

Utah State University

DigitalCommons@USU

All Graduate Theses and Dissertations

Graduate Studies

5-2005

Marital Commitment and Religiosity in a Sample of Adults in Utah

Sharon S. Harris
Utah State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Family, Life Course, and Society Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Harris, Sharon S., "Marital Commitment and Religiosity in a Sample of Adults in Utah" (2005). *All Graduate Theses and Dissertations*. 2851.

<https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/etd/2851>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usu.edu.



MARITAL COMMITMENT AND RELIGIOSITY
IN A SAMPLE OF ADULTS IN UTAH

by

Sharon S. Harris

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Family, Consumer, and Human Development

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

2005

Copyright © Sharon S. Harris 2005

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

Marital Commitment and Religiosity in a Sample of Adults in Utah

by

Sharon S. Harris, Master of Science

Utah State University, 2005

Major Professor: Dr. Scot M. Allgood
Department: Family, Consumer, and Human Development

This study examined the relationship of three types of marital commitment and religiosity factors in a random sample of 1,316 Utah adults. Participants were surveyed to assess attitudes of marriage, divorce, and marriage education. A lack of commitment was cited by 83% of divorced adults as a major factor for their divorce. The level of commitment to spouse, commitment to marriage, and constraint commitment was determined by extrapolating items from the *2003 Utah Marriage Movement Statewide Baseline Survey*. Religiosity included measures of the frequency of church attendance, church affiliation, and religious values. Regression analyses that included socio-demographics showed the strongest and most consistent predictor of commitment to spouse and commitment to marriage was religious values. This study confirms the distinct difference but strong interplay between the three types of marital commitment. There was a negative relationship between both commitment to spouse and commitment to marriage and constraint commitment. Premarital cohabitation was positively related

to constraint commitment but negatively related to commitment to spouse and commitment to marriage. Frequency of church attendance, conservative church affiliation (particularly The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints religion), and religious values were all significant factors related statistically to marital commitment. Study findings suggest that educators and marriage therapists engaged in helping couples can productively focus on marital commitment, the influence of religious activity, and belief systems in strengthening marriage relationships.

(166 pages)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Scot M. Allgood, my major professor, has given encouragement, attention, and valuable time to this thesis project and my academic, professional, and personal goals. He has been generous with his insight, cooperative spirit, and willingness to empower those he works with. Special thanks are extended to Tom Lee and Linda Skogrand who contributed expertise, adaptability, support, and advice as valued committee members.

Thanks go to the Governor's Commission on Marriage and Utah State Extension for supporting this project. It has been an honor to work with staff, faculty, and students in the Family, Consumer, and Human Development Department and particularly those in the Marriage and Family Therapy program. Additionally it has been a privilege to work with Roxane Pfister, for her expertise and assistance with the statistical analysis.

I would not have realized my dream without the support of my family. My husband, Steven, not only encouraged me in this process, but did more than his share of grocery shopping, laundry, and maintenance work. He provided an invaluable sounding board for my quandaries and indispensable technical feedback for my writing and analysis. Also my children, Paul, David, Shawn, Troy, Emily, along with my daughters-in-law, Valerie and Ellen, were a continual source of strength and joy with prodding, advice, and support. Finally, I would not have embarked on this adventure without a conviction that my life has meaning and is most valuable when I strive to find ways to enrich the lives of others.

Sharon S. Harris

CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION	1
Overview	2
Definitions	3
Religious Context	4
Theoretical Framework	5
Interdependence Theory and Marital Commitment	5
Interdependence Theory and Religion	8
The Purpose of this Study	11
II LITERATURE REVIEW	13
Overview	13
Marriage	13
Social Policy and Marriage	15
Marital Commitment	17
The Experience of Marital Commitment	17
The Three Types of Marital Commitment	18
Commitment to Spouse (Dedication)	20
Commitment to Marriage (Moral Obligation)	21
Constraint Commitment (Feeling Trapped)	24
The Importance of Marital Commitment	26
Socio-Demographic Variables	28

	Gender	29
	Education Level	30
	Age First Married	31
	Years in Current Marriage	32
	Premarital Cohabitation	33
	Religiosity	35
	Frequency of Church Attendance	37
	Religious Affiliation	38
	Religious Values	40
	Research Questions	43
III	METHODS	45
	Design	45
	Sample	45
	Procedures	47
	Measures	49
	Data Analysis	53
IV	RESULTS	57
	Socio-Demographic Factors	58
	Gender	58
	Education Level	60
	Age First Married	65
	Years in Current Marriage	66
	Premarital Cohabitation	67
	Religiosity Factors	68
	Frequency of Religious Attendance	69
	Religious Preference	75
	Religious Values	79
	Predictive Model	80
V	DISCUSSION	85
	Introduction	85

Conclusions	85
Socio-Demographic Factors	87
Religiosity	96
Therapeutic Application	98
Limitations and Recommendations	106
Summary	110
REFERENCES	112
APPENDICES	128
Appendix A. Sample Characteristics and Variable Correlation Tables	129
Appendix B. Analysis of Variance Multiple Comparisons Tables	134
Appendix C. Interview Introduction and Instrumentation	143
Appendix D. Confidentiality Agreement and Contact Records	
Disposition Categories	151

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Gender Differences for Commitment to Spouse (Dedication) and Commitment to Marriage (Moral Obligation)	59
2	Descriptive Statistics for Commitment to Spouse (Dedication) by Education Level and Gender	61
3	Descriptive Statistics for Commitment to Marriage (Moral Obligation) by Education Level and Gender	63
4	Constraint Commitment (Feelings of Being Trapped) by Education Level in Percentage	65
5	Means and Standard Deviations for Commitment to Spouse and Commitment to Marriage by Premarital Cohabitation	67
6	Cohabitation Difference by Constraint in Percentage	68
7	Frequency of Religious Attendance and Marital Commitment Scores	69
8	Analysis of Variance of Religious Attendance Frequency and Commitment Scores	70
9	Constraint Commitment by Frequency of Religious Attendance in Percentage	72
10	Religious Attendance Frequency with Years in Current Marriage	72
11	Analysis of Variance for Religious Attendance Frequency with Years in Current Marriage	73
12	Descriptive Statistics for Frequency of Religious Attendance and Religious Values	74
13	Descriptive Statistics for Religious Preference and Commitment Scores	75
14	Constraint Commitment by Religious Preference	77

15	Gender Differences by Religious Preference	77
16	Descriptive Statistics of Religious Preference with Age First Married and Years in Current Marriage	78
17	Summary of Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Commitment to Spouse (Dedication)	81
18	Summary of Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Commitment to Marriage (Moral Obligation)	82
19	Logistic Regression Predicting Constraint Commitment From Cohabitation, Commitment to Marriage, Gender, Education Level, Age at First Marriage, Years in Current Marriage, Commitment to Spouse, and Religious Values . . .	83
A1	Sample Characteristics	130
A2	Intercorrelations of Dependent and Independent Variables	132
B1	Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons of Frequency of Religious Attendance with Commitment to Spouse (Dedication)	135
B2	Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons of Frequency of Religious Attendance with Commitment to Marriage (Moral Obligation)	136
B3	Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons of Frequency of Religious Attendance with Years in Current Marriage	137
B4	Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons of Frequency of Religious Attendance with Religious Values	138
B5	Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons of Religious Preference with Commitment to Spouse (Dedication)	139
B6	Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons of Religious Preference with Commitment to Marriage (Moral Obligation)	140
B7	Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons of Religious Preference with Education Level	141

B8 Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons of Religious Preference
with Years in Current Marriage 142

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1	Commitment to spouse (dedication) by education level and gender 62
2	Commitment to marriage (moral obligation) by education level and gender 64

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Research on marital commitment has primarily focused on individual and dyadic factors that contribute to persistence in a relationship. Fewer studies have addressed the social influence of a regionally predominant religion on commitment. Evidence from empirical studies continues to grow to support the beneficial influence of religion on marital commitment, longevity, stability, and satisfaction (Call & Heaton, 1997; Fenell, 1993; Kaslow & Robinson, 1996; Larson & Goltz, 1989; Mahoney et al., 1999; Mahoney, Pargament, Jewell, & Swank, 2001; Robinson, 1994; Robinson & Blanton, 1993; Schumm, 1985; Shrum, 1980).

Sociologist James Duke (1999) reviewed changes in American religion and marriage with a specific focus on the predominant religion in Utah, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), commonly referred to as Mormons. Duke cited studies showing the unique characteristics of Mormon marriage and social dynamics in the United States: the lowest divorce rate, if couples marry within the church; the least likely to cohabit outside of marriage; the highest percentage of married-couple families; the most politically conservative; and one of the fastest growing religions in the world. These factors present a distinct opportunity to investigate the influence of religion on marital commitment with a large, homogenous population. An overview of this study, definitions, the religious context, the application of interdependence theory to marital commitment, and the purpose of this study will be summarized in this chapter.

Overview

Marriage reflects a social paradox: popular but fragile. It continues to be the most popular, voluntary arrangement, with approximately 90% of adults choosing to marry (Cherlin, 1992; U. S. Census Bureau, 2001b), notwithstanding its frequent dissolution. Although the divorce rate hovers around 50% (Bramlett & Mosher, 2001; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001a), 75% of divorced adults remarry (Norton & Miller, 1992); despite an even higher likelihood of marital distress and divorce than first marriages (Amato & Rogers, 1997; Martin & Bumpass, 1989; Norton & Miller).

When respondents in the *2003 Utah Marriage Movement Statewide Baseline Survey* (Welch & Johnson, 2003) were asked to select a major contributor to their divorce, 83% selected a "lack of commitment" as their top choice. This was consistent with the findings of the Oklahoma marriage study, where 85% of divorced respondents selected "lack of commitment" as the number one factor (Johnson et al., 2002). The 30 percentage point difference between Utah's first and second/third choices indicates a strong endorsement for the importance of commitment in marital stability. Fifty-three percent of respondents in the Utah study indicated the second component contributing to divorce was "too much conflict and arguing" and 52% selected infidelity or extramarital affairs as third choice.

A study of marital commitment offers a look at factors beyond exclusively self-serving goals in marriage. In Western society the centrality of the individual has dominated our social focus with a preponderance of attention to individualistic values in

studies on marriage (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985).

One of the main indicators used in social research for marital quality is a self-perception of marital satisfaction (Fowers, 1998). Advantages of this concentration on the individual in marriage include the encouragement of greater equity for women and freedom to leave abusive relationships (Cherlin, Burton, Hurt, & Purvin, 2003). However, there is also a recognition of the systemic nature of relationships and the intertwining of individual, marital, and familial quality of life with the larger community.

Definitions

The origin of the word commitment comes from the Latin word *committere* meaning join or entrust and "put into *custos*—guardian or protection" (Pearsall, 1999, pp. 353, 287). In other words, to be committed is to join in a relationship of trust with the promise of protecting that relationship. Three dictionary meanings relate to the specific applications of commitment in this study: (a) the "quality of being dedicated," (b) a "pledge or binding," and (c) the "obligation that restricts freedom of action," (Pearsall, p. 353). Brickman (1987) applied these three definitions to delineate the three ingredients involved in commitment: "a positive element, a negative element, and a bond between the two" (p. 7). The positive element is the sense of dedication, satisfaction, or attraction forces in the relationship (Adams & Jones, 1997; Johnson, 1973; Rusbult, 1983). The negative element is the constraining features, barriers, or structural factors that restrict freedom and produce a feeling of being trapped in the relationship to avoid

the problems of leaving (Adams & Jones; Johnson; Rusbult). The bond is a belief in the sanctity of marriage as a social or religious institution that binds one person to another (Adams & Jones; Johnson; Johnson, Caughlin, & Huston, 1999).

Amato (2003) captured these three elements with a definition of marital commitment:

The extent to which people hold long-term perspectives on their marriages, make sacrifices for their relationships, take steps to maintain and strengthen the cohesiveness of their unions, and stay with spouses even when their marriages are not rewarding. Commitment implies an obligation to others—an obligation that can be abandoned only under extreme circumstances. Implicit in the notion of marital obligation is the sense that marriage has value that extends beyond the happiness of the individual spouses (pp. 9-10).

The word "gender" will refer directly to the biological sex of male and female rather than the socially developed schema of gender identification. This preserves the consistency of terminology utilized by the reports that form the foundation of this study (Johnson et al., 2002; Schramm, Marshall, Harris, & George, 2003; Stark, 2002; Welch & Johnson, 2003).

Religious Context

Religiosity has been associated with marital commitment (Call & Heaton, 1997; Hunt & King, 1978; Larson & Goltz, 1989; Lehrer & Chiswick, 1993; Mahoney et al., 1999; Petersen, 1994; Robinson, 1994; Robinson & Blanton, 1993; Wilson & Musick, 1996). According to a national survey of 50,000 American adults, Utah has more people belonging to one religion, 72%, than any other state in the union (Kosmin, Mayer, & Keysar, 2001). Rhode Island is second with 63% reported Catholics, and Mississippi is

third with 33% professing to be Southern Baptist. Wilson and Musick reasoned that when a particular religion is predominant in one area it creates a quasi-ethnic culture and can be studied as a social entity. A study of 290 individuals showed that the perceived approval of one's social network was more predictive of relational stability than potential alternatives, intimacy, or arguing (Felmlee, 2001). The recent effort of the Utah state government to assess factors of marital stability and quality provides an opportunity to look at marital commitment in a culturally unique environment (Johnson et al., 2002; Schramm et al., 2003).

Theoretical Framework

Interdependence Theory and Marital Commitment

Marital commitment is most often grounded in a branch of social exchange theory called interdependence theory (Johnson, 1973; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Rusbult, 1980). Social exchange theory assumes humans make choices based on seeking the most benefits and least costs for themselves (Klein & White, 1996; Sabatelli & Sheehan, 1993). It considers a rational process of calculating rewards, costs, and possible alternatives before acting. In marriage, it is based on a utilitarian reciprocity between partners. In relationships, the ability to obtain benefits is balanced with the ability to reciprocate benefits of equal value (Klein & White; Sabatelli & Sheehan). Of course, individuals often place different values on various rewards.

Interdependence theory expands social exchange theory to include both the "self-

interested goal-seeking on an intrapersonal level and the enhancement of a relationship on an interpersonal level" (Karney & Bradbury, 1995, p. 4). Interdependence refers to the dynamics involved when two people influence each other's outcomes through their interactions. Both partners are dependent on each other and the relationship for desirable benefits. Both have reasons to stay in the relationship such as: feelings of love, friendship, or avoiding the financial and emotional costs of leaving. Both are also influenced by factors that reduce the desire to stay in the relationship, such as decreased satisfaction or the perception of attractive alternatives. The dynamics of the pros and cons of remaining in the relationship becomes an interdependent process (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978).

The interdependence theory assumes that decision-making includes mixed motives depending on the particular situation. It may begin with individual preferences that are dominated by self-interest, but later broaden to include the valued outcomes for their partner or for both (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). The balance between dependence and independence of partners in close relationships is the process of interdependently adjusting each individual's contributions to meet individual and joint needs. Interdependence theory considers a variety of goals and does not differentiate between instrumental and social-emotional needs such as financial support and affection (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). The needs can be individual or relational and satisfied by the actions of either partner or jointly (Kelley & Thibaut).

Rusbult's (1980, 1983) investment model extended the interdependence theory and added the concept that commitment in close relationships is strengthened by three

factors: higher satisfaction based on the a comparison of high rewards and low costs, the perception that there are less desirable alternatives to the relationship available (Bui, Peplau, & Hill, 1996), and a higher quantity and quality of personal investments such as time, possessions, shared memories, and emotional involvement. The longer individuals are in a close relationship the more they have invested in such things as monetary contributions, possessions, self-disclosure, emotional connections, shared memories, shared acquaintances, time, and other resources. The longer partners remain together the more they perceive they will lose if they leave (Rusbult, 1983). Beyond this, evidence indicates that marital commitment is more than the additive effects of satisfaction, alternatives, and investments, and marital commitment accounts for variance in pro-relationship behaviors beyond these three factors (Rusbult; Van Lange et al., 1997).

Marital commitment is manifested through affective, cognitive, and conative (volition) or behavioral components (Arriaga & Agnew, 2001). First, the affective component is the a feeling of attachment or dedication and a reliance on one's partner for personal well-being. This is the emotional dependence has been described as the "glue" or bond that keeps couples together through challenges (Sprecher, 1999). Next, the cognitive component of a committed spouse is the long-term orientation with the expectation and feeling of obligation that the relationship will continue in the future. Last, there is a consistent behavioral motivation to persist in the performance of pro-relational behaviors such as sacrifice and accommodation (Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster, & Agnew, 1999). These three dimensions account for 40% to 80% of the variance in commitment (Rusbult, 1983). These three psychological experiences form a foundation

for the three distinct types of marital commitment in this study.

Interdependence Theory and Religion

The extent to which autonomy or connectedness is valued culturally will make a great deal of difference to how the development of a couple's joint identity and cohesiveness affects outcomes (Bellah et al., 1985). Walsh (1998) described relational cohesiveness as "connectedness" which acts as a "counterbalance of unity, mutual support, and collaboration with separateness and autonomy of the individual" (p. 85). Walsh viewed the family or couple belief system "at the core of all . . . functioning . . . that trigger emotional responses, inform decisions, and guide actions" (p. 45). The belief system directs the choice of behaviors that benefit the individual, the partner, or the relationship the most.

Exchange theory assumes exclusive self-interest. The self-interested impulse to match the negative responses of a partner with negative responses seems predominant in interpersonal relationships (Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991; Yovetich & Rusbult, 1994). Interdependence theory goes beyond exchange theory in explaining the dynamics of marital commitment. The final results of six separate studies conducted by Adams and Jones (1997, p. 1193) indicated "marital satisfaction and exchange orientation are incompatible states" and "excessive concern over the fair distribution of interpersonal resources inhibits both the establishment and growth of close relationships." Interdependence theory establishes commitment as a process that includes a "other" or "mutual" orientation beyond self. Belief systems that strengthen

familial relationships and are promoted by various religions include concepts compatible with this theory (Walsh, 1998). This "other" orientation includes a "Golden Rule" perspective reminiscent of many world religions including: Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism, Taoism, and Zoroastrianism (Rost, 1986).

Clark and Mills (1979) distinguished between the exchange orientation and the communal orientation that is recognized by interdependence theory. Pure exchange relationships are based on reciprocity and the expectation that giving and receiving benefits will be equally balanced. A communal relationship focuses on pro-relational behaviors based on the partner's needs without the expectation of a comparable return. The mind set of a purely exchange orientation found in an individualistic culture implies that if spouses do not meet one another's needs the relationship should be dissolved (Bellah et al., 1985). The communal orientation encourages the practice of relational virtues motivated to preserve the stability and the quality of the relationship (Fowers, 1998). A communal paradigm is promoted by religious doctrine (Bellah et al.; Diamant & Cooper, 1976; Sullivan, 2001; Wall & Miller-McLemore, 2002).

