of the marriage, such as length of marriage, number and ages of children, wife's employment status outside the home, and family life-cycle stage. Further studies on the perceived quality of life have found that personal characteristics such as age, educational level, and income account for very little of the variance in marital satisfaction. Assessments of interpersonal relationships are the key factors according to Ryne(1981). Stages in the family life cycle are important to marital satisfaction as they embody significant life events. Marital quality and satisfaction with aspects of marriage change for both sexes as the marriage endures.

Events, transitions, and developmental stages affect marital satisfaction, especially a woman's return to school or entrance into the work force. Suitor (1987) focused on the differential effects of full-time and part-time enrollment on marital happiness during a woman's first year in the academic setting. She pointed out that women who attempt high levels of commitment to

nonfamilial roles experience a problem not shared by their male counterparts. The fact is that, for women, the family is a "greedy institution making total claim on their members seeking exclusive and undivided loyalty and attempting to reduce the claims of competing roles and status positions on those they wish to encompass within their boundaries" (p. 312). The greediness of the American family hampers women's involvement and commitment in the occupational sphere because family roles are expected to take precedence whenever there are conflicting demands placed on them by their nonfamilial roles. Violation of this cultural mandate through high levels of either time or psychological commitment affect marital quality. Support from the husband (Suchet and Barling, 1986; Hall, 1973) may help employed women (especially mothers) cope with their own interrole conflict. This is not dissimilar from Beutell and Greenhaus' (1983) findings that a husband's non-traditional sex-role stereotypes moderate the negative consequences of interrole conflict.

In a recent study, Bedeian, Burke, Moffett (1988) found that, among their sample of 423 male and 335 female accounting professionals, impaired marital functioning was a predictable consequence of conflict between work and family roles. They suggested that female managers encounter more stress and marital problems than do their male counterparts, and work has a stronger impact on the quality of individuals' marriages.

For both men and women, the indirect relationship between work-related role stress and marital satisfaction, influenced by work-family conflict, was found to be more important than the direct relationship between parental demands and marital satisfaction for both men and women (Bedeian, Burke, & Moffett, 1988). For both men and women, work-family conflict functioned as a link between work-related role stress and marital satisfaction. This finding offers

generalized support for the notion that stress generated within the work role may have dysfunctional consequences in non-work life for both women and men.

Suitor (1987) has researched the dynamics of the returning student. Sociological work done in the 40's and 50's has shown that higher levels of contact with a group are associated with a greater likelihood of adopting that group as a positive reference group, and at the same time adopting the groups' dominant values and interests. Since full time students have greater contact with their academic community than do part time students, it could be expected that full timers would be more likely than part timers to adopt the academic community as its normative reference group. Suitor (1987) anticipated that the change in reference group orientation might also produce a tendency for full time students to realign their priorities over the year, and begin placing their student role ahead of their family roles when status conflict arose. This violation of the cultural norm was expected to lower husbands' satisfaction with their wives' performance of family roles and, in turn, reduce the husband's satisfaction with their marriages over the year of the study. Bahr, Chappell and Leigh (1983) and Chadwick, Albrecht, and Kunz, (1976) contribute further discussion of relationship between marital satisfaction and spouse's satisfaction with one another's performance of family roles.

Suitor (1987) studied changes in marital happiness when women return to school. Marital happiness declined over the year among couples in which wives were enrolled as full-time students and changed little among couples in which wives were enrolled as part-time students. Marital happiness changed substantially more among husbands than wives. The decline in marital happiness among full-time female students and their husbands appeared to have been related to changes in the woman's performance of family roles over

the year and to husbands' responses to those changes. Also, in her study, Sutor (1987) found women's dissatisfaction focused exclusively on their husband's offering of emotional support. Their dissatisfaction with their husband's performance of this role led to a decline in their marital happiness, although much less than that experienced by the husbands. Husbands of part-time students continued to provide their wives with emotional support, resulting in little change in the wives' satisfaction with their husbands' family-role performance or their marriages.

Davidson, Balswick, and Halverson (1983) found that husbands' and wives' perceptions of the balance of affective self-disclosive exchange were strongly related to marital satisfaction. They go on to explain that equity theory rests on the assumption that the individuals' perceptions of the reward/cost factors of having a relationship are better predictors of distress, or satisfaction, than is some objective account. People prefer a reward of the same thing they give to others, e.g. "if I give love, I want love in return" (p. 102).

Family life cycle stage has a strong impact on marital satisfaction. Schumm and Bugaighis (1986) indicated that much of the observed decline in marital satisfaction during the middle stages of the life cycle are explained by the impact of preschool children on a specific group of low-income mothers. Working full-time, these mothers found too little time to discuss daily matters with their husbands, even though they perceived the husbands to be just as caring and understanding as did other, less-stressed wives. Rather than indicating a mild problem for all wives, the family life cycle data actually reflected a very severe source of distress for a small group of wives.

In a related study, Baucom and Aiken (1984) explored the relationship among masculinity, femininity, marital satisfaction, and response to behavioral

marital therapy. The study highlighted the importance of both femininity and masculinity in successful marriages. They found the wife's functioning to be a more sensitive barometer of the relationship. Among a college sample Baucom and Aiken found that, for both males and females, androgynous persons were rated most positively by same-sex friends, followed by feminine-sex typed, then masculine-sex typed, then undifferentiated types.

Using the theoretical constructs of the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B), Schutz (1978) found working wives wanted less inclusion, control, and affection than non-working wives. They did express a higher need to control, however. The sample was based on 189 pairs of married women and men, the latter either accountants or engineers, the former full or part-time employed. He concluded from the data, that, on the whole, two-career family members preferred less interpersonal exchange than did one-career family members. The two-career family members seem to be more self-reliant and self-sufficient individuals.

