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DISPOSITIONAL OPTIMISM AND MARITAL ADJUSTMENT

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Science in the
College of Agriculture
at the University of Kentucky

By

Agnes Machaty

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Jason Hans, Professor of Family Sciences

Lexington, Kentucky

2013

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

DISPOSITIONAL OPTIMISM AND MARITAL ADJUSTMENT

This project examined dispositional optimism and its influence on the three subscales of marital adjustment (consensus, satisfaction, and cohesion) by gender. Data for this study came from Wave 2 and 3 of the National Survey of Families and Households. The Actor Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) was used to examine both actor and partner effects of dispositional optimism on the marital adjustment subscales using the program AMOS. Results indicate that wives' optimism seem to influence their own later marital satisfaction as well as their husbands' later marital satisfaction. However, husbands' optimism appeared to influence neither their own nor their wives' later satisfaction. These results imply that wives' optimism matters for marital satisfaction, whereas husbands' does not.

KEYWORDS: positive affect, illusions, dispositional optimism, marital adjustment, marital satisfaction

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April 16, 2013

DISPOSITIONAL OPTIMISM AND MARITAL ADJUSTMENT

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Chapter 1

Literature Review

The quality and strength of marriage has the power to affect people's well-being and psychological health (Watson, Hubbard, & Wiese, 2000). Although it is normal within a marriage to experience ebbs and flows in relationship satisfaction over time (Bradbury & Karney, 2004), for many married couples in the United States, the number of negative interactions outweigh the number of positive ones and the marriage ends in divorce (Gottman & Levenson, 1999). "Broken marital relationships are a source of much self-reported unhappiness, whereas a supportive, intimate relationship is among life's greatest joys" (Myers & Diener, 1995, p. 15). Much scientific attention has been paid to studying when and why some marriages end and others survive.

Research on couples and marriage has in the past focused mainly on the damaging effects that negative characteristics, such as anxiety or depression, can have on a relationship (Beach & O'Leary, 2007; Davila, Karney, Hall, & Bradbury, 2003). Interventions that developed as a result of such research are mainly aimed at avoiding those pitfalls and ameliorating already existing marital distress (Beach, Smith, & Fincham, 1994; Gordon & Baucom, 2009). However, there is considerably less published scholarship on the role that positive processes play in a relationship and how they might improve already functional marriages.

Although many fields focus on eliminating negative states, that alone does not foster positive ones (Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2002). Simply ridding a relationship of the negatives does not ensure a happy marriage. Segrin (2006) highlights this distinction by writing:

Although a focus on the “dark side” of family interaction and well-being (i.e., physical and mental health *problems*) is understandable, another legitimate area of inquiry is the family’s role in promoting happy and healthy lives. It is not prudent to assume that the road to happiness and good health is to simply not do that which apparently leads to sickness and unhappiness. (p. 16-17)

Gordon and Baucom (2009) argue that researchers need to focus on how to help couples move beyond being simply satisfied, and achieve levels of happiness in their marriages that are better categorized as “relationship flourishing” (p. 421). There is a distinction between negative processes that encourage deterioration of a relationship and positive processes that help to improve it. When looking at the predictive ability of positive and negative affect in newlywed couples, negative affect although able to predict divorce, is unsuccessful in predicting happiness levels within the marriage; positive affect on the other hand is able to predict both (Gottman et al., 1998). A couple’s ability to use positive affect (e.g., humor or affection) during conflict specifically is also predictive of future relationship health (Driver & Gottman, 2004).

There are many different positive constructs that can be present within a marriage, including positive affect, positive illusions, and optimism (Assad, Donnellan, & Conger, 2007; Gordon & Baucom, 2009; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 2003). I will first review research on positive affect and positive affect, and conclude with the literature findings on optimism. This study focused specifically on optimism and how it can affect relationship satisfaction, consensus, and cohesion.

Positive Affect

Gordon and Baucom (2009) define positive affect as “a trait that reflects stable individual differences in positive emotional experience” (p. 423). An individual considered high in positive affect (PA) is usually cheerful, confident, enthusiastic, and

frequently experiences good mood. Gordon and Baucom (2009) examined both actor and partner effects of PA on relationship satisfaction by considering the importance not only of one's own PA, but the perception of their spouse's PA as well. They found that individuals reported feeling happier in their marriage if they saw themselves and their partner as more positive. However, there was no significant partner effect, meaning that an individual's marital satisfaction was not influenced by his or her partner's level of self-reported PA. Results also revealed that an individual's level of optimism was nearly significant in accounting for variation in that individual's PA. This suggests that optimism is related to an individual's PA, which is associated with relationship satisfaction.

Positive affect has been shown to be related to relationship satisfaction in both dating and newlywed couples, even after controlling for negative emotions (Watson, Hubbard, & Wiese, 2000). Positive affect (as divulged by self- and partner-ratings) is correlated with relationship satisfaction and in fact equals negative affect as a relationship satisfaction predictor (Watson et al., 2000). Interestingly, correlations are stronger in married samples than in dating samples (Watson et al., 2000). Research seems to suggest that predictor variables might correlate with satisfaction differently based on the stage of the relationship (Watson et al., 2000).

Positive Illusions

Related to positive affect, people can have positive illusions about themselves, their partner, or their perception of things, for example the amount of social support they receive (Vollmann, Antoni, Hartung, & Renner, 2011). Murray et al. (2003) defined illusions within a relationship as "the qualities that people see in their partner that their

partner does not see in himself or herself' (p. 290). By having positive illusions in relationships, people can potentially create idealized images of their partner without actually ignoring their partners' flaws. This requires changing the way a partner's potential faults are regarded, and viewing them as virtues instead. Positive illusions do not require people to ignore the bad and create false attributes in their partner. Rather, it requires finding the good in the bad and putting a positive spin on a partner's apparent flaws often resulting in partner's eventual recognition of the positive qualities within themselves (Murray et al., 2003). Research shows that in the long run, positive illusions do in fact have positive, self-fulfilling effects (Murray et al., 2003).

Optimism

In addition to positive affect and positive illusions, optimism is another concept in the area of positivity research that recently has been gaining interest. Optimism, positive illusions, and positive affect are distinct constructs. Optimism refers to beliefs or expectations, not emotions; which is how it contrasts from the concept of positive affect (Segerstrom, 2006). Optimism also differs from positive illusions because optimism is the expectation of future positive events, whereas positive illusions refer to the way people view something or someone in the present more positively than an objective viewer would (Barelds & Dijkstra, 2010; Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994).

Optimism has been linked to positive mood, high morale, effective coping and problem solving, better social functioning, and positive mental and physical health outcomes (Bohm, Schutz, Rentzsch, Korner, & Funke, 2010; Carver et al., 2010; Srivastava, McGonigal, Richards, Butler, & Gross, 2006; Vollmann et al., 2011).

Optimists are at a lower risk for depressive disorders, appear to be more resilient in the

face of stressful events, and seem to be more successful in pursuing their goals (Assad et al., 2007; Carver et al., 2010). There is some evidence that suggests optimists also do better in relationships overall compared to pessimists (Carver et al., 2010) and researchers now identify optimism as a useful resource for relationships (Assad et al., 2007).

Within the literature, several different forms of optimism are mentioned, but there is some ambiguity about how those different forms are related. Some researchers simply distinguish between generalized optimism and optimism in specific situations (Segerstrom, 2001). Carver and colleagues (2010) defined optimism as “an individual difference variable that reflects the extent to which people hold generalized favorable expectancies for their future” (p. 879). To complicate matters, in some scholarship the type of optimism is not specified, leaving the reader to question whether the researcher differentiates between types of optimism and which type they are looking at, or whether the researcher views optimism as a single construct.

The different forms of optimism that are present in the literature are optimism bias, optimism attribution, and dispositional optimism (Assad et al., 2007; Hjelle, Belongia, & Nesser, 1996; White, Cunningham, & Titchener, 2011). Optimistic bias is the propensity to believe that one is more capable and is less likely to experience negative events compared to one’s peers (White et al., 2011). Optimism attribution, also referred to as attributional style or explanatory style, is the way in which people habitually explain the cause of the good and bad events that happened to them (Hjelle et al., 1996). Furthermore, there are three dimensions that make up attributional style: (a) internality (“it is because of me”) versus externality, (b) stability (“it is always going to be this

way”) versus instability, and (c) globality (“it is like this in every aspect of my life”) versus specificity. Individuals characterized by optimistic attributional style typically evaluate good events to have internal, stable, and global causes and bad events to have external, unstable, and specific causes (Tomakowsky, Lumley, Markowitz, & Frank, 2001).

Finally, dispositional optimism, which is the focus of this study, is optimism as a personality trait (Segerstrom, 2006). Optimism’s heritability is thought to be around 25%, although childhood environment (e.g., parental warmth and financial security) is also believed to influence later adult optimism. Because optimism can be considered a trait, test-retest correlations for optimism have been found to be relatively high for periods lasting 3 years or even longer (Carver et al., 2010).

There is some controversy about whether dispositional optimism is a one bipolar dimension with optimism on one end of the spectrum and pessimism on the other, or whether optimism and pessimism are two independent dimensions (Carver et al., 2010; Herzberg et al., 2006). There is some evidence to support the two different dimensions idea (Herzberg et al., 2006) while other research provides evidence for the bipolar dimension view (Rauch, Schweizer, & Moosbrugger, 2007; Segerstrom, Evans, & Eisenlohr-Moul, 2011). According to the bipolar dimension view, optimism and pessimism can be conceptualized as broad versions of confidence and doubt, pertaining to life in general, rather than to a specific situation or context (Carver et al., 2010). Optimists and pessimists approach the world and life’s challenges differently (optimists expect good things to happen to them while pessimists expect bad things to happen to

them), and those differences have a meaningful influence on their lives (Carver et al. 2010).

Optimism and Romantic Relationships

Srivastava et al. (2006) looked at dating couples to test whether optimists and their partners have higher levels of relationship satisfaction compared to non-optimists. Srivastava et al. relied on the Life Orientation Test (LOT; Scheier & Carver, 1985) to measure dispositional optimism, and what the authors referred to as the Couple Satisfaction Scale (CSS; Cowan & Cowan, 1990) to measure relationship satisfaction. Results from this study revealed that not only optimists, but also their partners had a greater level of relationship satisfaction and that this observation was mediated by the greater perceived support that optimists report (Srivastava et al., 2006).

Others have looked at dispositional optimism and relationship satisfaction in married and cohabitating couples (Assad et al., 2007). Assad et al.'s (2007) longitudinal study used the LOT (Scheier et al., 1994) to measure dispositional optimism, the Quality Marriage Index (Norton, 1983) to assess relationship quality, and self- and partner-reports of cooperative problem solving. Results showed that over a 2-year interval, optimism was a good predictor for relationship satisfaction, with higher levels of optimism linked to more satisfaction in the relationship; this association was mediated by cooperative problem solving. Assad et al. found that an individual's own optimism positively predicted their own relationship satisfaction (i.e., actor effect) as well as their partner's level of relationship satisfaction (i.e., partner effect) within the same time period.