Interdependence theory recognizes pro-relational behaviors that strengthen marital commitment such as sacrifice, accommodation, and forgiveness, demonstrate a positive association with marital commitment through transformation of motivation (Adams & Jones, 1997; Arriaga & Rusbult, 1998; Davis & Rusbult, 2001; Drigotas, Rusbult, & Verette, 1999; Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002; Kapinus & Johnson, 2003; Rusbult, Bissonnette, Arriaga, & Cox, 1998a; Van Lange et al., 1997;

Whitton, Stanley, & Markman, 2002; Worthington, 1998).

This specific process, transformation of motivation, provides an example of the theory's significant departure from the self-interest of exchange theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). Transformation of motivation is defined as the "inclination to set aside immediate self-interest and respond on the basis of broader considerations--such as long-term well-being or well-being of partner" (Drigotas et al., 1999, p. 392). This process can take the form of a conscious redefining of a partner's negative behavior with beneficence to preserve the quality of the relationship (Arriaga & Rusbult, 1998; Finkel et al., 2002).

The connection of a communal orientation and relational virtues facilitates couple communication. Fowers (1998) explained that pro-relational behaviors such as nondefensive listening, empathy, and editing negative interpretations are not value neutral but require the application of relational virtues such as self-restraint, commitment to do one's part, politeness, sincerity, courtesy, and interest in spouse's welfare.

These pro-relational behaviors are promoted in cultural and religious teachings. Religious involvement may constitute a cultural influence that reduces self-interest and promotes pro-relational behaviors (Fowers, 1998). Religion also promotes a more systemic view with an assumption that personal satisfaction is enhanced through couple satisfaction (Fowers; Bellah et al., 1985; Waite & Gallagher, 2000).

Religious belief systems focus on interdependence. Wilson and Musick (1996) recognized the "frequency of [church] attendance interwoven in a complex web of interdependent and reciprocal relationships, making it more difficult for either spouse to

consider himself or herself independent from the other” (p. 32). They also found in their study of 5648 married respondents from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) that active Mormons (LDS) may reflect the combined effect of frequent church attendance and a strongly interdependent theology.

Wall and Miller-McLemore (2002) looked at the institution of marriage and the connection to the larger social connection:

Marriage . . . is a fundamental, necessary component of society. . . Pax Freud, there are more than just six people in the marriage bed (the couple plus each partner’s parents). There are also any children. . . bosses and co-workers, friends and community members who make up the marriage’s web of support, and more indirectly, various representatives of religious institutions and the state (the last becoming particularly evident in the event of divorce). . . . Marriage should be supported with an eye toward the complex networks of social institutions. (p. 274)

Durkheim described religion as a social phenomenon involving prescriptions for how members act and reinforcing social norms within a society (Bellah, 1973). “If religion has given birth to all that is essential in society, it is because the idea of society is the soul of religion” (p. 191). Religion is often “other” oriented promoting the affiliation and alliance of members in the care of each other.

The Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the association between marital commitment and religiosity using data gathered from randomly selected adults in Utah. Socio-demographic variables will also be examined. An exploration of how the interdependence theory is applied to marital commitment will aid in clarifying the gap between previous research in this area and religious paradigms in the Utah population.

Interdependence theory opens the door to a communal orientation so prevalent in religion and includes the process of transformation of motivation to alter the desire for immediate benefit for self and consider the long-term goals that benefit the partner and couple stability and relationship quality (Agnew, Van Lange, Rusbult, & Langston, 1998; Clark & Mills, 1979; Murstein & MacDonald, 1983; Yovetich & Rusbult, 1994).

An examination of the relationship between marital commitment and religion will be gleaned from the recent 2003 Utah marriage survey (Welch & Johnson, 2003). This study will look at frequency of religious attendance, various religious affiliation in Utah, and religious values. Do these religiosity factors make a difference in marital commitment? A search of peer-reviewed articles from Academic Search Premier, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, PsycINFO, ATLA Religion Database, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, and Communication & Mass Media did not disclose a study that looked at marital commitment and the cultural dynamics of a concentrated religious culture that embraces marital commitment with such fervor.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter reviews the recent changes in marriage and the efforts of government to study marital stability and the research on marital commitment. Additionally, it will examine information from applicable studies on the influence of socio-demographic variables including: gender, education level, current age, age when first married, duration of current marriage based on years, and premarital cohabitation. Next, it will examine literature about the elements of religiosity: frequency of church attendance, religious affiliation, and religious values. Finally, the research questions will be introduced.

Marriage

Marriage is a central, human institution with key functions to “establish and organize family identity and caregiving, regulate sexual behavior, support childrearing, channel resources, and situate individuals within families and communities” (Whitehead, 2004, p. 1). It involves economic, emotional, legal, and physical components. Despite these functions, the number of married adults has declined by about 9% between 1970 and 1998 (Jarchow, 2003). Factors related to the overall decline in marriage may include the rising age at first marriage, increased non-marital cohabitation, extended life span, increased unwed birth rates, and increased alternatives (Fields & Casper, 2001;

Heaton, 2002; Pinsoff, 2002; Whitehead & Popenoe, 2003). "The fastest growing marital status category was divorced persons. The number [of] currently divorced adults quadrupled from 4.3 million in 1970 to 17.4 million in 1994" in the United States (Saluter, 1996, p. vi).

Social changes affect marriages. A comparison of two different cohorts revealed that younger married adults showed significantly lower levels of marital interaction and higher levels of marital conflict and problems (Rogers & Amato, 1997). The Rogers & Amato study concluded that this may be related to economic factors, wives' gender role attitudes, and premarital cohabitation.

An abundance of research confirms the benefits of marital stability (General Accounting Office, 1997; Hirschl, Altobelli, & Rank, 2003; Ireland, 2003; Smith & Jarjoura 1988; Stack & Eshleman 1998; Waite, 1995; Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Whitehead & Popenoe, 2003; Wilmoth & Koso, 2002) and the costs of divorce for individuals and society (Amato, 2000; Amato & Booth, 2001; Coombs, 1991; Schramm, 2003; U.S. Department of Justice, 1993). Although many view family relationships as a private matter and express some resentment of outside intervention, family relations are governed by legal restrictions, policies, and procedures.

One alternate point of view for promoting healthy, life-long marriages with an expectation of life-long marriage is the option of flexible pair-bonding that includes the acceptance of divorce, cohabitation, and serial relationships as normal (Pinsof, 2002). Pinsof suggested that this altered view of seeing the institution of marriage in transition has a basis in the feminist emphasis on individual entitlement, fulfillment and higher

expectations of relationships. He also presented a ten-part pair-bonding paradigm for the future which emphasizes individual choice. Debates between embracing new relational pathways (Pinsof) or adhering to traditional marriage (Waite & Gallagher, 2000) still acknowledges the evidence that commitment to marriage provides verifiable benefits.

Social Policy and Marriage

Marriage is being discussed on the national social agenda (Jarchow, 2003). Proponents of efforts to preserve and foster healthy marriages have responded to the evidence showing the benefits of stable marriages. Civic, corporate, educational institutions, and criminal justice systems all have an interest in the benefits of supporting marital health (Doherty & Carroll, 2002). Government efforts to strengthen marriages is somewhat new to policymakers, and there is some controversy between a consideration of many positive outcomes associated with healthy marriages at one end and unhealthy, but stable marriages that include such problems as domestic violence on the other (Jarchow). However, Bogenschneider (2000) predicted that meeting the needs of a market-based economy with increasingly vulnerable social reserves will stimulate policy makers to strengthen marriage and discourage divorce over the next decade.

Despite the new emphasis, government and marriage have been intertwined for years. The 2004 update of the Government Accounting Office (GAO) report on marriage identified over a thousand federal statutes in 13 categories which involve marital status (General Accounting Office, 2004). Family relations are governed by legal restrictions, policies, and procedures. Governments, as guardians of social

resources, continue to seek solid evidence to direct social policy and legislative directives. These are especially obvious with family dissolution and divorce. Divorce, like marriage, is a legal and familial event. It must be sanctioned by law and court to be valid. It is estimated that taxpayers, as stakeholders in policies affecting marriage, pay a substantial cost for divorce due to higher rates of crime, drug abuse, education failure, chronic illness, child abuse, poverty, welfare expenditure, child support, court costs, foster care, and medicaid costs (Schramm, 2003).

Assistant Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services for Children and Families, Wade Horn, clarified the rationale for government's shift from a position of neutrality to an active interest in strengthening committed marriages (Horn, 2004):

[R]esearch literature is now replete with studies showing that children raised in stable, healthy marriages, are less at risk for a host of negative developmental outcomes. . . Research shows that adults in healthy marriages are happier, healthier and accumulate more wealth. . . And communities with high rates of healthy marriages evidence fewer social pathologies, such as crime and welfare dependency. (pp. 1-2)

Additionally, clinicians who seek guidance for best practices and researchers who provide the evidence used to fashion social policy both benefit from research on how to strengthen marriage. Continuing to refine the investigation will delineate what helps most to sustain marriage (Halford, Markman, Stanley, & Kline, 2002).

The 1996 Defense of Marriage Act passed during the Clinton administration permitted states to allocate federal funding sources such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) to strengthen marriage. Utah, in 1998, was the first state in the

union to initiate a commission to study and support healthy marriages as a sound financial investment (Schramm et al., 2003). Using the data from the Utah marriage survey to gain insight into the dynamics of marital commitment will support this objective by providing information about attitudes towards marriage and the impact on mental health, areas needing improvement, and future focus for low-income adults (Schramm et al.). Utah's uniquely conservative culture, with a culturally religious base for supporting strong marriages, may provide insights in the association of marital commitment and religiosity.

Marital Commitment

The Experience of Marital Commitment

Rusbult and Martz (1995) clarified the level of marital commitment as "the degree to which the individual intends to maintain a relationship, feels psychologically attached to it, and sustains a long-term orientation toward it" (p. 559). Marston, Hecht, Manke, McDaniel, and Reeder (1998) proposed that relational commitment has multiple ways of being experienced. Commitment plays an integral role in motivating couples who cope with the inevitable ups and downs of marriage to remain in the marriage. Commitment is based on conscious choice rather than on emotions, which, by their very nature, are transitory. In this study, committed partners reported putting effort and energy into the relationship, no matter how they were feeling. Marital commitment was experienced as the promise of a shared future, a promise to be together, come what may. Partners would take time to attend to their partner, give compliments, and face conflict

when necessary. Committed couples were more tolerant of each other's imperfection, developed more realistic expectations, and employed tension-reducing techniques such as a sense of humor when dealing with differences (Marston et al.).

In summary, marital commitment could be summarized as the purposeful choice to continue an interdependent relationship. It is a dynamic process that involves affective, cognitive, and behavioral components. It also fluctuates according to positive, negative, and binding factors (Adams & Jones, 1997; Arriaga & Agnew, 2001; Johnson et al., 1999; Rusbult, 1980; Stanley & Markman, 1992; Wieselquist et al., 1999).

The Three Types of Marital Commitment

Although commitment, the intention to continue a relationship, is often considered a "global" construct, it clearly separates into three distinct types (Adams & Jones, 1997; Johnson et al., 1999; Kanter, 1968; Rusbult, 1980, 1983). Fehr (1988) used six separate studies asking participants to list as many words as desired to describe concepts of love and commitment. Linguistic coding was followed by an elimination process to identify the words reflecting the most central features (Fehr). This process resulted in a description of commitment that included affective, cognitive, and behavioral components.

The variable labels for this study were selected based on an integrative, six-study analysis of conceptual distinctions between the three types of commitment (Adams & Jones, 1997). These three types of commitment are: (a) commitment to one's spouse based on the desire to remain in the relationship, (b) commitment to marriage related to

social or religious obligations and promises of integrity and responsibility, and (c) constraint commitment based on the feeling of being trapped in a relationship due to the costs and difficulty in dissolving the union (Adams & Jones; Johnson et al., 1999).

Brickman (1987) suggested that commitment is a dynamic psychological process that becomes strengthened in stages. Time may be a factor in these three types of commitment. The initial attraction components of the first stage may fade as negative components of a relationship are recognized and commitment is tested in the second stage (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Finally, this intermediate period of stress can result in a synthesis in the third stage of the positive and negative elements bound together by the sense of meaning or duty (Brickman).

Commitment as a subjective experience reveals a richness and complexity that involves affective, cognitive, and behavioral elements (Arriaga & Agnew, 2001). Arriaga and Agnew (2001) identified the three psychological processes as: (a) an affective psychological attachment to a partner indicated by satisfaction (Rusbult, 1980, 1983); (b) a cognitive, long-term orientation—based on a decision to continue the relationship in the future, the consideration of how one's behavior will affect the relationship, and the disparagement of alternatives (Johnson & Rusbult, 1989); and (c) a conative persistence or intent to behave in a pro-relational manner and to continue investing in the relationship (Rusbult). These emotions, thoughts, and actions can emerge from the desire to continue the relationship, the recognition of barriers in dissolving the marriage, or a moral obligation to persist despite challenges (Adams & Jones, 1997; Johnson et al.).

Johnson and colleagues (1999) employed separate individual interviews to assess measures for each of the three types of commitment with 187 individuals (91 couples and 5 women) and found that "the three experiences are not highly correlated with each other; 87% or more of the variance is unshared" (p. 174). Initially, zero-order correlations were conducted for each measure, then hierarchical regressions were calculated for the three commitment types, followed by factor analysis. Johnson concluded that the three types are distinct, not easily collapsed into a global measure, and there is an indication that they each originate from different sources (Johnson et al.). Adams and Jones (1997) confirmed the construct validity of these elements as functionally related but conceptually unique (p. 1177). These dimensions are also consistent with personal accounts of being in committed relationships and clarify separate processes that contribute to marital stability and quality (Adams & Jones). All three types of marital commitment are evident during good times but constraint is especially evident during difficult times (Johnson et al.). Various studies use different words to designate the three types of commitment.

Commitment to Spouse (Dedication)

The first type of marital commitment is labeled attraction forces (Levinger, 1976), personal (Johnson, 1973), satisfaction (Rusbult, 1980), or dedication (Stanley and Markman, 1992) commitment. This is motivated by the perception of positive endowments in a partner that increases the desire to want to be connected. An individual wants to continue the relationship because of (a) the desire for this relationship as a

personal need, (b) an attraction to and love of the partner, and (c) a mutual identity within the relationship that is satisfying (Kapinus & Johnson, 2003). Also, a relational identity, or the extent to which a relationship is a central part of one's self-concept, has long been a part of individual identity (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954).

The longer couples have been together, the more likely it is they have created a shared meaning and history, developed rituals, self-disclosed personal feelings and events, and gathered material possessions. These relational endowments underscore the central idea of the positive psychology movement that aims to understand and build on strengths (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Couples with strong relational identity or "cognitive interdependence" (Acitelli & Antonucci, 1994) view problems jointly (Bradbury, Finchman, & Beach, 2000), enhance their capacity to resolve problems in a way that promotes long-term, joint benefit (Kelley & Thiabaut, 1978), and view problems jointly with shared responsibility rather than blaming each other. A strong commitment to spouse is least likely to lead to divorce proneness and is often identified as love (Arriaga & Agnew, 1998; Fehr, 1988; Stanley, Markman, & Whitton, 2002).

Commitment to Marriage (Moral Obligation)

Marriage is one of the most ancient human institutions. It predates our available records of social, legal, and religious history. The multi-dimension of marriage as a foundation of society is found in every age and culture with biological, evolutionary, cultural, legal, and religious roots (Burns, 1969; Larson & Goltz, 1989; Wall & Miller-McLemore, 2002). It is mentioned in ancient literary and social works. It is a vital

concept in the "Story of Sinuhe," an Egyptian novel dated in 1960 B.C. (1958 trans.); the Sumerian "Epic of Gilgamesh" (1958 trans.); and one of the first examples of written law, the Code of Hammurabi (1958 trans.). Connecting couples in a bond has been the prevalent union in history to protect human relationships, the propagation of the race, and the unifying of generations. Marriage provides structure and stability that promotes social growth (Whitehead & Popenoe, 2003).

Commitment to marriage as an institution heightens feelings that individuals ought to preserve the marriage as a moral or social obligation (Adams & Jones, 1997). Some assessment instruments include this component with the negative feelings of being trapped in a relationship, but this connection does not capture the positive elements inherent in individual value and belief systems (Stanley & Markman, 1992). Adams and Jones confirmed the conceptual difference in the three types of commitment and assessed convergent and divergent validity by using correlations, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and factor analysis with varimax rotation. They employed six separate studies with 1,787 respondents and found that commitment to spouse, commitment to marriage, and feelings of entrapment are all conceptually distinct.

Commitment to marriage includes a belief in the value of (a) keeping promises and finishing what one starts; (b) sustaining marriage as a socially and morally important institution; (c) sustaining marriage as a sacred responsibility; and, (d) the avoiding divorce as harmful to partners, children, and society (Adams & Jones, 1997; Kapinus & Johnson, 2003; Stanley & Markman, 1992). Commitment to marriage can be based on religious convictions, a belief in the sanctity of marriage, a personal sense of obligation

to honor one's vows and promises, or the perceived immorality of divorce (Johnson, 1973). It assumes the activation of moral virtues such as altruism, perseverance, and sacrifice (Kapinus & Johnson). Fehr (1988) found respondents defined commitment as a sense of obligation, the personality trait of integrity, and the belief that marriage is a vital instrument of society.

Kaslow and Robinson (1996) asked 57 couples who had been married over 25 years and had above average scores on the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976) why they had stayed together during difficult times. The two types of marital commitment were evident in the top five answers. Seventy-six percent selected the belief that marriage should be a lifetime partnership as their first choice (commitment to marriage). A sense of responsibility to their partner was third (commitment to spouse). The fifth choice was the religious conviction in the sanctity of marriage (commitment to marriage).

Weigel and Ballard-Reisch (2002) asked 248 participants what they would choose to do to show their commitment to their partner. A follow-up study of 350 different subjects were asked to complete questionnaires that revealed a consensus in what people believed about commitment and the chosen actions of what they would say and do to show commitment to their partner. The behaviors included: expressing affection, providing support, maintaining integrity, sharing companionship, making efforts to communicate, showing respect, creating a relational future, creating a positive atmosphere, working together on relationship problems, and verbally expressing commitment. The study found the strongest behavioral indicator of relational

satisfaction was expressing commitment or the desire to remain married.

Constraint Commitment (Feeling Trapped)

Levinger (1976) recognized that marital stability is not the same as marital happiness. Marital stability may be strengthened because spouses find their relationship rewarding or they may remain together despite being unhappy because of the reluctance to give up tangible assets such as the family home, feeling responsible for the welfare of children, lack of vocational skills necessary to earn a living, or the loss of connection to the spouse's social network. These factors are considered barriers to leaving or constraint commitment.