Mason and Bumpass (1975) found significant life changes on the individual level affected the couple, just as changes for the couple had an impact on the individual partners. Their model of couple relationship suggests ". . . that each partner's self-concept, role arrangements, role satisfaction, interact to determine the quality of and satisfaction with the couple relationship" (p. 4). Chadwick et al. (1976) have shown strong correlations between marital satisfaction and role satisfaction and further between marital satisfaction and individual self-esteem.

### Summary

Life stages (Ryne, 1981) are important to marital satisfaction, the quality of which changes as the marriage endures. Among factors affecting marriage

satisfaction are a woman's return to school or entering the workplace. Suitor's (1987) work with the returning female student found decline in marital happiness, specifically focused on the perception of the husband's offering of emotional support.

Houser and Beckman (1980) found employed women have more favorable attitudes toward married women's employment than do those who do not work outside the home. They further found that women's individual circumstances, personalities, and experiences may determine their dual role attitudes. Gray (1983) has found that among professional women a higher than usual proportion divorce, suggesting difficulty combining a demanding career with marriage.

Impaired marital functioning was a predictable consequence of work and family role conflict according to Bedeian, Burke, & Moffet (1988). Other studies (Chadwick, et al, 1976) showed strong correlations between marital satisfaction and role satisfaction and further between marital satisfaction and individual self-esteem.

### Gender Role Conflict

Antill's (1983) study provided substantial evidence for the importance of femininity in relationships. The happiness of the husband, it was found, was positively related to the both the wife's femininity and to the husband's femininity. Where both partners were high on femininity (androgynous and feminine) couples were shown to be happier than were couples in which at least one of the partners was low on this dimension. Antill also found key time periods in the family life cycle when certain effects were strongest. The wife's feminine characteristics appeared to be most critical early in the relationship,

whereas these same characteristics of the husband seemed to be more important later on. (Levinson, 1978; Erikson, 1950).

What people learn about maleness and femaleness is culturally determined. Bem(1981) proposed that throughout the process of development, both men and women acquire a cognitive structure consisting of a network of associations tied to the concepts of masculinity and femininity as defined by their society. These acquired gender schema lead individuals to process a variety of information in terms of gender. That schema also serves as a standard against which individuals judge the adequacy of their own behaviors, attitudes, and attributes as appropriate for their own sex (Spence and Helmreich, 1981).

Hall and Gordon (1973) predicted that women who perform activities they choose to perform will be more satisfied than women whose roles do not match their preferences. This is consistent with other research showing that a woman's role performance and attitudes are less positive if inspired by necessity rather than choice (Suitor,1987).

Regarding equal opportunities for women, a key issue is the breadth of choices of possible careers and life styles available to women. In Hall and Gordon's (1973) study, home pressures were identified as the most important contributors to women's role conflicts, with non-home sources scoring next in importance. Their results suggested that the work-oriented married woman has a harder time implementing career choices successfully than does the home-oriented woman. "Home-related tasks and volunteer activities are part of the traditionally accepted roles of wife and mother. The woman who by her own choice prefers to do these activities will find external role support, acceptance, admiration, and intrinsic satisfaction for doing them" and conversely "when employment is outside the traditional home roles, the woman preferring to work may encounter increased role conflicts, time pressure, prejudice and

discrimination when she seeks employment" (p. 46). These problems often work to offset the satisfaction which a work oriented woman would receive by acting on her preference.

Beutell and Greenhaus (1983) also investigated the conflict that women experience between their home and nonhome roles. They found that the time demands inherent in the student role were more strongly associated with conflict for those women whose husbands had relatively traditional sex role attitudes than for those women whose husbands held relatively nontraditional attitudes. The research focused on married female college students who have children, a group of women who are particularly susceptible to a wide variety of role pressures. These findings are consistent with the observation that the relationship between home pressures and conflict is greatest for women married to relatively career-oriented men. Additionally, women who have nontraditional attitudes seem to have more home-nonhome conflicts than do women who hold more traditional sex role attitudes. Beutell and Greenhaus (1983) further suggested that sex role attitudes may be related to the development of inflexible coping strategies.

Age seems to be a factor in how gender role conflict is ameliorated. Blanchard-Fields and Friedt (1988) examined the moderating effect that age had on the relation between sex role orientation and relationship and job satisfaction as well as life satisfaction. Age was found to moderate significantly the relation between each type of sex role and life satisfaction. As age increased, the strength of the relation between sex role and life satisfaction increased. As Neugarten (1964) pointed out, aging allows individuals to become increasingly like themselves and the personality is more clearly revealed. Among adolescents and young adults, Kaplan and Sadock (1985) found that the blurring of sex roles creates more uncertainty and more changing

behavior in a developmental period already marked by plasticity and unpredictability. Over time, however, this blurring could result in a generation of adults who measure their sexuality not by stereotyped concepts, but by the quality of their lifestyle and their relationships. They found no significant predictors of relationship satisfaction.

Sex role strain has been described by O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David and Wrightsman (1986) as an intrapsychic process that can lead to a poor psychological adjustment, particularly low self-esteem. Building on a sex role strain paradigm, they suggested that gender role conflict can be conceptualized from four interwoven dimensions: cognitions, affective experience, behaviors and unconscious experience (p. 338). O'Neil and Carroll (1988) have developed a gender role journey workshop for participants from diverse helping professions. The workshop concept is one way that research and theory on gender roles can be translated into therapeutic nontraditional for adults. Of particular urgency today, these workshops focusing on gender roles are important because recent theory and research suggest strong relationships between gender roles and family violence, rape, and child sexual abuse.