Other researchers studying optimism have focused on romantic partners' similarity versus dissimilarity on life orientation, the term that the researchers used when referring to optimism, and examined how that may affect relationship quality (Bohm et al. 2010). Bohm et al. (2010) had participants rank the attractiveness of vignette characters with varying life orientations and found that optimists are more likely to rate optimistic vignette characters as more attractive than pessimistic characters. Likeness in optimism or pessimism actually increases attractiveness in the eyes of the perceiver. In those determined to be highly optimistic, greater perceived optimism in the partner is also linked to greater relationship quality (Bohm et al., 2010).

Although research has been done on optimism and relationship satisfaction, there are other measures besides satisfaction that assess the health of a romantic relationship, such as adjustment. Relationship adjustment is thought to be a multidimensional measure of relationship functioning (Spanier, 1976; Busby, Christensen, Crane, & Larson, 1995). Relationship adjustment was defined by Spanier (1976) as “a process, the outcome of which is determined by the degree of: (1) troublesome dyadic differences; (2) interpersonal tensions and personal anxiety; (3) dyadic satisfaction; (4) dyadic cohesion; and (5) consensus on matters of importance to dyadic functioning” (p. 17). Busby et al. (1995) refined the measurement of dyadic adjustment from Spanier (1976) suggesting that adjustment has three unique subscales: consensus, satisfaction, and cohesion. These subscales can be informative by themselves, or together to measure dyadic adjustment (Busby et al., 1995).

Purpose of this Study

In order to get an accurate understanding of the longitudinal effects of dispositional optimism on relationships, it is important to consider not only satisfaction, but also consensus and cohesion. An additional source of interest is whether any of the subscales of adjustment have a mediating effect on the others. Finally, research has suggested that the correlation between personality and relationship satisfaction may be different in married couples than in dating couples' relationships (Watson et al., 2000), which is why this study will focus on the former.

Dispositional optimism is expected to be positively correlated with all three of the separate subscales of marital adjustment (cohesion, satisfaction, and consensus). Specifically, Hypothesis 1 states that higher dispositional optimism in wives at Time 1 will be associated with higher marital consensus, satisfaction, and cohesion in wives at Time 2, and Hypothesis 2 states that higher dispositional optimism in husbands at Time 1 will be associated with higher marital consensus, satisfaction, and cohesion in husbands at Time 2, both constituting a longitudinal actor effect. While previous research has not found longitudinal partner effects for optimism, the literature behind positive affect suggests that partner effects are present for positive concepts related to marital satisfaction. Additionally, lack of findings specifically for married couples would suggest that there could be a partner effect in this study. Therefore, hypothesis 3 states that higher dispositional optimism in wives at Time 1 may be associated with higher marital consensus, satisfaction, and cohesion in husbands at Time 2, and Hypothesis 4 states that higher dispositional optimism in husbands at Time 1 may be associated with

higher marital consensus, satisfaction, and cohesion in wives at Time 2, both constituting a longitudinal partner effect.

Chapter 2

Method

Sample

The data used for this study were drawn from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH; Sweet, Bumpass, & Call, 1988). The purpose of NSFH was to gain a broad level of information about family life in order to act as a useful resource for subsequent research across different disciplines (Sweet et al., 1988). The original wave of interviews (NSFH1) conducted in 1987-1988 contained a national sample of 13,007 respondents, with an oversampling of Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, single-parent families, stepfamilies, cohabitating couples, and recently married individuals (Sweet & Bumpass, 2002). The units of observation were individuals rather than households or families (Sweet et al., 1988).

The inclusionary criterion for the current study were those participants that were married (to the same person), and whose spouse also filled out a survey in both Wave 2 and 3. As a result of these restrictions, the total sample size was 1926 couples. The demographic breakdown of the participants are as follows: 88.9% white, 7.4% black, 2.5% Mexican/Chicano/Mexican American, and less than 1% Puerto Rican, Cuban, other Hispanic, American Indian, or Asian. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 81 ($M = 42$, $SD = 10.5$). In terms of education level, 30.6% received a bachelor's degree, 10% received a master's degree, and 2.9% received a doctor's degree. See Table 2.1 and 2.2 for a summary of the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 2.1

Demographic Characteristics of Wives (n = 1926)

Variable	n	%
Age		
18-25	49	2.5
26-35	667	34.6
36-45	696	36.1
46-55	308	16.0
56-65	163	8.5
66-78	43	2.2
Education completed		
Bachelor's	264	13.7
Master's	83	4.3
Doctorate	8	0.4
Race		
Black	69	3.6
White/not Hispanic	872	45.3
Mex/Chicano	21	1.1
Cuban	2	0.1
American Indian	1	0.1
Asian	7	0.4

Note. % represents the percentage of women in the sample, not of the total sample.

Table 2.2

Demographic Characteristics of Husbands (n = 1926)

Variable	n	%
Age		
20-25	22	1.2
26-35	513	26.7
36-45	735	38.3
46-55	389	20.2
56-65	197	10.2
66-81	70	3.9
Education completed		
Bachelor's	325	16.9
Master's	109	5.7
Doctorate	48	2.5
Race		
Black	73	3.8
White/not Hispanic	840	43.6
Mex/Chicano	28	1.5
Puerto Rican	2	0.1
Other Hispanic	4	0.2
American Indian	1	0.1
Asian	3	0.2

Note. % represents the percentage of men in the sample, not of the total sample.

NSFH Procedure

The addresses of the households were randomly selected using the Primary Sampling Unit (PSU) National Sampling Frame (Sweet et al., 1988). The study used a nationally representative sample of adults and their cohabitating partners or spouses and randomly assigned one partner as the primary respondent and the other as the secondary respondent. In order to keep the flow of the interviews and due to the sensitive nature of some of the questions, several portions of the face-to-face interviews were self-administered. The original survey was succeeded by two follow up surveys: Wave 2 in 1992-1994 (Sweet & Bumpass, 1996) and Wave 3 in 2001-2002 (Sweet & Bumpass, 2002).

At Wave 2, face-to-face interviews and self-administered questionnaires were conducted with the primary respondents as well as with the current spouse or partner (secondary respondents). If the relationship had ended since Wave 1, the researchers interviewed the ex-spouse and the new spouse/partner became a respondent as well. These interviews were conducted using Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) technology with laptop computers (Sweet & Bumpass, 1996). At Wave 2, 93.9% of the original respondents from Wave 1 were located, and of those participants, 87% were successfully interviewed (overall response rate was 81.7%). The average length of the interview of the main respondent was 89 minutes (Sweet & Bumpass, 1996).

At Wave 3, all the interviews (for both the primary and secondary respondents) were conducted over telephone using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) technology. The instrument used for the primary and secondary respondents were identical. Due to budget constraints, only a subsample of Wave 1 respondents was

selected to re-interview at Wave 3. The total sample size at this time was 18,554, which included primary respondents, ex-spouses, secondary respondents, and eligible children. The average interview length was approximately 72 minutes (Sweet & Bumpass, 2002).

Data Preparation

For the purpose of the present study, all three waves of data were merged, and married couples were identified while all other participants were deleted. The data that was extracted from the Wave 2 and 3 surveys were the two questions measuring dispositional optimism (see Appendix A), and the fourteen questions measuring marital adjustment (see Appendix C), while demographic and background information was extracted from Wave 1. The analysis for this study compared Wave 2 and Wave 3 data, however from this point on, for clarity purposes and ease of reading, Wave 2 will be referred to as Time 1, and Wave 3 will be referred to as Time 2.

Measures

Optimism. Optimism was measured by the following questions from Time 1 and Time 2: “I have always felt pretty sure my life would work out the way I wanted it to” and “I feel hopeful about the future” (Sweet & Bumpass, 2002). Answer options for these questions range from *strongly agree* (1) to *strongly disagree* (5). These answer options were reverse coded before scoring so that a higher score reflects a higher level of optimism. The list of questions measuring optimism from Time 1 and 2 can be found in Appendix A. The reliability for the husbands’ optimism scales for Time 1 and 2 was $\alpha = .841$ and $.473$ respectively. The reliability for the wives’ optimism scales for Time 1 and 2 was $\alpha = .821$ and $.547$ respectively. For the list of reliability measures for optimism see Table 2.3.

Table 2.3

Reliability Scores for Optimism

Scale	Cronbach Alpha	
	Time 1	Time 2
Husbands' Optimism (2 items)	.841	.473
Wives' Optimism (2 items)	.821	.547

Those questions that appear in Time 1 and Time 2 of the NSFH are items that closely resemble items on the *Life Orientation Test-Revised* (LOT-R; Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994) and will therefore be used as proxy variables for optimism. The LOT-R is the most frequently used instrument to measure dispositional optimism and has been utilized in countless studies that look at optimism (Assad et al., 2007; Bohm et al., 2010; Herzberg, Glaesmer, & Hoyer, 2006; Srivastava et al., 2006). The LOT-R is a 10-item self-report instrument that measures general outcome expectancies (Srivastava et al., 2006) and is comprised of three positively worded items, three negatively worded items (which are reverse coded before scoring) and four filler items (Scheier et al., 1994). The answer options range from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5) and sample questions include “In uncertain times, I usually expect the best” and “I am optimistic about my future” (Scheier et al., 1994, p. 1073). The complete list of questions from the LOT-R is listed in Appendix B.

One of the creators of the LOT-R was contacted in order to establish face validity of the chosen items from NSFH. It was determined that at the item level, they were consistent (M. Scheier, personal communication, October 10, 2012). Receiving acknowledgement from one of the creators of the instrument, stating that those items from Time 1 and 2 are in his opinion similar to the items on the LOT-R strengthens the case for using optimism questions from NSFH.

Marital Adjustment. Marital adjustment was measured by questions such as the following from Time 1 and 2 of the NSFH: “During the past month, about how often did you and your husband/wife spend time alone with each other talking, or sharing an activity?” and “How often do you discuss your disagreements calmly?” (Sweet &

Bumpass, 2002). Some of the items were reverse coded so that a higher score indicates higher subscales of marital adjustment. The complete list of marital adjustment questions for Time 1 and 2 from NSFH can be found in Appendix C. For the husbands' NSFH marital adjustment subscales, the reliability ranged from .771 to .899 in Time 1 and .744 to .892 in Time 2. The reliability for wives' NSFH marital adjustment subscales ranged from .760 to .894 for Time 1 and .668 to .860 in Time 2. For the complete list of reliability measures see Table 2.4. Those questions from NSFH are comparable to items from the *Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale* (R-DAS; Busby, Christensen, Crane, & Larson, 1995) and were used as proxy variables for marital adjustment. The R-DAS is a 14-item multidimensional scale that measures adjustment in romantic relationships (Busby et al., 1995) and contains three unique subscales that can be used independently or together: cohesion, satisfaction, and consensus. Research has shown that the R-DAS is able to successfully distinguish between distressed and non-distressed couples (Busby et al., 1995). Sample items from the R-DAS include "Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?" and "How often do you and your mate calmly discuss something?" (Busby et al., 1995, p. 307-308). The complete list of questions from the R-DAS can be found in Appendix D.