The various labels used for this category of marital commitment are: constraints (Levinger, 1976), barriers (Johnson, 1973), costs (Rusbult, 1983), or structural (Stanley & Markman, 1992). The initial attraction to a spouse may fade as negative elements of the relationship are recognized and commitment is tested (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). This involves weighing the potential costs of dissolving the relationship. Costs include the reasons individuals feel that have to stay in the relationship (Adams & Jones, 1997).

The external barriers or constraints would include irretrievable investments and resources (property, possessions, time and money); termination procedures (legal and court costs, complex property division, child custody); the socially undesirable reaction of colleagues, family and friends; a lack of appealing alternatives (replacing the partner, lack of financial support, life style change, or viable job opportunities); and potential distress placed on children (Adams & Jones, 1997; Kapinus & Johnson, 2003; Rusbult,

1980; Stanley & Markman, 1992). Adams and Jones included intrinsic constraints such as: (a) emotional dependence on another, (b) approval seeking, (c) lack of assertiveness, (d) shyness, (e) guilt, and (e) loss of identity as a couple.

Rusbult and Martz (1995) found a high level of constraint commitment in a study of 100 randomly selected women who entered a shelter to escape a battering partner. Ninety-four percent of these women described their partner as dangerous. The reported frequency of abuse averaged once a week with 77% requiring medical attention for abuse-related injuries. Two thirds of the women returned to their abusive spouse within a year. Structured interviews were used within 48 hours of entering the shelter to assess relational commitment, investment factors, relational satisfaction, and the quality of alternatives. Those who returned to battering spouses had more children, less education, and less resources such as personal income. They reported little marital satisfaction and strong indicators of feeling trapped in the relationship.

Individuals are not always aware of this type of commitment until the relationship is challenged (Johnson et al., 1999). When a relationship is less satisfying, partners may shift to consider other reasons for staying in relationship. Amato described this awareness of commitment that "is difficult to disentangle from happiness when people's relationships are progressing smoothly. . . because their relationships are rewarding. It is only when relationships are troubled and spouses are unhappy . . . that commitment comes into sharp focus" (2003, p. 12). Brickman (1987) extended this concept:

Against the stark landscape of pain and suffering, the virtues of commitment can be seen most clearly since the experience of pain represents forcefully a major breakdown in the ability to control reinforcements. If no negative elements or contradictions . . . become salient, we do not think of it as commitment, we think of it as love. (pp.134, 175).

Previti and Amato (2003) conducted an analysis of a 17-year longitudinal study with the final sample consisting of 1,424 married individuals. They found that those who identified only barriers or constraints as factors for "keeping their marriage together" were much more likely to divorce 14 years into the future—indicating the process dissolving a relationship due to barriers can take time in unhappy marriages (Previti & Amato). Therapists recognizing long-term relational risks and injury can help couples during the process of decision making (Johnson & Denton, 2002).

The Importance of Marital Commitment

Commitment has also been addressed more frequently by social scientists during the past 30 to 40 years (Becker, 1960; Johnson, 1973; Kanter, 1968; Levinger, 1976; Rusbult, 1980). Rusbult, Drigotas, and Verette (1994, p. 123) proposed commitment to be "a central macromotive in relationships" and a more salient factor than satisfaction in predicting marital stability.

Adler (1933) proposed:

We only regard those unions as real examples of love and real marriages in which a fixed and unalterable decision has been taken. If men or women contemplate an escape, they do not collect all their powers for the task. In none of the serious and important tasks of life do we arrange such a "getaway." We cannot love and be limited. (p. 79)

Fenell (1993) asked 147 couples who had been married 20 years or more to

complete a survey and select the ten most important factors contributing to their higher than average score on marital satisfaction. All the individuals scored above 100 on the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976). The characteristic chosen as most important was lifetime commitment to marriage. Although Fenell noted that common reasons given by couples for divorce in other studies included a prevalence of specific issues such as money and sex, this study suggests that choosing marital commitment may be based on the fact that it affects how couples deal with the specific issues such as money and sex.

Studies show commitment not only predicts interdependence and marital stability but it increases attitudes and behaviors that maintain a relationship and promote marital quality (Clements & Swensen, 2000; Drigotas et al., 1999; Robinson & Blanton, 1993). Some of these pro-relational behaviors include: persistence (Bui et al., 1996), accommodation (Rusbult et al., 1991), devaluing potential alternatives (Johnson & Rusbult, 1989), forgiveness (Worthington, 1998), and willingness to sacrifice (Van Lange et al., 1997; Whitton et al., 2002). Gottman (1994) contended that conflict is frequently the mechanism for growth in a relationship and that commitment to the spouse or marriage establishes a foundation for healthy resolution of conflict.

Fifteen married couples, who had been together for an average of 40 years, identified commitment as one of the five key characteristics contributing to their happiness and longevity (Robinson & Blanton, 1993). This study interviewed each partner separately and their responses were coded. The other four characteristics that helped them maintain longevity and marital happiness were: intimacy, communication,

congruence, and a shared religious orientation.

Commitment may be the primary factor for marital stability in cases where there are fewer perceived marital rewards and higher losses if the relationship ends (Johnson et al., 1999). Indeed, commitment may contribute to the redevelopment of marital rewards in couples that are dissatisfied but reject divorce as an option. Couples may choose to work together with a therapist, and develop a deeply satisfying relationship. The Utah Marriage Survey reported 93.8% were glad they were still married despite thoughts of divorce (Schramm et al., 2003). Waite and Gallagher (2000) found 86% of unhappily married individuals in the U. S. National Household Survey in 1986-87 rated themselves as happy or very happy five years later, indicating unhappily married people who remain committed for whatever reason have the potential for future happiness. This contrasted with those in the unhappy marriages in 1986-87 who chose to divorce but reported very poor levels of emotional well being in 1992-94.

As we continue the dialogue about the future of marriage we must also continue the analysis of what benefits individuals, children, and the larger community (Whitehead & Popenoe, 2003). Studying the three types of marital commitment with contextual elements will help clarify its primacy in marital stability.

Socio-Demographic Variables

Longitudinal studies suggest that marital distress and dissolution can be predicted from specific variables (Amato & Rogers, 1997; Bumpass, Martin, & Sweet, 1991). The five socio-demographic factors in this study include: gender, education level, age when

first married, duration of current marriage in years, and premarital cohabitation. These five variables have been shown to have predictive force on the construct of marital commitment (Adams & Jones, 1997; Amato & Rogers; Amato, Johnson, Booth, & Rogers, 2003; Bumpass et al.; Stanley & Markman, 1992; Stanley et al., 2002).

Gender

Gender as used in this present study refers to male and female as a biological sex difference. Amato and Rogers (1997) in a four-wave panel study interviewed 1,592 randomly selected couples to assess marital problems which predicted divorce 12 years later. Although women reported more marital problems than husbands, both genders were equally aware of problems the husbands caused. The husbands, in fact, reported more problems they created than their wives reported. Extramarital affairs were the most powerful predictor of divorce.

Johnson and colleagues (1999) found husband's commitment to marriage (moral obligation) was most highly correlated with consistency values while wife's commitment to marriage (moral obligation) was moderately related to constraints, quality of alternatives, and social pressure. Arriaga and Rusbult (1998) conducted four studies with 53 couples and 408 individuals who were currently involved with a partner. Their purpose was to assess two pro-relational behaviors associated with commitment: the individual capacity to empathize with their partner's perspective and the disposition to accommodate rather than retaliate when their partner disappointed them. They studied this through experimental dilemmas. They performed multiple regressions to

assess gender discrepancies and found no significant gender differences

Several studies showed men and women were not different in perceptions of global commitment to their marriage (Le & Agnew, 2003; Stanley et al., 2002). However, one difference was if the husband was willing to sacrifice without resentment (a pro-relational behavior). This was strongly related to the males long-term view and identity as part of a couple relationship (Whitton et al., 2002). Men who marry show greater willingness to invest and sacrifice than those who are unmarried. Matthija (1999) found gender differences supporting constraint commitment. Women were more likely to leave a bad marriage if they had a higher level of education and worked after the birth of their first child (Matthija). This same study showed women reporting higher marital satisfaction if their husbands were strongly involved with their children.

Some suggestions of cultural changes that influence marital instability are: women contributing more to the family income, more equitable decision-making, and less traditional views of marriage (Rogers, 2004). Pasley, Kerpelman, and Guilbert (2001) found conflict, negative interaction styles, distancing behaviors, and issues about gender roles or expectations all related to increased marital instability. This study confirmed gender differences related to education level and income level.

Education Level

Overall, an increased education level is associated with increased marital quality, more income, better communication skills and productive problem solving (Amato et al., 2003; Bumpass et al., 1991). Women with less than high school education show higher

rates of divorce than high school graduates or college graduates. Although some studies indicate that an increased education level for women may be a negative factor in marital stability (Heaton, 2002). Women with higher earning capacity and a broader perspective about relationships may be less constrained to stay in an unhappy relationship (Heaton; Matthija, 1999; Rogers, 2004). An increased level of education in a younger cohort offset marital problems by 10% (Rogers & Amato, 1997). Although it may seem that a highly religious sample would be less inclined to pursue educational goals (Albrecht & Heaton, 1984), the Mormon culture differs in its encouragement of education. A study (Merrill, Lyon, & Jensen, 2003) updating the results found by Albrecht and Heaton found a positive association between religiosity and educational attainment among Mormons. Merrill et al. analyzed data from two Utah cross-sectional random surveys with 766 subjects. Utah Mormons who attend church weekly were twice as likely to graduate from college as non-Mormons while controlling for factors such as age, gender, race, marital status, and income.

Age First Married

Commitment, the intention to continue a relationship, is often measured as marital stability vs. divorce (Amato, 2003; Booth, Johnson, & Edwards, 1983; Kapinus & Johnson, 2003; Stanley & Markman, 1992). Age when first married is the most consistently studied factor associated with marital instability or lack of marital commitment (Amato & Rogers, 1997; Heaton, Albrecht, & Martin, 1985). In this study, the age at first marriage, the age in years when a person becomes married for the first

time, ranged from 13 to 48 years old (Welch & Johnson, 2003).

A four-wave panel study indicated a younger age at first marriage is associated with infidelity, jealousy, and other problems leading to divorce. In fact, each year marriage is postponed resulted in a decline in jealousy, substance abuse, and a 21% decrease in problems created from infidelity (Amato & Rogers, 1997). And, although age at first marriage is associated with increased dissolution, it is especially predictive before age 21 (Bumpass et al., 1991). A younger age when first married is also associated with belief in difficulty to maintain a happy, stable relationship (Amato et al., 2003).

Years in Current Marriage

The number of years in a current marriage for the present sample ranged from less than 1 year to 67 years (Welch & Johnson, 2003). Rogers and Amato (1997) found that after controlling for generational cohorts for first marriages and attrition differences, the younger cohorts with fewer years together continue to have less marital stability. Call and Heaton (1997) analyzed data on 4,587 married couples from the National Survey of Families and Households and found marital duration was associated with increased marital stability.

Rusbult's Investment Model (1980) defined investment as the extent respondents "put things into their relationship" (p. 182). These include time spent together, children, material possessions, emotional investments, self-disclosures, mutual friends, and activities associated with a partner. Investments that increase each year of

marriage are a primary factor in relational commitment (Bui et al., 1996; Rusbult, 1980; 1983; Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998b).

Heaton and Albrecht (1991) studied stable but unhappy marriages. Their sample consisted of 13,017 respondents from the National Survey of Families and Households. They found the length of marriage was correlated with a increased belief that marriage is a lifetime commitment (commitment to marriage) and increased constraint commitment or a perceived loss of benefits (standard of living, social life, career opportunities, happiness, sex life, and responsibility for children).

Huber and Spitze (1980) found the longer couples remained married the greater their perception of investing in their relationship. This included external and internal investments such as shared experiences and tangible resources. Adams and Jones (1997) found that feelings of entrapment or constraint commitment seems to be intensified by the length of relationship. Age was not considered as a variable for this study because age and years married are highly collinear (Heaton & Albrecht, 1991).

Premarital Cohabitation

Over half of all first marriages are now preceded by living together compared to virtually none 50 years ago (DeMaris & MacDonald, 1993; Smock, 2000). Cohabitation is a prelude to marriage for some, an alternative for living alone for others, and more common in populations with lower education and lower income (Cohan & Klienbaum, 2002; Whitehead & Popenoe, 2003). Forty-percent of cohabiting households also include children. Presently there is a wide spread belief among young people that

cohabitation is a way to find out whether you really get along (Amato et al., 2003). A substantial body of evidence suggests that those who live together before marriage are more likely to break up (Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Heaton, 2002).

Bramlett and Mosher (2002) reported that in 1995 a higher percentage of women aged 15 to 24 had cohabited than married without cohabiting. The national average of cohabiting women aged 15 to 24 was indicated by a ratio of wives to unmarried partners. This was 2.0 in the year 2000. Kreider and Simmons (2003) reported that Utah recorded the highest ratio of non-cohabiting women in this age group with more than 7 times as many wives as partners; thus showing the least likelihood of cohabitation. Utah also had the highest proportion of people aged 15 to 24 who were married (Kreider & Simmons).

An explanation for why cohabitators are more likely to get divorced than noncohabitators remains to be determined. Some (Amato et al., 2003; Cohan & Klienbaum, 2002; Pinsof, 2002; Teachman, 2003) suggest three possible explanations: maybe they are in a more advanced stage of the relationship when they marry, cohabitators may have more risk factors for divorce, and cohabitators indicate less religious participation and more individualistic, autonomous, and independent attitudes. These factors and others indicate that those who cohabit before marriage may have basic differences from those who do not, and it may be these differences, and not the experience of cohabitation that leads to eventual divorce (Cohan & Klienbaum).

There are indicators that cohabitators have reduced marital maintenance skills such as poorer communication skills, increased levels of negative interaction, lower relationship satisfaction, greater risk for violent interaction, and lower levels of

interpersonal commitment to partners (Cohan & Kleinbaum, 2002; Stanley, Whitton, & Markman, 2004). In 16 out of 17 nations, Stack and Eshleman (1998) found being married accounted for almost three and one-half times more variance in relational happiness than cohabitation. Rogers and Amato (1997) found premarital cohabitation increased marital problems by 15% in younger cohorts.

Religiosity

Schumm (1985) asserted that religious orientation is the "prime motivation" force of marital commitment. Larson and Goltz (1989) studied the connection of religiosity and marital commitment. They concluded that "commitment may indeed be the senior variable in the evolution of a strong marriage, from one that is merely stable to one that is becoming more enriching" (p. 397). Religiosity has been a consistent predictor of long-term marriages (Kaslow & Robinson, 1996; Robinson, 1994; Robinson & Blanton, 1993). It has been an identified predictor of marital commitment, reduced marital problems, marital quality, increased expression of love and dyadic adjustment (Clements & Swensen, 2000). Walsh (1998) suggested that the idea of religion or spirituality has been somewhat neglected by the mental health field who may not have considered these topics appropriate for secular or scientific inquiry.

Utah's predominant religion, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), other religions, and the conservative political atmosphere influence attitudes about marriage. *The 2003 Utah Marriage Movement Statewide Baseline Survey* reported 71% of respondents identified themselves as LDS, 6.3% Protestant, and 3.5% Catholic

(Welch & Johnson, 2003).

Catholics believe that marriage is a sacrament and “links the most personal and intimate natural tendencies of individuals—for sex, love, and companionship—to the sacred goods intended by [God]” (Wall & Miller-McLemore, 2002, p. 269). Jews and Catholics see marriage as a connection to God and society, with the expectation that marriage should be supported by government and other social institutions (Diamant & Cooper, 1976; U. S. Catholic Church, 2003). Various Protestant religions also believe in the importance of marriage as an institution (Bockelman, 2001; Baptist General Conference Resolution on Marriage and the Family, 2004).

Lehrer and Chiswick (1993) noted homogamous, Mormon (LDS) marriages were the most stable of any religious group. This was consistent with the strong LDS belief system. “Mormonism is not simply concerned with the family, as so many other groups; the Mormon religion . . . is *about* the family” (p. 395). The presiding leadership of the LDS church reemphasized this belief in the family and marriage, “We . . . solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children” (Hinkley, 1995). A strong religious influence becomes part of the social milieu.

Several studies noted a gender difference associated with religiosity. Nelson (2003) surveyed 484 young adult Mormons with a 143-item questionnaire assessing demographics, family background, religious background, risky behaviors, and religious practices. Although there were many similarities, there were clear differences in religious rites of passage for men and women. Stark (2002) explored the gender

differences for religious expression with socialization and physiological factors. Mahoney et al. (1999) studied religious constructs in marital functioning and notes differences in how men and women express religiosity. For instance, wives reported an average of praying twice a week while husbands reported praying about twice a month.

For the purposes of this study the concept of religiosity will include: frequency of church attendance, religious affiliation, and religious values. The reasoning for the inclusion of each of these factors will be discussed individually.

Frequency of Church Attendance

Sociologist Emile Durkheim (Bellah, 1973) proposed that religious value systems are best achieved through meeting together with other believers to reaffirm shared sentiments. Cornwall's (1989) study found that religious belief and behavior were strongly influenced by an individual's connection to other group members. In Utah, 70% of those who identify themselves as Mormons and 56% of those in all denominations attend church weekly (Merrill et al., 2003). This compares to 40% weekly attendance at a church or synagogue of all denominations nation wide (U. S. Census Bureau, 2001b).

Mahoney and colleagues (2001) reviewed 94 studies on religiosity and marital/parental functioning. Studies evaluating church attendance were associated with lower divorce rates and this link remained consistent when demographic variables typically associated with divorce were controlled. There was a confirmed link between individual religiosity and greater marital commitment in ten studies (Mahoney et al.).

Wilson and Musick (1996) and Larson and Goltz (1989) both concluded that church attendance was associated with greater marital commitment even after accounting for demographic variables and marital satisfaction. Call and Heaton (1997), using national data from 4,587 individuals, found frequency of religious service attendance had the greatest impact on marital stability. This is particularly true if both partners attend with similar frequency. Attendance at church can also provide social support, a connection with the community, and assistance with an unexpected crisis for families (Mahoney et al., 2001).

In a longitudinal study of 1,592 randomly selected couples, Amato and Rogers (1997) reported marital problems identified by respondents in 1980 predicted divorce up to 12 years in the future. These marital problems included: infidelity, spending money foolishly, substance abuse, jealousy, moodiness, and irritating habits. Frequency of church attendance was negatively associated with all six problems, thus reinforcing the association of religiosity and marital stability (Amato & Rogers).

Religious Affiliation

Johnson's (1973) work on the three types of commitment drew on Kanter's (1968) analysis of commitment mechanisms. Kanter determined that social organizations were most successful in promoting commitment when it required members to sacrifice and invest. Attachment to the group included music and a sense of unique powers others did not have. These are features that strengthen a sense of belonging in many religions, including the LDS church (*True to the Faith*, 2004), the Catholic church

(U. S. Catholic Church, 2003), and the Lutheran church (Bockleman, 2001).

