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# Couples' conflict resolution strategies and marital quality across the transition to parenthood.

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COUPLES' CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES AND MARITAL QUALITY  
ACROSS THE TRANSITION TO PARENTHOOD

A Thesis Presented

by

COURTNEY P. PIERCE

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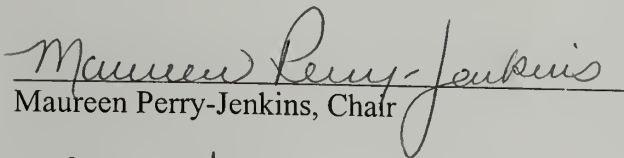
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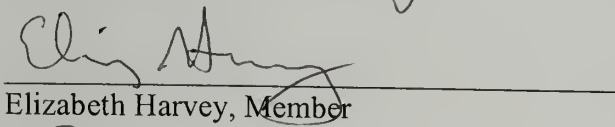
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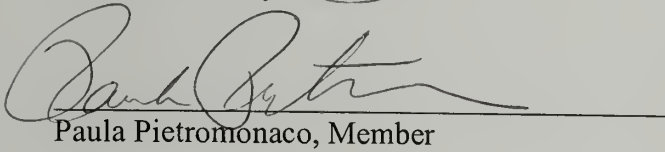
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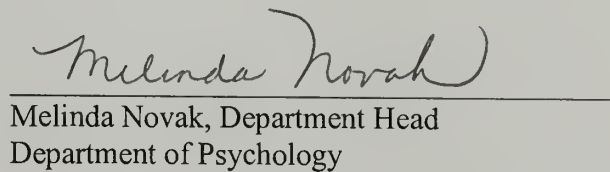
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ABSTRACT

COUPLES' CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES AND MARITAL QUALITY  
ACROSS THE TRANSITION TO PARENTHOOD

FEBRUARY 2002

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This study examines how gender ideology, the division of household labor, and conflict resolution strategies relate to marital love and marital conflict for 122 dual-earner, working-class new parents. Results reveal that marital love declines over the transition to parenthood for husbands and wives, but marital conflict remains stable. Bivariate correlations indicate that problem solving, engagement, withdrawal, and compliance are differentially related to pre-birth and post-birth marital love and conflict. Further, certain conflict resolution strategies affect husbands and wives in different ways, with the most consistent result identifying withdrawal as a strategy that is harmful to marital well-being. Regression analyses reveal that spouses' own and their partners' engagement and withdrawal predict changes in marital quality across the transition to parenthood. In addition, couples' use of the problem-solve/problem-solve pattern was related to declines in marital conflict for husbands, while the withdraw/withdraw pattern predicted declines in wives' marital conflict over time. Finally, conflict resolution strategies are more powerful predictors for changes in husbands' marital evaluations than wives' and wives' strategies matter more for husbands' marital assessments than husbands' matter for wives'.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

With an estimated ninety percent of Americans marrying at some point in their lives (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000), the study of marriage remains at the forefront of the sociological and psychological literatures. In the mid-1980's, the likelihood that a first marriage would end in separation or divorce surpassed the likelihood that it would continue (Bumpass, 1990); thus, social scientists increased their efforts to gain a greater understanding of the development, and in some cases the decline, of marital relationships. As a result, the number of studies on marriage multiplied and researchers identified innumerable correlates of distressed and nondistressed marital relationships (Fincham & Bradbury, 1987; Gottman, 1994; Huston & Geis, 1993; Karney & Bradbury, 1997; Kurdek, 1993; for a review see Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, in press).

Extant research identifying variables that place marriages at risk is oftentimes based on one of several conceptual approaches (Kurdek, 1993). Some work, for example, focuses on an *individual-differences* approach and reveals that changes in marital quality are related to husbands' and wives' personality traits (e.g., Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000; Kurdek, 1991a). Taking a more *structural approach*, other researchers posit that marital distress is predicted by variables such as age (Levenson, Carstensen, & Gottman, 1993), years of education and income (e.g., Kurdek, 1991b). The majority of the emphasis on marital quality, however, is based on a *communication approach*, focused on couples' patterns of interaction, particularly problem-solving skills and resolution styles during conflict (Cahn, 1990; Fitzpatrick & Vangelisti, 1995; Prado & Markman, 1999).

Research reveals that interpersonal conflict is an unavoidable component of close relationships and that intimate couples are more likely than acquaintances to experience frequent and intense disagreements (Braiker & Kelley, 1979; Cahn, 1990). Further, couples who experience more frequent and severe interpersonal conflicts tend to be more unhappy and dissatisfied than couples who engage in fewer and less severe conflicts (Cahn, 1990). Gottman (1993; 1994), challenging the idea that the frequency of conflict is associated with marital distress, has suggested that the ability of spouses to *manage* conflict may be more central to maintaining a marriage, and more indicative of marital quality, than the actual presence of conflict. Building on Gottman's work, several researchers have demonstrated that spouses' marital satisfaction is related both concurrently and over time to the type of conflict resolution strategies employed as well as to the frequency with which those strategies are used (e.g., Kurdek, 1995; Noller, Feeney, Bonnell, & Callan, 1994).

While the goal of understanding the processes within a marriage that enhance or undermine marital quality is a worthy one, some researchers caution that these processes may vary across social contexts (Cahn, 1990). Indeed, an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) would challenge researchers to question how aspects of the social environment, such as family structure, class, race, or employment status, influence intrafamilial processes, such as conflict, styles of resolving conflict, and couples' feelings of happiness in the relationship. Moreover, this approach considers how family well-being may vary as a function of social time. For example, the process of conflict resolution and evaluations of marriage may differ for newly married couples, new parents, or retirees.

It is important to recognize that the majority of research on both the transition to parenthood and marital satisfaction has documented the experiences of well-educated, middle- or upper-class families, too often neglecting the voices of working-class couples. Although approximately 30% of families in the United States fall into the working-class category (Gilbert & Kahl, 1993), little is known about how spouses with fewer financial resources adjust to the demands of parenthood, including the strain that is placed on the marital relationship. Furthermore, because research has demonstrated variability in reports of marital conflict and satisfaction for couples when only one partner is working-class compared to when both partners are working-class (Perry-Jenkins & Folk, 1994), it is necessary to consider the experiences of families as a function of the compatibility of husbands' and wives' class levels.

Finally, the consideration of whether one or both parents are employed full-time outside of the home is often unspecified in the transition to parenthood literature. Considering that more than half (55.2%) of mothers with children under the age of one are employed outside of the home, and that 67 percent of these mothers are working full-time (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1999), it is necessary to explore how a marriage changes across the transition to parenthood for dual-earner couples. While there is some evidence suggesting that dual-earner couples experience increased stress and marital conflict (Hochschild, 1989), little is known about how the demands of new parenthood coupled with the demands of two jobs may affect how spouses cope with changes in their marital relationship. It is probable that dual-earner, working-class couples, with fewer resources and busy work schedules, cope with changes in their family structure and their marital relationship very differently than their more financially secure counterparts.

## CHAPTER 2

### MARRIAGE AND THE TRANSITION TO PARENTHOOD

#### Changes in Marital Satisfaction

The transition to parenthood is a period marked by many changes for husbands and wives. New parents, for example, are confronted with the need to reorganize certain family roles and responsibilities. In fact, adjustments necessary to accommodate a new family member may be so challenging as to place the marital relationship at risk.

Evidence that the birth of a child is coupled with declines in marital satisfaction includes cross-sectional studies documenting a negative correlation between marital satisfaction and the presence of children (Glenn & McLanahan, 1982) and several longitudinal studies reporting linear declines across the transition to parenthood based on various measures of marital quality (e.g., Belsky, Lang, & Rovine, 1985; Belsky, Spanier, & Rovine, 1983; Cowan et al., 1985; Wallace & Gotlib, 1990). Despite the fact that the most recent literature on the transition to parenthood is informed by these findings, these results have not gone unchallenged.

Some researchers, for example, have implemented nonparent control groups to test whether the birth of a child actually precipitates a decline in marital satisfaction. Some of these studies documented similar declines in satisfaction for parents and nonparents early in marriage, raising the question of whether the effect of a child on the marital relationship was confounded with the normative declines in satisfaction that occur in the early years of marriage (McHale & Huston, 1985; White & Booth, 1985). On the other hand, some studies suggest that new parents indeed experience greater declines in their marriage compared to their nonparent counterparts (Cowan et al., 1985; Huston &

Vangelisti, 1995). The inconsistencies in the literature have prompted researchers to identify other factors, such as gender, and methodological approaches that might account for individual differences in the adjustment to parenthood.

Looking beyond a generalized decline in marriage, gender differences have been noted with respect to husbands' and wives' adjustment to parenthood. For example, Belsky et al. (1983) reported that wives' scores on the cohesion subscale of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976) declined dramatically from the prenatal time of measurement to three months postpartum while husbands' scores remained unchanged. In a replication study using multidimensional measures of marital quality, Belsky, Lang, & Rovine (1985) reported that women, again, showed significantly greater declines than men on measures of love, ambivalence, maintenance, and satisfaction. Likewise, in a study by Waldron and Routh (1981), wives', but not husbands', evaluations of marital happiness declined from prebirth to postbirth. Further, Cowan et al. (1985) reported that, whereas women's satisfaction declined sharply through six months postpartum, men's evaluations of marriage dropped drastically between six and eighteen months when women's decline had begun to slow. Such findings emphasize Bernard's (1982) contention that there are two marriages, "his and hers," and that husbands and wives might very well adjust in different ways, and perhaps at different rates, in response to life events, such as the transition to parenthood.