As with the optimism questions, I contacted one of the creators of the R-DAS to get his opinion of the marital adjustment items. It was determined that at the item level, the questions had face validity (R. Crane, personal communication, October 11, 2012). By asking one of the creators to verify that the proposed items from Time 1 and 2 of NSFH are in his opinion comparable to items on the R-DAS strengthens the argument for using those questions as a measurement of marital adjustment.

Table 2.4

Reliability Scores for Subscales of Marital Adjustment

Scale	Cronbach Alpha			
	Husbands		Wives	
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2
Satisfaction (5 items)	.899	.892	.894	.860
Consensus (5 items)	.771	.744	.760	.731
Cohesion (4 items)	.844	.753	.848	.668

Chapter 3

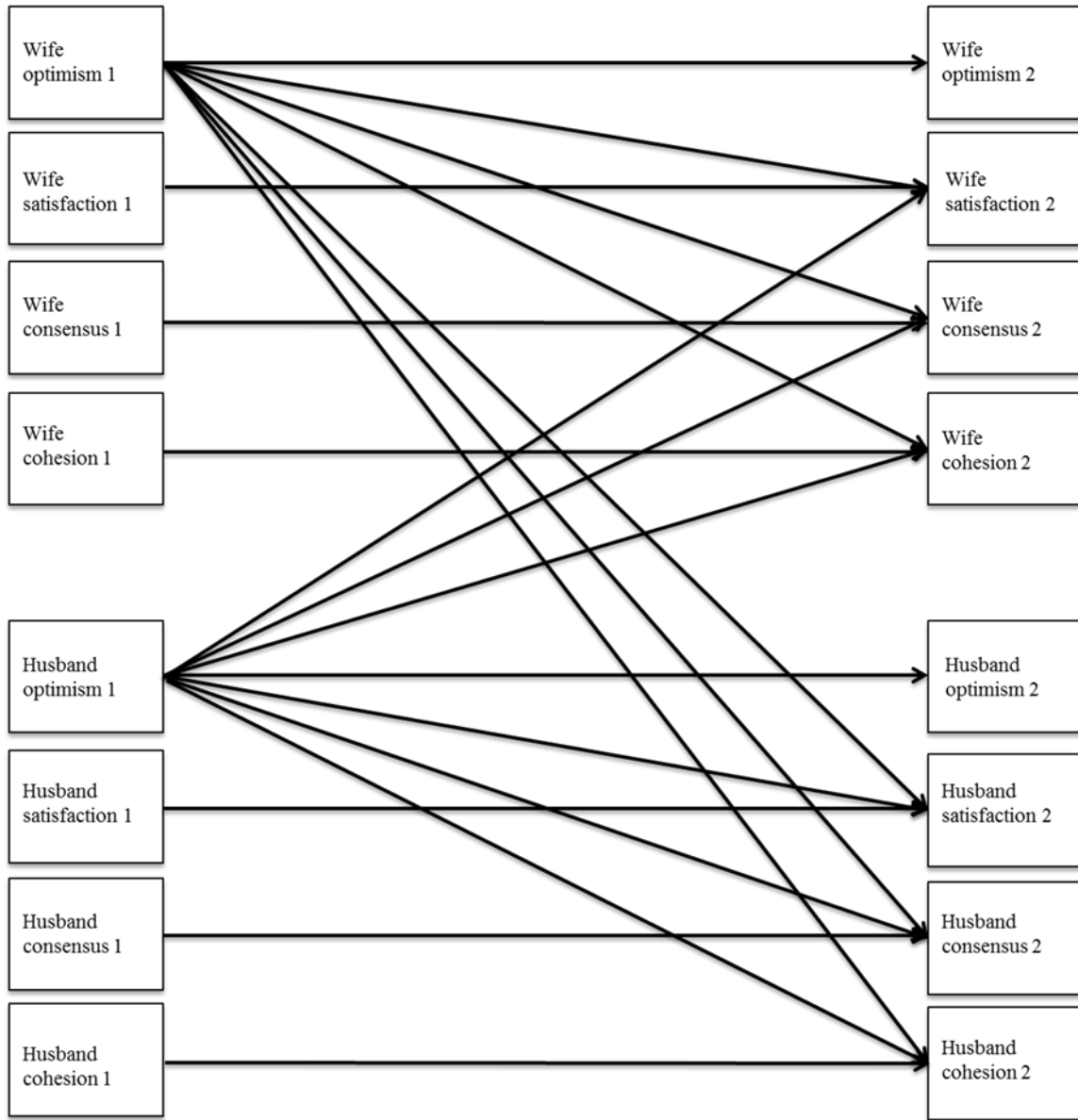
Results

The aim of this study was to understand both the actor effects and partner effects of dispositional optimism on the subscales of marital adjustment, as well as explore any possible mediation of the three subscales. Because of the nature of the data and the research questions, it was important to use a method that would be able to analyze dyadic data. Consistent with some previous work in the literature (e.g., Assad et al., 2007; Gordon & Baucom, 2009; Srivastava et al., 2006; Vollmann et al., 2011), the modeling approach that was determined appropriate for the majority of the analysis was the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM). APIM was designed to address the violations of statistical independence related to dyadic data and also takes into account partner similarity and accounts for the confounding that can result (Kenny, Kashy, & Bolger, 1998).

During the beginning parts of the analysis phase, many different combinations and models were explored in order to find the best fit for the data. Originally, attempts were made to create models that contained both husbands' and wives' optimism as well as both of their subscales of adjustment within the same model. See Figure 3.1 for an example of an earlier model. However, after considering the fit of the models, it was determined that two separate models should be created; one for wives' effect on husbands and a separate model for husbands' effect on wives.

I also tried several orientation variations of the marital adjustment subscales. For example, some of the earlier models had the three subscales of adjustment at time 2 as unique outcome variables, while other models that were tried had variations of one of the

Figure 3.1 Earlier Model with Both Wives' and Husbands' Subscales of Adjustment



Note. $\chi^2 = 2118$, $df = 63$, CFI = .772, RMSEA = .130. Correlations were included in the model but are not shown here for clarity purposes.

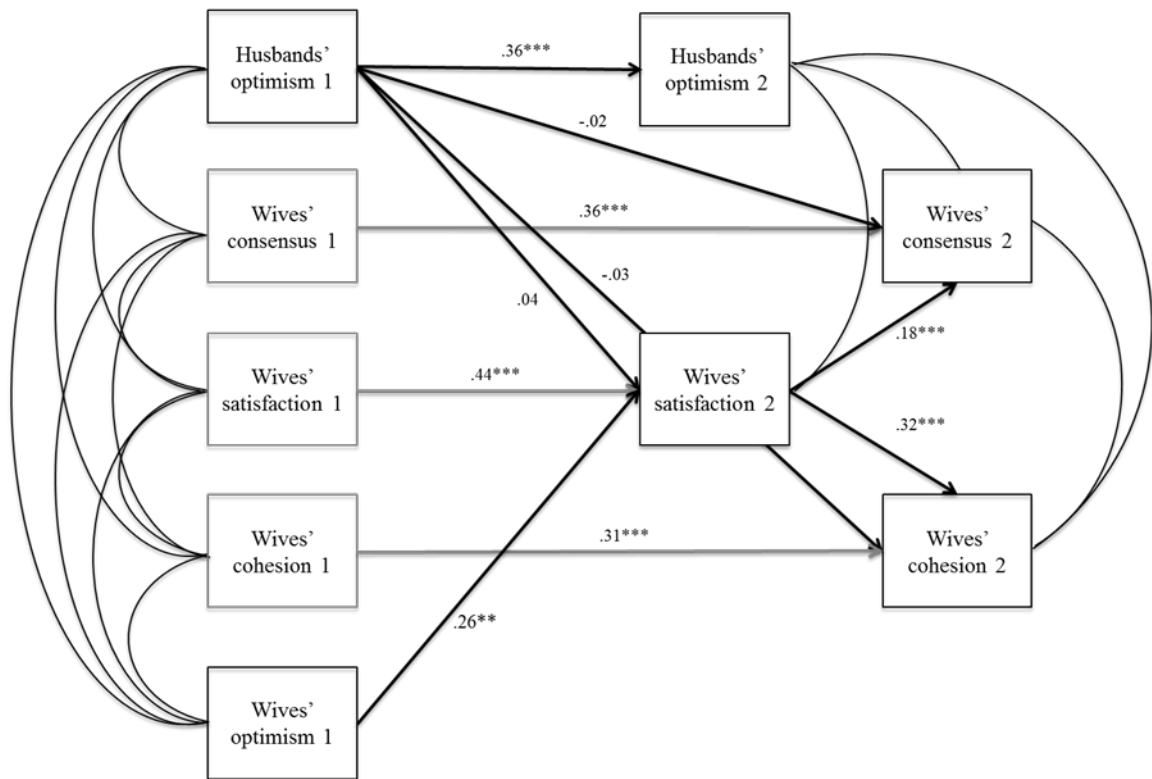
three subscales at Time 2 mediating the effect of optimism on the other two subscales at Time 2. After building many different models, it was determined that satisfaction appeared to mediate the effect of dispositional optimism on consensus and cohesion, for both husbands and wives at Time 2. However, at Time 1 there was no significant change when ordering the variables in such a way, so therefore the three adjustment subscales were left as unique predictor variables. In the end, there are two final models, separated by gender.

Model 1: Predictors of Wives' Satisfaction

The first model (see Figure 3.2) shows the effect of husbands' optimism on wives' satisfaction, consensus, and cohesion. The model fit indices indicate a good overall model fit ($\chi^2 = 111.44$, $df = 12$, CFI = .973, and RMSEA = .066). The model accounted for Time 1 levels of optimism, satisfaction, cohesion, and consensus, and all of those autoregressive paths were significant. For example, for every one-point increase in wives' satisfaction at Time 1, there is a corresponding .44 increase in wives' satisfaction at Time 2 ($B = .438$, $p < .001$). However, each of the paths from husbands' optimism at Time 1 to wives' Time 2 consensus, satisfaction, and cohesion were statistically insignificant. This reveals no longitudinal partner effects within this model. However, there were statistically significant partner effects within the same time period (Time 1) for satisfaction ($r = .072$, $p = .004$), consensus ($r = .065$, $p = .010$), and cohesion ($r = .053$, $p = .031$).