The Utah culture seems uniquely appropriate to study the association of marital commitment and religiosity. Seventy-two percent of respondents indicated their religious preference was the LDS church with another 12.7% selecting other religions (Schramm et al., 2003). Respondents in this data set who agreed that their outlook on life was based on their religion was 81.5% (Welch & Johnson, 2003).

Other religions strongly support marriage as an institution. One branch of Lutherans believe that marriage is a lifelong covenant where two persons become "one flesh" for the purpose of companionship, sexual exclusivity, and procreation (Bockelman, 2001). Wall and Miller-McLemore (2002) studied various religious responses to marriage and found Protestants showed two general views. First, conservative Protestants believe in a marriage based on a covenant with God that does not support heavy government involvement in marital matters. Second, the more liberal Protestants believe in possible alternatives to traditional marriage and the acceptance of government intervention as a type of "surrogate" family. Catholics accept government protection and material support of marriage and families (Wall & Miller-McLemore). Catholics and Jews see marriage as a sacred connection to God and society (Diamant & Cooper, 1976; U. S. Catholic Church, 2003). Marriage and the formation of a family are seen as inseparable elements of Jewish responsibility. Judaism requires a couple to sign a contract (ketubah) that includes their marriage as a means of preserving the identity of Israel as a people (Diamant & Cooper). Catholics believe marriage is a sacrament between God and man (Wall & Miller-McLemore).

Religious affiliation seems to have a reciprocal effect on the partner's attitude toward marriage, including the recognition of dependence on each other for social factors (Wilson & Musick, 1996). Two studies (Amato & Rogers, 1997; Larson & Goltz, 1989) suggested faith may internalize behavioral norms taught in a religious community that are consistent with marital commitment. Thornton and Camburn (1989) also suggested that the religious instructions of various church denominations are a major source of behavioral expectations regarding marriage and divorce. Heaton and Pratt (1990) confirmed this finding, suggesting that the influence of a particular church affiliation goes beyond religious observance to a supportive social network promoting specific views that strengthen marital stability.

Religious Values

A study of 64 couples assessed religiosity, marital satisfaction, and marital adjustment (Hunt & King, 1978). Seventeen religious and cognitive style variables were correlated. Pro-relational values were associated with pro-religious values. The authors concluded that commitment to religious values was positively related to the commitment to work on a more positive marital adjustment. The study stated, "In one sense it is possible to consider the marriage system as a real life, long-range laboratory in which to apply and test out beliefs and behaviors that are described in a religious system as desirable or worthwhile" (Hunt & King, p. 405).

Larson and Goltz (1999) asked 179 randomly selected married couples about the influence of religiosity on marital commitment. Church attendance and religious

affiliation were assessed. They found activity in a chosen religion and the duration of their marriage was associated with a greater commitment to their marriage. They concluded a commitment to marriage probably increased relative to their experience being married and their involvement in religion. Their commitment to marriage, based on the sense of moral obligation fostered by a religious belief system, was an "individual and relational source of making a good [or even weak] marriage better" (Larson & Goltz, p. 397).

A 1999 study of 97 couples (Mahoney et al.) found that couples who viewed their marriage as reflecting sacred qualities such as spiritual, holy, and blessed were more inclined to forgive each other, dismiss minor conflicts, avoid hostile responses such as verbal aggression and stonewalling, and resolve problems more effectively. Measures for religiosity in the study by Mahoney and colleagues not only included frequency of church attendance and religious homogamy; but the frequency of prayer, self-rating for religiousness and spirituality, perceived sanctity of marriage, and the degree that they believed God was a part of their marriage.

Participation in a denomination that views marriage as "sacred" correlated with increased marital commitment, marital satisfaction, and decreased marital conflict (Mahoney et al., 2001). This perception of marriage as sacred was associated with the motivation to invest, build, and sustain marriage during tough times because individuals attached marriage goals to higher order, religious (transcendent) meanings.

Walsh (1998) maintained that "[t]ranscendent beliefs offer clarity about our lives and solace in distress; they render unexpected events less threatening and enable

acceptance of situations that cannot be changed” (pp. 68-69). Couples may function best when they feel connected to larger systems. These expanding belief systems are often rooted in many religions and become significant factors in couple/family resilience, as it “involves an active investment in internal values that bring a sense of meaning, inner wholeness, and connection with others” (Walsh, p. 70).

Mahoney and colleagues (2001) differentiated between various elements of religiosity. Some serve psychological or social purposes, others refer to the actual beliefs linked to particular religion. The psychological benefit of religion offers a cognitive and emotional framework to deal with difficulties. The evidence from the meta-analysis on religion (Mahoney et al.) suggests that religion may facilitate positive couple/family interactions by “advocating cognitions and behaviors that are likely to facilitate marital functioning” (p. 586).

Religious commitment to marriage is a primary predictor of marital quality and stability, and may function to promote the development of behaviors associated with marital quality (Robinson & Blanton, 1993). Activity in religion may provide guidelines and cultural promotion for pro- marriage maintenance behaviors (Amato & Rogers, 1997; Wilson & Musick, 1996). Fowers (1998) suggested that religiosity plays a part in values and character development that is conducive to marital quality and stability. Wilson and Musick found in a national data set that religion impacted individual’s belief that their life could be worse if their marriage ended.

Religiosity in the Utah culture relates to commitment (moral obligation) and both private and public responsibility (Wall & Miller-McLemore, 2002). Carroll,

Linford, Holman, and Busby (2000) found that "highly religious" LDS young adults had significantly more marriage oriented values than highly religious young adults from other denominations.

Wall and Miller-McLemore (2002) reviewed three religious models of marriage: the Catholic subsidiary theory, the Protestant covenant, and the liberation theology of social goods, covenants, and mutual responsibility. The religious view of marriage is not considered just a union between two spouses but a tripartite with God including accountability to each other, deity, and society. They found that when a religion considers marriage as a covenant it is not considered a constraint from personal fulfillment but a dedication to long-term reciprocal satisfaction. It becomes a private and public responsibility (Mahoney et al., 2001; Wall & Miller-McLemore). So far, in a study of states employing covenant marriages (Hawkins, Wardle, & Coolidge, 2002), respondents did not indicate anticipated problems of social regressiveness or divisiveness among socio-demographic groups.

The effort to promote healthy, stable marriages and reduce the cost of dissolution for private and public entities in Utah (Schramm, 2003) will be facilitated by an understanding of the relationship between the three types of marital commitment and an individual's religious activity in a predominately religious environment. This study will look at factors related to marital commitment and religiosity to further that understanding. Three basic research questions will be addressed in this study. These questions are outlined below.

Research Questions

1. How are socio-demographic characteristics (gender, education level, age when first married, years in current marriage, and previous cohabitation experience) associated with marital commitment and religiosity?
2. Is there an association between marital commitment and religiosity?
3. Can variables be identified as predictive of each of the three types of marital commitment: commitment to spouse (dedication), commitment to marriage (moral obligation), and constraint commitment (feeling trapped)?

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This study utilized the data from the *2003 Utah Marriage Statewide Baseline Survey* which was conducted to measure the attitudes of Utah adults towards marriage, divorce, and marriage education; and collect information about their relationship history and other demographic data (Welch & Johnson, 2003). Selected survey items was used to determine the association and interaction of variables on marital commitment.

Design

A cross-sectional, correlational design was used for this study to assess the differences in commitment to spouse, commitment to the institution of marriage, and constraint commitment (feeling entrapped). This present study is based on socio-demographic characteristics and religiosity of the adult respondents in Utah. This study focused on looking at a representative section of the Utah adult population that varies demographically, socially, and religiously at a single point in time. A cross-sectional design was chosen with the assumption that the differences in marital commitment have resulted with current characteristic differences and not how those characteristics vary over time (Dooley, 2001).

Sample

The population for this study included a total of 1,316 Utah adults. Ages ranged

from 18 to 99 years. For age, the sample proportions do not differ by more than 2% from the 2000 U. S. Census (U. S. Census Bureau, 2001b) except for the 18- to 19-year-old individuals who were somewhat underrepresented by 4%.

The homogenous sample was predominantly white (91%), Mormon (71.2%), with 64.5% reporting education beyond high school (Welch & Johnson, 2003). Participants reported 59% currently married, 4% widowed, 8% divorced, 1.0% separated, and 28% never married. Eight-six individuals or 6% of all unmarried adults reported cohabiting with a romantic partner. According to this study 16% of currently married respondents had lived together before marriage compared with 53% nationally. A more detailed breakdown of sample characteristics is included in the appendix (see Table A1 in Appendix A).

One way this sample did not mirror the general Utah adult population was gender. Males were under-sampled in this distribution of participants with only 30% of the respondents being male. Systematic random sampling seeks to give each potential respondent an equal opportunity to be included in the survey. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) weights the data from respondents according to the odds with which male respondents answers were included in the data in order to give the appropriate weight for male responses. This problem was addressed giving a weight of 1.71 for males and 0.706 for females to reflect the actual Utah population distribution of approximately 50% male and 50% female and allow appropriate data analyses and generalizability (Dooley, 2001; U. S. Census Bureau, 2001b; Welch & Johnson, 2003).

Procedures

There were two sources for the sample of 1,316 adults. The majority (1,186) were randomly selected respondents from Utah households employing random digit dialing (RDD) methodology. Computer software was utilized to select a sample from residential telephone numbers. Business and disconnected numbers were not included. Random telephone numbers were selected systematically giving each respondent an equal probability of being included in the survey.

The second portion of the sample consisted of an additional 130 individuals randomly selected from the 900 current Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) clients listed on the Utah Department of Workforce Services data file. They served as an over-sample to represent low-income households in Utah. Three quota areas were established to facilitate an effort to represent the people of Utah's actual urban and rural populations. These consisted of (1) Utah County, (2) Davis, Salt Lake, and Weber Counties, and (3) the remaining 25 counties.

The random selection procedures insured that each household in the state had an equal chance to be included in the survey (Welch & Johnson, 2003). The response rate for the general populace survey and TANF group was 30% and 85.5%, respectively. The lower response rate for the general populace was accounted for by several factors. A total of 1,402 respondents could not be reached despite six attempts. An additional 2,761 phone numbers were either not residential numbers or not currently working. A group of 170 individuals was unable to complete the survey due to either language or

physical difficulties, and 319 refused to participate. Of those who were available 51% cooperated in completing the survey. The high response rate for the TANF group may be due to the \$15.00 they received for completing the survey (see Appendix D for disposition).

Results for the Utah Study were based on telephone interviews conducted by the Bureau for Social Research at Oklahoma State University utilizing students at Oklahoma State University. The interview content and procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board of Utah State University and Oklahoma State University with the informed consent of the participant and a signed confidentiality agreement by the interviewer. Training included explicit direction concerning confidentiality (see Appendix D), survey technique instruction, a manual, coaching on the Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) software, a written test assessing competency, instruction on policy and protocol, and finally, practice with the actual instruments for oral competency. Interviewers introduced themselves as calling from the Bureau of Social Research (Welch & Johnson, 2003). Interviewers were supervised during data collection, and specific procedures were utilized for skipping irrelevant questions and indicating "I don't know" or the option of refusing to answer. All open-ended responses to questions such as, "what is your religious preference?" were typed verbatim by the interviewer into a computer text box (Welch & Johnson).

These interviews were collected between February and April 2003. The data collection technology used in the study was the Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) software (Welch & Johnson, 2003). An assessment of the total

sample resulted in 95% confidence interval and error due to sampling or other effects is plus or minus 2.67 percentage points (Schramm et al., 2003).

The survey questions replicated the *2001 Oklahoma Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce* (Welch & Johnson, 2003). Seven general topics were included with an explanation of the content and design is reported (Schramm et al., 2003). Questions chosen for this study were selected based on the application of interdependence theory to delineate marital commitment, those specific to associated socio-demographics, and the three chosen religiosity factors.

Measures

The selected survey questions used in this study are included in Appendix C. The socio-demographic variables include: gender, education level, age when first married, years in current marriage, and premarital cohabitation. Age when first married and years in current marriage are interval/ratio variables by years. In the survey (Welch & Johnson, 2003) the responses for age first married ranged from age 13 years to 48 years, and years in current marriage ranged from less than one to 67 years. Education level was assessed by asking what was the highest level earned and separated into six groups: less than high school, high school graduation, some college, completion of trade or vocational training, college graduation, and post-college degrees. Gender was recorded from 1 = male, 2 = female to 1 = male, 0 = female to allow more efficient statistical analysis. Cohabitation history was coded 1 = yes, cohabited and 0 = never cohabited. Premarital cohabitation rates were 1,066 never and 250 yes. The premarital

cohabitation variable was defined as "if the respondent has ever cohabited" (Welch & Johnson). For this study the basic concept of religiosity involved three different factors. These include: frequency of religious attendance, religious affiliation, and religious values. They were each assessed separately as different manifestations of religiosity.

Frequency of religious activity was assessed with the question, "How often do you attend religious services?" Options for self-report response included a four-point Likert scale ranging from never or almost never; occasionally, but less than once per month; one to three times per month; or one or more times per week.

Religious affiliation options in the survey were 1 = Other (Catholic and Jewish); 2 = LDS; 3 = Protestant; and 4 = None. Jews and Catholics were grouped together to represent the historically traditional Judeo-Christian belief based on the writings of Moses that marriage is required to meet God's first commandment to develop a union between a man and a woman to cleave together as companions and procreate (Diamant & Cooper, 1976; U. S. Catholic Church, 2003). These categories were chosen to reflect the denominational representation for Utah (Merrill et al., 2003; U. S. Census Bureau, 2001b).

Religious values, the third factor assessed in religiosity, was assessed with four items (Schramm et al., 2003). The items were drawn from other studies of religiosity (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989; Mahoney et al., 1999; Stanley & Markman, 1992). Mahoney and colleagues used religious values to consider the function of religion in couples. The reliability for this sample using these four items was $\alpha = .79$. This measure includes such items as "My outlook on life is based on my religion." The

appendix contains a complete list of survey questions used in this present study. The response format again used a Likert scale ranging from strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, to strongly disagree. Two items were reverse coded to maintain consistency. The higher score indicates a higher level of religiosity.

Marital commitment was divided into the three identified types: commitment to spouse (dedication), commitment to marriage (moral obligation), and constraint commitment (feeling trapped). Six of the eight items were reverse coded so higher scores would indicate a higher level of commitment.

A measurement for commitment to spouse (dedication) included three items such as, "I like to think of my spouse/partner and me more in terms of "us" and "we" than "me" and "him/her"." Agnew and colleagues (1998) focused on couple identity as an indicator of dedication. Other chosen items focus on the salience of the relationship and projected future together (Adams & Jones, 1997; Johnson et al., 1999; Stanley & Markman, 1992; Welch & Johnson, 2003). Response options were based on a Likert scale ranging from strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, to strongly disagree. Two of the items required reverse coding so a higher score would indicate more commitment. The reliability for this construct was $\alpha = .80$. These questions came from specific subscales to measure dedication commitment (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989; Johnson et al., 2002; Stanley & Markman; Stanley et al., 2002).

Commitment to marriage or moral obligation was based on the attitudes about marital stability from Stanley and Markman's commitment survey (1992). Five items fit this construct including, "Sure divorce is bad, but a lousy marriage is even worse"

(Welch & Johnson, 2003). A Likert scale ranged from strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, to strongly disagree. Three of the items required reversed coding so a higher score would indicate more commitment. The moral and social obligation to marriage included attitudes towards divorce and responsibility for children (Adams & Jones, 1997; Johnson et al., 1999). The reliability for this construct was $\alpha = .73$ for this sample.

Constraint commitment (feeling trapped) was assessed with a question generalizing this construct "I feel trapped in this marriage/relationship, but I stay because I have too much to lose if I leave." Again, a Likert scale with values ranging from strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, to strongly disagree assessed this construct. This item was also reverse coded to indicate a higher score for greater constraint commitment. This variable will be collapsed into two categories: 1 = agreement or neutrality and 2 = disagree. Either respondents may not feel constrained or they do feel constrained. This item was consistent with the research that suggested this construct does not become apparent until difficulty arises in a relationship (Adams & Jones, 1997; Johnson et al., 1999; Levinger, 1976; Previti & Amato, 2003; Rusbult & Martz, 1995). Constraint commitment reflected specific, external barriers to leaving a relationship (Johnson, 1973). Since these barriers are often situational, specific to individuals, and not highly correlated with each other (i.e., termination procedures, dependent children, shared experiences, and a vast array of emotional and tangible investments), it would be difficult to capture all possibilities in a multitude of survey questions without leaving out an element for specific individuals (Adams & Jones;

Johnson et al.). Previti and Amato chose to assess this type of commitment with an open-ended format asking respondents about obstacles to leaving a relationship (2003). The overall concept of feeling trapped in a relationship because of various constraints might lose meaning for some participants if a specific response was forced. Thus a broad question that does not limit the application seems appropriate to the assessment of this construct (Thorndike & Dinnel, 2001).

Data Analysis

To answer the three research questions of this study, data analysis was completed through the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 12.0) computer program. Type I errors were controlled by specifying an alpha level set at .05 a priori as in the original data set. This level maintained a conventional 95% degree level of confidence (Dooley, 2001). Research questions focused on differences and associations were addressed.

The dependent variables for this study included commitment to spouse (dedication), commitment to marriage (moral or social obligation), and constraint commitment (feeling trapped). The independent variables included both socio-demographic factors and religiosity factors. The socio-demographic factors were: gender, education level, age at first marriage, duration of the current marriage, and cohabitation. The factors for religiosity included frequency of religious participation, religious affiliation preference, and religious values. Inter-item reliability for multiple item constructs was measured using Cronbach alpha for each scale and are described

previously in the measurement section.

Variables for age first married and years in current marriage were assessed in years as interval/ratio variables. Gender and religious affiliation were nominal variables with proxy or dummy variables applied for analysis. Other variables used are considered ordinal. The variables constraint commitment (feeling trapped) and cohabitation are categorical and dichotomous variables. They required the use of a non-parametric, chi-square analysis when evaluating the association with other variables because the analysis does not rely on estimations of the population or precise distributional assumptions.

Correlations assume that scores are linear, similarly shaped distributions for a randomly selected sample, and there is homogeneity of variance (Thorndike & Dinnel, 2001). Transformation strategies were applied to accommodate nonlinear relationships. A correlation matrix was generated to assess multicollinearity and determine if multiple regression analysis was appropriate using all or a subset of the independent variables (Myers, 1990). Frequencies for all variables were completed (Welch & Johnson, 2003). A general linear model underlies the statistical analyses used in this study to consider a set of interdependent variables and the three dependent variables (Dooley, 2001).