Critiquing the literature from a more methodological stance, Belsky and his associates (1985; 1990) pointed out that examination of mean levels of change might mask variations in patterns of marital change across the transition to parenthood. In fact, factors such as infant temperament were demonstrated to discriminate marriages that

declined, remained stable, or improved over time (Belsky & Rovine, 1990). Recent scholarship (e.g., Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Kurdek, 1999) has implemented advanced statistical procedures to obtain more precise information on patterns of marital change, including identification of factors associated with changes. For example, a fairly recent study by Kurdek (1995) borrowed the technique used by Belsky and Rovine (1990) to demonstrate how spouses' conflict resolution styles account for differential changes in marriages over time. Thus, it is clear that inconsistencies within the literature regarding marital change are partially explained by the variation in methods of analysis.

Clearly, whether or not marital satisfaction declines across the transition to parenthood depends on several factors. As Huston and Vangelisti (1995) point out, researchers who assess marital satisfaction often use measures that characterize satisfaction in different ways, often confounding global reports of marital satisfaction with changes in marital behavior patterns. It is important, therefore, for researchers to identify what aspects of the marital relationship are being measured. It is also critical to address the question of whether marital satisfaction declines differentially for husbands and wives, considering they may adjust differently to the changes and demands of parenthood. Furthermore, since declines in marital satisfaction may be more immediate for some individuals and more delayed for others, researchers should attend more carefully to the postnatal times of measurement. Finally, it is important to realize that average levels of change in marital satisfaction across couples necessarily overlooks the variation within couples, where assessments of marriage may decrease, remain stable, or increase.

At least three important factors have been identified as correlates of marital quality across the transition to parenthood; they are: 1) the division of household labor, 2) gender ideology, and 3) socioemotional behavior.

### The Division of Labor and Gender Ideology

Many studies examining the division of household work or husbands' and wives' gender ideology explore how these constructs relate to conflict and marital happiness. Kluwer, Heesink, & Vliert (1996), in a study of new parents and expectant parents, reported that wives' *dissatisfaction* with the division of labor is associated with increased marital conflict, while husbands' dissatisfaction was unrelated to frequency of conflict. Cowan and colleagues suggest that the transition to parenthood inspires gender role differentiation, causing partners to espouse more traditional gender ideologies, a change that, if experienced only by one spouse, presumably involves a great deal of conflict (Cowan et al., 1985).

Although some evidence exists indicating no relationship between parental gender role attitudes and declines in marital satisfaction across the transition to parenthood (Waldron & Routh, 1981), spouses' gender role ideology does seem to play an important role in their assessments of marriage when considered in conjunction with the division of labor. In fact, the problem for some couples seems to be rooted in incongruencies between one's gender role ideology and actual family roles. Mothers who possess more traditional gender role attitudes who are in marriages with an equal division of labor report less love toward their spouses and more marital conflict (Belsky, Lang, & Huston, 1986; MacDermid et al., 1990; McHale & Crouter, 1992). Similarly, traditional fathers who contribute more to the household work (i.e., assume less traditional family roles)

report less love and more marital negativity toward their wives (MacDermid et al., 1990; McHale & Crouter, 1992). Such incongruencies between gender role attitudes and actual behaviors did not, however, explain individual differences in love and marital conflict for nonparents (MacDermid et al., 1990).

The effects of role incongruence on the marital relationship extend also to dual-earner couples. Perry-Jenkins and Crouter (1990) pointed out that mismatches between husbands' provider-role attitudes and involvement in household tasks impacts marital well-being. Specifically, coproviders (who acknowledge the importance of the wife's income to the family's financial stability) who contribute more to household tasks, and main/secondary providers (who perceive the man as having the ultimate responsibility of providing for the family) who participate less in household work, report higher marital satisfaction. In contrast, ambivalent coproviders (who are conflicted about who should provide), who do more household work report lower marital satisfaction than those doing less housework. This research emphasizes the importance of how the meaning of providing for the family influences the relationship between task allocation and marital outcomes.

Although the number of working women and mothers is increasing, the division of household labor has remained quite stable. Even in dual-earner couples, husbands consistently participate less than wives in household work (Blair & Lichter, 1991; Deutsch, 1999; Hochschild, 1990; Leslie & Anderson, 1988), an asymmetry that is only magnified once couples become parents (Cowan et al., 1985; McHale & Huston, 1985). Indeed, once couples experience the transition to parenthood, husbands typically become more invested in the paid labor force, while wives, at least temporarily, give primary



status to their role in the home. Consequently, husbands become the sole breadwinner for the family and wives increase their involvement in household responsibilities (MacDermid, Huston, & McHale, 1990). This division of labor may simply not be possible in lower income households.

Perry-Jenkins and Folk (1994), in a cross-sectional study of dual-earner couples, found that social class is an important moderator of the link between the division of household labor and marital conflict. Specifically, they reported that *perceived inequities* in the division of labor predicted increased marital conflict for middle-class wives, yet were unrelated to reports of marital conflict for working-class wives and working- or middle-class husbands. For working-class couples, however, the greater *proportion* of traditionally feminine tasks wives performed, the less marital conflict husbands reported. These results suggest that social context may give different meanings to behaviors and their consequences.

It is clear that not all marriages suffer when confronted with changes in gender ideology and the division of labor that are coupled with new parenthood. In fact, the impact of such changes on marital well-being appears to be moderated by several additional variables, such as what spouses perceive as equitable (Perry-Jenkins & Folk, 1994), or conflict between ideal and actual roles (McHale & Crouter, 1992; Perry-Jenkins & Crouter, 1990). It is important, therefore, to move beyond a focus of what new parents fight about, to examine how their ability to manage conflict is related to their assessments of marriage. While new parents might endure similar demands on the marital relationship, some may be more equipped than others to deal effectively with the conflict that arises as a result.

## Socioemotional Behavior

Scholars have noted changes in new parents' socioemotional behavior in terms of companionate activities as well as their conflictual interactions. Although studies reveal that new parents experience changes in the quality of leisure time together (Crawford & Huston, 1993; McHale & Huston, 1985), the decline in satisfaction with companionship is not associated with changes in global marital happiness or feelings of love (Huston & Vangelisti, 1995). Issues of conflict, however, have been explicitly linked to spouses' assessments of marriage. Specifically, some studies indicate that new parents experience an increase in the frequency of conflict (e.g., Cowan et al., 1985; Crohan, 1996). In terms of conflictual behaviors, longitudinal data has documented an increase in negative interactions (e.g., acting bored or uninterested in partner) and a decrease in positive ones (e.g., expressing approval toward partner or sharing leisure interests) in marital relationships following the birth of a child, changes that are coupled with a decline in marital satisfaction (Belsky, Lang, & Rovine, 1985).

## CHAPTER 3

### CONFLICT AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Marital conflict has been documented to have important implications for the psychological and physical health of spouses and their children, as well as general family well-being (see Fincham & Beach, 1999). Although married people are less likely to be psychologically distressed compared to unmarried people (Gotlib & McCabe, 1990), associations with marital conflict have been noted for depression (O’Leary & Smith, 1991), alcoholism (O’Farrell, Choquette, & Birchler, 1991), and poorer health (Burman & Margolin, 1992). Further, there is growing evidence that marital conflict, and subsequent family dissolution, affects children’s social, emotional, and behavioral development (Cummings, 1994). Finally, problematic attachment to parents (Owen & Cox, 1997) and increased parent-child conflict (Margolin, Christensen, & John, 1996) are consequences some families sustain in the face of marital conflict. For these reasons, as well as the fact that conflict is the leading reason for spouses to seek counseling (Fincham & Beach, 1999), understanding how conflict leads to distress for husbands and wives has become an important concern for clinicians and researchers. In fact, empirical research indicates that certain conflict resolution strategies, interpersonal behaviors used to address disagreements that occur within the marriage, are salient indicators of satisfaction with the marital relationship.

Observation and self-report techniques have been employed to identify specific patterns of interaction and communication tactics that differentiate satisfied and less satisfied couples. The literature often distinguishes between “constructive” and “destructive” conflict resolution strategies by suggesting a negative relationship between

destructive behaviors and marital satisfaction and a positive relationship between constructive behaviors and marital satisfaction (Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1990). Constructive strategies include behaviors such as compromise, negotiation, and humor, while destructive strategies are characterized by behaviors such as withdrawal, confrontation, and manipulation. Gottman (1994) pointed out that, whereas distressed couples are more likely to engage in a cycle of escalating negativity, whereby one partner's expression of negative affect and destructive behaviors is reciprocated by the other, nondistressed couples tend to find adaptive ways to exit from such cycles.

Another form of marital interaction that has been identified as particularly destructive is labeled the "demand-withdraw" pattern (Fincham & Beach, 1999; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989). This type of interaction is characterized by one spouse, usually the wife, focused on discussing the issue, often resorting to pressure, demands and criticism, and the other spouse, typically the husband, trying to avoid or withdraw from the discussion. In fact, this asymmetrical interaction pattern is displayed more by dissatisfied couples (Roberts & Krokoff, 1990), and is thought to cause partners to become more distant over time, often leading to marital dissolution (Rubin, 1983).

Researchers also underscore the importance of recognizing the complexity of the relationships between marital conflict, resolution styles, and marital satisfaction. Discrepancies in the literature, for example, might arise when conflict resolution strategies have been defined differently. Subjective reports of how one deals with conflict might characterize someone's resolution style very differently than using a coding system to identify that person's style during an actual conflict interaction. In addition, the

relationships between marital conflict, resolution strategies, and marital satisfaction may be understood differently depending on whether they are examined concurrently or over time or within a particular social context.

Most studies examining the link between marital outcomes and styles of communication explore the concurrent relationship. For example, in a study of newlywed couples, Noller et al. (1994) found that spouses high in relationship satisfaction reported less use of negativity, destructive processes, demand-withdraw sequences, and higher levels of positivity than those low in relationship satisfaction. Other longitudinal research, however, has predicted later marital satisfaction from an initial measure of conflict resolution styles. In a study of conflict in early marriage, Huston and Vangelisti (1991) found that negativity expressed by husbands or wives predicted declines in wives' relationship satisfaction.