Although there does not appear to be longitudinal partner effects in this model, there is a clear longitudinal actor effect; for every one point increase in wives' optimism at Time 1, there is a corresponding .26 increase in wives' satisfaction at Time 2 ($B =$

Figure 3.2 Predictors of Wives' Satisfaction (Model 1)



Note. ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. $\chi^2 = 111.44$, CFI = .973, RMSEA = .066, $df = 12$. Bolded paths are those of direct importance to the hypotheses. The paths in light grey are those that account for the influence of those variables over time.

.263, $p = .005$). Additionally, the model supports statistically significant actor effects in the same time period for satisfaction ($r = .257, p < .001$), consensus ($r = .170, p < .001$), and cohesion ($r = .168, p < .001$).

Wives' satisfaction at Time 2 was able to predict .18 of the variation ($p < .001$) in wives' consensus at Time 2, and .32 of the variation ($p < .001$) in wives' cohesion at Time 2. Therefore, this model also reveals that wives' satisfaction at Time 2 was a good predictor of their own consensus and cohesion in the same time period, indicating partial mediation. See Table 3.1 for a correlation and covariance table for Model 1.

Model 2: Predictors of Husbands' Satisfaction

The second model (see Figure 3.3) shows the effect of wives' optimism on husbands' satisfaction, consensus, and cohesion. The model fit indices indicate a good overall model fit ($\chi^2 = 65.369, df = 10, CFI = .983, \text{ and } RMSEA = .054$). This model also accounted for Time 1 levels of optimism, satisfaction, cohesion, and consensus. Like with the first model, Time 1 variables were able to account for a large amount of the variation at Time 2; for example for every one point increase in husbands' satisfaction at Time 1, there is a corresponding .42 increase in husbands' satisfaction at Time 2 ($B = .416, p < .001$).

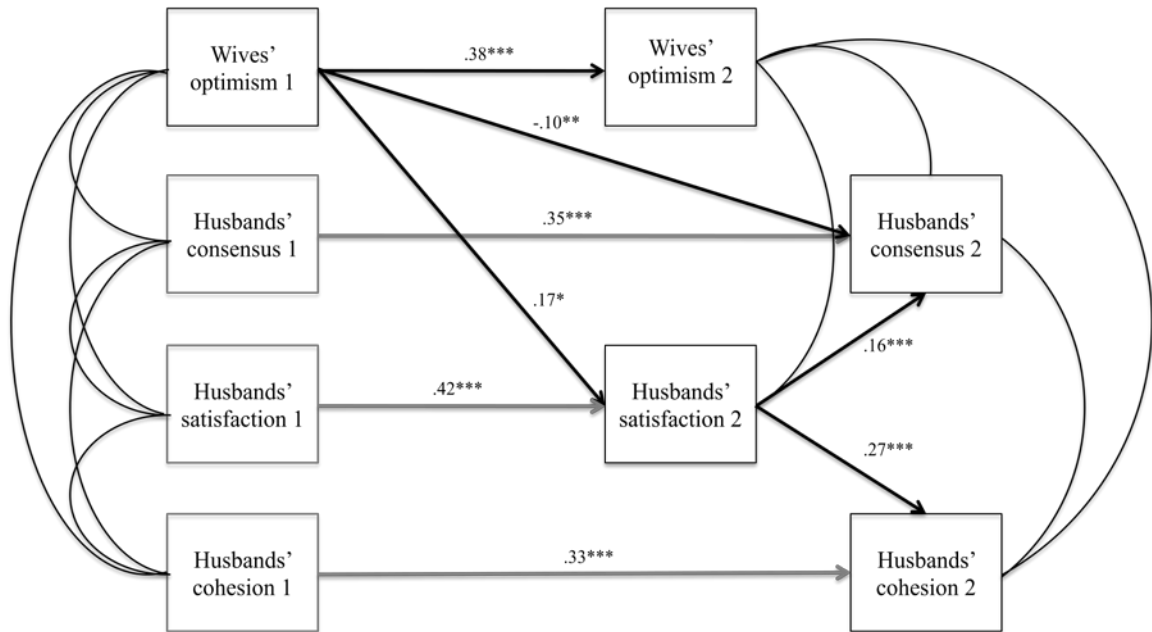
Longitudinally, this model reveals an important partner effect from wives' optimism to husbands' satisfaction: for every one point increase in wives' optimism at Time 1, there is a corresponding .17 increase in husbands' satisfaction at Time 2 ($B = .168, p = .038$). It is important to note that this path is statistically significant while accounting for the relationship between marital scales across time. The relatively small coefficient therefore may be explaining unique contribution between optimism and later

Table 3.1

Covariances and Correlations for Model 1

Variable 1	Variable 2	Covariance	S.E.	Correlation	<i>p</i>
Optimism husband 1	Satisfaction wife 1	0.65	.23	.07	.004
Satisfaction wife 1	Optimism wife 1	2.41	.24	.26	<.001
Optimism husband 1	Optimism wife 1	0.20	.05	.09	<.001
Cohesion wife 1	Satisfaction wife 1	14.75	.75	.55	<.001
Consensus wife 1	Satisfaction wife 1	8.70	.60	.39	<.001
Consensus wife 1	Optimism husband 1	0.32	.13	.07	.010
Consensus wife 1	Cohesion wife 1	5.46	.38	.37	<.001
Cohesion wife 1	Optimism husband 1	0.32	.15	.05	.031
Cohesion wife 1	Optimism wife 1	1.02	.15	.17	<.001
Consensus wife 1	Optimism wife 1	0.87	.13	.17	<.001
Optimism husband 2	Satisfaction wife 2	0.44	.16	.07	.006
Consensus wife 2	Cohesion wife 2	1.18	.16	.18	<.001
Optimism husband 2	Consensus wife 2	-0.03	.07	-.01	.672
Optimism husband 2	Cohesion wife 2	-0.04	.08	-.01	.583

Figure 3.3 Predictors of Husbands' Satisfaction (Model 2)



Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. $\chi^2 = 65.369$, CFI = .983, RMSEA = .054, $df = 10$. Bolded paths are those of direct importance to the hypotheses. The paths in light grey are those that account for the influence of those variables over time.

satisfaction. Additionally, an unexpected finding was that for every one-point increase in wives' optimism at Time 1, there was a corresponding .10 *decrease* in husbands' consensus at Time 2 ($B = -.103, p = .009$). There was no statistically significant effect of wives' optimism at Time 1 on husbands' cohesion at Time 2, and therefore that path was removed from the final model. There were also statistically significant partner effects within the same time period between wives' optimism and husbands' satisfaction ($r = .144, p < .001$), consensus ($r = .081, p = .001$), and cohesion ($r = .108, p < .001$). See Table 3.2 for a correlation and covariance table for Model 2.

Additionally, the results revealed that husbands' satisfaction at Time 2 was able to predict .16 of the variation ($p < .001$) in husbands' consensus at Time 2, and .27 of the variation ($p < .01$) in husbands' cohesion at Time 2. Therefore, this model indicates that husbands' satisfaction at Time 2 was a good predictor of their own consensus and cohesion in the same time period.

This model also revealed that the path from husbands' optimism at Time 1 to husbands' satisfaction at Time 2 was statistically insignificant, and was therefore removed from the final model with no adverse effects to the model. This signifies that within this model there is no longitudinal partner effect. Because husbands' optimism at Time 1 was deleted from the model, there are no concurrent actor effects to report.

Table 3.2

Covariances and Correlations for Model 2

Variable 1	Variable 2	Covariance	S.E.	Correlation	<i>p</i>
Optimism wife 1	Satisfaction husband 1	1.27	.23	.14	<.001
Cohesion husband 1	Satisfaction husband 1	12.17	.65	.52	<.001
Consensus husband 1	Satisfaction husband 1	9.02	.59	.42	<.001
Consensus husband 1	Optimism wife 1	0.43	.13	.08	.001
Consensus husband 1	Cohesion husband 1	5.03	.36	.37	<.001
Cohesion husband 1	Optimism wife 1	0.61	.14	.11	<.001
Optimism wife 2	Satisfaction husband 2	0.37	.15	.06	.011
Consensus husband 2	Cohesion husband 2	0.86	.14	.15	<.001
Optimism wife 2	Consensus husband 2	0.14	.07	.05	.058
Optimism wife 2	Cohesion husband 2	0.00	.08	.00	.966

Chapter 4

Discussion

The goal of this study was to examine the longitudinal effects of dispositional optimism on husbands' and wives' own subscales of marital adjustment (consensus, satisfaction, and cohesion), as well as the effects on their partners' measures of marital adjustment. I hypothesized that dispositional optimism would have a positive effect on participants' own levels of consensus, satisfaction, and cohesion, as well as that of their spouses', regardless of gender. The other goal of this study was to determine how the three subscales of marital adjustment interacted with each other, and whether any of them mediated the path from dispositional optimism to the other two subscales.

Model 1: Predictors of Wives' Satisfaction

Some of the results confirmed the original hypothesis, while other parts did not. The results for this model indicate that husbands' optimism level does not seem to affect wives' subsequent marital satisfaction, consensus, or cohesion, which did not support that part of my hypothesis. This finding is consistent with existing literature, which has not found a longitudinal partner effect from dispositional optimism to their partners' level of marital satisfaction/quality (Assad et al., 2007).

Although husbands' optimism did not appear to affect their wives' later subscales of adjustment, it was correlated with their wives' satisfaction, consensus and cohesion within the same time period, and this is consistent with existing literature which states that cross-sectionally, dispositional optimism correlates with relationship satisfaction and marital quality (Assad et al., 2007; Srivastava et al., 2006). However, these partner effect correlations within the same time period although significant, are all weak. This is

nevertheless meaningful because although husbands' optimism might not always lead to their wives' increased satisfaction, consensus, and cohesion longitudinally, it does correlate with wives' concurrent levels.

Next, looking at the actor effects of optimism, the results indicate that wives' own optimism levels influences their own level of satisfaction later on as well as their concurrent subscales of marital adjustment. All of these findings reveal that longitudinally, in model 1 there are important actor effects but no partner effects, although there are both actor and partner effects in the same time period. This is consistent with the longitudinal findings of Assad et al. (2007) as well as the findings within the same time period of Srivastava et al. (2006). It appears that the best predictor of a wife's satisfaction is her earlier satisfaction and her earlier optimism, but not her husband's earlier optimism.

Model 2: Predictors of Husbands' Satisfaction

The findings for model 2 indicate that wives' optimism level does in fact increase their husbands' later marital satisfaction, which in this case constitutes a partner effect, and confirms that part of the hypothesis. This positive longitudinal partner effect actually goes beyond the findings by Assad et al. (2007) who found no such longitudinal partner effect. Next, considering actor effects, model 2 indicates that husbands' own optimism level does not seem to affect his later satisfaction, and therefore that path was deleted from the final model. This specific finding is surprising, because Assad et al. (2007) had found a statistically significant longitudinal actor effect. However, examining the sample and the methodology in that previous study reveals several differences. One possible explanation for these differences could be due to differences in measurement that Assad

et al. (2007) used as the dependent variable (marital quality) and how they tested for it (Norton's Quality of Marriage Index). Another possible reason for the difference could be that Assad et al. (2007) did not allow husbands and wives data to vary, constraining the effects and making them identical for husbands and wives. Finally, the difference could be due to the fact that the current study was constrained by an existing dataset, and only two items were identified as measuring dispositional optimism. Other, similar studies had included either five (Assad et al., 2007) or eight items (Srivastava et al., 2006) to measure dispositional optimism.