Role theory predicts that multiple roles sometimes lead to stressors, such as work overload and interrole conflict, and in turn, to symptoms of strain (Cooke and Rousseau, 1984). The supporting social research and theory suggest that multiple roles, and particularly family roles, serve to reduce strain. Research on role conflict indicates that "tensions between family and work roles can lead to poor marital adjustment, inadequate role performance, and other negative outcomes; although family roles might reduce the effects of stressors, these same roles can simultaneously serve as a source of stress for the employed person" (p. 252). Social support from a spouse can potentially mediate the effects of stress and family roles have the potential to reduce strain.

However, Cooke and Rousseau (1984) found in their research that as men work more, they do less at home, and their wives report less satisfaction with their spouse's marital role performance.

Over the last decade the increase in the numbers of women working outside the home, has altered the allocation of tasks and roles within the household. A need for a sophisticated, creative, and pioneering approach to problem solving within the marriage by both partners has arisen. Wynne and Wynne (1986) articulated the "tension between individuation and relatedness as a fundamental dialectic throughout the life span" (p. 391). Intimacy, as the visible, active quest in marital relationship, appeared to be a recent phenomenon that has been impacted by changing gender roles. Wynne and Wynne (1986), observed intimacy recurring most reliably, not as a primary or continuous experience, but rather as it emerged spontaneously within the framework of a basic, well-functioning relationship processes. They defined intimacy as a "subjective relational experience in which the core components are trusting self-disclosure to which the response is communicated empathy"(p. 384).

Increased role demands and ambiguity have put many marriages in a tailspin. Barnett and Baruch (1985) looked at women's involvement in multiple roles in relationship to three stress indicators: anxiety, role overload, and role conflict. Although the relationship of complicity in multiple roles to stress is a matter of some controversy, their research has found that women occupy roles different from those of men and that those roles may be labeled identically but may be structured quite differently.

Barnett and Baruch (1985) stated the two most outstanding findings of the study are that "(a) the role of parent rather than that of paid worker is the major source of stress for women in the middle years and (b) the quality of experience

within a woman's social roles is a major independent predictor of role overload, role conflict, and anxiety" (p.139).

Some sociological research has been directed to the basic question of why women, especially married women, have higher rates of psychological distress and disorder than do comparable men. Thoits (1986) examined this hypothesis in some detail suggesting that role acquisition is psychologically protective, perhaps even enhancing a sense of purpose and meaning in the life process, in spite of the likely cost in role strain. Thoits further proposed that differential rates of disturbance might be due at least in part to differential possession by men and women of role identities.

Exploring the relationship between wife's employment, sex-role traditionalism, and the reported division of household tasks and decisions, Beckman and Houser (1979) found that among women 18-49 years of age in the far West, "sex-role traditionalism was positively related to wives' relative performance of feminine tasks, but generally unrelated to masculine task performance and decision-making between spouses" (p. 160). Professional women took primary responsibility for fewer feminine tasks than did either nonemployed or nonprofessional women. Beckman and Houser's findings suggested that in spite of differences in sex role traditionalism and employment status among women, most women say that they and their spouses share tasks in a traditional sex role fashion.

With the advent of the women's movement, the force of sex role attitudes has become more liberal. At the same time, more married women are entering the labor force (Beckman and Houser, 1979). The changes in the employment of women and in attitudes toward women's roles in American society, should result in some changes in familial structure. However, few changes in sex-typed division of labor or decision-making have seemingly occurred. "The

disturbing possibility remains that womens' roles can change within one sphere of our society while not changing within another. Similarly, attitudes toward sex-appropriate behavior within the marriage may change, while actual behavior remains sex-typed"(p. 161). Beckman and Houser's research explored the notion that women who have been employed show lower traditional attitudes toward sex role than do women who have never worked. Professional women also are less sex role traditional than are nonprofessional women , even though they may differ little in the process of decision-making or task allocation. They concluded that evidence suggests that employment status correlates more closely to sex role attitudes than to sex role behavior. "It is implied," they asserted, "that the first stage of detraditionalization of household task sharing may be for husbands to assume a greater share of responsibility for performance of feminine tasks. If so, husbands' attitudes may better predict this change than do wives' attitudes" (p. 173). Houser and Beckman (1980) examined the extent that womens' attitudes regarding dual role performance ( and presumed conflict) are a group phenomenon, dependent on collectively held notions of a woman's social niche rather than on her individual personality, experiences, or circumstances.

While Petro and Putnam(1979) asserted that the force of the women's movement has indeed liberalized sex-role attitudes, others (Beckman and Houser, 1979; Houser and Beckman, 1980) have observed that while spoken attitudes may have changed, basic behaviors and patterns within the family have not. There is a need for more research in this area.

### Summary

Anthill (1983) found evidence for the importance of femininity in marital relationship. Couples both high in femininity (or androgyny) were found to be

more satisfied than were couples in which at least one partner was low on that dimension. Bem (1981) and others (Levinson, 1978; Erikson, 1950) suggested that throughout the process of development, men and women fashion a cognitive structure made up of a constellation of ideas associated with the concepts of masculinity and femininity both culturally determined.