A dummy or proxy variable is used in statistical analysis to identify subgroups of the sample in a study. They are often used for dichotomous variables. When there are only two choices the dummy variable can be 1 or 0, and acts like a switch that turns various parameters on or off in a statistical equation, such as the gender variable previously described. Three study variables; gender, constraint, and cohabitation were dichotomous and used this method (Thorndike & Dinnel, 2001). The advantage of using

dummy or proxy variables is that a categorical or nominal variable can be treated statistically like an interval level variable (Thorndike & Dinnel). Using a dummy variable allows us to see the difference between various groups by conducting a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). We can compute the difference between groups based on the identifying proxy number chosen to represent each group.

The education level variable was also assigned numbers to identify each separate group (less than high school, high school graduation, some college, trade or technical school degree, college degree, or post-graduate achievement). These numbers only identify the separate groups. This would be the same as assigning numbers to six different schools for analysis. The group values come from scores for particular items or a group of items such as commitment to marriage. Those who fit in one category, for example "less than high school education level" had an average score that is lower than those that graduate from college for commitment to marriage.

Expectations based on the literature review suggest that gender will generally not make a difference to marital commitment, although there are some mixed results. Females are perceived as being more constrained (Rusbult & Martz, 1995). A higher education level was expected to increase commitment to spouse and commitment to marriage but decrease constraint commitment (Heaton et al., 1985). It was hypothesized that a younger age at first marriage will decreased commitment to spouse and commitment to marriage but increase constraint commitment (Amato et al., 2003). Longer years in a current marriage was expected to increase all three types of marital commitment (Amato et al.). Premarital cohabitation was expected to decrease all three

types of marital commitment (DeMaris & MacDonald, 1993).

The literature indicated that increased frequency of religious attendance would increase all three types of marital commitment (Larson & Goltz, 1989). Religious affiliation in religions with strong social networks and conservative beliefs about the preservation of marriage should increase all three types of marital commitment according to previous studies (Lehrer & Chiswick, 1993; Mahoney et al., 1999). Higher religious values would be associated with an increase of all three marital commitment types (Call & Heaton, 1997; Mahoney et al.). The specifics of methodology for analyzing each of the research questions will be addressed in the results section.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study focuses on the relationship of marital commitment to religiosity for a sampling of 1,316 adults living in Utah. Three research questions focused on this objective. The first question examined differences in individuals with regards to marital commitment based on socio-demographic variables. The second question examined differences in individuals with regards to marital commitment based on religiosity. The last question sought to assess a model showing which variables were most predictive of commitment to spouse (dedication), commitment to marriage (moral obligation), and constraint commitment.

Before scores could be calculated and comparisons made, reliability analyses were conducted for variable measurements containing more than one survey question item: commitment to spouse, commitment to marriage, and religious values. The internal consistency analyses produced a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .80 for commitment to spouse, .73 for commitment to marriage, and .80 for religious values. These are an appropriate level for social statistics (Kaplan & Saccizzo, 1997).

The variables for this study include both categorical and continuous measures. Chi-square analysis was used for categorical items and parametric *t* tests and analysis of variance was utilized for continuous items. Correlational analyses were employed to assess the statistical significance and strength of bivariate relationships. Next, multiple regression techniques were utilized to determine whether a composite measure of each

predictor category contributed independently to predicting the dependent variables.

Multicollinearity of the independent variables was assessed by regressing each independent variable on all other independent variables using a tolerance measure of uniqueness. There were no tolerance levels less than .20 indicating multicollinearity was not a problem for this study (Kaplan & Saccizzo, 1997). Also, scatter plots did not show any curvilinear relationships.

The results are presented in three sections. The first section presents the socio-demographic data for the three types of marital commitment. The second section presents the religiosity data for the three types of marital commitment. The final section presents a predictive model for the three types of marital commitment. A minimum confidence interval of 95% was used throughout the study for statistical significance.

Socio-Demographic Factors

The first question assessed statistically significant difference based on socio-demographic variables. These variables included gender, education level, age first married, years in current marriage, and premarital cohabitation for the three types of marital commitment.

Gender

It was hypothesized that there would not be a statistically significant difference between males and females for commitment to spouse, commitment to marriage, and constraint commitment. Female scores were compared to male scores by coding 0 for

females and 1 for males. The differences resulted in a negative number if male scores were higher than female scores and a positive number if female scores were higher than male scores.

Gender differences were examined for the three types of marital commitment. Independent samples *t* tests were conducted for commitment to spouse and commitment to marriage (see Table 1). After a determination of equal variances by Levene's tests the *t* tests showed males were statistically significantly more dedicated (committed to their spouse) than females. Males were also statistically significantly more committed to marriage than females.

The final type of marital commitment to be evaluated for gender was constraint commitment (feeling trapped). A chi-square test for independence showed no significant differences, $\chi^2(1,1019) = .00, p = 1.00$. The percentage observed and expected frequencies were exactly equal with 5.9% of men ($n = 19$) and 5.9% of women

Table 1

Gender Differences for Commitment to Spouse (Dedication) and Commitment to Marriage (Moral Obligation)

Commitment type	Gender	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Commitment to spouse (dedication)	Female	696	13.02	2.20	-2.07	.038
	Male	322	13.31	1.99		
Commitment to marriage (moral obligation)	Female	919	15.60	3.99	-2.55	.011
	Male	386	16.20	3.93		

($n = 41$) feeling trapped in their current marriage.

Gender differences were also evaluated for age first married and years in current marriage using independent sample t tests. A Levene's test for equality of variances was conducted to specify the appropriate level for measuring each variable. Statistically significant differences between groups based on gender (biological sex) were reported for age first married but not for years in current marriage. Males ($M = 23.08$, $SD = 3.83$) showed a statistically significant higher age than females ($M = 20.92$, $SD = 3.55$) when first married, $t(1134) = -9.54$, $p < .001$, but there was no statistically significant difference between males ($M = 20.56$, $SD = 16.61$) and females ($M = 19.54$, $SD = 15.83$) for years in current marriage, $t(869) = -.87$, $p = .38$.

Education Level

It was expected that education level would increase commitment to spouse and commitment to marriage, and decrease constraint commitment. Non-parametric correlational analyses were conducted for education level (see Appendix A, Table A2) using dummy variables for the educational level categories (Thorndike & Dinnel, 2001). Non parametric tests do not rely on distributional assumptions. They often refer to nominal, categorical, or ordinal variables (Thorndike & Dinnel). A dummy or proxy variable is a numerical value used to identify subgroups and allow statistical applications with categorical data (Thorndike & Dinnel).

Results indicated a statistically significant relationship for commitment to spouse (dedication) and education level, $r(1017) = .15$, $p < .001$. There was also a statistically

significant relationship between commitment to marriage (moral obligation) and education level, $r(1302) = .27, p < .001$. There was no statistically significant difference between education level and constraint commitment, $r(1016) = -.06, p > .05$.

Two factorial analysis of variance tests were used to assess education level, gender and two dependent variables. These are appropriate tests for the education level groups. First, the relationship between education level and gender on commitment to spouse (dedication) was examined with a factorial analysis of variance. The means and standard deviations are reported in table 2.

Figure 1 shows that females with less than a high school education show the lowest mean for commitment to spouse. The highest mean was for males with post

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Commitment to Spouse (Dedication) by Education Level and Gender

Education level	Female dedication			Male dedication		
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
< High school	39	11.41	2.76	16	13.25	1.81
High school	167	12.86	1.98	67	12.91	1.88
Some college	239	13.19	2.18	87	13.32	2.09
Trade, technical, vocational	32	13.16	2.19	15	13.00	2.56
College	177	13.38	2.00	81	13.38	1.96
Post graduate	43	12.48	2.65	56	13.79	1.83

graduate degrees. The main effect of gender was statistically significant, $F(1,1007) = 7.99, p < .005$. The main effect for education level was also statistically significant, $F(5, 1007) = 2.66, p = .021$. Males generally increased in dedication or commitment to spouse with higher educational achievement. Females also increased in commitment to spouse (dedication) with high school degree, college attendance, and a college degree, but decreased with post graduate degrees. Finally, the interaction effect was significant, $F(5, 1007) = 2.85, p = .014$; indicating that the level of commitment to spouse was related to gender and the level of educational achievement as shown in Figure 1. The overall effect size was $\eta^2 = 0.03$ where gender and education level accounted for approximately 3% of the overall variance for commitment to spouse (dedication). Although this is a weak relationship (Cohen, 1988), it does indicate a relationship.

Second, a two-way analysis of variance was conducted to examine the relationship between education level and gender on commitment to marriage (moral

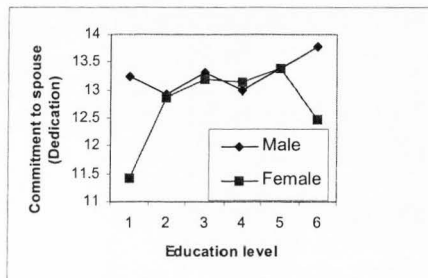


Figure 1. Commitment to spouse (dedication) by education level and gender.

obligation). Table 3 shows mean scores for commitment to marriage (moral obligation). There was a significant increase in moral obligation or commitment to marriage with higher educational attainment. This test yielded a significant main effect for education level, $F(5,1292) = 17.23, p < .001$.

Figure 2 shows that females with less than a high school education have the lowest mean for commitment to marriage (moral obligation). The highest mean for commitment to marriage (moral obligation) was for males with post graduate degrees. The main effect of gender was statistically significant for gender, $F(1, 1292) = 8.52, p < .004$. The reported F value for education indicates the probability of this result occurring by chance is low, $F(5,1292) = 17.23, p < .001$. Males showed increased

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Commitment to Marriage (Moral Obligation) by Education Level and Gender

Education level	Female moral obligation			Male moral obligation		
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
< High school	56	12.23	2.86	18	14.22	3.98
High school	233	14.53	3.73	86	14.50	4.13
Some college	313	16.04	3.94	111	16.35	3.84
Trade, technical or vocational	47	15.74	4.04	18	16.72	3.72
College	210	16.90	3.69	91	16.70	3.73
Post graduate	59	15.78	4.03	62	17.98	3.05

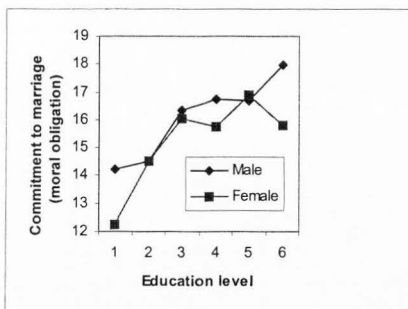


Figure 2. Commitment to marriage (moral obligation) by education level and gender.

moral obligation or commitment to marriage with higher educational attainment. Females also increased in moral obligation with a high school degree, college attendance, and a college degree, but decrease in moral obligation with trade, vocational, or technical experience and post graduate degrees. The interaction effect was significant, $F(5, 1292) = 2.4, p = .035$; indicating that the level of moral obligation was related to the attained education level and gender as shown in Figure 2. The overall effect size was $\eta^2 = 0.10$, where education level and gender accounted for approximately 10% of the overall variance, which is a small effect (Cohen, 1988).

A chi-square test for independence examined the relationship between education level and constraint commitment (see Table 4). The relationship between these variables was significant, $\chi^2(5, 1018) = 11.71, p = .039, V = .11$. Those who did not graduate from high school were two to seven times more likely to feel trapped

Table 4

Constraint Commitment (Feelings of Being Trapped) by Education Level in Percentage

Constraint	<HS	HS	Some College	Trade/ Tech	College	Post grad	Total
No	47.0	291.0	305.0	46.0	249.0	92.0	958.0
Percentage	85.5	93.6	93.8	97.9	96.5	92.9	94.1
Yes	8.0	15.0	20.0	1 ^a	9.0	7.0	60.0
Percentage	14.5	6.4	6.2	2.1	3.5	7.1	5.9
<i>N</i>	55.0	234.0	325.0	47.0	258.0	99.0	1018.0

^a Indicates a cell with a count less than 5.

(constraint commitment) than those with a higher level of educational attainment. Those who attained trade, vocation, or technical education levels were the least likely to feel trapped (constraint commitment). Caution is advised for interpreting the category of trade, technical, or vocational with such a small cell count (Thorndike & Dinnel, 2001). Those who had post graduate degrees were twice as likely to feel constrained as those whose highest level of education was a college degree. This model explains 11% of the variance.

Age First Married

The average age and standard deviation for age first married by gender is: females ($M = 20.82$, $SD = 5.55$) and males ($M = 23.08$, $SD = 3.83$). Table A2 in Appendix A contains intercorrelations with age first married and other study variables. There were no statistically significant correlations for age first married, education level, years in current marriage, and cohabitation. There was also no statistically significant correlation

found for age first married and the first dependent variable, commitment to spouse (dedication), $r(962) = .04, p = .20$.

However, there was a statistically significant relationship between age first married and commitment to marriage (moral obligation), $r(1142) = .10, p < .05$. Generally, the older the participants were when they first married, the higher their scores were for commitment to marriage (moral obligation).

Finally, there was no statistically significant correlation found between age first married and constraint commitment (see Methods section for an explanation of dichotomous variable analysis).

Years in Current Marriage

Years in current marriage were compared to the three dependent variables: commitment to spouse, commitment to marriage, and constraint commitment. The average years in current marriage and standard deviation is: males ($M = 20.56, SD = 16.61$) and females ($M = 19.54, SD = 15.83$). No significant relationship was found between participants' years in a current marriage and commitment to spouse (dedication), $r(869) = -.03, p = .432$.

There was a statistically significant correlation between the years in a current marriage with commitment to marriage (moral obligation), $r(869) = .09, p < .05$. The longer the participants were married the higher their scores were on commitment to marriage (moral obligation). Correlations for years in current marriage and other study variables can be found in the Appendix (see Table A2).

There was no statistically significant correlation between years in current marriage and constraint commitment, $r(869) = -.06$, $p = .082$. The average years in current marriage for those who do not feel trapped (constraint commitment) was 20.07, ($SD = 16.24$, $N = 829$), and the average years in current marriage for those who do feel trapped (constraint commitment) was 15.59 ($SD = 11.92$, $N = 41$).

Premarital Cohabitation

The affect of cohabitation on the three types of marital commitment was examined in this study. Independent sample t tests were conducted for commitment to spouse and commitment to marriage with premarital cohabitation (see Table 5). After a determination of equal variances by Levene's tests, the t tests showed that those who have cohabited were significantly less dedicated (committed to their spouse) than those who had not cohabited, $t(297.47) = -6.70$, and $p < .001$. Those who cohabited before

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations for Commitment to Spouse and Commitment to Marriage by Premarital Cohabitation

Commitment Type	Cohabitation	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Commitment to spouse (dedication)	Yes	220	12.10	2.48	-6.70	.000
	No	810	13.37	1.96		
Commitment to Marriage (moral obligation)	Yes	269	13.10	3.62	-13.15	.000
	No	1047	16.44	1.96		

marriage were also statistically significantly less committed to marriage than those who did not cohabit, $t(1314) = -13.15$, and $p < .001$.

A chi-square for independence test was conducted for constraint commitment (feeling trapped) and premarital cohabitation (see Table 6). Cross tabs analysis showed a statistically significant difference in the feeling of constraint with those who have cohabited and those who have not, $\chi^2(1, 1028) = 16.05$, $p < .001$. Those who have cohabited are more likely to feel trapped (constraint commitment) when married than those who have not cohabited. The effect size was small, $\phi^2 = .13$ (Cohen, 1988).

Religiosity Factors

Research question two focused on individual differences pertaining to the three types of marital commitment based on the three factors of religiosity. The three manifestations of religiosity are: frequency of religious attendance, religious

Table 6
Cohabitation Difference by Constraint in Percentage

Constraint	Cohabitation	
	Yes	No
No, I do not feel trapped	194.0	773.0
Percentage	88.2	95.7
Yes, I do feel trapped	26.0	35.0
Percentage	11.8	4.3
<i>N</i>	220.0	808.0

affiliation preference, and religious values.

Frequency of Religious Attendance

It was hypothesized that a higher frequency of religious attendance would be associated with a higher commitment to spouse (dedication) and commitment to marriage (moral obligation), and lower constraint commitment. Table 7 summarizes the descriptive statistics for commitment to spouse and commitment to marriage as they relate to frequency of religious attendance.

An analysis of variance test was conducted to evaluate frequency of religious attendance with commitment to spouse and commitment to marriage (see Table 8). The results were statistically significant showing that frequency of religious attendance

Table 7

Frequency of Religious Attendance and Marital Commitment Scores

Frequency of religious attendance	Commitment to spouse			Commitment to marriage		
	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Never or almost never	165	12.16	2.09	212	12.99	3.32
Occasionally	101	11.88	2.80	152	13.08	3.73
1 to 3 times per month	118	12.62	2.31	162	14.63	3.65
One or more per week	637	13.65	1.79	780	17.29	3.41
Total	1012	13.11	2.14	1306	15.78	3.95

Table 8

Analysis of Variance of Religious Attendance Frequency and Commitment Scores

Type of Commitment	Difference	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Commitment to spouse (dedication)	Between groups	3	171.12	41.99	.000
	Within groups	1017	4.07		
Commitment to marriage (moral obligation)	Between groups	3	1583.96	131.84	.000
	Within groups	1302	12.01		

increased with both commitment to spouse (dedication) and commitment to marriage (moral obligation).

Post hoc analyses using Fisher's Least Square Difference criterion for significance also indicated that those who attended religious services more frequently had higher scores for commitment to spouse and commitment to marriage. Tables B1 and B2 (see Appendix B) list the post hoc multiple comparisons of frequency of religious attendance with commitment to spouse and commitment to marriage. For commitment to spouse (dedication) those who never or almost never attend were significantly different than those who attend one or more times per week, $p < .001$. Those who attend occasionally, but less than once per month were significantly different than those who attend 1 to 3 times per month, $p < .007$, and those who attend one or more times per week, $p < .001$. Those who attend 1 to 3 times per month were also statistically different than those who attend one or more times per week, $p < .001$.

For commitment to marriage (moral obligation) there was a statistically significant difference ($p < .001$) for all frequency group comparisons except the first two groups: Never or almost never attend and Occasionally attend. An increase in the frequency of religious attendance accompanied a significant increase in commitment to marriage (moral obligation), but not until attendance increased to more than once per month. Participants who attend religious services one or more times per week (level 4) showed a statistically significant increase in commitment scores when compared to those in the other three levels, $p < .001$ for all three comparisons. This was consistent with both commitment to spouse and commitment to marriage.

This study showed a statistically significant difference in constraint commitment (feeling trapped) by frequency of religious attendance $\chi^2(3, 1020) = 16.56$, $p < .001$. The effect size was $\phi^2 = .13$. Those who never or almost never attended or who attended 1 to 3 times per month were 2.8 times more likely to feel trapped in their marriage than those who attended once a week (see Table 9). Those who attended religious services occasionally felt less constraint. However, the cell count for this category was only 6, barely meeting the prescribed statistical criteria of 5 per cell.