Also, Assad et al. (2007) included couples that were married, cohabitating full-time, and couples that were not cohabitating on a full-time basis. Contrarily, the current study only included married couples because the literature has shown that the correlation between personality traits and relationship satisfaction is stronger in married couples than in dating couples' relationships (Watson et al., 2000). The sample size in the current study is also much greater (1926 couples) than the sample size in Assad et al. (2007), which included only 274 couples. Because of sample size differences, the current study has a greater range of ages, and a much higher average age for participants compared to similar studies.

The results from this model also reveal that wives' optimism seems to decrease husbands' later consensus levels, which goes against my hypothesis. However, there is evidence to suggest possible mediation from optimism to consensus through satisfaction, because husbands' satisfaction at Time 2 is a good predictor of their own consensus and cohesion in the same time period. Therefore, although the path from wives' optimism at Time 1 to husbands' consensus at Time 2 is negative, the concurrent path from husbands'

satisfaction to husbands' consensus is positive, which may balance it out, and this indicates a partial mediation between wives' optimism and husbands' consensus.

Wives' optimism did not seem to affect their husbands' later cohesion levels directly. However, because wives' optimism has a direct effect on husbands' satisfaction, which has a direct effect on husbands' cohesion, this potentially reveals a full mediation process. Additionally, wives' optimism was correlated with their husbands' current level of satisfaction, consensus, and cohesion, which is consistent with existing literature that found partner effects in the same time period (Assad et al., 2007; Srivastava et al., 2006). Although the concurrent actor effects between dispositional optimism and marital satisfaction are present, the correlations are weak.

Comparing the two models

An interesting finding uncovered by comparing the two models reveals that a wife's dispositional optimism affects not only her own level of later marital satisfaction, but also her husband's level of later satisfaction. However, a husband's dispositional optimism affects neither his own nor his wife's later marital satisfaction. This is interesting because it suggests that within a marriage, the wife's level of dispositional optimism matters whereas the husband's does not.

Past research has shown that men tend to benefit more from marriage compared to women in a variety of ways: men suffer less than women from marital conflict (Wanic & Kulik, 2011), and daily hassles are reduced at a greater rate for husbands compared to wives (Hochschild & Machung, 1999). Men gain greater social support from their wives than vice versa (Umberson, Chen, House, Hopkins, & Slate, 1996). Social support within a marriage is defined in the literature as feeling cared for and listened to, and is inversely

related to depression (Umberson et al., 1996). Additionally, Hochschild (1998) found that women are the ones to provide the emotional support work within a family, which is associated with a greater burden. The findings in this study seem to be yet another example of this gender differences: optimism levels of wives have a positive effect on husbands' later satisfaction, but optimism levels of husbands have no effect on wives' later satisfaction.

Implications

The results of this study have implications for clinicians working with couples with relationship issues. Although dispositional optimism is considered a trait (Carver et al., 2010), some researchers believe that there may be ways of improving one's optimism level. Carver et al. (2010) suggest that cognitive-behavioral therapies might be one way of decreasing a person's negative thoughts, which lead to pessimism and negative affect, while increasing positive thoughts. From a cognitive-behavioral standpoint, the therapist could help the couple train themselves to think more positively, in such ways that an optimist would think. This could help couples experience higher marital satisfaction in the present, and for husbands may increase satisfaction in the future as well.

Carver et al. (2010) argues that from the body of literature on optimism, clinicians need to learn what they can about optimists and their approach to the world so that it can be taught to pessimists as well. Little research thus far has explored interventions to help pessimists improve their ways of thinking. Although this trait may be resistant to change, in certain contexts change has been documented (Carver et al., 2010).

Additionally, marriage enrichment programs can help educate couples on the importance of optimism on marital satisfaction, and can attempt to foster optimism within

both partners. Programs already exist to focus on marital skills such as communication (Wampler & Sprenkle, 1980); therefore it would not be much of a stretch to add helpful information about dispositional optimism into such marriage enrichment programs.

Limitations

Due to the large sample size and the complexity of the model, a potential limitation of this study is that it is hard to be sure if the results are meaningful. Although the p-values suggest statistical significance, it is hard to determine the degree to which these results have real-world applicability. However, both of the models had good model fit, with low RMSEA (.066 and .054) and high CFI (.973 and .983).

Another limitation of this study is that the measure for dispositional optimism was made up of only two items, which could have affected the reliability of the measure. The reliability for optimism for both husbands and wives at Time 2 was below acceptable levels, however the reliability for optimism at Time 1 was strong for both partners. Regardless, there was still an effect found with only two items—future research may find a stronger effect with a more reliable scale. Additionally, the reliability of wives' cohesion at Time 2 was also rather low. Finally, another potential limitation of this study is that no formal analysis was done to determine the presence of gender differences. The wives' data were kept separate from the husbands' data and the coefficients were found to be different based on gender.

Future Directions

Areas for future research include exploring intervention techniques that might help clinicians teach couples the skills to increase their optimistic characteristics and deal more effectively with pessimistic thought patterns. Although such a trait might be

resistant to modification, change has been observed in certain contexts (Carver et al., 2010), and therefore researching such interventions might help us understand the best ways to go about doing so.

Another direction for future research is to continue studying the interplay between the three subscales of marital adjustment. This study found that satisfaction acted as a mediator for consensus and cohesion, but continued research ought to be conducted to verify these results and explore this concept.

Concluding Remarks

In closing, this study has revealed a complex relationship between optimism and gender on the subscales of marital adjustment. The analyses based on longitudinal data indicate that partner and actor effects seem to vary based on the gender. It appears that wives' dispositional optimism affects not only their own level of subsequent marital satisfaction but also that of their husbands', while husbands' optimism affects neither their own nor their wives' level of later marital satisfaction.

Appendices

Appendix A

Optimism Questions from the National Survey of Families and Households

I have always felt pretty sure my life would work out the way I wanted it to.

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 Disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree

I feel hopeful about the future.

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 Disagree
- 5 Strongly disagree

Appendix B

Life Orientation Test- Revised (LOT-R)

	1 = strongly disagree			5 = strongly agree	
1. In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.	1	2	3	4	5
2. It is easy for me to relax. (Filler item)	1	2	3	4	5
3. If something can go wrong for me, it will.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I'm always optimistic about my future.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I enjoy my friends a lot. (Filler item)	1	2	3	4	5
6. It's important for me to keep busy. (Filler item)	1	2	3	4	5
7. I hardly ever expect things to go my way.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I don't get upset too easily. (Filler item)	1	2	3	4	5
9. I rarely count on good things happening to me.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C

Marital Adjustment Questions from the National Survey of Families and Households

Item [†]	Response Scale	Likert Range	Final Construct
Describe relationship	(Very Unhappy-Very Happy)	1-7	Satisfaction
How happy with amount of understanding	(Very Unhappy-Very Happy)	1-7	Satisfaction
How happy with love and affection	(Very Unhappy-Very Happy)	1-7	Satisfaction
How happy with demands of spouse	(Very Unhappy-Very Happy)	1-7	Satisfaction
How happy with sexual relationship	(Very Unhappy-Very Happy)	1-7	Satisfaction
How happy with time spent	(Very Unhappy-Very Happy)	1-7	Cohesion
Amount of free time with spouse	(Almost none-Almost all)	1-5	Cohesion
How often shared activity last month	(Never-Almost every day)	1-6	Cohesion
How often spend mutual time with friends	(Never-Almost every day)	1-6	Cohesion
Disagree over household tasks	(Never-Almost every day)	1-6*	Consensus
Disagree over money	(Never-Almost every day)	1-6*	Consensus
Disagree over time spent together	(Never-Almost every day)	1-6*	Consensus
Disagree over sex	(Never-Almost every day)	1-6*	Consensus
Disagree over spouses parents	(Never-Almost every day)	1-6*	Consensus

Note: *=represents items that were reversed coded. **=Items loaded together onto a fourth factor. †=Question items are identical for NSFH participants and spouses across Wave 2 and Wave 3. ††= Variable names listed are for Wave 2 participants.

Appendix D

Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (R-DAS)

Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Agree	Frequently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
1. Religious matters	5	4	3	2	1	0
2. Demonstration of affection	5	4	3	2	1	0
3. Making major decisions	5	4	3	2	1	0
4. Sex Relations	5	4	3	2	1	0
5. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)	5	4	3	2	1	0
6. Career decisions	5	4	3	2	1	0
	All the Time	Most of the Time	More often than not	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
7. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?	0	1	2	3	4	5
8. How often do you and your partner quarrel?	0	1	2	3	4	5
9. Do you ever regret that you married (or lived together)?	0	1	2	3	4	5
10. How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves"?	0	1	2	3	4	5
	Every Day	Almost Every Day	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	
11. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?	4	3	2	1	0	
How often would you say the following events occur between you and your mate?						

	Never	Less than once a month	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Once a day	More often
12. Have a stimulation exchange of ideas	0	1	2	3	4	5
13. Work together on a project	0	1	2	3	4	5
14. Calmly discuss something	0	1	2	3	4	5

Annotated Bibliography

Assad, K. K., Donnellan, M. B., & Conger, R. D. (2007). Optimism: An enduring resource for romantic relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 93*, 285-297.

This study is very closely related to my thesis project. It looked at the predictive ability of optimism (both partner effects and actor effects) on later marital satisfaction. They used the LOT to measure optimism and Norton's Quality of Marriage Index to measure relationship satisfaction. The study participants for the longitudinal analysis consisted of 274 married or dating couples. The researchers found statistically significant actor effects but not partner effects.

Barelds, D. P. H. & Dijkstra, P. (2011). Positive illusions about a partner's personality and relationship quality. *Journal of Research in Personality, 45*, 37-43.

The goal of this study was to examine positive illusions about relationship quality and personality. Participants included 120 couples, and the study looked at actor and partner effects. The results revealed that positive illusions are in fact positively related to relationship quality. This study is important because positive illusions is a topic which may be confused with optimism, therefore it is necessary to illustrate the differences in addition to pointing out how it relates to relationship satisfaction.

Beach, S. R. H. & O'Leary, K. D. (2007). Dysphoria and marital discord: Are dysphoric individuals at risk for marital maladjustment? *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy, 19*, 355-368. doi:10.1111/j.1752-0606.1993.tb00998.x

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of dysphoria (mild depression) on later marital adjustment. The participants included 264 couples getting ready to marry. Levels of both dysphoria and relationship adjustment were measured before marriage, six months after the wedding, and 18 months into the marriage. Results suggest that premarital dysphoria is associated with later marital unhappiness and marital deterioration. This study helps show that prior research has focused on the damaging effects of negative characteristics on a marriage.