Hall and Gordon (1973) found that women who choose what they do are more satisfied and are more positive in their role performance and attitudes if that acting was inspired by choice not necessity. Beutell and Greenhaus (1983) further suggested that sex role attitudes may be related to the development of inflexible coping strategies.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Hypothesis

The study was designed to explore the relationship between attitudes of women toward gender role conflict, as defined by Spence and Helmreich (1972) in the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS), and marital satisfaction, as defined by Schutz (1978) in the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B). It attempted to explore the following:

Null Hypothesis: There will be no significant relationship between a linear combination of the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B) scores and the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS) scores.

#### Subjects

A total of 43 female subjects were involved in this study, comprising returning students enrolled in education, or psychology classes at a large, mid-western university. Of this population, 42% held bachelor or associate degrees, and 58% held a master's degree or were in process. The ages of the respondents ranged from 23 to 50, with an average age of 35.1. For 72% of the sample it was a first marriage, 23% were in a second marriage, and 5% were in a third marriage. The length of the most recent marriages ranged from .5 to 29 years, with the average length 10.65 years.

### Selection of Subjects

The volunteer subjects were students attending evening classes at a midwestern commuter campus. The total sample (n=43) consisted of female students. Stipulations were that respondents be married. Since volunteers were used, the data do not constitute a random sample.

### Operational Definitions and Variables

The Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS), measuring attitudes toward the rights, roles, and privileges of women, served as the dependent variable. The scales of the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B) served as the independent variables, measuring interpersonal needs in the areas of inclusion, control, and affection.

### Instrumentation

The Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS) and the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior scale (FIRO-B) are discussed in this section along with descriptions of the instruments and their respective norming, reliability, and validity information.

#### Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS)

Spence and Helmreich (1972) designed the Attitudes Toward Women Scale to measure attitudes toward the rights, roles, and privileges of women in contemporary American culture. In this study, the AWS was used to estimate these attitudes among married women who are returning students at the graduate and the undergraduate levels.

Originally the AWS was comprised of fifty-five items describing "roles and patterns of conduct in major areas of activity in which men and women were, in principle, capable of being granted equal rights" (Spence and Helmreich, 1972, p. 3). The original fifty-five items are placed in six thematic groups: (1) vocational, educational, and intellectual roles; (2) freedom and independence; (3) dating, courtship, and etiquette; (4) drinking, swearing, and dirty jokes; (5) sexual behavior; (6) and, marital relations and obligations (Spence and Helmreich). Spence, Helmreich, and Stapp (1973) devised a highly correlated shorter version for convenience. For the purposes of this study, the twenty-five-item instrument was selected for its brevity as well as its correlation of .95 or above with the original fifty-five item AWS (Spence and Helmreich, 1972). The full test scores (1) reflected the degree to which the respondent holds traditional or liberal views, (2) permitted comparing attitudes of different groups, and (3) allowed prediction of other behaviors based on the respondent's attitude score. The normative data were based on correlations among scores for female and male students at the University of Texas at Austin, their parents, and for students and parents. Item analysis of the data from 241 female and 286 male students in an introductory psychology class was done. Cross-validation was obtained from the same analysis of data from 292 mothers and 232 fathers of these students.

On a four-point Likert-type scale, respondents mark their agreement with the declarative statements indicating, "strongly agree", "mildly agree," "mildly disagree," and "strongly disagree." Items on the twenty-five-item version are scored from 0 to 3, zero reflecting a conservative, traditional attitude and three reflecting a pro-feminist, liberal attitude. Summing all items yields a possible score range from 0 to 75 (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1973).

**Validity.** One study undertaken by Doyle (1975) correlated scores from the fifty-five item AWS and Kirkpatrick's eighty-item Feminist-Antifeminist Belief Pattern Scale to establish construct validity. Given to males and females in two sections of a general psychology course, the Pearson correlation coefficients between the two measures were for men, .86, for females .87, for the total number, .87. Construct validity of the AWS is evidenced by results of studies which used interventions (e.g. course work, social change and legislation over time) to measure change in attitudes toward the roles of women (Lunneborg, 1974; Helmreich, Spence and Gibson, 1982).

In their initial norming work, Spence and Helmreich (1972) found, as expected, males more conservative than females, and older people more conservative than younger people. Lunneborg (1974) tested a group of 74 students at the University of Washington enrolled in a Psychology of Sex Differences class. It was expected that males would be more conservative than females, that scores would be more pro feminist as a result of the course and, additionally, that, compared to the Spence and Helmreich (1972) study at the University of Texas at Austin, Washington students would be more liberal, indicating regional north/south differences in the United States. Significant mean north/south differences were found for both men and women in addition to northern males being significantly ( $p < .05$ ) more conservative than females before (but not after) the women's study class.

Internal consistency coefficients were reported by Spence and Helmreich (1972) based on Cronbach Alphas on the initial sample to be .92 for both sexes.

**Reliability.** Beach and Kimmel (1976, p. 212) reported test reliability on one sample of sixty was  $r = .74$ . Stein and Weston (1976) employed the split-half technique on a group of 294 coed female (northern) college students, correlating the two halves using the Pearson product moment, followed by the

Spearman-Brown prophecy formula. The corrected reliability was .92. The researchers considered this strong for measure of attitude.

### Fundamental Interpersonal Relations

#### Orientation-Behavior

The Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B), one of seven tests labeled "FIRO Awareness Scales" (Dolliver, 1985, p.284), is based on Will Schutz's 1958 theory of personal interaction. The test was designed as a Guttman scale to measure relationships between people and also to assess individual characteristics. There are six scales with nine non-threatening items each. These items are answered on a six-point Likert scale. These short tests measure the relative strength of the needs *within the individual*; they were not designed to compare a person with a population and therefore norms were not provided (Schutz, 1978).