Descriptive statistics with the sample size, mean, and standard deviation for the four levels of religious attendance and years in current marriage is presented in Table 10. Age first married was not included in the table because an analysis of variance showed there was no statistically significant difference for frequency of religious attendance and age first married, $F(3, 1133) = 2.35$, $p = .07$.

An analysis of variance was conducted to analyze the difference between the

Table 9

Constraint Commitment by Frequency of Religious Attendance in Percentage

Constraint	Frequency of religious attendance			
	Never or almost never	< 1 per month	1-3 times per month	1 per week
No, I do not feel trapped	148.0	95.0	106.0	612.0
Percentage	89.1	94.1	89.8	96.2
Yes, I do feel trapped	18.0	6.0	12.0	24.0
Percentage	10.9	5.9	10.2	3.8
<i>N</i>	165.0	101.0	118.0	636.0

four levels of religious attendance and years in current marriage. The results of the analysis of variance with degrees of freedom are shown in Table 11. A significant

Table 10

Religious Attendance Frequency with Years in Current Marriage

Religious attendance frequency	Years in current marriage		
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Never or almost never	112	15.73	13.23
Occasionally but less than once per month	69	20.06	18.12
1 to 3 times per month	95	16.14	14.56
One or more per week	594	21.20	16.36
Total	870	19.86	16.08

Table 11

Analysis of Variance for Religious Attendance Frequency with Years in Current Marriage

Characteristic	Difference	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Years in current marriage	Between	3	1433.48	5.63	.001
	Within	866	254.59		

difference was found for frequency of religious attendance and years in current marriage, $F(3, 866) = 5.63, p = .001$.

To examine the specific means that were statistically different, post hoc multiple comparisons tests were run. Two comparisons showed a significant difference as revealed by post hoc comparisons for years in current marriage. There was a significant difference for years in current marriage between those who attended 1 to 3 times per month and those who attended one or more times per week, $p < .004$. There was a significant difference between those who never or almost never attended and those who attended one or more times per week, $p < .001$ (see Table B3 in Appendix B).

Descriptive statistics were calculated for religious attendance and religious values. Table 12 lists the results of religious values levels for each attendance group. The religious values variable utilized multiple item questions with a different number of response choices for each item. Standardized z scores were used for comparison. Standardized scores are based on zero being the mean, allowing some scores to show negative values. The analysis showed a significant difference in religious values based

Table 12

Descriptive Statistics for Frequency of Religious Attendance and Religious Values

Religious attendance frequency group	Religious values		
	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Never or almost never	211	-3.11	2.30
Occasionally but less than once per month	152	-2.39	2.46
1 to 3 times per month	160	-1.10	2.58
One or more per week	780	1.53	1.93
Total	1304	.00	2.89

on the frequency of religious attendance, $F(3, 1300) = 356.24, p < .001$.

Post hoc multiple comparison tests were employed to assess specific group differences (see Table B4 in Appendix B). There were statistically significant differences between all groups. Those who never or almost never attended showed lower religious values than those who attended occasionally, $p = .002$. Those who never or almost never attended also showed lower religious values scores than those who attended 1 to 3 times per month or one or more times per week, $p < .001$ for both group differences. Those who attended occasionally showed statistically lower religious values scores than those who attended 1 to 3 times per month or one or more times per week at the same level, $p < .001$, and those who attended 1 to 3 times per month showed a lower score on religious values than those who attended one or more times per week, $p < .001$.

Religious Preference

The second component of religiosity is religious preference. Religious preference was condensed to four categories due to the small *n* in some categories: LDS; Other, which included Catholic and Jewish; Protestant; and No religion. Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 13.

A between subjects analysis of variance showed that there was a statistically significant difference in commitment to spouse (dedication) and commitment to marriage (moral obligation) based on the four choices of religious preference, $F(3, 1012) = 39.62, p < .001$, and $F(3, 1296) = 70.03, p < .001$, respectively.

Post hoc analyses for significant difference between commitment to spouse (dedication) and commitment to marriage (moral obligation) and religious groups indicated that LDS affiliation was related to a significantly higher level of commitment to spouse and a significantly higher level of commitment to marriage. Table B5 and

Table 13

Descriptive Statistics for Religious Preference and Commitment Scores

Religious preference	Commitment to spouse			Commitment to marriage		
	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
LDS	765	13.51	1.79	962	16.65	3.67
Other	60	11.55	2.49	86	13.77	3.53
Protestant	80	12.45	2.77	106	13.92	3.96
No religion	111	11.86	2.40	146	12.69	3.55
Total	1016	13.13	2.12	1300	15.79	3.95

Table B6 (see Appendix B) revealed post hoc multiple comparisons indicating there were statistically significant higher scores for commitment to spouse (dedication) and commitment to marriage (moral obligation) for LDS than the other three religious groups at the same level of significance, $p < .001$.

For commitment to spouse (dedication) the religious category of Other was not statistically different from the No religion group, but it had significantly lower scores than Protestant, $p = .009$. The Protestant category also showed a statistically higher score for commitment to spouse than No religion, $p = .044$.

For commitment to marriage (moral obligation) the religious categories of Other and Protestant were also significantly different than the No religion category, $p = .031$ and $p = .009$, respectively. There was no statistically significant difference for Other and Protestant categories on measures of commitment to marriage.

A chi-square analysis was calculated for religious affiliation preference and constraint commitment. The result was significant, $\chi^2 = (3, 1015) = 12.89$, $p < .005$, $\phi^2 = .11$. LDS participants were significantly less likely to feel constrained in their marriage than other religious persuasions, followed by those selecting No religion. Those most likely to feel trapped in their marriage fit the category of Other as shown by the percentages in Table 14.

Religious preferences and their relationship to socio-demographic variables are varied. A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine differences in religious affiliation by gender (see Table 15). There was a statistically significant difference of religious preferences between genders, $\chi^2 (3, N = 1297) = 8.85$, $p = .031$.

Table 14

Constraint Commitment by Religious Preference

Constraint	LDS	Other	Protestant	No religion	Total
No, I do not feel trapped	729.0	51.0	72.0	102.0	954.0
Percentage	95.3	85.0	91.1	91.9	94.0
Yes, I do feel trapped	36.0	9.0	7.0	9.0	61.0
Percentage	4.7	15.0	8.9	8.1	6.0
<i>N</i>	765.0	60.0	79.0	111.0	1015.0

Descriptive statistics were calculated for religious preference with age first married. Mean values for religious preference varied only slightly. The results are presented in Table 16. There are no statistically significant differences in religious preference with age first married from the analysis of variance, $F(3,1126) = 1.36, p = .254$. Mean values did vary for years in current marriage as show in Table 16. In

Table 15

Gender Differences by Religious Preference

Gender	LDS	Other	Protestant	No religion	Total
Female	673.0	69.0	80.0	93.0	915.0
Percentage	73.6	7.5	8.7	10.2	70.5
Male	288.0	16.0	26.0	52.0	382.0
Percentage	75.4	4.2	6.8	13.6	29.5
<i>N</i>	961.0	85.0	106.0	145.0	1297.0

Table 16

Descriptive Statistics of Religious Preference with Age First Married and Years in Current Marriage

Religious preference	Age first married			Years in current Marriage		
	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
LDS	872	21.37	3.40	70	20.80	16.67
Other	62	22.16	5.27	39	15.92	14.57
Protestant	93	21.92	4.44	59	17.59	11.39
No religion	103	21.52	4.92	62	13.47	11.55
Total	1130	21.47	3.70	867	19.84	16.08

addition, the analysis of variance for years in current marriage with the five categories of religious preference showed statistically significant differences, $F(3, 863) = 5.32, p = .001$.

To examine which specific categories of religious preference showed significant differences for education level and years in current marriage post hoc multiple comparisons were conducted (see Appendix B, Table B7 and B8). The Protestant category showed no statistically significant difference in education level from the other three groups as seen in Table B7 of Appendix B. The categories of Other and No religion showed a statistically significant difference of lower educational level than LDS, $p = .003$ and $p = .022$, respectively. Years in current marriage showed one statistically significant difference between LDS and No religion, $p = .001$, with the No

religion category showing less years in current marriage.

An analysis of variance showed that there was a statistically significant difference in the frequency of religious attendance by religious preference, $F(3, 1295) = 268.54, p < .001$. A between group analysis of variance also revealed a statistically significant difference in religious values according to the four religious preference categories, $F(3, 1293) = 402.25, p < .001$.

Religious Values

Some of the analyses for the religious values variable have been presented in the frequency of religious attendance and religious preference section. Also, although the results concerning gender were presented at the first of this chapter its relationship to religious values and, consequently, marital commitment will be presented in this section. Previous studies (Fiese & Tomcho, 2001; Hunt & King, 1978; Sullivan, 2001) of gender differences for religious values were substantiated. Females ($M = .16, SD = 1.13$) showed statistically significant higher scores on religious values than males ($M = -.38, SD = 1.22$), $t(1300) = 3.11, p = .002$.

Religious values correlated with commitment to spouse (dedication) and commitment to marriage (moral obligation) respectively (see Table A2, Appendix A). The standardized mean religious values score for those who did not feel trapped was .23 ($SD = 2.85$) and for those who did feel trapped (constrained) it was -1.51 ($SD = 2.04$). Those with higher constraint commitment (feeling trapped) showed a statistically significant lower score on religious values, $t(1017) = 4.56, p < .001$.

Predictive Model

The final part of the results section was to assess the extent to which specific variables would impact the three types of marital commitment. Correlation analyses were carried out for both continuous variables using Pearson's r correlation and ordinal variables using Spearman's rho correlation. Results of these analyses are listed in Table A2, Appendix A. Note that Spearman's rho correlations are designated with "a" superscript in Table A2. Also note that absolute difference comparisons cannot be made between the two groups of correlation coefficients but are valid within groups.

Three separate regression analyses were conducted for the three dependent variables employing the socio-demographic variables, religious values, and the commitment to spouse (dedication), commitment to marriage (moral obligation) and constraint commitment (feeling trapped). Simultaneous multiple regressions were conducted for the first two types of commitment. The last dependent variable, constraint commitment (feeling trapped), was assessed using logistic regression. The standardized regression coefficients, β (beta), in the third column are based on the same scale; allowing comparison of the predictive strength of each independent variable.

The commitment to spouse model (see Table 17) showed gender, years in current marriage, not cohabiting, religious values, commitment to marriage, and constraint commitment as significant predictors for commitment to spouse, $F(8,858) = 36.99, p < .001$. Those statistically significant variables, in order of their predictive

Table 17

Summary of Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Commitment to Spouse (Dedication)

Predictor Variable	B	SE B	β	<i>p</i>
Gender	.425	.124	.107	.001
Education level	-.034	.042	-.027	.412
Age first married	-.020	.016	-.040	.224
Years in current marriage	-.011	.044	-.098	.002
Not cohabiting	.372	.169	.077	.028
Religious values	.126	.024	.192	.000
Commitment to marriage (moral obligation)	.077	.017	.158	.000
Constraint commitment	-2.83	.261	-3.26	.000

strength, are: constraint commitment (-.326), religious values (.192), commitment to marriage (.158), gender (.107), years in current marriage (-.098), and not cohabiting (.077). There was a negative relationship for constraint commitment (feeling trapped) and years in current marriage; indicating that the more an individual feels trapped in their marriage and the longer one is married the less they feel commitment to spouse (dedication). The gender variable indicated that males are more dedicated than females. The model predicted commitment to spouse at a level of 25% (adjusted $R^2 = .25$).

Multiple regression analysis (shown in Table 18) produced a model that predicted commitment to marriage (moral obligation) by 27 % ($R^2 = .27$). The model was significant, $F(8,858) = 40.13, p < .000$. Variables that significantly predicted

Table 18

Summary of Simultaneous Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Commitment to Marriage (Moral Obligation)

Predictor variable	B	SE B	β	<i>p</i>
Gender	.347	.252	.043	.169
Education level	.295	.084	.112	.000
Age first married	.058	.033	.056	.083
Years in current marriage	.015	.007	.060	.038
Not cohabiting	1.080	.342	.108	.002
Religious values	.457	.047	.338	.000
Commitment to spouse (dedication)	.317	.068	.155	.000
Constraint commitment	1.501	.562	.084	.008

commitment to marriage (moral obligation) were: education level, years in current marriage, not cohabiting, religious values, commitment to spouse (dedication), and constraint commitment (feeling trapped). The order of predictive strength for each statistically significant variables is: religious values (.338), commitment to spouse (.155), education level (.112), not cohabiting (.109), constraint commitment (.084), and years in current marriage (.064).

Logistic regression is an appropriate method of analysis for the dichotomous dependent variable, constraint commitment. This model explains 31.6% of the variance in constraint commitment, $H(9,808) = 86.44$, $p < .001$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .316$, $p < .001$.

The strongest predictor of constraint commitment was the negative relationship

of the dependent variable, commitment to spouse (dedication) (see Table 19). The less committed to spouse (dedicated) the higher the constraint commitment (feeling trapped). The next strongest predictor was religious values. This also showed a negative relationship indicating that those with the highest religious values were the least constrained in their marriage. Commitment to marriage (moral obligation) was next in predictive strength, $p = .014$ with a positive relationship.

A trend was noted with years in current marriage ($p = .066$) indicating that the more years an individual is married the less constrained they feel. Cohabitation, gender,

Table 19

Logistic Regression Predicting Constraint Commitment From Cohabitation, Commitment to Marriage, Gender, Education Level, Age at First Marriage, Years in Current Marriage, Commitment to Spouse, and Religious Values

Predictor Variable	B	Wald χ^2	p	Odds ratio
Gender	.130	.089	.765	1.140
Education level	-.074	.257	.612	.930
Age first married	.016	.108	.742	1.020
Years in current marriage	-.029	3.384	.066	.097
Not cohabiting	.021	.002	.964	-1.020
Religious values	-.221	8.923	.003	.800
Commitment to spouse (dedication)	-.573	50.680	.000	.900
Commitment to marriage (moral obligation)	.154	6.080	.014	1.170

education level, and age first married were not significant predictors of constraint commitment. The odds ratio for commitment to spouse indicates that for each one point increase on the three-to-fifteen scale for commitment to spouse (dedication) there will be a .055 decrease in the odds that the participant will feel more trapped in their marriage. Likewise, for each one point increase on the scales for religious values and commitment to marriage (moral obligation) there will be a 0.80 decrease and 1.17 increase, respectively, in the odds that the participant will feel more trapped (constraint commitment) in their marriage.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the interconnectedness of the three types of marital commitment and religiosity. First, the study examined the extent that socio-demographic characteristics predicted marital commitment. Next, the study explored how frequency of religious attendance, religious affiliation preference, and religious values predicted marital commitment to spouse, commitment to marriage, and constraint commitment. Finally, the study sought to create a predictive model of each type of marital commitment using the study variables.

Conclusions

For over 20 years the interdependence model has theorized that individuals continue in a marriage based on rewards found in staying or the costs of leaving. Another less studied factor was the obligation to stay based on individual beliefs about marriage as an institution. In many studies this factor, commitment to marriage, has been grouped with the costs of leaving. This rather adverse feeling of being trapped in a marriage because of the high cost of leaving (constraint commitment) was used as an indicator of higher marital commitment in previous studies (Johnson, 1973; Rusbult, 1980, 1983; Stanley & Markman, 1992). Individuals stayed married based on how they perceived their losses if they leave. This study does not violate that assumption, but

does indicate a clear separation in the three types of marital commitment (Johnson et al., 1999). The moderately negative correlation between constraint commitment and commitment to spouse (dedication) suggests that they may be polarized aspects of staying married. If an individual wants to stay in a marriage based on a positive feeling toward their spouse they may have fewer feelings of being trapped in their marriage. And if an individual has a feeling of being trapped in the relationship due to a variety of perceived obstacles in leaving, they may be less likely to have a positive feeling toward staying with their spouse. Commitment to marriage (moral obligation) may actually mediate the other two types of marital commitment: commitment to spouse and constraint commitment (Adams & Jones, 1997). When attraction forces diminish and the barriers of leaving become more prominent an individual may shift their focus to their belief in marriage as an valued institution. This belief system may sustain the relationship until positive feelings are restored. This study helps to define commitment to marriage as a potentially positive quality that is separate from the negative quality of constraint commitment. Results from the three predictive models developed in this study also indicate a clear separation of the three types of marital commitment.

The predictive models also confirm a strong association between religiosity and marital commitment (Sullivan, 2001). Increased religiosity seems to promote higher commitment to spouse and commitment to marriage, but reduce constraint commitment. Conversely, the personal experience of marriage may mediate religious values, frequency of church attendance, and continued involvement in a particular denomination.

Socio-Demographic Factors

The contributions of this study include several findings. The first question focused on socio-demographic factors, beginning with gender differences concerning marital commitment. Contrary to expectations, men were more likely to feel commitment to spouse (dedication) than women and more commitment to marriage (moral obligation).

Evolutionary theorists (Noone, 1988) suggest that females are more committed to marriage because of their biological role to give birth and nurse babies, which calls for a partner to provide resources and protection. Males are less restricted in mating responsibilities. However, this is contrary to the findings of this study and suggests that men may experience intrinsic benefits to sexual exclusivity that have not been fully recognized beyond hormones and propagation. Restricting males to the historically assigned provider/protector role without acknowledging their capacity for nurturing and caring is probably shortsighted. The psychological and emotional benefits of marriage for men have been documented in previous studies (Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Whitehead & Popenoe, 2003).

Hunt and King (1978) noted that only the men in their study reported a correlation between greater marital happiness and positive purpose in life. This may suggest that men who feel better about their partner and marriage also feel more positive about life in general. This finding also coincided with a positive correlation between the male's marital success and a higher level of conventional, pro-religious motivation

(Hunt & King).

There was no gender difference in constraint commitment. This was contrary to previous research (Rogers, 2004; Rusbult & Martz, 1995; Rusbult et al., 1998b) that females feel trapped in marriages more often than males due to higher emotional or financial dependency. Scanzoni and Arnett (1987) found that female's perceptions of the negative costs of a relationship was moderated by higher religious activity and beliefs. Scanzoni and Arnett also confirmed that religiosity increased females' willingness to make sacrifices for their marriage.

Perhaps females in this sample have moderated social issues of dependence on male partners by increased access to income, education, and other resources (Rogers, 2004). Feeling less dependent financially may reduce their inclination to stay connected in a marriage they find unsatisfying and less committed to their spouse or marriage in general. Also, 74% of individuals in this study reported their marriage as very happy (Schramm et al., 2003) and this may relate to commitment to spouse (dedication) and commitment to marriage, but not to feeling trapped (constraint commitment).