Also, in a study using observational coding of couples attempting to resolve a high-conflict issue, Gottman & Krokoff (1989) found that *different* conflict resolution behaviors predicted concurrent and later marital satisfaction. In their study, while conflict engagement predicted concurrent dissatisfaction, it was associated with an increase in satisfaction over a 3-year period. Gottman & Krokoff rationalized this counterintuitive finding by suggesting that, because wives are more likely than husbands to confront conflict and because addressing conflictual issues is necessary for long-term marital satisfaction, wives must raise conflictual issues in ways that encourage husbands to openly vent disagreement. A similar effect was reported for wives' positivity, which predicted concurrent satisfaction, but decreases in later satisfaction. An assumption in this study, however, is that conflict resolution strategies are stable, unchanging

phenomena. It is possible that conflict resolution strategies indeed change over time and that such changes are linked to change in spouses' marital satisfaction.

Kurdek (1995), in a study of newlywed couples, tested the causal link between change in marital satisfaction and change in resolution strategies over time and found, for example, that husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction declines when husbands increase their use of withdrawal and wives increase their use of conflict engagement. Thus, research that actually observes a change in conflict resolution strategies may be interpreted very differently than studies where resolution styles appear static.

In an interesting twist on the causality argument, other investigations have examined how marital satisfaction predicts conflict resolution styles. Marchand & Hock (2000) demonstrated that husbands' and wives' assessments of marriage can predict their own conflict resolution strategies. Similarly, Noller et al. (1994) reported that, although spouses lower in marital satisfaction decreased their use of destructive conflict strategies over the first year of marriage, they increased their use after year one, and spouses high in satisfaction were less likely to use destructive conflict behaviors over time. These data suggest that measuring outcomes at one phase, versus multiple timepoints, plays an important role in how we interpret the effect of conflict resolution strategies on marriage. For example, before concluding that negative conflict resolution strategies do not necessarily forecast lower marital satisfaction, one might consider that spouses low in satisfaction might make a special effort early in the relationship to use more constructive strategies. Finally, Kurdek (1995) examined the bi-directional causal relationships between conflict resolution strategies and marital satisfaction and found that, while

conflict resolution strategies predicted husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction, marital satisfaction scores, in turn, did not predict conflict resolution styles.

Also important with respect to the present study is how conflict resolution strategies are linked to marital happiness for new parents. Only two studies examine this relationship in the context of the transition to parenthood. In the first study, Crohan (1996) found that new parents experienced decreases in marital happiness and increases in conflict compared to their prenatal scores and their nonparent counterparts. While new parents were also more likely to use destructive conflict behaviors such as conflict avoidance and less likely to use constructive behaviors, this finding was true for nonparents as well.

In a more recent investigation in which couples engaged in problem-solving interactions before and after becoming parents, couples decreased their positive interaction behaviors (e.g., support validation, positive affect) and increased their negative interaction behaviors (e.g., conflict, negative affect) during the child's first year (Cox, Paley, Burchinal, & Payne, 1999). Couples who demonstrated better problem-solving abilities prenatally also tended to report the highest levels of marital satisfaction prenatally and less of a decline in marital satisfaction after the birth of the child.

Finally, it is clear from the literature on conflict and marital happiness that there are important gender differences that need to be addressed. Gottman & Levenson (1988) reviewed four patterns where gender differences in conflict management were consistently found. First, wives function more effectively than husbands in a climate of negative affect; secondly, husbands are more likely to withdraw during conflict; thirdly,

wives are more likely to escalate conflict; and fourthly, husbands are more likely to play a reconciling role in trying to reduce conflict, particularly when the level of conflict is relatively low.

Other researchers have identified gender differences when predicting conflict resolution strategies from marital satisfaction. Marchand & Hock (2000), for example, demonstrated that, while husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction predicted their own conflict attacking behaviors, marital satisfaction predicted avoidance behaviors for husbands but not for wives. Specifically, lower marital satisfaction scores predicted increases in attacking and avoidance behavior for husbands and increases in attacking behaviors for wives. The same study demonstrated that spouses' use of certain strategies affects their partners level of satisfaction in the relationship. Wives' satisfaction, for example, was positively related to husbands' assertion and support and negatively related to husbands' manipulation. Husbands' satisfaction was also concurrently and positively related to wives' assertion and support, but was negatively related to wives' use of coercion. Interestingly, in a similar analysis, Kurdek (1995) found that husbands' marital satisfaction was more frequently affected by how their wives resolved conflict than wives' marital satisfaction was affected by how their husbands resolved conflict. These results emphasize the importance of considering the function of conflict resolution strategies on husbands' and wives' marital well-being independently.

Thus, the literature suggests that couples with fewer financial resources, where both spouses work full-time and who are first-time new parents, may be at increased risk for marital conflict than couples not facing these multiple challenges. The current investigation will examine the relationships among gender ideology, the division of labor,



conflict resolution strategies and marital well-being for working-class, dual-earner, couples making the transition to parenthood. Four major questions will be addressed.

Question #1. Do reports of marital conflict and feelings of love change from Time1 (prebirth) to Time2 (postbirth) for both husbands and wives? Based on the literature that average levels of marital satisfaction decline over the transition to parenthood (Belsky et al., 1985), it is expected that positive feelings (love) will decline for spouses and that negative behaviors (conflict) will increase from Time1 to Time2. It is also hypothesized that wives will experience more extreme negative changes in marital quality than to husbands.

Question #2. What are the relationships, concurrently and over time, between age, family income, the division of labor, gender ideology, conflict resolution styles, and marital love and conflict?

Based on the consistent findings reported in the literature regarding the relationships between age, income, and marital quality (Levenson et al., 1993; Kurdek, 1991b), older spouses and more financially secure spouses are predicted to report greater marital love and less conflict. With regard to the division of household tasks, results are expected to replicate those of Perry-Jenkins and Folk (1994), such that husbands contributing little to household chores will likely report less conflict. Gender ideology is not expected to be related with marital outcomes unless considered in conjunction with the division of labor (Perry-Jenkins & Crouter, 1990). In this case, spouses whose gender ideology is compatible with actual family behaviors are hypothesized to report more positive marital quality.

Spouses' conflict resolution strategies are expected to be linked, concurrently and over time, to their own and to their partners' marital quality. Based on general conclusions in the literature (Gottman, 1994; Noller et al., 1994), the constructive strategy (problem solving) is predicted to correlate positively with marital love and negatively with marital conflict. Engagement and withdrawal, two destructive strategies, are expected to correlate negatively with love and positively with conflict. Although Kurdek (1995) did not identify many significant relationships between compliance and marital outcomes, given the nature of this strategy (giving in), it is considered destructive and is therefore expected to result in less love and more conflict for spouses.

Question #3. Do conflict resolution strategies at Time 1 predict husbands' and wives' evaluations of love and conflict at Time 2, controlling for Time 1 love and conflict, years married, total family income, the division of household tasks, and gender ideology? It is predicted that a spouses' own Time 1 conflict strategies and their partners' strategies will predict change in their marital assessments from Time 1 to Time 2. Specifically, use of problem solving should predict increases in love and decreases in conflict, while use of engagement or withdrawal should predict decreases in love and increases in conflict. It is also hypothesized that Time 1 conflict strategies will account for more variance in this change than demographic variables, allocation of household tasks, and gender role attitudes.

Question #4. Do reports of marital conflict and love change over time as a function of the compatibility between husbands' and wives' Time 1 conflict resolution strategies? It is expected that husbands' and wives' reports of conflict and love will be affected by the compatibility of their own and their partner's resolution strategies. First,

based on previous findings that the demand-withdraw pattern is particularly destructive for marital well-being (Fincham & Beach, 1999), it is hypothesized that use of the husband withdraw/wife engage pattern of conflict resolution will predict decreases in love and increases in conflict for both spouses. Also, because problem solving appears to be an adaptive strategy for marriage, use of the problem-solve/problem-solve pattern is expected to predict increases in love and decreases in conflict for both spouses.

## CHAPTER 4

### METHOD

#### Sample and Procedures

Data were drawn from the Work and Family Transitions Project, a 5-year longitudinal study conducted at the University of Massachusetts Amherst (Perry-Jenkins, 1996). The design of the larger study included five face-to-face interviews with 150 dual-earner couples experiencing the transition to parenthood for the first time. Interviews with each couple were conducted over a one year period: a third-trimester interview, a one-month postpartum interview, an interview within two weeks of mothers' return to work, a six-month postpartum interview, and a one-year postpartum interview. During the interviews mothers and fathers were asked to provide information in three general domains: 1) family (e.g., parental work situations, finances), 2) personal (e.g., psychological well-being, quality of marital relationship), and 3) work (e.g., hours, work place policies). Interviews were conducted separately with husbands and wives in their homes and were between two and three hours long.

Participants were heterosexual couples recruited at prenatal education classes at various hospitals throughout Western Massachusetts. Married or cohabiting couples were chosen for inclusion if they met the following criteria: (a) both partners were expecting their first child, (b) held full-time jobs (at least 35 hours per week) prior to the birth of their baby (c) planned to return to work full-time within six months of the baby's birth, and (d) were "working-class" (defined by restricting educational level to an Associate's Degree or less).

The present study focuses on data from the phase 1 (prenatal) and phase 3 (return to work) interviews. These time points will be referred to as "Time 1" and "Time 2" in this study. For the purposes of this investigation, 122 couples completed a series of standardized forms that assess marital satisfaction, styles of resolving conflict, gender ideology, and the division of household labor at both time points.