Beach, S. R. H., Smith, D. A., & Fincham, F. D. (1994). Marital interventions for depression: Empirical foundation and future prospects. *Applied & Preventive Psychology, 3*, 233-250. doi:10.1016/S0962-1849(05)80097-6

This article has two distinct goals: to examine the effects of marital discord on depression, and to understand the usefulness of marital interventions in treating depression in individuals who are already experiencing marital discord. This article reviews research that has found a robust association between depressive symptoms and marital distress. Finally, it concludes that certain marital

interventions (e.g., behavioral marital therapy) has been shown to be effective in increasing marital adjustment and has the potential to treat and prevent depressive symptoms. As with the other article by Beach, this article helps to show that prior research has focused on the effects of negative characteristics on a marriage.

Bohm, R., Schutz, A., Rentzsch, K., Korner, A., & Funke, F. (2010). Are we looking for positivity or similarity in a partner's outlook on life? Similarity predicts perceptions of social attractiveness and relationship quality. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 5*, 431-438.

The goal of this study was to examine whether similarity in romantic partners' life orientation (optimistic vs. pessimistic) affects relationship quality. The study consisted of 316 participants, and revealed that likeness on optimism or pessimism increased attractiveness in the eyes of the perceiver. This study is an example of other optimism research.

Blum, J. S. & Mehrabian, A. (1999). Personality and temperament correlates of marital satisfaction. *Journal of Personality, 67*, 93-125.

The participants in this study were 166 married couples, ages 20-85 and they were given marital satisfaction questionnaires along with Pleasantness-Arousal-Dominance temperament scales. Results showed that participants with more pleasant temperaments whose partners also had more pleasant temperaments were happier in their marriages. It seems that personality traits similar to individual characteristics can be strong predictors of marital satisfaction, including Optimism-Pessimism. The study also showed that more optimistic people were more likely to have successful marriages. This article gives information on optimism as well as on temperament and how they affect marital satisfaction, which will add substance in the optimism portion of this project.

Bradbury, T. N. (1995). Assessing the four fundamental domains of marriage. *Family Relations, 44*(4), 459-468.

This article states that many marital therapists do not routinely use standardized assessment tools with their clients, because of the difficulties associated with choosing a useful measure. It talks about a variety of useful self-report measures and observation procedures that may be helpful for marital practitioners in conducting assessments.

Bradbury, T.N. & Karney, B.R. (2004). Understanding and altering the longitudinal course of marriage. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 66*, 862-879.

One of the many things this article looks at is positive affect, problem solving skills and their effects on marital satisfaction. This article analyzed recent findings in this area of research. It illuminates key findings such as couples with relatively low problem solving skills can achieve the same level of marital quality than couples with good problem solving skills as long as they display relatively

high levels of positive affect: affection, humor, interest/curiosity. This article also highlights the moderating effects and benefits of positive affect in marital relationships, specifically during problem solving.

Busby, D. M., Christensen, C., Crane, D. R., & Larson, J. H. (1995). A revision of the dyadic adjustment scale for use with distressed and nondistressed couples: Construct hierarchy and multidimensional scales. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 21*(3), 289-308.

This study was designed to improve the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), an instrument used to measure marital adjustment that was created in 1976 by Spanier. There was debate over whether the instrument is unidimensional or multidimensional; there was a desire for it to be multidimensional because there are other, shorter instruments that can measure adjustment. One study argued that it is neither, but rather it should be considered hierarchical with first and second-order constructs. The DAS had 4 separate subscales: consensus, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, and affectional expression, however two of them were found to be problematic.

The researchers hoped to make changes to the DAS and correcting the problems with the subscales by “following the standards of construct hierarchy”. This would allow the instrument to be used as a multidimensional scale. First of all, homogenous items were selected out, and 3 second-order concepts were created: consensus, satisfaction, and cohesion. Factor analysis showed that this new Revised DAS (RDAS) has construct validity, and discriminant analyses show that criterion validity is also present. It was also possible to confirm that the factor structure for both distressed and nondistressed groups were equivalent.

Carver, C. S., Scheier, M. F., & Segerstrom, S. C. (2010). Optimism. *Clinical Psychology Review, 30*, 879-889. doi:10.1016/j.cpr.2010.01.006

This article gives a great introduction on the concept of optimism, including an overview of recent research on the topic. It discusses findings from recent studies describing the advantages and benefits of optimism, such as greater overall well-being, better physical health, and better relationship functioning. Information in this article is very beneficial in introducing the concept of optimism in my thesis paper.

Chen, Z., Tanaka, N., Masayo, U., Hiramura, H., & Shikai, N. (2007). The role of personalities in the marital adjustment of Japanese couples. *Social Behavior and Personality, 35*, 561-572.

This study examined 66 Japanese married couples to examine the relationship between personality and marital adjustment. The researchers used Locke and Wallace’s Short Marital Adjustment Test (SMAT) and the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ). Results suggest that husbands’ neuroticism affect their wives’ marital satisfaction, while wives’ extraversion affect their husbands’

marital satisfaction. These findings indicate that personality traits can in fact predict marital adjustment.

Cowan, C. P., & Cowan, P. A. (1990). Couple Communication Questionnaire. Unpublished questionnaire, University of California.

This is the citation used by Srivastava et al. (2006) when citing the scale they used to measure couple satisfaction. Srivastava et al. (2006) is one of the studies that is closely related to my thesis project, and therefore it is important to point out the similarities and differences in the methods.

Davila, J., Karney, B. R., Hall, T. W., & Bradbury, T. N. (2003). Depressive symptoms and marital satisfaction: Within-subject associations and the moderating effects of gender and neuroticism. *Journal of Family Psychology, 17*, 557-570. doi:10.1037/0893-3200.17.4.557

This study used 164 newlywed couples to address the three study objectives: to examine the association between depressive symptoms and marital quality over time, to study any possible gender differences in these associations, and to determine whether neuroticism moderates those associations. The results did confirm a negative association between depressive symptoms and marital satisfaction, but found no gender difference.

Driver, J. L. & Gottman, J. M. (2004). Daily marital interactions and positive affect during marital conflict among newlywed couples. *Family Process, 43*, 301-314.

This study aims to add supporting evidence to a marital therapy model that suggests that increasing positive behaviors during conflict will improve the relationships. The participants were newlywed couples that had been married for less than 6 months, on their first marriage, and were childless. Their interactions were observed during a 10-minute dinnertime conversation and a 15-minute conflict discussion. This article shows that daily interactions are an important target for relationship enhancement, and that there is a general call to focus on positive affect. Results also indicate that the ability to use positive affect such as humor or affection during conflict is crucial in predicting the future health of the relationship.

Diener, E., Lucas, R. E., & Oishi, S. (2002). Subjective well-being: The science of happiness and life satisfaction. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 463-473). New York: Oxford University Press.

This book chapter reviews research on subjective wellbeing, including a definition of the term. It discusses theoretical approaches as well as makes suggestions for future studies in the area of wellbeing. This chapter will help my thesis by making the point that simply getting rid of negative characteristics or traits does not automatically create positive characteristics.

Gordon, C. L. & Baucom, D. H. (2009). Examining the individual within marriage: Personal strengths and relationship satisfaction. *Personal Relationships*, 16, 421-435.

This article points out that a lot of research on marriage has focused on dyadic processes, and how they affect marital satisfaction. However, only recently have there been studies done that look at individual strengths that could contribute to positive processes that pave the way to happy marriages. This study focuses specifically on one's positive affectivity and how it may relate to couple's satisfaction. It also mentions a growing interest in positivism within the marital field. Alleviating negatives in a marriage may allow partners to be "satisfied" but many want to move beyond that to "relationship flourishing". This article gives a great definition for positive affect, as well as optimism.

Results of this study show that individuals reported being happier in their marriage when they perceived their spouse as more positive and when they perceive themselves to be more positive. The study suggested 3 different models on how this happens, and it appears that optimism, coping and personal expansion are related to an individual's positive affect, which is in turn associated with relationship satisfaction (supporting model 1).

Gottman, J. M., (1994) *What predicts divorce?* Hillsdale NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

This book talks about Gottman's findings about the ratio of the positive and negative aspects in a couple's interactions that is required in order for the marriage to work. He reported that in three different marital types, stable marriages had a 5:1 ratio of positivity to negativity during conflict, whereas in unstable marriages the ratio was .8:1. This source will be included in the positive affect section of the paper, and is important because it provides a specific, concrete ratio of positives to negatives that is needed to maintain a happy, stable marriage.

Gottman, J.M., Coan, J., Carrere, S. & Swanson, C. (1998). Predicting marital happiness and stability from newlywed interactions. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 60, 5-22.

This article discussed seven types of process models that are predictive of divorce or marital stability, and that further differentiate between happily and unhappily married couples. The process that I am interested in is the positive affect model, which has two forms. One suggests that positive affect is randomly distributed throughout a conflict. The second model suggest that positive affect is used to de-escalate marital conflict. These models are compared across newlyweds who will end up either: divorced, married and unhappy or married and happy. Results indicate that positive affect was significantly related to marital stability, as well as

happiness. Interestingly, negative affect did predict divorce but did not predict happiness in the marriage. This is important because this article shows that positive is not merely the absence of negative.

Gottman, J.M. & Levenson, R. W. (1999). What predicts change in marital interaction over time? A study of alternative models. *Family Process*, 38, 143-158.

This article discusses what predicts the deterioration of affective marital interaction over a 4-year period. The model of particular interest within the article, is a balance model based on the ratio of positivity to negativity at Time-1. The results indicate that the more negativity to positivity the husband expressed in Time-1, the more “cascade variables” were present in the marital interaction at Time-2. Cascade variable predict a deterioration of marital quality towards divorce, and include variables such as disgust, contempt, stonewalling, domineering, and belligerence.

Johnson, D. R. & Booth, A. (1998). Marital quality: A product of the dyadic environment or individual factors? *Social Forces*, 76, 883-904.

This study strives to answer the question of whether marital quality is influenced by the dyadic properties of the relationship such as the couple’s interactions, or by individual factors such as personality and individual character. The results indicate that although dyadic factors play a large role in marital satisfaction, personality and individual traits can also be influential. This is an important point to make because a lot of research has focused on dyadic factors exclusively. Characteristics such as positive affect and optimism are individual traits, and therefore there is a need within this paper to highlight their importance in influencing marital quality.

Herzberg, P. Y., Glaesmer, H., & Hoyer, J. (2006). Separating optimism and pessimism: A robust psychometric analysis of the revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R). *Psychological Assessment*, 18, 433-438. doi:10.1037/1040-3590.18.4.433

This article analyzed the internal structure of the LOT (Life Orientation Test) using a sample of over 40,000 participants. This study argues that based on the results, dispositional optimism is bidimensional; optimism and pessimism are two independent dimensions. The study did find a negative correlation between optimism and pessimism, although the strength of the correlation decreases with age.