This study was also conducted with a predominantly LDS population. Nelson (2003) noted clear differences in rites of passage for Mormon males and females. Males, who volunteer two years of missionary service to their church at a higher rate than females, may have ingrained family values such as marital commitment while teaching these concepts to investigators. In addition, they are assigned companions by ecclesiastical leaders who counsel them to be committed to this 24-hour-a-day relationship (Carroll et al., 2000) and utilize sacrifice, accommodation, forgiveness, and

transformation of motivation in a collaborative, mutually dependent process (Arriaga & Rusbult, 1998; Drigotas et al., 1999; Whitton et al., 2002, Worthington, 1998). This experience can strengthen the internalization of a belief system in sustaining the institution of marriage. Carroll et al. (2000) also found that even though the LDS population is similar in many ways to other religions, they are notably more conservative in pre-marital sexuality and acceptance of divorce. As previously mentioned, Mahoney et al. (1999) also clarified gender differences in religious practices, such as the frequency of prayer, were indicators of adherence to religious values, and adherence to religious values correlated with increased marital commitment.

Statistically significant gender differences were noted for age first married, with men being about two years older. This is comparable to the national averages (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 2001a), men marry later than women, although Utah adults marry earlier than the national average (Welch & Johnson, 2003). This sample also showed males generally have higher levels of education than females, also consistent with national samples. There was no statistical difference in gender for years in current marriage or premarital cohabitation.

Although males in this study showed higher commitment to spouse and commitment to marriage, gender differences in religiosity factors in this study indicated females have a statistically significant higher frequency of religious attendance and a higher level of religious values. This concurred with previous studies. Fiese and Tomcho (2001) found wives are more oriented towards religious rituals than husbands. Mahoney et al. (1999) found female subjects prayed more frequently than their

husbands. Stark's (2002) generalized suggestion that men are less religious than women may be based not only in sex role socialization but in a physiological basis. Males in this sample were more likely to be LDS or have no religion than were females.

Those with generally higher levels of education showed higher commitment to spouse and commitment to marriage; substantiating Heaton's study (2002) of those with less than a high school degree being the least committed to marriage. It was found that those most likely to feel constraint commitment were those who did not graduate from high school, followed by females with post graduate degrees. Although this study shows a curvilinear pattern for women, the pattern for men was generally linear. This confirmed previous studies showing higher education for females correlated with increased marital instability (Heaton; Matthija, 1999). Females feeling the least constraint commitment had graduated from college. There was an indication that those with higher education levels attend religious services more frequently and have a higher level of religious values. This confirmed previous research showing higher education levels for LDS (Merrill et al., 2003). Keysar and Kosmin (1995) found that the impact of religious identification varied with women according to their age. Women ages 25 to 44 showed a stronger effect of religion on educational attainment. Younger females may still be strongly influenced by their parents' religious background while women over age 25 have generally established a personal religious identification (Flor & Knapp, 2001).

A younger age first married has been shown in the past to be a consistent marker for marital instability and lower marital commitment (Amato & Rogers, 1997; Heaton et al., 1985). However, the results from participants in this study showed a non-significant

relationship for age first married and commitment to spouse (dedication) and constraint commitment (feeling trapped). However, there was a statistically significant correlation between age first married and commitment to marriage (moral obligation) with older individuals showing greater moral obligation. This may suggest that those who marry younger may not have developed as strong a sense of social or moral reasoning for staying married, especially since there was also a statistically significant relationship for age first married in this sample with religious values.

There was no statistically significant relationship between years in current marriage (marital duration) and commitment to spouse (dedication). This might suggest that the longer individuals are married and are familiar with each other's human frailties, the less they feel enamored with their spouse. Regression analysis for the predictive model indicated a statistically significant negative relationship between years in current marriage and commitment to spouse, strengthening this possible explanation. As stated in the literature review Brickman (1987) recognized the dynamic quality of marital relationships that progress through stages of initial attraction, disillusionment, and a sense of duty to the relationship. Particular stages of marriage were not assessed in this sample. Seventy-four percent of the married individuals in this study reported being very happy. Perhaps couples started with a stronger commitment to a spouse and matured to being more committed to marriage with this sense of duty over time.

Correlational and regression analyses showed a statistically significant relationship between years in current marriage and commitment to marriage (moral obligation). This concurs with the literature (Call & Heaton, 1997; Heaton & Albrecht,

1991; Rogers & Amato, 1997) that more stable marriages are associated with the number of years individuals are married. Years in current marriage were also correlated with the frequency of religious attendance and religious preference. Heaton and Albrecht suggested that marital duration, which is highly collinear with age, could be related to less physical attractiveness due to aging that reduces alternatives, increased investment in the relationship, and costliness for older women who may not be financially independent. Another possibility is the cohort effect (Amato & Rogers, 1999; Robinson, 1994). Those of older generations may be less accepting of divorce (Amato et al., 2003; Norvai, 1998; Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001) as a viable option. Also, they may have a more socially ingrained mind-set of more conservative, religious values as suggested by Shrum (1980). Amato and Rogers found younger cohorts who were more accepting of divorce tended to indicate lower marital happiness and higher marital conflict.

There was no statistically significant relationship between years in current marriage and constraint commitment. This concurs with Adams and Jones (1997) who showed the number of years in current marriage was unrelated to constraint commitment. However, Heaton and Albrecht (1991) showed couples in unhappy but stable marriages showed higher levels of constraint the longer they were married. The measure of constraint commitment for this study was an open-ended question avoiding a forced answer format. This may also have reduced the number of respondents who might select feeling constrained if they did not think of specific ways that choice might apply to their situation. Again, feeling trapped (constraint commitment) does not tend to

become evident until the relationship seems less satisfying (Adams & Jones; Brickman, 1987), which is the case with unhappy couples. Overall, this sample showed much lower percentages of individuals feeling constraint than those who did not. Further investigation into stages of marriage; i.e., honeymoon period, disillusionment, and renewal could enlighten the discussion of this result (Brickman).

Cohabitation, the last socio-demographic variable, is one of the strongest indicators of feeling trapped (constraint commitment), lower commitment to spouse, and lower commitment to marriage. This validated previous research (Amato et al., 2003; Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Heaton, 2002; Stanley et al., 2004; Whitehead & Popenoe, 2003). Although half of all first marriages are now preceded by cohabitation (Bumpass & Lu), it continues to provide a less stable beginning for marital longevity and a greater risk for marital distress (Rogers & Amato, 1997; Stanley et al.). It may be possible that the lack of legal and public commitment in cohabitation reduces the sense of commitment to a partner. It seems reasonable to conclude that cohabitants would not feel as committed to the institution of marriage.

Cohabitation is a complex issue and it is not clear if it is a stage of courtship or an alternative to marriage (Seltzer, 2004), but only 1 of 10 cohabiting couples lasts 5 or more years (Bumpass & Lu, 2000). To understand why cohabitants feel more constrained will require continued study. Part of the reason may be the more ambivalent and fragile nature of the relationship, with less motivation to stick out bad times and develop more constructive problem solving patterns. Feelings of constraint in this group may also be a result of feeling more fragile about counting on a partner who can leave at

any time despite developing an economic, emotional, and social dependency on another person. Rogers and Amato (1997) reported cohabitants had lower marital quality and significantly higher levels of marital conflict and problems.

The rate of cohabitation is also one of the largest differences between this Utah study and the Oklahoma study. Twenty-four percent of the Utah participants in the youngest age category (18 to 24) reported cohabiting compared to 60% of Oklahoma's same age group (Shramm et al., 2003). A possible explanation for this contrast could be the conservative Utah society promoted by the predominant religion and other religions. Individuals who cohabited in this study were least likely to be LDS and most likely to prefer no religion. They also reported lower frequency of religious attendance and lower religious values. This seems reasonable since conservative religions tend to pronounce cohabitation as an undesirable living choice. This comprises a social expectation against cohabitation. Social pressure to marry rather than live together is more common in a conservative culture.

There was a negative, statistically significant relationship between premarital cohabitation and two socio-demographic variables: education level and years in current marriage, but not gender and age first married. This was consistent with Bupass and Lu (2000) who found individuals who do not complete high school were twice as likely to cohabitate as those who complete college. Cohan and Klienbaum (2002) suggested that fewer years in current marriage for cohabitants may be for a variety of reasons such as a more advanced stage in the marital relationship, cohabiting to preserve financial gains, and that a cohabitant may have basic differences not clarified by this study.

Religiosity

This study confirmed previous studies that showed factors of religiosity increased commitment to spouse (dedication) and commitment to marriage (moral obligation), but did not increase constraint commitment. Active participation in a religion that strongly advocates staying married, except in cases of abusiveness (Larson & Goltz, 1989; Schovanec & Lee, 2001: *True to the Faith*, 2004; U. S. Catholic Church, 2003; Wall & Miller-McLermore, 2002; Wilson & Musick, 1996), and stronger belief in religious values are closely associated with commitment to spouse and commitment to marriage. Hunt and King (1978) found that "commitment to beliefs and effort in the sphere of religion is related to commitment to maintaining better marital adjustment" (p. 405).

This study showed a negative relationship between these same religiosity factors and constraint commitment. Mahoney and colleagues (2001) found greater religiosity tends to inhibit divorce and increase marital commitment. They conjecture that this may be due to the social benefits in religious groups that provide a sense of belonging. This sense of connection to the religious network may create a reluctance to divorce and risk social rejection or isolation. It may be socially undesirable to focus attention on the barriers that prevent individuals from leaving unsatisfactory relationships. Cognitively, individuals may choose to deny feeling trapped when they are active participants in a religion that strongly discourages marital dissolution. They may feel stigmatized for negative feelings about their marital relationships and fear others may think their negative response is based on not living by religious convictions.

Frequency of religious attendance is the most common indicator for marital stability (Amato & Rogers, 1997; Call & Heaton, 1997). This finding was confirmed in this study. Thornton and Camburn (1989) suggested that religious instruction of conservative churches provide a strong expectation of marital stability. The religious preference of LDS showed statistically significant relationships with commitment to spouse (dedication), commitment to marriage (moral obligation) and the least constraint commitment.

Affiliation with a religious organization must be interpreted with caution. Individuals differ in their religious experience depending on multiple variables which may or may not be directly related to religious teachings. The degree of influence of religious dogma compared to the social pressure of friends and neighbors who happen to attend the same church has not been clarified in this study.

Religiously supported, pro-relational values have a strong relationship to marital commitment (Mahoney et al., 1999; Schovanec & Lee, 2001). Religion is a complex variable to measure and separating the effects of religious teachings from the cultural effects of a social network in a predominant local religion is difficult. There seems to be an overlap between religious belief systems and the effect of a church's social network (Mahoney et al., 2001). Studies comparing the Utah population to other geographic areas where the LDS are not so predominant would provide insight into the social influence of the indoctrination of theology. Although measures of religiosity that include intrinsic values and beliefs may help to separate these effects (Mahoney et al., 1999), continued refinement of measures will be important to future research.

The final question of this research was to determine the extent that the study variables predicted the three types of marital commitment. Those who feel trapped (constraint commitment) were least likely to show commitment to spouse (dedication). This finding confirms the polarized relationship of these two phenomena observed by Adams and Jones (1997). This study also confirms the possibility that commitment to marriage (moral obligation) mediates the other two types of commitment (Adams & Jones; Johnson et al., 1999). From the regression analyses a negative score on constraint commitment was the strongest predictor of commitment to spouse (dedication) and, adversely, the strongest predictor of constraint commitment was a negative score on commitment to spouse. Additionally, both commitment to spouse and constraint commitment were significant predictors of commitment to marriage. The predictive models strongly connected religiosity to the three types of marital commitment with religious values being either the first or second strongest predictor to commitment to spouse (dedication), commitment to marriage (moral obligation), and an inverse relationship to constraint commitment.

Therapeutic Application

There are several implications of these findings for marital therapy. Enduring and satisfying marriages are not merely based on finding someone who fits a set of pre-determined criteria and meets individual expectations. It also involves developing interaction patterns based on shared understanding (Gottman, 1994). No single factor determines marital success. A therapist will benefit from a systemic exploration of

couple dynamics, schemas, affective expressions, behavior patterns, relational issues, contextual issues, and a clarification of chosen values (Baucom, Epstein, & LaTaillade, 2002; Gottman; Hoyt, 2002; Johnson & Denton, 2002). Marital commitment can provide the motivating energy to maintain stability, recover from challenges, and enhance the relationship.

Therapists who can conceptualize the three types of commitment processes will be better facilitators to help couples move beyond the self-interest of happiness and satisfaction and incorporate the component of perseverance required to overcome the often inevitable difficult times in marriage (Rusbult et al., 1998a). Understanding marital commitment helps couples not only survive but thrive.

Therapists who assess a partner with lower levels of commitment to spouse and commitment to marriage but a higher level of the more negative aspect of constraint commitment might choose to address marital distress differently than if a partner shows a high level of commitment to spouse (dedication) or commitment to marriage (moral obligation). In fact, confronting ambivalent individuals about their level of marital commitment may provoke them to abandon the relationship prematurely. Recalling and reinforcing the appealing characteristics that initially attracted partners to each other can aid couples in shifting what they attend to and create positive feedback (Hanson, 1995). This shift in focus is suggested by the positive psychology movement that aims to build on strengths more than weaknesses (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Renewing these strengthening features during therapy can have a powerful effect on couple dynamics (Johnson & Denton, 2002). However, if individuals do not have a certain

level of marital commitment, they probably will not be open to seeing positive qualities. Commitment can be the motivating factor of persevering (Amato, 2003).

Although a circular causality (Hanson, 1995) may blend the three types of commitment in the mind of a client, an aware therapist can differentiate these three processes and identify interactional patterns that need to be altered to enhance each type. The ability of a clinician to reframe (Johnson & Denton, 2002) constraint commitment as a more positive commitment to marriage may shift the perceptions of feeling trapped in a dissatisfied spouse to an affective response that involves a more acceptable belief in responsibility for marriage from a moral basis. Re-creating a shared identity helps couples view problems as a joint responsibility and reduce the destructiveness of blaming each other for problems (Arriaga & Agnew, 1998; Gottman, 1994; Stanley et al., 2002).

Wall and Miller-McLemore (2002) investigated the dilemma of marital therapists in balancing the needs of the individual with the needs of the couple. When commitment is viewed using just two constructs; attractions for staying versus the barriers for leaving, without the moral obligation element, it "does an injustice" to the therapeutic context (pp. 272-273).

Rusbult and colleagues (1998b) found marital commitment becomes most pertinent when spouses are unhappy. Their study identified commitment as the primary factor in choosing one of four alternatives for dealing with marital distress. These four choices reflect various levels of marital commitment: (a) leaving, which indicates an absence of commitment; (b) becoming disengaged or denying any problems but

remaining may show a bit more commitment; (c) waiting optimistically for things to change reflects a passive, but more committed stance; and (d) working actively towards a more satisfying marriage shows the highest commitment (Rusbult et al., 1998a). A therapist who can assess these various stances can adapt treatment and help individuals make their choices explicit and open to exploration.

Assessment of the three types of commitment can be formal or informal. Therapists can administer formal instruments, ask direct questions about commitment levels, or avoid risking premature conclusions by clients and watching for behavioral clues (Baucom et al., 2002; Johnson & Denton, 2002).

Solution focused therapists can amplify and reinforce spouses' positive shifts who express willingness to act to solve marital dilemmas, or help clients focus on exceptions to feelings of ambivalence about their relationships. A subjective punctuation of the sequences of interaction between spouses often determines the meaning ascribed to their partner's behaviors. Finding the exceptions to these behaviors can create powerful ripple effect to future expectations (Hoyt, 2002).

Viewing commitment from an emotionally focused perspective emphasizes the organization quality of emotions and the marriage as the client might. The feelings of being stuck inherent in constraint commitment can be identified and analyzed from an attachment point of view (Johnson & Denton, 2002). Creating new emotional experiences by revealing that distress may be identified in positive ways as commitment to a spouse or commitment to marriage can add freeing insight into why a partner can gain a more secure base to strengthen their marriage. Valuing interdependency can help

individuals utilize more pro-relational behaviors (Arriaga & Rusbult, 1998; Rusbult et al., 1991, 1998a).

Cognitive-Behavioral Couple therapy can explore schemas and help individuals address possible attributions a spouse makes about their partner's demand or withdrawal behaviors (Baucom et al., 2002). Clarifying schemas about marital commitment and a discussion of expectations can help couples identify the positive values in their behaviors.

Fennell's study (1993) indicated that commitment to marriage (moral obligation) is one of the strongest predictors of marital satisfaction. Clements and Swenson (2000) found that a high level of commitment to spouse (dedication) was negatively associated with marital problems, positively related to dyadic adjustment, and the strongest indicator of marital quality overall. One challenge in strengthening a languishing marriage involves recognition of external, contextual stresses that disrupt the functioning of a relationship. Looking beyond parts of individuals, to the dynamic whole allows a broadened perspective for treatment options. Kaslow and Robison (1996) suggested therapists working with couples that face chronic illness recognize the power of commitment in letting go of disappointment and create more positive attitudes towards their situation.

Rosen-Grandon, Myers, and Hattie (2004) found that shared values, defined as belief in God and religious commitment, are strongly associated with the ability of a couple to deal constructively with conflict. Therapists reported that couples who seek intervention because of lower levels of marital happiness often are vague about the

source of dissatisfaction. Martial commitment was identified as the motivating energy to help these couples work through their problems and maintain optimism for progress. Religious values was a predictor of the three tools to achieving martial satisfaction: love, loyalty, and shared values (Rosen-Grandon et al.).

Schovanec and Lee (2001) studied the mind set towards divorce and suggested that religion plays a vital role in commitment to marriage, and respondents who valued respecting others were more likely to agree that marriage should be a lifelong commitment. Commitment to marriage was connected to the willingness to sacrifice enhancing couple functioning (Van Lange et al., 1997).

A systemic oriented marriage and family therapist will see the interconnectedness of attitudes between partners (Hanson, 1995). Therapists can use knowledge of commitment to spouse, commitment to marriage, and constraint commitment to promote a change in one part of the commitment process that will consequently affect another commitment process as a systemic change (Hanson).

For a complete understanding of a client's commitment to marriage a therapist needs to analyze their belief system values (Walsh, 1998). Understanding why a partner clings to relationships and the particular type of commitment helps clarify the balance of the relationship maintenance and individual gratifications. The findings from this study will assist therapists in understanding the role cultural differences such as religion play in the meaning couples place on values of commitment, positive interaction, and religiosity and how they relate to marital stability and marital quality. It will help connect the relationship between a couple's satisfaction and stability with commitment

to spouse, commitment to marriage, and constraint commitment. The results will be valuable for those who provide an informational foundation for social policy and therapists who provide treatment for couples. Weaver and colleagues (2002) suggested that therapists who increase their comprehension of religions influence can incorporate religious values as a resource in a strength-based model of treatment for couples.