### Sample.

The average age at the prenatal visit was 29.1 years (range 19.3 – 41.3) for fathers and 27.3 years (range 17.6 – 40.8) for mothers. Nearly eighty percent (78.7) of the couples were married for an average of 3.2 years. This was a first marriage for 89.3% of the men and 87.7% of the women. The remaining 20.3% of couples had been cohabiting for an average of 2.0 years. A large percentage of the participants were white (90.2% of men, 93.4% of women).

There was a broad range of education attainment levels. The highest degree held by 30.1% of men and 22% of women was a high school diploma or GED. Many of the participants (52.8% of men, 49.5% of women) had some type of additional schooling following high school (e.g., some college, cosmetology license, EMT certification) and 17.1% of men and 28.5% of women had earned an Associates Degree.

Individually reported income ranged from \$2,000 to \$62,500 annually for men and from \$4,860 to \$55,000 for women. Median salaries were \$29,868 and \$27,871 for men and women respectively, and the median family income was \$53,000. It is necessary to consider that many participants earning high incomes do so through working multiple jobs or increased hours. Men worked an average of 47.6 hours per week at the prenatal interview and an average of 47.4 hours at the postnatal interview. Mothers' weekly hours

averaged 40.6 hours per week at the first interview and 35.3 hours at the postpartum interview.

## Measures

Marital Satisfaction. Pre-birth and post-birth perceptions of the marital relationship were assessed using two subscales from the Personal Relationship Scale developed by Braiker and Kelley (PRS; 1979) (See Appendix A.1). The 5 items of the Conflict-Negativity subscale assess the interpersonal character of the relationship by indicating the amount of conflict and negativity. The 10 items of the Love subscale tap into attitudes and beliefs about the relationship by assessing respondents' feelings of closeness or belonging toward their spouses. Questions such as "How often do you and your partner argue with each other?" (conflict-negativity) and "To what extent do you have a sense of 'belonging' with your partner?" (love) were answered on a 9-point scale ranging from not at all to very much.

Scale reliability alpha for the conflict-negativity items for men and women, respectively, was .54 and .66 at Time 1, and .78 and .76 at Time 2. For the love items, the alpha coefficient for men and women, respectively, was .73 and .73 at Time 1, and .82 and .83 at Time 2. For this study, one item was excluded from the love subscale ("How sexually intimate are you with your partner?") because it lowered the alpha coefficient significantly (most likely because sexual activity in the third trimester of pregnancy is less than usual).

Conflict resolution styles. Each spouse's pre-birth conflict resolution styles were assessed with the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSI; Kurdek, 1994) (See Appendix A.2). Spouses indicated how frequently (1 = never, 5 = always) they use each

of four styles to manage arguments and disagreements with their spouse. There are four items per subscale, including questions such as “I negotiate and compromise” (positive problem solving), “I launch personal attacks” (conflict engagement), “I tune the other person out” (withdrawal), and “I do not defend my position” (compliance). The alpha coefficients for problem solving, engagement, withdrawal, and compliance were .76, .76, .82, and .71 for men and .71, .75, .81, and .75 for women.

Division of labor. A division of labor variable was constructed for husbands and wives to represent the average of participants' subjective assessment of their total Time 1 contribution to eight traditionally feminine household chores. Feminine household tasks refer to those chores which have been traditionally considered and culturally defined as feminine. Empirical work has suggested that men would have to assume traditionally female tasks in order to balance out the family work load (Perry-Jenkins & Crouter, 1990). These tasks included making beds, cleaning, meal preparation, dishwashing, laundry, running errands including grocery shopping, gift purchasing, and preparing for events and activities. These items were part of the “Who Does What” questionnaire developed by Atkinson & Huston (1984) (See Appendix A.3). Respondents indicated the extent of their personal contribution to each task on a 5-point scale (1 = Usually or Always my spouse, 0-20% personal contribution, 5 = Usually or Always myself, 80-100% personal contribution). Scale reliability alpha for the 8 items was .56 for husbands and .64 for wives.

Gender Ideology. Spouses indicated how “traditional” or “liberal” they were regarding the roles of men and women in the home and in the workplace by responding to 39 items on the Men’s and Women’s Roles Scale (Brogran & Kutner, 1976) (See

Appendix A.4). On a 6-point scale (1 = Strongly Agree, 6 = Strongly Disagree), respondents indicated their opinions regarding how men and women should behave or should be treated differently in regard to jobs, education, and activities. Higher scores indicated endorsement of more egalitarian views. The alpha coefficient was .72 for women and .62 for men.



## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS

Before addressing the major questions, descriptive statistics on the independent and dependent variables were calculated for husbands and wives. Means and standard deviations are reported in Table 1.

#### Question #1.

*Do reports of marital conflict and feelings of love change from Time 1 (prebirth) to Time 2 (postbirth) for both husbands and wives? <sup>1</sup>*

Repeated measures analysis of variance revealed that marital love declined significantly for wives and husbands ( $F = 19.97, p < .001$ ). In addition, a trend indicated that wives' Time 1 love scores were greater than husbands' ( $F = 3.19, p = .076$ ), but there were no significant differences between spouses' love at Time 2. The decline in love over time was also more extreme for wives ( $F = 5.50, p < .05$ ).

With regard to marital conflict, wives reported greater conflict at Time 1 ( $F = 9.13, p < .01$ ) and Time 2 ( $F = 14.49, p < .001$ ) compared to husbands. However, the increase in marital conflict over time for both spouses was not significant.

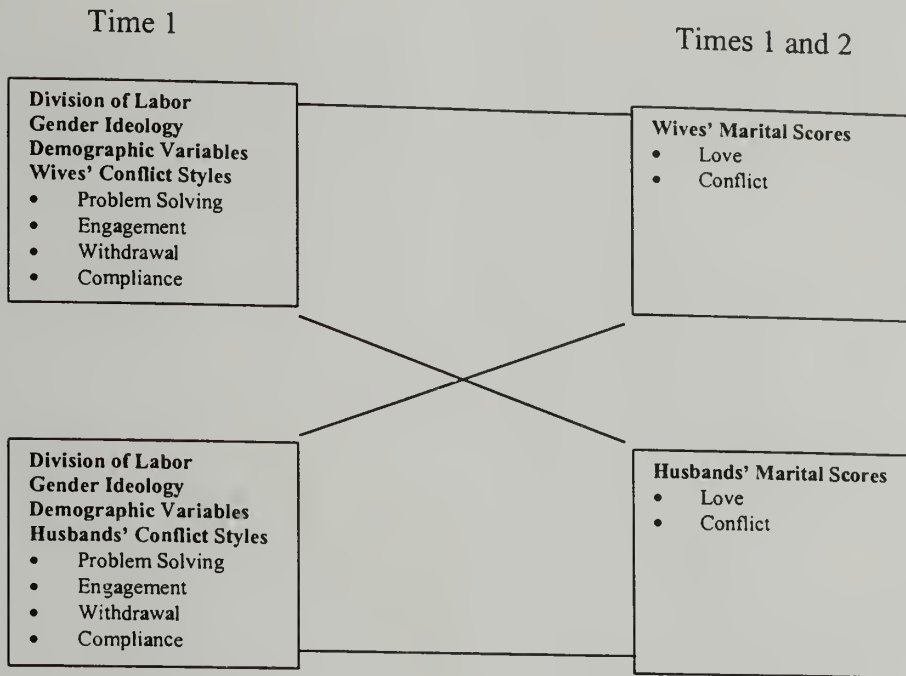
#### Question #2.

*What are the relationships, concurrently and over time, between spouses' reports of love, conflict, conflict resolution styles, division of labor, gender ideology, and spouses' age, years married, and total family income?*

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<sup>1</sup> Because some research indicates that conflict resolution strategies change over time, repeated measures ANOVAs were performed for problem-solving, engagement, withdrawal, and compliance to test the stability of the strategies examined in this study. The rationale behind these analyses was that marital outcomes predicted by Time 1 resolution strategies could be colored by changes in those strategies, if such changes occurred. Results indicated that husbands and wives decreased their use of withdrawal over time ( $F = 6.74, p < .01$ ;  $F = 5.34, p < .05$ ). Nonetheless, significant findings are later noted for conflict

The following diagram depicts the correlations that were examined:



First, correlations among spouses' age, years married, and total family income and marital outcome variables were examined. Age and marital conflict were negatively correlated; older wives and husbands reported less marital conflict at pre-birth ( $r = -.246$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $r = -.311$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and post-birth ( $r = -.277$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $r = -.334$ ,  $p < .001$ ) assessments. Because age and years married were significantly correlated for wives and husbands ( $r = .355$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $r = .441$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and age, but not years married, was related to outcome variables, age was included in subsequent regression analyses. Higher family income was also related to less marital conflict for wives and husbands at Time 1 ( $r = -.181$ ,  $p < .05$ ;  $r = -.217$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and Time 2 ( $r = -.316$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $r = -.373$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and, therefore, was included in later regression analyses.

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withdrawal and withdraw/withdraw interactions. Changes in withdrawal, therefore, are not considered to have impacted the major questions of this investigation.

Next, bivariate correlations of the division of labor and gender ideology with marital love and conflict were examined (Table 2). All variables were unrelated to wives' marital outcomes, with one exception. Wives taking on more of the household work reported less love at Time 1. Both gender ideology and the division of labor variables were related to husbands' love. More egalitarian husbands reported significantly more love at Time 1 and Time 2. In addition, the more chores husbands performed, the more love they reported at both assessments. As a result of these findings, variables representing husbands' gender ideology and the division of household tasks were included in regression analyses when husbands' love was the dependent variable.