Hjelle, L., Belongia, C., & Nesser, J. (1996). Psychometric properties of the Life Orientation Test and Attributional Style Questionnaire. *Psychological Reports*, 78, 507-515.

This article assessed the psychometric properties of two scales: LOT and the Attributional Style Questionnaire. The findings revealed a moderate correlation

between the two scales, and no gender differences on either of the scales. The importance of this article in my thesis is that it helps highlight the different types of optimism in the literature. This article also gives an excellent definition of optimism attribution, which is another form of optimism besides dispositional optimism.

Hochschild, A. R. & Machung, A. M. (1999). *The second shift*. New York: Avon Books, Inc.

This book describes the challenge that many women face as they work a full-time job outside the home, and then come home to more housework and childcare duties. It details the difficulty that women deal with as they balance career and home life. This book adds to the discussion section of the thesis, because it points out the fact that husbands often benefit more from marriage than wives do, for example husbands' daily hassles are reduced at a greater rate than wives'. The findings from my thesis add to this argument.

Karney, B. R., & Bradbury, T. N. (1997). Neuroticism, marital interaction, and the trajectory of marital satisfaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72, 1075-1092.

This study used six newlywed couples for participants, and measured for neuroticism, marital satisfaction. The couples were also observed during interactions. The findings revealed that neuroticism was correlated with initial marital satisfaction but had no effect on later changes in satisfaction. On the other hand, marital interaction predicted changes in marital satisfaction but was not correlated with initial levels of marital satisfaction. The article also points out that predictor variables may correlate with relationship satisfaction differently based on the stage of the relationship.

Kenny, D. A., Kashy, D. A., & Bolger, N. (1998). *Data analysis in social psychology*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

This book provides information on the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM), which is the model that is utilized in my thesis project. It details when to use APIM, how the model works, as well as the strengths of this model.

Locke, H. J., & Wallace, K. M. (1959). Short marital-adjustment and prediction tests: Their reliability and validity. *Marriage and Family Living*, 21(3), 251-255.

The purpose of this study is to develop a short yet reliable and valid measure of marital adjustment as well as determine marital prediction. It gives a definition of marital adjustment: "accommodation of a husband and wife to each other at a given time" (p. 251). It also gives a definition of marital prediction: "forecasting the likelihood of marital adjustment at a future time" (p. 251). The authors believe there is a way to measure marital adjustment and create prediction tests

using a limited number of items, contrasting with previous tests that use lengthy questionnaires.

The objectives of this study were to select the most fundamental items, make any necessary changes, and then test the reliability and validity of them. Fifteen items were selected for the adjustment test, and thirty-five were selected for the prediction test. The article includes the actual Marital-Adjustment Test, and the Marital-Prediction Test. Results show that the short adjustment test has high reliability, and is clearly able to differentiate between well-adjusted and maladjusted individuals in marriage (therefore has validity as well). In conclusion, both the marital-adjustment and marital-prediction tests achieve results that are “approximately comparable with longer and more complex adjustment and prediction tests” (p. 255).

McGoldrick, M., Carter, B. & Preto, N.G. (2011). Becoming a couple. In *The expanded family life cycle: Individual, family, and social perspectives* (4th ed.). (pp. 193-210). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

This textbook chapter explains the process of becoming a couple from a life cycle perspective. It details some of the challenges that couples face as they join together their lives, as well as the benefits of marriage. The chapter also incorporates research findings on marriage and cohabitation.

Murray, S. L., Holmes, J. G., & Griffin, D. W. (1996). The self-fulfilling nature of positive illusions in romantic relationships: Love is not blind, but prescient. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71, 1155-1180.

This study examined the long-term effects of positive illusions by following dating couples on measures of idealization and well-being in three different time periods within a year. The results showed that idealization did in fact have self-fulfilling effects. In addition, idealizing a partner led to increases in relationship satisfaction and decreases in conflict. This article will help differentiate between optimism and positive illusions.

Murray, S. L., Holmes, J. G. & Griffin, D. W. (2003). Reflections on the self-fulfilling effects of positive illusions. *Psychological Inquiry*, 14, 289-295.

The authors of this study go over the concept of positive illusions, and give a great definition of the term. This article gave a lot of great examples of positive illusions, and really helped me understand the concept. They also review another article (Murray et al., 1996) that first introduced positive illusions.

Myers, D., & Diener, E. (1995). Who is happy? *Psychological Science*, 6, 10-19.

This article discussed the area of research on positive illusions and positivity. The article argued that people could develop idealized images of their partner without necessarily denying or masking their partner's faults. It gave a definition of

illusions, and stated that over a longer term, positive illusions can turn into self-fulfilling prophecies. The authors of this article argue that whether a relationship cup is seen as half full or half empty depends on the objectives of the perceiver.

Nakonezky, P.A. & Denton, W. H. (2008). Marital relationships: A social exchange theory perspective. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 36, 402-412. doi: 10.1080/01926180701647264

This article discusses the treatment of marital relationships within the context of social exchange theory, which is the theoretical framework that will be used in this paper. This article also discusses couple therapy in terms of social exchange theory, as well as providing a good definition of it. Social exchange theory seeks to explain the development, maintenance and deterioration of exchange relationships in terms of the balance between the rewards that marital partners obtain and the costs they incur by choosing to enter into a marital relationship.

Newton, T. L., & Kiecolt-Glaser, J. K. (1995). Hostility and erosion of marital quality during early marriage. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 18, 601-619.

This longitudinal study followed 53 newlywed couples after marriage and measured the relationship between hostility and marital quality. Husbands' hostility was found to be significantly associated with decreases in their own and their wives' marital quality.

Norton, R. (1983). Measuring marital quality: A critical look at the dependent variable. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 45, 141-151.

This article examines the construct of marital quality that many studies use as a dependent variable, and compares traditional measures of marital quality. It also compares marital quality with marital adjustment as measured by Spanier's Dyadic Adjustment Scale. This article then introduces the Quality Marriage Index (QMI) and discusses the advantages of this index compared to other measures.

Nurmi, J.-E., Toivonen, S., Salmela-Aro, K., & Eronen, S. (1996). Optimistic, approach-oriented, and avoidance-strategies in social situations: Three studies on loneliness and peer relationships. *European Journal of Personality*, 10, 201-219.

This article discusses three studies that aimed to understand behavioral strategies in social situations, feelings of loneliness, and peer relationships. The different approaches to social situations were approach-oriented strategy and social avoidance strategy. The authors hypothesized that optimism in social situations would be related to the use of approach-oriented strategy, and pessimism would be related to using the social avoidance strategy. The results confirmed the hypothesis, suggesting that optimism encourages the use of an active type of strategy.

Rasmussen, H. N., Scheier, M. F., & Greenhouse, J. B. (2009). Optimism and physical health: A meta-analysis review. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine, 37*, 239-256. doi:10.1007/s12160-009-9111-x

The goal of this study was to examine the relationship between optimism and physical health, and to determine the strength of that relationship. This article reviewed the findings from 83 various studies. The researchers found that optimism was an important predictor of health outcomes, and that the effect sizes were larger in studies that used a subjective measure of physical health.

Rauch, W. A., Schweizer, K., & Moosbrugger, H. (2007). Method effects due to social desirability as a parsimonious explanation of the deviation from unidimensionality in LOT-R scores. *Personality and Individual Differences, 42*, 1597-1607.

This study sought to answer the question of whether optimism and pessimism are two separate constructs, or whether it is one bipolar dimension. The researchers used confirmatory factor analysis with over 600 students, and found that when incorporating method effects into the model, it helps explain the deviation from unidimensionality in the observed scores. The data therefore seem to support the bipolar, unidimensional view of optimism.

Scheier, M. F., & Carver, C. S. (1985). Optimism, coping, and health: Assessment and implications of generalized outcome expectancies. *Health Psychology, 4*, 219-247.

This study introduces a new scale for measuring dispositional optimism: Life Orientation Test, and gives a definition of optimism. It explains the theoretical background to the LOT, as well as empirical support and rationale behind the development of the scale. Finally, the study seeks to establish convergent and discriminant validity for the instrument. The results revealed that the LOT appears to provide a psychometrically sound measure of optimism, and has adequate internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and convergent and discriminant validity.

Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., & Bridges, M. W. (1994). Distinguishing optimism from neuroticism (and trait anxiety, self-mastery, and self-esteem): A reevaluation of the Life Orientation Test. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 67*, 1063-1078.

The researchers in this article reevaluated the Life Orientation Test that measured dispositional optimism because there was argument over whether optimism was distinguishable from neuroticism. Results indicated that optimism was distinguishable from neuroticism even when controlling for trait anxiety, self-mastery, and self-esteem. However, the researchers proposed minor changes to

the LOT, and called it the revised version. This new revised LOT contains 3 positively worded items, 3 negatively worded items, and four filler items.

Scumm, W. R., et al. (1986). Concurrent and discriminant validity of the Kansas marital satisfaction scale. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 48(2), 381-387.

The Kansas Marital Satisfaction (KMS) Scale correlates substantially with both the DAS and the Quality Marriage Index (QMI). The KMS scale is self-report measure and contains fewer items than both the DAS and the QMI, therefore making it a useful brief measure of marital satisfaction. The focus of this study was to compare the KMSS with the DAS and QMI, which are known to be reliable and valid measures of marital adjustment. Another major objective was to “evaluate the discriminant validity of the KMS scale in terms of whether it would correlate significantly with measures having similar response formats but presumably unrelated theoretical content” (p. 382). Results indicate that the KMSS has adequate reliability, and has some degree of concurrent validity, although its discriminant validity remains questionable. The KMSS was found to be significantly more correlated with the QMI than the DAS. This article argues that the KMSS holds some advantages due to its ability to assess marital satisfaction with a shorter questionnaire.

Segerstrom, S. C. (2001). Optimism and attentional bias for negative and positive stimuli. *Personality and social psychology bulletin*, 27, 1334-1343.
doi:10.1177/01461672012710009

The article starts with a review of the positive benefits of optimism including better psychological and physiological adjustment, and better coping skills. This study examined the relationship between optimism and attentional bias for positively valenced and negatively valenced terms. The results from 48 undergraduate students revealed that optimism is associated with attentional bias for positive stimuli compared to negative stimuli. In this article, the author simply differentiated between generalized optimism and optimism in specific situations.

Segerstrom, S. C. (2006). *Breaking Murphy's law: How optimists get what they want from life- and pessimists can too*. New York: Guilford Press.