These scales measure a person's characteristic behavior " as interpersonal needs in the areas of *inclusion, control, and affection*" (Dolliver, 1985, p. 284). According to Schutz (1978), *inclusion* describes "how much you want to include other people in your life and how much attention and recognition you want from them"; *control* describes "the way you usually react to taking charge of situations or being directed by others"; *affection* describes "interpersonal relationships with people you might be close to" (p.66).

The FIRO-B was selected for this study to measure marital satisfaction. The inventory is brief, and the items are non threatening. Furthermore, it is simple to administer, accomplished in fifteen minutes or so, and taking about eight minutes to score (Dolliver, 1985).

Validity. Schutz (1978) claims that "if the theory underlying the Guttman scales is accepted, then content validity is a property of all legitimate cumulative

scales, and therefore of all FIRO-B scales (p. 9). Evidence of concurrent validity comes from the extensive use of the test in a variety of settings: marriage counseling, evaluation of human relations workshops, experimentation with group composition, and more (Schutz, 1978).

Reliability. Reviewer Bruce Bloxom (1972) pointed out that "each item is keyed dichotomously in such a way as to maximize the Guttman scale property of the subscale to which it belongs; this results in high internal consistency" (p. 78). Because of the cumulative nature of the scale, reproducibility rather than split-half method is used. A mean correlation coefficient of .94 was obtained on a mean norm group of 1543 mostly college students (Schutz, 1978). Test-retest correlations are an acceptable .70 (Bloxom, 1972); a mean coefficient of .76 was found among Harvard students (Schutz, 1978).

#### Demographic Questionnaire

Additional to completing the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-B (FIRO-B) and the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS), subject volunteers were asked to complete a Demographic Questionnaire designed by the researcher. The questions made inquiry into age, employment, marriages (number and length), children (step and natural), annual income, level of education, reason for current studies. There was no need for validity or reliability trials.

#### Design

Data were gathered from 43 students. Of this number, 42% held an associate or bachelor's degree and 58% were in the process or held a master's degree. Each student completed the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations

Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B) and the twenty-five item Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS).

Raw scores on both instruments were used to compute zero order correlations for the dependent variable (AWS) with the independent variable (marital satisfaction as measured by the FIRO-B) and rank ordered in terms of their  $r$  values. A stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted to indicate the degree of common or shared variance. To explore the correlation of variables with each other, correlation coefficients among predictor variables were computed.

## Procedure

### Permission to Conduct Research

Permission was obtained from the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects in Research. The application was reviewed and processed as exempt by the IRB based on the subjects' guaranteed anonymity.

Permission was obtained from each university represented and from each instructor to make a brief classroom presentation regarding the content and purpose of the study and to gather data through the use of two instruments and a demographic survey. One instrument assessed attitudes toward women, and the other measured marital satisfaction. A packet containing an instruction sheet (Appendix A), a Demographic Questionnaire (see Appendix B), the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation- Behavior (FIRO-B) (see Appendix C), and the Attitude Toward Women Scale, was distributed to each married female who was willing to participate. The respondents were informed

that the two instruments combined would take about twenty-five minutes to complete.

Because the study looked at the male-female marriage dyad exclusively, married women students were invited to respond. Volunteer respondents were asked to complete the three instruments during the week and to return them to the office of their home institution by the following class meeting. They were not to put any identifying mark or name on the response sheets so that anonymity would be assured. Additional information about expected findings were not discussed at this time.

The data were collected over a three week period of time, on different evenings of the week. Although both of the instruments could be self scored, the researcher scored all the tests to control for scorer-rater reliability.

## Data Analysis

### Scoring

The Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS) uses a Likert-type scale of four response alternatives, ranging from agree strongly to disagree strongly. Each of the statements is given a score from 0 to 3, 0 representing the most traditional and 3 the most contemporary, or pro feminist response. Scoring is accomplished by tallying the assigned value of each response. A higher score is reflective of a more contemporary attitude.

Scoring for the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B) can be done by the respondent, as a group, or most easily with the scoring template. A scoring grid is printed on the front of the question/response sheet. Spaces are provided for computing the six basic scale scores: sums of

columns, sums of rows, sum of sums, differences within columns, and sum of differences.

### Analysis

Scores from the six basic scales of the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B) were correlated with the summary score of the Attitude Towards Women Scale (AWS). The six scores from the FIRO-B were the independent variables used as predictors of the dependent variable (attitudes toward women).

Zero order correlations were calculated for each independent variable with the dependent variable and rank ordered according to their  $r$  values. A stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted. This analysis generated multiple  $R$  and  $F$ -Ratio values which were used to determine statistical significance with  $p < .05$ .  $F$ -Ratios were also computed to determine if the addition of each independent variable was statistically significant. To indicate this correlation of the variables to each other, correlation coefficients were calculated among the predictor variables.

The multiple  $R$  and its  $F$ -Ratio were used to locate any significant relationships between the independent and dependent variables. The results were utilized to reject/support the null hypothesis.

### Assumptions and/or Limitations

The assumption was made that the sample was representative of the returning student population. The study was carried out with a volunteer sample taken from selected, available classes, and is therefore not random. Non-random selection and limited population size restricts generalizability of the results to specified characteristics of the volunteers.

Potential for self-selection based on some conflict, problem or other stressor related to the parameters of the study also limits representation. The participants in this study were assumed to be honest and sincere in their responses. They were under no overt nor implied coercion to volunteer.

An additional limitation was that the researcher did not know if the respondents had ever taken the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS) or the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B).