Because prior research has demonstrated that the mesh between gender role attitudes and actual behaviors holds important implications for marital well-being (McHale & Crouter, 1992; Perry-Jenkins & Crouter, 1990), it was also necessary to examine the *combination* of husbands' and wives' gender ideology and contribution to household tasks with respect to marital outcomes. Four 2 (high/low egalitarianism) x 2 (high/low task contribution) Univariate ANOVAs were run with wives' Time 2 love, wives' Time 2 conflict, husbands' Time 2 love, and husbands' Time 2 conflict as the dependent variables. When wives' love and conflict were the dependent variables, wives' contribution to household tasks and their gender ideologies were entered as the fixed factors. Likewise, when husbands' love and conflict were the dependent variables, husbands' contribution to household tasks and their gender ideologies were the fixed factors.

Results revealed few significant effects. For wives, the division of labor and gender ideology variables, including the interaction, were unrelated to marital love and

conflict. For husbands, analysis of variance revealed that higher contribution to household tasks at Time 1 was associated with greater Time 2 marital love at the level of a trend ( $F = 2.97, p = .088$ ). There was also a significant interaction effect for husbands' conflict. As a result of these findings, variables representing the compatibility between gender ideology and division of labor were excluded from later regressions, with the exception of those predicting post-birth conflict for husbands.

With regard to conflict resolution strategies, problem solving and withdrawal were related to marital love and conflict, whereas engagement and compliance were associated with conflict only (Table 2). Greater use of problem solving was associated with more love at Time 1 and Time 2 for both spouses. Frequent use of problem solving was also associated with less conflict at both times for wives and at Time 2 for husbands. Use of conflict engagement, on the other hand, was associated with greater marital conflict for husbands and wives at both time points. Withdrawal was related to less love for husbands and wives at both assessments, more conflict for wives at both assessments, and more post-birth conflict for husbands. Finally, husbands who comply more during conflict reported more marital conflict at Time 1.

Correlations involving the *crossover* among one spouse's gender ideology, contribution to household tasks, and conflict resolution strategies and the other spouse's marital evaluations were examined next. Table 3 depicts the relationships among wives' conflict resolution styles and husbands' marital assessments and Table 4 depicts the relationships among husbands' conflict resolution strategies and wives' marital outcomes. Results indicated that spouses' gender ideology is unrelated to their partners' marital

evaluations. Interestingly, husbands reported less love when their wives' contributed more to household chores.

With respect to resolution styles, wives' strategies mattered more for husbands' marital evaluations than husbands' mattered for wives'. Wives' use of problem solving was negatively related to husbands' pre- and post-birth reports of marital conflict. Wives' use of conflict engagement was negatively related to husbands' reports of love and positively related to husbands' conflict at Time 1. In addition, wives' withdrawal was associated with greater marital conflict for husbands at both assessments. For wives', husbands' use of withdrawal was related to more pre-birth conflict and husbands' use of engagement was related to more post-birth conflict.

### Question #3.

*Do conflict resolution strategies at Time 1 predict husbands' and wives' evaluations of love and conflict at Time 2, controlling for Time 1 love and conflict?*

Four hierarchical regressions were run with husbands' and wives' Time 2 marital love and conflict as the dependent variables, controlling for Time 1 levels of love and conflict. Only variables that were significant at the bivariate level were included in the regression models.

Love. Both wives' and husbands' conflict resolution strategies failed to explain any of the variance in regressed change in wives' marital love. For husbands, increases in love over time were predicted by wives' frequent use of conflict engagement at Time 1. Decreases in husbands' love were predicted by wives' and husbands' use of withdrawal during conflict (Table 5).

Given the surprising result regarding a positive relationship between wives' engagement and husbands' love, exploratory analyses were conducted in an attempt to understand this finding. One thought was that a floor effect was occurring, such that some husbands' baseline love was so low to begin with that it could only go up over time, even if their wives were highly engaging during conflict. To address the possibility that wives' engagement operated differently depending on the pre-birth level of husbands' love, two groups of husbands were created based on mean split of Time 1 love and separate regressions with husbands' Time 3 love as the dependent variable were performed. Again, contrary to expectations, wives' conflict engagement predicted significant increases in husbands' love for the "high love" group only ( $\beta = .494, p < .01$ ).

Conflict. Wives' use of withdrawal at Time 1 predicted increases in wives' marital conflict. In addition, a trend indicated that husbands' use of engagement during conflict also predicts increases in wives' conflict (Table 6). Increases in husbands' marital conflict over the transition to parenthood were predicted by income and husbands' withdrawal. Specifically, the lower the family income at Time 1, the more conflict husbands reported at Time 2. Also, the more husbands withdrew during conflict at Time 1, the greater conflict they reported later (Table 7).

#### Question #4

*Do reports of marital conflict and love change over time as a function of the compatibility between husbands' and wives' Time 1 conflict resolution strategies?*

Four hierarchical regressions were run with husbands' and wives' Time 2 love and conflict as the dependent variables. To replicate Kurdek's (1994) findings that spouses' Time 1 conflict resolution scores are linked synergistically to change in marital

quality over time, the following interaction terms were entered in the last step of each regression:

1. Husband Withdraw/Wife Engage
2. Husband Withdraw/Wife Withdraw
3. Husband Problem Solve/Wife Problem Solve

Each of the two-way interaction terms failed to explain any of the variance in regressed change in husbands' and wives' marital love and marital conflict. However, a trend indicated that greater use of problem solving skills by both spouses resulted in less marital conflict for husbands over time ( $\beta = -1.33$ ,  $p = .06$ ). In addition, this finding became significant when exploratory regression analyses were conducted; specifically, when each interaction term was examined individually in the model, the Problem-Solve/Problem-Solve pattern predicted less conflict for husbands over time ( $\beta = -1.72$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Also, a trend indicated that greater use of the Withdraw/Withdraw pattern predicted less conflict for wives over time ( $\beta = -.665$ ,  $p = .08$ ).

Exploratory analyses were conducted in an attempt to capture the effects of both spouses' conflict resolution strategies. Groups of spouses were created based on mean split. For example, the "demand-withdraw" group was created by assigning wives who scored over the mean on engagement to the demand group, husbands who scored above the mean on withdrawal to the withdraw group, and then assigned couples to the demand-withdraw group if the wife met criteria for the demand group and the husband met criteria for the withdraw group. Three groups in total were created: demand/withdraw, withdraw/withdraw, and problem-solve/problem-solve.

Analyses of Variance revealed that, compared to all other couples, wives reported more conflict at Time 2 when the withdraw/withdraw pattern was used ( $F = 5.09, p < .05$ ) and less conflict when the problem-solve/problem-solve pattern was used ( $F = 16.86, p < .001$ ). Significant results were not found for the demand/withdraw pattern, for husbands' marital love or marital conflict, or for wives' marital love.



## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION

Longitudinal data were used to address the relationships between spouses' styles of negotiating conflict and changes in marital quality over time. These results will be discussed from an ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1986), considering how changes in marital quality might vary for dual-earner couples juggling multiple roles with limited resources. Consistent with past research on new parenthood and marital change, findings from the present investigation indicated that dual-earner, working-class couples experience declines in marital love across the transition to parenthood. In addition, some styles of negotiating conflict were meaningful predictors of change in new parents' perceptions of marital quality and, consistent with Kurdek (1994) and Crohan (1996), wives' strategies of conflict resolution were more important for husbands' evaluations of marriage than husbands' strategies mattered for wives'. Many of the specific findings of this study, however, contradicted what would be expected based on prior research. In some cases, it is thought that such contradictions may be evidence that individuals' social contexts greatly influence familial processes and how major life transitions are experienced.

Marital quality was defined in terms of husbands' and wives' subjective perceptions of love and conflict. Studies on marital change across the transition to parenthood almost invariably note increases in conflict and decreases in love, changes that are typically more extreme for wives than husbands (Belsky et al., 1985; Cowan et al., 1985). One goal of the current study was to determine whether these negative changes are also experienced by working couples who have access to fewer financial resources.

Indeed, husbands and wives reported less love in their marriages as they became parents, a consequence often attributed to the stress that accompanies adaptation to family life. However, no changes in marital conflict were found for these couples. This finding is at odds with others' assertion that, due to the challenges of renegotiating family roles and responsibilities, marital conflict increases when a new member enters the family (Cowan et al., 1985; Crohan, 1996).

This unexpected finding related to marital conflict may be explained by the proximity of time points used to assess change in the present investigation. The outcome data used in this study were limited to a one-time assessment still close to the birth of the child (i.e., outcome data were collected with parents at an average 19.74 weeks following the birth). Perhaps tracking these parents later into their adjustment of parenthood would reveal findings more consistent with the literature; that is, consequences of added constraints on the marital relationship may surface over a longer postnatal period. On the other hand, the presumed "natural increases" in marital conflict is based on studies representing entirely different samples. Stability in marital conflict, therefore, may be one distinguishing feature of working-class, new parents.

To address inconsistencies in research, future studies should consider looking at more complex trajectories of marital change. Studies have indicated that some consequences on the marriage are more immediate and move toward baseline over time. Others show that the effects on marriage "kick in" at different times for husbands and wives (Cowan et al., 1985). While the present study is important in that it examines more immediate effects on marriage when couples have a child *and* return to paid work, it is also important to consider the long-term and, perhaps, changing effects on the marriage.

Moving beyond levels of change in marital love and conflict for new parents, the current study examined important demographic variables as well as gender ideology and the division of labor as factors that may influence marital change across the transition to parenthood. As expected, family income and age were variables that help distinguish differences in marital quality across couples; being more financially secure or being older decreased the levels of conflict experienced by spouses. A majority of the results regarding the bivariate relationships among the division of labor, gender ideology, and marital outcomes, however, were somewhat surprising.