This book reviews research on the benefits of optimism including better physical health, more resilience with negative events, and more satisfying relationships. The book attempts to teach readers the skills that optimists are born with. The authors calls this process “doing optimism” by establishing a positive feedback loop, fighting cynicism and self-doubt. For the purpose of my thesis, this book helps differentiate between the different types of optimism, as well as contrasts the concept with positive affect. It also shows that an optimism researcher believes that optimistic skills can be taught to those more pessimistic in nature.

Seegerstrom, S. C., Evans, D. R., & Eisenlohr-Moul, T. A. (2011). Optimism and pessimism dimensions in the Life-Orientation Test-Revised: Method and meaning. *Journal of Research in Personality, 45*, 126-129.

This study examined the original Life Orientation Test (LOT) and the revised version (LOT-R) to understand the relationship between optimism and pessimism. The study was administered both to undergraduates and a web-based sample, with a total number of participants of 3,777. Based on the results of the study, the authors recommend using the original LOT, which treats optimism and pessimism as a bipolar unidimensional measure.

Segrin, C. (2006). Family interactions and well-being: Integrative perspectives. *The Journal of Family Communication, 6*, 3-21.

Although this article is mainly focused on communication and its role in family processes, it includes a very powerful statement that will be useful to quote within the paper: "Although a focus on the "dark side" of family interaction and well-being (i.e. physical and mental health *problems*) is understandable, another legitimate area of inquiry is the family's role in promoting happy and healthy lives. It is not prudent to assume that the road to happiness and good health is to simply not do that which apparently leads to sickness and unhappiness (pg. 16-17). This quote drives home the idea that positive is not merely the lack of negative, and researchers need to look at not only what unhappy couples are doing wrong, but what happy couples are doing right.

Spanier, G. B. (1976). Measuring dyadic adjustment: New scales for assessing the quality of marriage and similar dyads. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 38(1)*, 15-28.

This study reports on the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), which at the time was a 'new' measure that assesses marital quality (and other similar relationships), and uses a 32-item scale. The questions for the DAS were pulled from an assortment of existing scales that measure marital adjustment or any related concept. This study discusses the existence of four components of dyadic adjustment, which can be examined separately as subscales: dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, dyadic consensus, and affectional expression. This article argues for the presence of content, criterion, and construct validity, as well as high scale reliability. Therefore the questionnaire can be used altogether, or each subscale can be used separately. It acknowledges that there are some remaining methodological issues that need to be addressed in future research, but nevertheless contends that the DAS is a significant improvement over previous measures of marital adjustment. This article also talks about the importance of marital adjustment when studying marriage and family relationships.

This article also mentions the debate that marital adjustment can be measured in two distinct ways: either as a process or as an evaluation of a state. Current measures generally do not measure a changing process, but rather measure a

specific point on a continuum. However, in recent research, it has been shown that marital adjustment does in fact resemble a process rather than a state.

Srivastava, S., McGonigal, K. M., Richards, J. M., Butler, E. A., & Gross, J. J. (2006). Optimism in close relationships: How seeing things in a positive light makes them so. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 91*, 143-153. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.91.1.143

This study is closely related to my thesis project. The goal of the study was to examine the effects of optimism on couples' relationship satisfaction. The participants included 108 dating couples recruited from an undergraduate university. The part of the study that is related to my thesis project was not longitudinal, but rather within the same time period. They used the LOT to measure optimism and a scale that they referred to as the Couple Satisfaction Scale to measure relationship satisfaction. The results indicated statistically significant actor and partner effects within the same time period. These results are thought to be a result of optimists' greater perceived support.

Sumi, K. (2006). Correlations between optimism and social relationships. *Psychological Reports, 99*, 938-940. doi:10.2466/PRO.99.3.938-940

This study sought to better understand the relationship between optimism as measured by the revised Life Orientation Test, and social support as measured by the Interpersonal Relationship Inventory. Participants for this study were 275 Japanese college students. The results indicated that optimism was positively related to social support but negatively related to interpersonal conflict.

Sweet J. A., & Bumpass, L. L. (1996). *The national survey of families and households - Waves 1 and 2: Data description and documentation* [Data file and code book]. Madison, WI: Center for Demography and Ecology. Retrieved from <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/nsfh/home.htm>

This is the citation for the first and second wave of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), including both the data files and codebooks. The data utilized from the first wave was the demographic and background information for participants. The data pulled from the second wave were the questions used to measure optimism and marital adjustment.

Sweet J. A., & Bumpass, L. L. (2002). *The national survey of families and households - Waves 1, 2, and 3: Data description and documentation* [Data file and code book]. Madison, WI: Center for Demography and Ecology. Retrieved from <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/nsfh/home.htm>

This is the citation for the first, second, and third wave of the NSFH, including both the data files and codebooks.

Sweet J. A., Bumpass L. L., & Call, V. R. A. (1988) *The design and content of the national survey of families and households*. [Data file and code book]. Madison, WI: Center for Demography and Ecology. Retrieved from <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/nsfh/home.htm>

This is the citation used for the National Survey of Families and Households.

Tomakowsky, J., Lumley, M. A., Markowitz, N., & Frank, C. (2001). Optimistic explanatory style and dispositional optimism in HIV-infected men. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 51, 577-587.

This study examined two different types of optimism: explanatory style and dispositional optimism and their relation to symptoms and immune status among HIV-infected men. They found that the two types of optimism are only slightly related to each other. The results also indicated that higher levels of both types of optimism were related to fewer HIV symptoms. The reason why it is included in my thesis is because it gives a great description of optimistic explanatory style, and helps differentiate between dispositional optimism.

Umberson, D., Chen, M. D., House, J. S., Hopkins, K., & Slate, E. (1996). The effects of social relationships on psychological well-being: Are men and women really so different? *American Sociological Review*, 61, 837-857.

This article adds to the existing literature on gender differences across a variety of relationships. One of the findings revealed in this study is that men tend to gain greater social support from their wives than vice versa. This finding is very useful for my thesis project because it provides an example of how men benefit more compared to women from marriage. The findings from my study also appear to add to this body of evidence.

Vollmann, M., Antoni, K., Hartung, F.M. & Renner, B. (2011). Social support as mediator of the stress buffering effect of optimism: The importance of differentiating the recipients' and providers' perspective. *European Journal of Personality*, 25, 146-154. doi: 10.1002/per.803

This longitudinal study examines the stress buffering effect of optimism and whether those effects are due to an actual higher availability or social support or to positive illusions about available social support. A model that the article mentioned is called Actor-Partner-Interdependence and shows that optimism was prospectively related to lower stress. The results of this study seem to suggest that optimists hold positive illusions about available support and that these illusions account at least partly for the effect of stress buffering. This article also talks about the benefits of optimism including a multitude of positive health outcomes, less mood disturbance, less perceived stress, and higher well-being in the absence of specific stressors, promote physical functioning when facing major life events and medical conditions.

Wampler, K. S. & Sprenkle, D. H. (1980). The Minnesota couple communication program: A follow-up study. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 42, 577-584.

This study examined the effects of a program called the Minnesota Couple Communication Program (MCCP). Results indicate that the MCCP had positive effects on couples' communication and on the perceived quality of the relationship right after the program. However, at a follow-up, the communication effects vanished, the perceived improved quality of the relationship persisted. This article establishes that programs seeking to improve couples' relationships already exist, and therefore adding a component about increasing optimistic thinking is not much of a stretch.

Wanic, R., & Kulik, J. (2011). Toward an understanding of gender differences in the impact of marital conflict on health. *Sex Roles*, 65, 297-312. doi:10.1007/s11199-011-9968-6

This article reviews a recent research finding that men seem to benefit more from a marriage compared to women in the United States. These benefits are in terms of both morbidity and mortality. The authors hypothesize that this is due to spousal conflict having a greater negative impact on wives than on husbands and that this relationship negativity decreases the benefit to women. The authors then review a couple of other views or hypotheses related to this subject that have been proposed by other researchers in the field.

Watson, D., Hubbard, B. & Wiese, D. (2000). General traits of personality and affectivity as predictors of satisfaction in intimate relationships: Evidence from self- and partner-ratings. *Journal of Personality*, 63, 413-449.

This study looked at the self- and partner-ratings on trait affect the Big Five personality traits of 74 married and 126 dating couples; for the purpose of this paper, the focus will be on the result obtained from the married couples. The relationship satisfaction of each person was correlated with four different sets of ratings: the target's self-rated personality, the target's partner-rated personality, the partner's self-rated personality, and the partner's target-rated personality. Evidence shows that negative and positive affectivity are consistent predictors of satisfaction.

Another reason why this source will be useful for writing this paper is that it talks about the importance of personal relationships and the need to have healthy relationships in our lives. It argues that the health and stability of these relationships have important implications for health and well being and are tied to general life satisfaction.

White, M. J., Cunningham, L. C., & Titchener, K. (2011). Young drivers' optimism bias for accident risk and driving skill: Accountability and insight experience manipulations. *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, 43, 1309-1315

This article gives a great overview of optimism bias, which is another type of optimism (in addition to dispositional optimism, which is the focus of my thesis). The researchers studied young drivers' optimism bias in terms of their perceived driving ability and perception of accident risk. The usefulness of this article is due to the definition it gives of optimism bias.

Yoder, J.D. & Nichols, R. C. (1980). A life perspective comparison of married and divorced persons. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 42, 413-419.

This study used data from the National Opinion Research Center's 1976 General Social Survey and looked at four attitude factors: life satisfaction, trust, optimism, and political conservatism and their influence on marital dissolution. It was found that these attitude factors significantly differentiated married, remarried, divorced, and never-married individuals. One significant finding that is relevant to this paper showed that divorced persons were less satisfied with life and less optimistic than those who were never divorced. Optimism levels were highest for married individuals, then remarried, then single, and finally for divorced individuals. This study however did use a correlational technique and therefore causal inferences cannot be made. The information in this study is appropriate for this paper because it examines optimism and their influence on marital quality.

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PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS

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SCHOLASTIC AND PROFESSIONAL HONORS

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PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Vazsonyi, A.T., Harris, C. Looney, R. **Machaty, A.** Pagava, K., Phagava, H. and Michaud, P.A. (August, 2012). Sleep Functioning and Problem Behaviors in National Probability Samples of Georgian and Swiss Adolescents. The 13th Bicentennial Conference on the European Association for Research on Adolescent Research (EARA), Island of Spetses Greece.

Vazsonyi, A.T., Looney, R., **Machaty, A.**, Harris, C., Blatny, M., Sobotkova, V. & Osecká, T. (August 2012) Self-Reported Health Compromising Behaviors Among Roma and Non-Roma Youth. The 13th Biennial Meetings of the European Association of Adolescent Research (EARA), Island of Spetses Greece.

Harris, C. Vazsonyi, A.T., **Machaty, A.**, Looney, R., Pagava, K., Phagava, H. and Michaud, P.A. (November, 2012). The Influence of Sleep on Adolescent Deviance and Weapon Carrying/Use in Georgian and Swiss National Samples. Adolescent Society of Criminology, Chicago.