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between marital satisfaction and women's attitudes toward gender role conflict. The hypothesis investigated follows:

**Null Hypothesis:** There will be no significant relationship between a linear combination of the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B) scores and the Attitudes Toward Women (AWS) score.

To test the hypothesis, a step-wise multiple regression analysis was performed with attitudes toward women operating as the dependent variable and expressed and wanted control (CE and CW), expressed and wanted affection (AE and AW), and expressed and wanted inclusion (IE and IW) serving as the independent variables. Table I is the summary of a step wise multiple regression analysis.

Table I shows that after Expressed Control (CE) was entered, there was no statistical significance with the entrance of the other variables. The results show that CE plus a constant account for 17% of the variance; a significant result ( $F=8.268$ ). The equation that would predict this amount of variance is:

$$AWS = (-2.215) CE + 69.27.$$

To examine the relationship among the predictor variables, Table II was constructed, summarizing the correlations.

Among the sample, there is significant correlation: between expressed inclusion (IE) and expressed affection (AE), between wanted inclusion (IW) and

TABLE I  
STEPWISE MULTIPLE REGRESSION SUMMARY

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Step	Variable entered	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F-Ratio Equation	F-Ratio Increment	Zero-Order r
1	expressed control	.409	.168	8.269	8.267	-.410

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p=<.05

TABLE II  
CORRELATION AMONG PREDICTOR VARIABLES

	AWS	IE	CE	AE	IW	CW	AW	AGE
AWS	1.000							
IE	.005							
CE	-.410*	.317*						
AE	.116	.629*	-.001					
IW	-.149	.512*	.231	.393*				
CW	-.342*	-.140	.268	-.193	.168			
AW	.080	.372*	-.023	.558*	.484*	-.233		
AGE	.017	-.102	.312*	-.127	.178	.026	.046	

p=< .05

expressed affection (AE), and among wanted (AW) and expressed affection (AE) and wanted inclusion (IW). Age correlated moderately with the variable, expressed control (CE). Correlations with the dependent variable are highest with CE, expressed control ( $r = -.410$ ,  $p < .05$ ), accounting for 17% of the variance in AWS.

Inspection of the correlation matrix reveals generally moderate correlations. These moderate correlations contributed to the fact that only one of the independent variables added significantly to the regression equation. This suggests that they are not contributing independent variance in spite of relatively high zero order correlation. The Expressed Control (CE) variable, however, is significantly correlated with Attitudes Toward Women (AWS).

#### Results Related to Hypothesis

This chapter presents the results of the statistical comparisons between a linear combination of the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B) scales as the independent variables and the Attitudes Toward Women (AWS) scale as the dependent variable. Based on the multiple R, there is a significant relationship between a linear combination of the independent variable expressed control (CE) as a predictor, and the dependent variable attitudes toward women as the criterion. This linear combination accounts for 17% of the variance and is statistically significant with  $p < .05$ . Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

#### Summary

The purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between marital satisfaction and women's attitudes toward gender role conflict. Awareness of this relationship may improve the clinician's understanding of issues surrounding: (a) inclusion, (b) control, and (c) affection. Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation (FIRO) theory suggests relationship development proceeds through interpersonal issues of inclusion, into control areas, and then into affection issues. Then it recycles. The two dimensions measured by the FIRO-B are the aforementioned interpersonal areas, and the direction of the behavior. The *expressed* dimension is one's behavior toward others and the *wanted* dimension is the behavior one wishes from others.

Research confirms that attitudes toward gender roles underlie a variety of domestic, political, and social enigmas. Recent research (Finklehor, 1984; O'Neil and Carroll, 1988) has found gender role conflict underlying the sexual and physical abuse of children. Profiles of offenders further confirm rigid and stereotypic thinking about male and female gender roles and identity. Family violence is a social concern as it knows no socioeconomic, cultural, or academic boundaries. Politically, the public is increasingly aware of tax dollars involved in the public funding of offender treatment programs and overcrowded and inadequate penal institutions.

Beutell and Greenhaus (1983) suggested that conflict women experience between home and non-home roles is particularly high among students. Conflict is stronger for women whose husbands have relatively traditional sex role attitudes than for women whose husbands hold relatively nontraditional attitudes. Additionally, women who have nontraditional attitudes seem to have more home/non-home conflicts than do women who hold more traditional sex role attitudes. This researcher found, that among the sampled student population, the average response was 64 on a scale of 0 to 75, indicating a direction toward nontraditional attitude.

Previous studies suggest that age is a factor in gender role conflict amelioration. Blanchard-Fields and Friedt (1988) examined the moderating effect of age on the relationship between sex role orientation (feminine, masculine, and androgynous) and marital relationship (and life satisfaction). Age was found to significantly moderate the relationship between each type of sex role and life satisfaction. Kaplan and Sadock (1985) discussed that they found no significant predictors of relationship satisfaction.

In the present study, however, age is not a significant independent variable. It correlates moderately (.312) with expressed control (CE). This result may be attributed to the lack of age diversity in the sample and also to the developmental stage of the study population. The sample population is adults on average in their early thirties. As Neugarten (1964) pointed out, aging populations are more uniform in the distribution of gender-role attitudes.

In the present study wanted affection (AW) correlated most strongly with expressed inclusion (IE) .372, expressed affection (AE) .558, and wanted inclusion (IW) .484, but not with Attitudes Toward Women (AWS). Expressed affection (AE) correlated most significantly with expressed inclusion (IE), .629. Age showed a slight significance with expressed control (CE). The variable

wanted control (CW) has marginal significance with AWS, but not enough to show up in the step-wise multiple regression analysis used. In this study the Null Hypothesis "There will be no significant relationship between a linear combination of the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B) scores, and the Attitudes Toward Women (AWS) score" was rejected.