Generally, the division of household labor and gender ideology variables were significantly associated with husbands' marital love, but unrelated to husbands' conflict and wives' marital assessments. Specifically, the fewer feminine chores husbands performed at Time 1, the less love husbands reported at Time 2. In addition, more egalitarian husbands reported more post-birth love. The latter finding is not surprising, given that the couples in this study share the breadwinning responsibility, which is consistent with more liberal views regarding the roles of men and women. However, husbands are typically content when their wives take on the greater proportion of household work, and wives are usually unhappy about inequities in the division of labor (Coltrane, 2000 ). It is interesting, then, that husbands in the current study reported less love when they are less involved in the division of household labor and that there was no effect on wives. Two possibilities for this unusual finding are suggested.

First, some research indicates that perceived fairness and satisfaction about the division of labor paints a very different picture than when looking at the actual division of household work. For example, some women take on the majority of the household

responsibilities, yet report high satisfaction with the division of labor. Therefore, hypotheses posed in this paper may have been substantiated if perceived fairness or satisfaction were included as an independent variable.

Secondly, the current investigation assumed that household division of labor remained stable from the prebirth to postbirth assessments. It may be that postbirth evaluations of the division of labor, rather than prebirth assessments, are better indicators of postbirth marital happiness, particularly for this sample of dual-working spouses who must divide their time between parenting and maintaining a household, marriage, and job. In addition, with a new baby joining the family, parents are faced with the increased *childcare* chores, an issue that was not considered in the present analyses. While some mothers at Time 1 reported doing a majority of the housework with little or no consequences on the marriage, adding childcare to their responsibilities at Time 2 may change how much conflict arises in the relationship and/or their perceptions of how happy they are in their marriages. In fact, studies have indicated differences in the ways household versus childcare tasks are divided between spouses, and that such differences affect husbands and wives differently (Coltrane, 2000).

The goal of this study, however, was not to explain *how* gender ideology and the division of labor relate to marital outcomes. Instead, it was intended to demonstrate these variables as sources of influence on marital change and that spouses' styles of managing conflict can predict marital change above and beyond such variables. The fact that few significant relationships emerged among gender ideology, the division of labor, and marital outcomes changed the nature of the original investigation; rather than examining if conflict resolution strategies predicted change in marital evaluations *beyond the effects*

*of division of household labor and spouses gender ideologies*, the effects of conflict resolution strategies on marital change were examined primarily in conjunction with age and income. In cases where it was necessary to include gender ideology and division of labor in regression analyses (i.e., when husbands' love was the dependent variable), these variables did not predict changes in marriage. In fact, marital change was not predicted even when considering the important interaction between one's actual behaviors with respect to housework contribution and one's attitude toward such behaviors.

The ultimate goal of the current study was to look beyond factors already known to influence marital change, and to investigate what role conflict management plays for couples who are actually at risk for increased conflict. Initially, the relationships between conflict resolution strategies and marital love and conflict were examined at the bivariate level. As expected, the one constructive conflict resolution strategy, positive problem solving, was positively related to spouses' perceptions of marital quality. Withdrawing during conflict (i.e., remaining silent, acting distant, tuning out the other person) was the most harmful conflict resolution strategy for couples' marriages, decreasing their perceptions of love and increasing perceptions of conflict. In addition, conflict engagement (insulting, exploding) increases spouse's perceptions of conflict in the relationship. Also similar to former research (Kurdek, 1995), compliance was unrelated to Time 2 marital assessments. Thus, like many studies on relationship conflict and conflict management, some techniques of negotiating conflict for these new parents are more conducive to maintaining a satisfying marriage than others (Gottman, 1994; Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1990).

Styles of negotiating conflict were not only related to the level of marital quality; spouses' pre-birth strategies of resolving conflict predicted marital change over the transition to parenthood. It appears that destructive conflict resolution strategies, conflict engagement and withdrawal, are more salient than constructive strategies, such as positive problem solving, in predicting how marital love and conflict increase or decrease over time. In fact, conflict resolution strategies that were related to marital quality at the correlational level did not always predict change in marital outcomes. This finding supports the suggestion by Gottman & Krokoff (1989) that some strategies are helpful indicators of concurrent marital happiness while others are associated with long-term or changing marital quality. Also similar to research by Gottman & Krokoff (1989), results from the current study did not always turn out in the expected directions. In addition, gender differences were noted with respect to which strategies were helpful predictors for husbands' and wives' marital change.

Although styles of managing conflict did not predict change in wives' marital love over time, some individual and spousal strategies held important implications for changes in wives' marital conflict. As expected, wives' withdrawal and husbands' engagement predicted increases in wives' reports of conflict across the transition to parenthood. Despite the significant bivariate relationships among wives' problem solving and withdrawal strategies with postbirth reports of love, their conflict resolution strategies failed to explain change in love from Time 1 to Time 2. These results indicate that perhaps other important independent variables were excluded from the present study and that ways husbands and wives negotiate conflict play little or no role in wives' marital love over time. However, these results do confirm that withdrawal and conflict

engagement are strategies of resolving conflict that can be detrimental to wives' assessment of marriage over time, particularly with respect to increased conflict.

Conflict engagement and withdrawal were also the two strategies that predicted changes in husbands' marital evaluations over time. As expected, wives' and husbands' use of withdrawal predicted declines in husbands' love over time. Interestingly, wives' use of conflict engagement predicted *increases* in husbands' love over time. The possibility of obtaining a floor effect (that these husbands' love increased because it was so low to begin with that it could only improve over time) was tested, however, the counterintuitive finding was not resolved. Even after dividing husbands into two groups based on their baseline love scores (those below the mean of love and those above the mean), wives' conflict engagement significantly predicted increases in husbands' love for the group of husbands that were high in love to begin with.

The positive relationship between wives' engagement and husbands' love, while unforeseen, supports others' suggestions that engaging during conflict can be adaptive for marriages. Gottman's research, for example, reveals that nondistressed couples are better able to deescalate negative conflict cycles and that, as long as spouses' positive behaviors toward one another outnumber more negative behaviors, conflict can forecast marital happiness and stability in the long run (Gottman, 1994; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989). It may be, then, that conflict engagement is functional for these new parents' marriages because they have established high levels of love and ways to confront disagreements successfully, which pays off at a hectic time of family change. Thus, although conflict engagement is a behavior that we think about negatively (because it includes being confrontational, defensive, and nagging during conflict), husbands may construe this

behavior as constructive because it allows the conflictual issues to be addressed rather than ignored and portrays the wife as caring about the issue, rather than sweeping it aside as unimportant.

With regard to husbands' conflict, their own use of withdrawal was the only conflict resolution style to significantly predict increases in conflict over time. Thus, the hypothesis that withdrawing during conflict results in negative changes in marriage over time has been substantiated. In addition, this was the only conflict resolution strategy that posed problems for husbands' *and* wives' marital evaluations.

Perhaps the most interesting and important question in the paper considered how spouses' ways of resolving conflict interacted in concert to impact marital assessments over time. Surprisingly, all interaction terms failed to explain any of the variance in regressed change for marital love and marital conflict for both spouses. However, trends indicated that the Problem-Solve/Problem-Solve pattern predicted less conflict over time for husbands and that the Withdraw/Withdraw pattern predicted less conflict over time for wives. The findings that these patterns predict decreases in conflict over time make sense in terms of Gottman's (1994) suggestion that couples are happier when they do not get caught in cycles of conflict negativity. Clearly, couples who are both invested in compromising and focusing on the problem directly are more likely to keep their conflict under control. Interestingly, although withdrawal by one spouse is harmful for spouses' marital assessments (based on results of question #3), it appears that withdrawal is functional when both partners prefer to avoid conflictual issues.

Based on Kurdek's research that the synergistic link between spouses' conflict resolution strategies is the most powerful predictor for husbands and wives marital



change (1995), it was expected that additional significant relationships would have been identified among the three interaction patterns and change in marital outcomes.

Therefore, exploratory analyses were conducted to identify how the three patterns were related to levels of marital love and conflict. When the link between spouses' conflict resolution strategies were tested by analysis of variance, wives reported more conflict when the withdraw/withdraw pattern was used and less conflict when the problem-solve/problem-solve pattern was used. That different outcomes were found for the withdraw/withdraw sequence demonstrates the importance of distinguishing between levels of marriage and change in marriage; although spouses who use the withdraw/withdraw pattern have an overall higher level of conflict compared to spouses who use that pattern less frequently, the withdraw/withdraw pattern predicts decreases in conflict over time.

Failure to replicate Kurdek's (1995) results may be a consequence of differences in measuring marital quality and conflict resolution strategies. Kurdek (1995) used a global measure of marital satisfaction, whereas the current investigation examined two components of marital quality, conflict and love. In addition, Kurdek (1995) obtained an average of individuals' personal perceptions and their spouse's subjective evaluations of their conflict resolution styles while the current study used only individual reports of conflict resolution strategies. Failure to obtain significant relationships between marital change and the link between spouses' resolution strategies may also be explained by practical issues of group assignment. Examining the effects of specific resolution patterns (e.g., Demand/Withdraw) does not consider the fact that couples exhibiting such a pattern may also use just as many or more constructive patterns of resolving conflict. If this is

indeed the case, the negative effects of the Demand/Withdraw pattern may be counterbalanced by more positive effects of a more constructive pattern such as Problem-Solving/Problem-Solving.

### Implications

Results of this study can benefit clinicians and researchers alike. First, the important message from this investigation is that communication serves as a foundation of marital happiness, particularly for couples experiencing life changes with few resources. Further, communication skills training has been demonstrated to prove useful and effective for dual-career couples experiencing relationship difficulties (Avis, 1986). It is necessary that communication skills training programs be modified to accommodate the specific needs of couples in distress, considering that some communication strategies are beneficial to some (e.g., engagement predicts increases in marital love, but only for husbands whose level of love was particularly high to begin with) and not others. In addition, gender differences surfaced many times in throughout this study, indicating that communication behaviors can not be generalized across gender.