To test the hypothesis, a stepwise multiple regression analysis was performed. Attitudes toward gender role conflict served as the dependent variable. (1) Expressed and wanted affection (AE and AW), (2) expressed and wanted control (CE and CW), and (3) expressed and wanted inclusion (IE and IW) are the independent variables. The overall multiple R was statistically significant mandating rejection of the null hypothesis.

The predictor variables (see Table II) were moderately correlated with each other. These results suggest that the predictor variables are not contributing independent variance in spite of relatively high zero order correlation. The expressed control (CE) variable, however, is significantly correlated with Attitudes Toward Women (AWS). These moderate correlations lead to the conclusion that only one of the independent variables (CE) has any measurable affect upon marital satisfaction (as measured by the regression equation).

## Discussion

The researcher expected to find more significance between scores on the constructs measured by the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B) and nontraditional scores on the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS). The literature (Schutz, 1978) indicates that the intensity of the score on the FIRO-B, on a range from 0-9, modifies the strength and

applicability of the construct measured. A range of 2-3 or 6-7 shows the behavior to be noticeably characteristic of the person. The 4-5 range indicates that the person may show a tendency toward either high or low score characteristics. The high score range of 8-9 indicates the behavior will have a compulsive quality to it. In this sample expressed control (CE) averaged 2.3 and wanted control (CW) averaged 2.7, indicating these constructs are characteristic. The remaining four constructs (1) expressed and (2) wanted inclusion, and (3) expressed and (4) wanted affection fell in the borderline score range of 4-5.

The control scale measures leadership behavior on a range from low (avoiding making decisions and taking responsibility) to high (one can and does take responsibility in leadership). The statistically significant score in this study, expressed control (CE), mean of 2.33, falls in the low range indicating that avoidance of making decisions and taking responsibility will be noticeably characteristic of the sample population (Schutz, 1978). Because control in the FIRO-B pertains to leadership behavior, it was expected that the sample population would show scores in the high range. It was assumed by the researcher that women in their mid-thirties, married and returning for further schooling would be demonstrably assertive and show strong leadership qualities. The negative or inverse correlation (-.410) with expressed control (CE) and Attitudes Toward Women (AWS) score may indicate that the higher or more non traditional the AWS scores, the less need there is for women to take aggressive control of interactions.

Combining the expressed and wanted elements of control produce an interesting profile that might clarify the findings. A low-range expressed control (with a mean of 2.33) and low-range wanted control (with a mean of 2.70) combination reflect neither dependence nor inadequacy, but an attitude of

doubt about ability to handle new areas of responsibility. Among the sample, women possess competence and clarity of purpose, but may be experiencing preparation for the world of work for the first time. They may be returning to school or the work place after many years' absence. For the women at home, re-entering academia may raise doubts of ability to handle that new area of endeavor. Among the sample the potential for general leadership is good. However, the sample population may proceed cautiously into new areas of responsibility, such as schooling or the work place.

The construct wanted control (CW) is moderately correlated with CE, but not significantly related to AWS scale. Like CE, it shows an inverse relationship to the AWS. Wanted control (CW) may be more an indication of tolerance than a lack of leadership. With tolerance and acceptance, and consequent self esteem, the sample population may feel less conflictual in their gender roles.

Hall and Gordon (1973) found that women who perform activities they choose have higher levels of satisfaction and more positive attitudes than if those activities were inspired by necessity. The ability to choose had a direct, positive bearing on their marital and familial happiness. This finding is supported by the present study with the correlation of expressed control to non-traditional scores on the AWS.

### Conclusions

This study, within its limitations, was successful in confirming that there is a significant relationship between marital satisfaction and gender role attitudes. A primary goal of this study is to improve understanding the impact of gender role conflict in marriage. Rejection of the null hypothesis confirmed the hypothesis

that there is significant relationship between marital satisfaction and women's attitudes toward gender role conflict.

One of the contributing factors to high divorce rate and domestic violence is how clearly women (and men) perceive their gender role. For researchers using college samples, the apparent progress of changing cultural values may be skewed. In the measurement of attitudes (Rokeach, 1968), often changed behavior may lead to the false conclusion of attitudinal change. A scenario may illuminate the point. In a distressed family, the husband may begin to help more with household chores, freeing the wife's time. The behavior may be changed (husband gives more help, wife has time to pursue an activity) but the underlying attitude may remain. The husband may think of his actions as "helping *her* out," and she may have an attitude of "*his* being good to her."

Study results also indicate that low expressed control is associated with non-traditional attitudes toward women. This correlation may reflect a liberal attitude of acceptance of other people regardless of the respondent's personally held beliefs.

Several important limitations of these results must be noted. The homogeneity of the returning student population (average age of 32), may have affected the results. This age group and student status hold typically more non traditional attitudes (Spence and Helmreich, 1972) and may not be representative of the population in general. A heterogeneous population of larger size could be attempted in future studies.

The FIRO-B instrument's limitations affect this study. It measures multiple constructs, based on the assumption of validity of the Guttman scales. The tool has demonstrated application in the field, but more validation studies should be done on its use as a research tool, specifically to measure satisfaction.

Another limitation is the small size ( $n=43$ ) of the sample pool. One way to increase the power of the study is to increase the sample size.

## Recommendations

### Research

Future research should consider:

1. Using a different measurement tool, or developing a new one. Tests could be conducted among both sexes for the purpose of scoring men's and women's attitudes toward gender role conflicts. It is the researcher's hypothesis that a more incisive assessment tool would more clearly articulate the nature of conflict between and among the sexes.

2. The role of cultural bias in gender role conflict should be further investigated. As Zuckerman's (1980) research suggests, culturally traditional careers and homemaking choices for women have historically been seen as requirements. As substantive shifts occur in attitudes, these same traditional career and homemaking choices may indeed be seen as options and not as requirements.

3. The sample ought to be expanded to include multiple types of relationships. It is recommended that further gender research utilizing the AWS be conducted with broader and larger sample range. It would appear that as attitudes have shifted generationally from conservative to more liberal (Spence, 1973), so have patterns of culturally acceptable relationships. Gender role attitudes and conflicts permeate all socioeconomic levels, educational backgrounds, and ethnicity. Finkelhor's (1984) work has empirically linked bound and rigid gender role attitudes to domestic violence, including the

physical and sexual abuse of children. This work needs to be expanded to include ways to intervene at the prevention level.

4. The research design could also be reworked to include more complex hypotheses, using a more sophisticated statistical approach. The general direction of the study, relationship between gender and marital (and, interpersonal) satisfaction, needs more research to address the impact of social and personal changes on entrenched, traditional attitudes.

5. The demographic questionnaire data, (see Appendix B) are pertinent and could be meaningful in further research. The marital dyad and attitudes utilizing different instruments and/or design analyses testing both partners of the marital couple would add depth to the analysis of marital satisfaction and more meaning to the results.

### Interventions

The results of this study, as they confirm previous research, suggest that several actions might be taken to contravene the negative affects of gender role conflict upon marital satisfaction:

1. School curriculums could be designed and implemented to enhance awareness of gender stereotypes. Because sex role stereotypes may be related to the development of inflexible coping strategies, it is imperative to intervene early in the developmental process.

2. Workshops for various professionals, such as the type O'Neil and Carroll (1988) developed, could educate the helping community. These sessions are designed to enhance gender awareness and personal growth.

3. In the event marital distress or personal gender role conflict produces dysfunction, competent individual or family therapy could be provided to explore

possible options beyond the limits of one's culture-bound gender role definitions.

### Summary

This research was undertaken to clarify women's attitudes toward gender role conflict. The researcher's interest in and perceptions of gender role generated the study question and hypothesis. Of particular interest, was how attitudes impact the marital dyad. It appears to the researcher from time in graduate school and time in the field as a therapist that the line is often not clear or clean in separating education from therapy. It is expected that continuing research will open new ideas and approaches to the broader issue of conflicted relationships, and thus provide a growing body of knowledge to those in the helping/educating professions.

This study also indicates the desirability of further research. The relationship of gender role conflict to domestic violence, for example, is of pressing practical concern. Current studies indicate that perpetrators of sexual abuse and molestation have rigidly prescribed notions of gender role.

Clinicians, educators and researchers ascribe to their labor the purpose of service to mankind. To the extent that conflict resolution is a primary means to that end, the helping professions have an opportunity, if not an obligation, to investigate and ameliorate gender role conflict, in marriage and in other human relations.

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## APPENDIXES

**APPENDIX A**  
**INSTRUCTIONS**

## Class Presentation to Request Participation

My name is Jill MacKay, and I am working on a Master's degree in the Community Counseling program through OSU. For my thesis research I am studying the relationship between marital satisfaction and women's attitudes toward female gender role conflict. I am testing married women enrolled in a variety of graduate and undergraduate programs.

I would appreciate your help with this project. I am using two questionnaires which will take about a total of 25 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary; there will be complete anonymity. Do not put your name on the response sheets. I will, however, use the data collected in the study.

I will not be more specific at this time about the study in order to prevent influencing how you may answer the questions. Instead, I will have available some information about research in this area upon receipt of your completed questionnaires.

Each packet contains the forms and instructions. Please fill them out during the next week and return the completed packet, without any name, to your home institution office next week.

Thank you for your time, your energy, your participation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jill MacKay". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name "Sincerely,".

**APPENDIX B**

**DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE**

## DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Level of Education:  
some college \_\_\_\_\_; Bachelor's Degree \_\_\_\_\_; Master's Degree \_\_\_\_\_;  
Doctoral Degree \_\_\_\_\_; Other \_\_\_\_\_
3. Major in most recent degree: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Current profession/work role: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. How long in this profession/role? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Are your present studies in preparation for a career change?  
yes \_\_\_\_\_. no \_\_\_\_\_.
7. If yes, give reason: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. How many times have you been married? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Length of most recent marriage: \_\_\_\_\_
10. Ages of children from most recent marriage: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.
11. Ages of any step-children living at home: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.
12. Your present annual salary range:  
None \_\_\_\_\_; under \$25,000. \_\_\_\_\_; \$26-\$32,000. \_\_\_\_\_;  
\$33-40,000. \_\_\_\_\_; \$41-50,000. \_\_\_\_\_; \$51,000. + \_\_\_\_\_.

**APPENDIX C**

**FUNDAMENTAL INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS**

**ORIENTATION BEHAVIOR**

**FIRO AWARENESS SCALES MANUAL AND QUESTIONNAIRES**

are available from:

**CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGISTS PRESS, INC.**

**577 COLLEGE AVENUE**

**PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA 94306**

VITA

Jill MacKay

Candidate for the Degree of  
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Thesis: THE RELATIONSHIP OF MARITAL SATISFACTION TO WOMEN'S  
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