Second, research including working-class, dual-earner samples remains sparse. Thus, any study that focuses on this sample enriches our understanding of processes that we otherwise make generalizations about based on more traditionally studied samples. Given that more than half of the hypotheses of this study were violated, it is clear that the experiences of dual-earner, working-class couples are unique. It is suggested, then, that this paper serve as new knowledge about our understanding of marital trajectories for

individuals we know little about and to initiate stronger efforts to both corroborate and elaborate these findings. It is important that researchers consider how life experiences (e.g., parenthood, marriage) vary as a function of context.

### Limitations

The findings of this study need to be viewed in the context of its limitations. First, marital change was assessed over a relatively brief period of time (approximately 6 months), telling us only about more immediate changes in marriage across the transition to parenthood. Researchers have cautioned that changes in marriage during this transition vary by spouse and fluctuate over time (e.g., Cowan et al., 1985). Second, spouses' conflict resolution strategies were based only on self reports and required participants to indicate *generally* how they manage conflict in their marital relationship. Research indicates that one's personal perception of their conflict management techniques sometimes differs from how their spouse characterizes their resolution styles and that conflict resolution strategies vary depending on the topic or intensity of conflict, or whose issue is being discussed.

A third limitation of this study is that the division of labor was defined only by household work. Because the sample is comprised of new parents, childcare tasks add substantially to the responsibilities these couples must divide. Also, satisfaction with the division of labor was not assessed; research indicates that satisfaction with the division of labor does not necessarily match what is actually being done and that satisfaction may be a better indicate of marital happiness.

## Future Directions

Future research should examine more complex trajectories of marital change for couples making the transition to parenthood, as well as the relationships among conflict, resolution strategies, and marital quality. To date, this study is only the third that addresses these relationships for new parents. It will also be interesting to tease apart how or why conflict engagement might be adaptive for some marriages. Roberts and Krokoff (1990) suggested that couples evidence different conflict resolution behaviors depending on their levels of satisfaction in the marriage; it may be helpful, then, to examine how conflict resolution strategies predict differences in marital change for couples who start off at different levels of happiness. In addition, the current study assumed that couples high in conflict or couples low in love were the "less happy" ones, whereas individuals can be a variety of combinations of love and conflict (e.g., high love, low conflict; low love, low conflict). Future studies should consider developing typologies based on these components of marital quality to see how conflict resolution strategies function between the different groups.

## APPENDIX A

### Measures

1. Relationship Questionnaire
2. Conflict Resolution Inventory
3. Who Does What Questionnaire
4. Men's and Women's Roles

## Appendix A.1: RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE

(Braiker & Kelly, 1979)

The following questions ask about certain aspects of your relationship with your spouse. Please answer these questions for the present time in your relationship. Circle the number which best represents your view of your marriage.

1. To what extent do you have a sense of “belonging with your partner”?  

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
Not at all    Very much
2. How often do you and your partner argue with each other?  

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
Very    Frequently  
Infrequently
3. How much do you feel you “give” to the relationship?  

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
Very little    Very much
4. To what extent do you try to change things about your partner that bother you (e.g., behaviors, attitudes, etc.) ?  

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
Not at all    Very much
5. To what extent do you love your partner at this stage?  

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
Not at all    Very much
6. To what extent do you feel that things that happen to your partner also affect or are important to you?  

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
Not at all    Very much
7. How often do you feel angry or resentful toward your partner?  

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
Never    Very often
8. To what extent do you feel that your relationship is somewhat unique compared to others you’ve been in?  

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
Not at all    Very much
9. How committed do you feel toward your partner?  

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
Not at all    Extremely
10. How close do you feel toward your partner?  

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
Not at all close    Extremely close
11. How much do you need your partner at this stage?  

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
Not at all    Very much
12. How sexually intimate are you with your partner?  

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
Not at all    Extremely

RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE (Continued)

13. How attached do you feel to your partner?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
 Not at all Very much
14. When you and your partner argue, how serious are the problems or arguments?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
 Not serious at all Very serious
15. To what extent do you communicate negative feelings toward your partner (e.g., anger, dissatisfaction, frustration, etc.)?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
 Not at all Very much
16. How confused are you about your feelings toward your partner?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
 Not confused at all Very confused
17. To what extent do you reveal or disclose very intimate things about yourself or personal feelings to your partner?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
 Very Frequently  
 Infrequently
18. How much do you think or worry about losing some of your independence by getting involved with your partner?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
 Not at all Very much
19. How much time do you and your partner spend discussing and trying to work out problems between you?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
 Not very much Very much
20. How much time do you and your partner talk about the quality of your relationship - for example, how good it is, how satisfying, how to improve it, etc.?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
 Not very much Very much
21. How ambivalent or unsure are you about continuing in the relationship with your partner?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
 Not at all Extremely
22. To what extent do you feel that your partner demands or requires too much of your time and attention?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
 Not at all Very much
23. To what extent do you try to change your behavior to help solve certain problems between you and your partner?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
 Not at all Very much
24. To what extent do you feel "trapped" or pressured to continue in the relationship?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
 Not at all Very much
25. How much do you tell your partner what you want or need from the relationship?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
 Not at all Very much

Appendix A.2: CONFLICT RESOLUTION INVENTORY  
(Kurdek, 1994)

Using the scale 1=Never and 5=Always, rate how frequently you use each of the following styles to deal with arguments or disagreements with your partner.

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Never	Rarely	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always

- |     |   |           |
|-----|---|-----------|
| 1.  | I launch personal attacks.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2.  | I focus on the problem at hand.                                   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3.  | I remain silent for long periods of time.                         | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4.  | I am not willing to stick up for myself.                          | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5.  | I explode and get out of control.                                 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6.  | I sit down and discuss differences constructively.                | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7.  | I reach a limit, "shutting down," and refuse to talk any further. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8.  | I become too compliant.   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9.  | I get carried away and say things that I don't mean.              | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. | I find alternatives that are acceptable to both of us.            | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 11. | I tune the other person out.                                      | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 12. | I do not defend my position.                                      | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 13. | I throw insults and digs.   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 14. | I negotiate and compromise.                                       | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 15. | I withdraw, act distant and not interested.                       | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 16. | I give in with little attempt to present my side of the issue.    | 1 2 3 4 5 |



### Appendix A.3: WHO DOES WHAT?

In your family, who usually performs the household chores and certain family activities? Please circle the number which represents the percentage of YOUR OWN contribution to each of the following tasks. We realize that your pregnancy may have changed the way tasks are divided. Please think back to your usual habits before the pregnancy. If the item is Not Applicable, please write NA in the margin.

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
0-20%	20-40%	40-60%	60-80%	80-100%
Mostly or always my spouse/partner	More likely my spouse/partner	Shared about equally	More likely me	Mostly or always me

- |     |   |           |
|-----|---|-----------|
| 1.  | Make beds or change bed linens  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2.  | Cleaning (vacuum, clean bathrooms, sweep floors)  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3.  | Food preparation (cook, set table, prepare meal or snack)   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4.  | Dish-washing  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5.  | Take out garbage, recycling   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6.  | Outdoor work (yard work, rake, mow, shovel snow, garden)  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7.  | Care for pet (feed, walk, put out)  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8.  | Laundry (wash, iron, fold clothes)  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9.  | Run errands outside of home including grocery shopping  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. | Upkeep of car including repairs, washing and vacuuming  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 11. | Small repairs around the house  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 12. | Taking care of financial matters (write-out bills, figure out budget)                               | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 13. | Prepare for events and activities, like birthdays or anniversaries                                  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 14. | Buys presents, and/or makes calls to acknowledge important events for family, friends or co-workers | 1 2 3 4 5 |

Note: Items 1,2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 13, & 14 were coded as “feminine tasks” for the purposes of the questions forwarded in this proposal.

Appendix A.4: MEN'S AND WOMEN'S ROLES  
(Brogran & Kutner, 1976)

The statements listed below describe attitudes which different people have toward the roles of men and women. There are no right or wrong answers, only opinions. Express your personal opinion about each statement (not the feelings that you think people in general may have) by circling the number that indicates your agreement.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly agree	Moderately agree	Agree Slightly more than disagree	Disagree slightly more than agree	Moderately disagree	Strongly disagree

- |     |   |             |
|-----|---|-------------|
| 1.  | It is more important for a wife to help her husband's career than to have a career herself.   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 2.  | The idea of young girls participating in Little League baseball competition is ridiculous.  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 3.  | The amount of time and energy devoted to a career, home and family should be determined by one's personal desires and interests rather than by one's sex. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 4.  | It is more important for a woman to keep her figure and dress fashionably than it is for a man.   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 5.  | The old saying that "a woman's place is in the home" is still basically true and should remain true.  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 6.  | A woman should not be too competitive with men and should keep her peace rather than show a man he is wrong.  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 7.  | A woman whose job involves contact with the public, e.g., salesperson or teacher, should not continue to work when she is noticeably pregnant.            | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 8.  | The husband should take primary responsibility for major family decisions, such as the purchase of a home or car.   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 9.  | In groups that have both male and female members, the top leadership positions should be held by males.   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 10. | Married women who have school-aged children should not work outside the home unless it is economically necessary.   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |

MEN'S AND WOMEN'S ROLES (Continued)

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly agree	Moderately agree	Agree Slightly more than disagree	Disagree slightly more than agree	Moderately disagree	Strongly disagree

- |     |  |             |
|-----|--|-------------|
| 11. | If a man and a woman are being considered for the same job and the woman is slightly better qualified, the job should still go to the man because he is more likely to have a family to support. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 12. | Marriage is a partnership in which the wife and husband should share the economic responsibility of supporting the family.   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 13. | A woman should not accept a career promotion if it would require her family to move and her husband to find another job.   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 14. | A married woman who chooses not to have children because she prefers to pursue her career should not feel guilty.  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 15. | Married women who have preschool-aged children should not work outside the home unless it is economically necessary.   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 16. | It is generally better to have a man at the head of a department composed of both men and women employees.   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 17. | A husband should feel uncomfortable if his wife earns a larger salary than he does.  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 18. | It is alright for women to hold local political offices.   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 19. | A male student and a female student are equally qualified for a certain scholarship; it should be awarded to the male student on the grounds that he has greater "career potential."             | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 20. | The use of profane or obscene language by a woman is more objectionable than the same usage by a man.  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 21. | It is acceptable for boys, as well as girls, to play with dolls.   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 22. | Girls should primarily be encouraged to enter "feminine" careers such as nursing, public school teaching, library science, etc.  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 23. | Women should feel free to compete in any form of athletics.  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 24. | Parents should encourage just as much independence in their daughters as in their sons.  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |

MEN'S AND WOMEN'S ROLES (Continued)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Strongly agree	Moderately agree	Agree slightly more than disagree	Disagree slightly more than agree	Moderately disagree	Strongly disagree
25.	Women should be able to compete with men for jobs that have traditionally belonged to men, such as telephone lineman.					1 2 3 4 5 6
26.	It is O.K. for a wife to keep her own last name, rather than take her husband's name.					1 2 3 4 5 6
27.	A woman should not be president of the United States.					1 2 3 4 5 6
28.	Career education for boys should have higher priority with parents and teachers than career education for girls.					1 2 3 4 5 6
29.	Even though a wife works outside the home, the husband should be the main breadwinner and the wife should have the responsibility for running the household.					1 2 3 4 5 6
30.	In elementary school, girls should wear dresses rather than pants or jeans to school.					1 2 3 4 5 6
31.	It is acceptable for a woman to be a member of the church clergy.					1 2 3 4 5 6
32.	It is acceptable for women to hold important elected political offices in state and national government.					1 2 3 4 5 6
33.	It is not a good idea for a husband to stay home and care for the children while his wife is employed full-time outside the home.					1 2 3 4 5 6
34.	The only reason girls need career education is that they may not marry or remain married.					1 2 3 4 5 6
35.	A man should always offer his seat to a woman who is standing on a crowded bus.					1 2 3 4 5 6
36.	Men should be able to compete with women for jobs that have traditionally belonged to women, such as telephone operator.					1 2 3 4 5 6
* 37.	It's important to raise a son so he will be able to hold down a good job when he's grown, but that's not as important with a daughter.					1 2 3 4 5 6
* 38.	It's okay for children to help around the house, but I would not ask a son to dust or set the table.					1 2 3 4 5 6
* 39.	Education is important for both sons and daughters but is more important for a son.					1 2 3 4 5 6

## Appendix B

### Tables

1. Means of Independent and Dependent Variables
2. Intercorrelations between Independent Variables and Marital Outcome Variables By Time and Spouse
3. Correlations between Husbands' Marital Assessments and Wives' Conflict Strategies and Gender Ideology
4. Correlations between Wives' Marital Assessments and Husbands' Conflict Strategies and Gender Ideology
5. Predicting Change in Husbands' Love
6. Predicting Change in Wives' Marital Conflict
7. Predicting Change in Husbands' Marital Conflict

Table B.1

Means of Independent and Dependent Variables

	Husbands		Wives	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
<u>INDEPENDENT VARIABLES</u>				
Age	29.07	5.11	27.32	5.00
Income	\$29,890.52	\$10,602.95	\$22,964.67	\$10,475.28
Gender Ideology	4.86	.67	5.30	.47
Division of Labor	2.46	.47	3.86	.53
Conflict Problem Solving	3.73	.61	3.60	.53
Conflict Engagement	1.93	.63	2.28	.68
Conflict Withdrawal	2.34	.83	2.44	.75
Conflict Compliance	2.13	.72	2.06	.67
Pre-birth Marital Love	8.34	.61	8.46	.54
Pre-birth Marital Conflict	3.26	1.07	3.62	1.16
<u>DEPENDENT VARIABLES</u>				
Post-birth Marital Love	8.22	.71	8.12	.81
Post-birth Marital Conflict	3.27	1.30	3.79	1.34

Table B.2

Intercorrelations between Independent Variables and Marital Outcome Variables By Time and Spouse

Time 1 Variables	Marital Outcome Variables				
	Love	Love		Conflict	
	Time1	Time2	Time1	Time2	Time2
		Wives (n = 105)			
Gender Ideology	.093	.064	-.149		-.065
Division of Labor	-.221*	.059	-.170		-.060
Conflict Resolution Styles					
Problem Solving	.273**	.254**	-.389**		-.359**
Engagement	-.135	-.121	.456**		.313**
Withdrawal	-.197*	-.201*	.227*		.357**
Compliance	-.077	-.022	.004		.001
		Husbands (n = 103)			
Gender Ideology	.288**	.216*	.001		-.035
Division of Labor	.299**	.202*	.005		.031
Conflict Resolution Styles					
Problem Solving	.268**	.215*	-.135		-.278**
Engagement	-.085	-.112	.338**		.422**
Withdrawal	-.312**	-.311**	.164		.367**
Compliance	-.068	-.093	.244*		.183

\*p<.05. \*\*p<.01.

Table B.3

Correlations between Husbands' Marital Assessments and Wives' Conflict Strategies and Gender Ideology (n = 102)

Wives' Time 1 Variables	Husbands' Marital Outcome Variables			
	Time1	Love Time2	Conflict Time1	Time2
Gender Ideology	.018	-.001	.116	.057
Division of Labor	-.210*	-.217*	.002	.066
Conflict Resolution Styles				
Problem Solving	.144	.133	-.337**	-.273**
Engagement	-.247*	-.029	.225*	.163
Compliance	.022	-.095	.069	.142
Withdrawal	.000	-.108	.212*	.219*

\*p<.05. \*\*p<.01.



Table B.4

Correlations between Wives' Marital Assessments and Husbands' Conflict Strategies and Gender Ideology (n = 106)

Husbands' Time 1 Variables	Wives' Marital Outcome Variables				
	Time1	Love Time2	Conflict Time1	Time2	
Gender Ideology	.078	.059	-.042		-.106
Division of Labor	.074	.064	-.094		-.112
Conflict Resolution Styles					
Problem Solving	.112	.083	-.074		-.177
Engagement	-.092	-.033	.046		.265**
Compliance	.119	.107	-.142		-.023
Withdrawal	-.148	.005	.238*		.142

\*p<.05. \*\*p<.01.

Table B.5

## Predicting Change in Husbands' Love (N = 103)

Variable	1		2		3		4	
	B	$\beta$	B	B	B	$\beta$	B	$\beta$
Control								
H1 Love	.789	.707***	.828	.734***	.791	.701***	.832	.737***
H1 Age			.002	.012	.003	.019	-.000	-.005
Family Income			-.000	-.038	-.000	-.066	-.000	-.067
Gender Ideology			-.060	-.052	-.067	-.062	-.010	-.009
Division of Labor			-.035	-.025	-.036	-.025	-.042	-.029
Independent								
H1 Withdrawal								
H1 Problem Solving					-.097	-.114	-.139	-.163*
					.009	.008	-.013	-.012
W1 Engagement							.252	.230**
W1 Withdrawal							-.191	-.199**
Change in R <sup>2</sup>								
F			.004		.012		.054	
R <sup>2</sup>			.213		1.138		5.840**	
F			.504		.516		.570	
			19.74***		14.47***		13.70***	
	101.00***							

\*\*p&lt;.01. \*\*\*p&lt;.001.

Table B.6

Predicting Change in Wives' Marital Conflict

Variable	1		2		3		4	
	B	$\beta$	B	$\beta$	B	$\beta$	B	$\beta$
Control								
W1 Conflict	.570	.499***	.527	.461***	.432	.378***	.437	.382***
W1 Age								
Family Income			-.003	-.012	.013	.048	-.012	.045
			-.000	-.247*	-.000	-.230*	-.000	-.190*
Independent								
W1 Problem Solving								
W1 Engagement					-.310	-.116	-.299	-.112
W1 Withdrawal					.013	.006	.012	.006
					.362	.202*	.325	.182*
H1 Engagement								
Change in R <sup>2</sup>				.063		.057	.352	.162 <sup>+</sup>
F				4.65*		3.00*		.024
R <sup>2</sup>	.249			.311		.369		3.86 <sup>+</sup>
F	34.41***			15.38***		9.64***		.393
								9.05***

\*p&lt;.05. \*\*\*p&lt;.001.

<sup>+</sup>p = .052.

Table B.7

## Predicting Change in Husbands' Marital Conflict

Variable	1		2		3		4	
	B	$\beta$	B	B	B	$\beta$	B	$\beta$
Control								
H1 Conflict	.769	.639***	.711	.590***	.644	.535***	.627	.521***
H1 Age			-.022	-.087	-.024	-.093	-.022	-.087
Family Income			-.000	-.210*	-.000	-.144	-.000	-.136
Gender Ideology (GI)			-.062	-.031	-.009	-.005	-.014	-.007
Division Labor (DL)			.497	.184	.409	.152	.417	.155
GI X DL			.079	.195	.089	.222	.089	.219
Independent								
H1 Problem Solving								
H1 Engagement					-.147	-.072	-.150	-.073
H1 Withdrawal					.216	.104	.204	.098
					.296	.184*	.304	.189*
W1 Engagement								
W1 Withdrawal							-.087	-.033
							.059	.034
Change in R <sup>2</sup>				.079		.065		.003
F				2.896*		4.415**		.256
R <sup>2</sup>		.408		.487		.552		.555
F		68.20***		14.87***		12.46***		10.08***

\*\*p&lt;.01. \*\*\*p&lt;.001.

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