Therapists would miss a vital component of couple dynamics if they ignored the power of religious influence on couple behaviors (Wall & Miller-McLemore, 2002). Acknowledging both the positive and negative aspects with regards to religious beliefs provides a format to respect beliefs and utilize those beliefs in creating a treatment plan. In addition, knowledge about religious belief systems may provide tools for the therapist who works with difficult and/or uncooperative partners (Sullivan, 2001).

This study's finding that there is a relationship between a religious belief system and commitment to marriage can aid a therapist in making preliminary assessments if they know the strength of a couple's religious adherence, homogamy, and commitment to each other, their marriage, and the constraint they might feel at a particular moment. Couple's relationships occur within a cultural context that includes their religious activity and adherence to a religious belief system. There are general assumptions, according to this religious context, about how their relationship should ideally function. Expectations for individuals and their spouse are part of these assumptions. Couples seem to fare best when they have similar core values and beliefs (Call & Heaton, 1997; Heaton & Pratt, 1990).

As treatment for couples continues to be refined and tested, the interventions

seem to include a more inclusive look at contextual issues (Schovanec & Lee, 2001; Smith & Jarjoura, 1988; Smock, 2000). Research is needed to further clarify the role of religion in marital commitment. However, religious beliefs should be integrated into interventions. We cannot ignore the cybernetics involved with couples to understand the dynamics of individuals (Hanson, 1995). Religious beliefs of both partners become a systemic part of the process of interaction. Strong religious beliefs about what should be happening in a marriage may produce negative feedback to a dysfunctional system. A therapist who is informed about a couple's religious belief system can explore possibilities with them on the religious meaning of their current status and evoke other possibilities within the context of these belief systems (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). A holistic approach allows therapists to include the importance of their partner in their life, the marital union, and the barriers that keep them feeling trapped. Interpreting communication between partners based on report only can be clarified by including the command elements of meaning based on religion. Religion includes emotion as well as rational elements (Hunt & King, 1978; Mahoney et al., 1999, 2001). A therapist who understands various religious backgrounds can incorporate that information in helping couples identify the differences between subjective expectations and practical reality.

Carlson, Kirkpatrick, Hecker, and Killner (2002) cautioned those who train therapists not to over correct for the religious influence for clients, but found that 76% of marriage and family therapists did not receive any training related to religious issues. Miller and Thoresen (2003) stressed the importance of expanding the religious knowledge base for therapists by adding that "religion is the single most important

influence in life for a substantial minority" (p. 25). Wall and Miller-McLemore (2002) suggest that therapists do clients a disservice if they ignore the social/religious orientation. One in 20 marriage and family therapists are clergy, and referrals to marriage and family therapists from clergy is 10 times greater than referrals from psychologists (Doherty & Simmons, 1996).

Clinicians should be encouraged to gently approach the role of religion at the beginning of therapy to discern religion's power for influencing behavior and designing treatment that fits personal paradigms. Opening the door to a discussion by asking if there are any religious beliefs or practices that are important to the clients that they would like to the therapist to understand can provide a positive format for exploration. Hopefully, this will avoid offending, or creating an atmosphere of defensiveness. Interventions can be planned from forthright discussions about the salience of religious activities, beliefs, and compliance for individuals. Worthington (1998) found the use of prayer and religious writings can be an effective tool when compatible with clients' belief systems. The continued expansion of training for therapists in understanding the power of religion in the lives of those they serve, whether it involves a particular denomination or a non-religious stance, is a valuable asset.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study employed relatively simplistic measures of the constructs (see Measures section). The data are cross-sectional, and causal inferences cannot be statistically verified with such data. Although this study avoided a forced response

format for particular situations indicating constraint commitment, some constraint-related but non-leading questions might provide participants with a stimulus to respond to this construct differently. An open-response format may evoke a more predominant choice of barriers rather than relationship rewards and this study limited the selection of barrier-related questions.

Phone surveys have several inherent weaknesses. They do not clarify what selection factors, if any, are associated with inclusion in the sample. They also do not quantify the type of participant who answer the phone, stay on the phone, or have a land-line phone from others in regard to measuring social constructs. Even so, telephone surveys are a simplistic measuring device that offer the benefit of random selection of participants and provide a broad basis for generalization.

Race and ethnicity are important factors to consider in any study. However, the sample for this study under-represented diverse groups and limited the possibility of analyzing race and ethnicity differences (other than the LDS culture) with meaningful results. The current trend of increased cultural diversity in Utah will provide more opportunities in the future to enrich the study of marriage by including a more heterogeneous sample (Utah's Vital Statistics, 2002). Because this sample is overwhelmingly homogeneous with regard to religious affiliation and culture, the generalization of the results to other populations may be limited. Results about religiosity must, accordingly, be viewed with caution. Also continued study of the changing dynamics between males and females may reveal added information on gender differences. Affiliation in conservative religions that promote strong marital bonds may

alter contextual elements seen in other parts of the country. The interdependence of partners may be enhanced or weakened by religious expectations. Commitment to marriage may be perceived differently by religiously heterogeneous couples (Hunt & King, 1978; Lehrer & Chiswick, 1993; Williams & Lawler, 2001).

Age at first marriage for this study's participants is also different than the U. S. population. Again, this sample showed a younger age at first marriage than the national sample, but both this sample and the national study show a similar difference between males and females for age first married (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001b). The average age for Utahns at first marriage is 3.5 years younger than the national median age. Second, the high percentage choosing a religious preference for the predominant religion indicates a highly homogeneous sample, making it difficult to generalize conclusions to other populations. The duration of marriage in Utah for those who were married and currently divorced was 14.65% longer than the national average with a median length of 9 years compared to the national median length of marriage of 7.85 years (Schramm et al., 2003). As mentioned previously, Utahns also have the lowest cohabitation rate of any state in the nation (Kreider & Simmons, 2003).

Separating a religious belief system and the social influence of involvement in a predominant religion deserves focus. The overlap of conservative, religious, and social values may obscure the mediating effect of a particular denomination. Those who attend church more frequently may not ingrain the religious beliefs about the sanctity of marriage while those who do not attend religious services with the same frequency may have spiritual convictions and high expectations for their marriage and work hard to

strengthen their relationship. Further research is needed on church attendance, religious affiliation, and religious values. Matching individual behavior with the belief system and interdependency would help clarify the association. We will continue to watch for when a religious belief in maintaining marriage becomes the rationale for staying in an abusive relationship. Thornton and Young-Demarco (2001) found younger cohorts who reported higher commitment to marriage correlated with stronger commitment to equality, tolerance, and freedom. But caution must be employed in research and therapy paradigms that impose political ideals.

Despite affiliation in conservative, pro-marriage religions, individuals differ in their religious experience depending on multiple variables which may or may not be related to religion. There is an overlap in religious and social values. Separating religious beliefs from the social effect of attending church deserves more focus. Those who attend church frequently may not internalize religious beliefs, and those who do not attend a particular denomination may have an ingrained belief in the "sanctity" of marriage and work to strengthen their marriage. To augment research on the benefits of religious involvement on marital commitment, qualitative research could prove insightful. Open questions could be asked regarding the meaning of religious attendance, religious values, and affiliation in various denominations. As suggested by Marks (2004), a glimpse into the literal processes between the quality of marital relationships and the experience of religion is important to family clinicians. Underlying factors, revealed through qualitative methods of why religious activity facilitates marital commitment, should be investigated more thoroughly. Also, the Protestant category

does not reflect the variety and extent of beliefs about marriage.

This study of marital commitment on individuals does not provide a correlated response based on paired couples. Further study is needed to verify these results for possible interaction between married partners and if both partners see their situation similarly. It did not connect the religious affiliation of individuals to their partner's religious affiliation. Religious homogamy (both partners belonging to the same church) is strongly associated with marital stability (Call & Heaton, 1997; Heaton et al., 1985; Heaton & Pratt, 1990; Lehrer & Chiswick, 1993; Mahoney et al., 2001).

The dynamic quality of relationships makes it difficult to rely totally on a static point in time to clearly evaluate marital commitment (Adams & Jones, 1997). Perceptions change and are not usually stable over time. Longitudinal data would strengthen the picture of marital commitment for couples. This study received information from individuals who were not paired with their partner. A longitudinal study with couples would likely reveal more viable information.

Summary

In conclusion, despite several limitations, this study provides strong support for predictions regarding the three types of marital commitment and establishes a relationship between religiosity factors and marital commitment. The three types of marital commitment: commitment to spouse (dedication), commitment to marriage (moral obligation), and constraint commitment (feeling trapped) were confirmed as separate, distinct experiences. Study results also indicated that religion plays an

important part in the strength of commitment to spouse and commitment to marriage and a decrease in constraint commitment. This study supported the work of Adams and Jones (1997) and Johnson and colleagues (1999) in separating marital commitment into the three types. It is important that we consider the three types of different experiences cognitively, conatively, and effectively to define the process of marital commitment in future studies.

Utah has the highest level of religious concentration of a particular denomination and the highest frequency of church attendance. This provides a unique picture of religiosity and marriage. Lower religious values was the only statistically significant predictor of constraint commitment, other than commitment to spouse and commitment to marriage. A strength-based model of understanding and treating marriages includes a mandate to consider religious/social networks as a positive support and religious beliefs as a powerful influence on strengthen marital commitment. As suggested by Hunt and King (1978), marriage becomes a "long range laboratory" for the application of religious beliefs.

REFERENCES

- Acitelli, L. K., & Antonucci, T. (1994). Gender differences in the link between marital support and satisfaction in older couples. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 67*(4), 688-698.
- Adams, J. M., & Jones, W. H. (1997). The conceptualization of marital commitment: An integrative analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 72*, 1177-1196.
- Adler, A. (1933). *What life should mean to you*. New York: Unwin Books.
- Agnew, C. R., Van Lange, P. A. M., Rusbult, C. E., & Langston, C. A. (1998). Cognitive interdependence: Commitment and the mental representation of close relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 74*(4), 939-954.
- Albrecht, S. L., & Heaton, T. B. (1984). Secularization, higher education, and religiosity. *Review of Religious Research, 26*, 43-58.
- Amato, P. R. (2000). The consequences of divorce for adults and children. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 62*(4), 1269-1287.
- Amato, P. R. (2003). *Studying marital interaction and commitment with survey data* (Conference on Measurement Issues in Family Demography). Bethesda, MD: National Institutes of Health.
- Amato, P. R., & Booth, A. (2001). The legacy of parents' marital discord: Consequences for children's marital quality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 81*, 627-638.
- Amato, P. R., Johnson, D. R., Booth, A., & Rogers, S. J. (2003). Continuity and change in marital quality between 1980 and 2000. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 65*(1), 1-22.
- Amato, P. R., & Rogers, S. J. (1997). A longitudinal study of marital problems and subsequent divorce. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 59*, 612-624.
- Amato, P. R., & Rogers, S. J. (1999). Do attitudes toward divorce affect marital quality? *Journal of Family Issues, 20*, 69-86.

- Arriaga, X. B., & Agnew, C. R. (2001). Being committed: Affective, cognitive, and conative components of relationship commitment. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 27, 1190-1203.
- Arriaga, X. B., & Rusbult, C. E. (1998). Standing in my partner's shoes: Partner perspective taking and reactions to accommodative dilemmas. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 24, 927-948.
- Baptist General Conference Resolution on Marriage and the Family. (2004, June). *Statement on marriage*. Arlington Heights, IL: Baptist General Conference Communications. Retrieved April 8, 2005, from <http://www.bgcworld.org/intro/tramar.htm>
- Baucum, D. H., Epstein, N., & LaTaillade, J. J. (2002). Cognitive-behavioral couple therapy. In A. S. Gurman & N. S. Jacobson (Eds), *Clinical handbook of couple therapy* (3rd ed., pp. 26-58). New York: Guilford Press.
- Becker, H. S. (1960). Notes on the concept of commitment. *American Journal of Sociology*, 66, 32-40.
- Bellah, R. N. (1973). *Emile Durkheim: On morality and society, selected writings*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bellah, R. N., Madsen, R. S., Sullivan, W. M., Swidler, A., & Tipton, S. M. (1985). *Habits of the heart: Individualism and commitment in American life*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Bockelman, K. G. (2001). *Marriage: A worship handbook*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press.
- Bogensneider, K. (2000). Has family policy come of age: A decade review of the state of family policy in the 1990s. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62, 1136-1159.
- Booth, A., Johnson, D., & Edwards, J. N. (1983). Measuring marital instability. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 45(2), 387-394.
- Bradbury, T. N., Fincham, F. D., & Beach, S. R. H. (2000). Research on the nature and determinants of marital satisfaction: A decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62(4), 964-980.

- Bramlett, M. D., & Mosher, W. D. (2001). *First marriage dissolution, divorce, and remarriage: United States* (Tech. Rep. No. 323). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.
- Bramlett, M. D., & Mosher, W. D. (2002). *Cohabitation, marriage, divorce, and remarriage in the United States* (Vital Health Statistics No. 23:22). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.
- Brickman, P. (1987). *Commitment, conflict, and caring*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bui, K. T., Peplau, L. A., & Hill, C. T. (1996). Testing the Rusbult model of relationship commitment and stability in a 15-year study of heterosexual couples. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22, 1244-1257.
- Bumpass, L., & Lu, H. H. (2000). Trends in cohabitation and implications for children's family contexts in the United States. *Population Studies*, 54, 29-41.
- Bumpass, L. L., Martin, T. C., & Sweet, J. A. (1991). The impact of family background and early marital factors on marital disruption. *Journal of Family Issues*, 12, 22-44.
- Burns, E. M. (1969). *Western civilizations* (7th ed.). New York: W. W. Norton.
- Call, V. R. A., & Heaton, T. B. (1997). Religious influence on marital stability. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 36(3), 382-392.
- Carlson, T. D., Kirkpatrick, D., Hecker, L., & Killmer, M. (2002). Religion, spirituality, and marriage and family therapy: A study of family therapists' beliefs about the appropriateness of addressing religious and spiritual issues in therapy. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 30, 157-171.
- Carroll, J. S., Linford, S. T., Holman, T. B., & Busby, D. M. (2000). Marital and family orientations among highly religious young adults: Comparing Latter-day Saints with traditional Christians. *Review of Religious Research*, 42(2), 193-205.
- Cherlin, A. J. (1992). *Marriage, divorce, remarriage*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Cherlin, A., Burton, L., Hurt, T., & Purvin, D. (2003, September). *Domestic abuse and patterns of marriage and cohabitation: Evidence from a multi-method study*. Paper presented at the National Poverty Center Conferences on Marriage and Family Formation Among Low-Income Couples. Washington, DC.

- Clark, M. S., & Mills, J. (1979). Interpersonal attraction in exchange and communal relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37, 12-14.
- Clements, R., & Swensen, C. H. (2000, Summer). Commitment to one's spouse as a predictor of marital quality among older couples. *Current Psychology*, 19(2), 110-120.
- Code of Hammurabi. (1958). (T. J. Meek, Trans.). In J. B. Pritchard (Ed.), *The ancient near east: An anthology of texts and pictures* (pp. 138-167). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Cohan, C. L., & Klienbaum, S. (2002, February). Toward a greater understanding of the cohabitation effect: Premarital cohabitation and marital communication. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 64(1), 180-192.
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavior sciences*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Coombs, R. (1991). Marital status and personal well-being: A literature review. *Family Relations*, 40, 97-102.
- Cornwall, M. (1989). The determinants of religious behavior: A theoretical model and empirical test. *Social Forces*, 68(2), 572-592.
- Davis, J. L., & Rusbult, C. E. (2001). Attitude alignment in close relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81(1), 65-84.
- DeMaris, A., & MacDonald, W. (1993). Premarital cohabitation and marital instability: A test of the unconventional hypothesis. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 55, 399-407.
- Diamant, A., & Cooper, H. (1976). *Living a Jewish life: Jewish traditions, customs, and values for today's families*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Doherty, W. J., & Carroll, J. S. (2002). Health and the ethics of marital therapy and education. In J. Wall, D. Browning, W. J. Doherty, & S. Post (Eds.), *Marriage, healthy and the professions: If marriage is good for you, what does this mean for law, medicine, ministry, therapy, and business?* (pp. 208-232). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.
- Doherty, W. J., & Simmons, D. S. (1996). Clinical practice patterns of marriage and family therapists: A national survey of therapists and their clients. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 22(1), 9-25.

- Dooley, D. (2001). *Social research methods* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Drigotas, S. M., Rusbult, C. E., & Verette, J. (1999). Level of commitment, mutuality of commitment, and couple well-being. *Personal Relationships, 6*, 389-409.
- Duke, J. T. (1999, March 4). *Latter-day Saints in a secular world: What we have learned about Latter-day Saints from social research*. Presented at the Martin B. Hickman outstanding scholar lecture, Brigham Young University. Retrieved October 7, 2004, from <http://www.byu.edu/papers/hickman/>
- Epic of Gilgamesh. (1958). (E. A. Speiser, Trans.). In J. B. Pritchard (Ed.), *The ancient near east: An anthology of texts and pictures* (pp. 40-75). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Fehr, B. (1988). Prototype analysis of the concepts of love and commitment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 55*, 557-578.
- Felmlee, D. H. (2001, June). No couple is an Island: A social network perspective on dyadic stability. *Social Forces, 79*(4), 1259-1287.
- Fenell, D. L. (1993). Characteristics of long-term first marriages. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 15*, 446-460.
- Fields, J., & Casper L. M. (2001). *America's families and living arrangements: 2000* (U. S. Census Bureau No. P20-537). Washington, DC: U. S. Census Bureau.
- Fiese, B. H., & Tomcho, T. J. (2001). Finding meaning in religious practices: The relation between religious holiday rituals and marital satisfaction. *Journal of Family Psychology, 15*, 597-609.
- Finkel, E. J., Rusbult, C. E., Kumashiro, M., & Hannon, P. A. (2002). Dealing with betrayal in close relationships: Does commitment promote forgiveness? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 82*(6), 956-974.
- Flor, D. L., & Knapp, N. F. (2001). Transmission transaction: Predicting adolescents' internalization of parental religious values. *Journal of Family Psychology, 15*, 627-645.
- Fowers, B. J. (1998, January). Psychology and the good marriage: Social theory as practice. *American Behavioral Scientist, 41*(4), 516-541.

- General Accounting Office. (1997, November). (Tech. Rep. No. GAOB-275860). Washington, DC: Office of the General Counsel.
- General Accounting Office. (2004, January). (Tech. Rep. No. GAO-04-353R). Washington, DC: Office of the General Counsel.
- Gottman, J. M. (1994). *Why marriages success or fail*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Gorsuch, R. L., & McPherson, S. E. (1989). Intrinsic/extrinsic measurement: I/E-revised and single-item scales. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 28(3), 348-354.
- Halford, W. K., Markman, H. J., Stanley, S., & Kline, G. H. (2002). Relationship enhancement. In D. H. Sprenkle (Ed.), *Effectiveness research in marriage and family therapy* (pp. 191-222). Alexandria, VA: The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy.
- Hanson, B. G. (1995). *General systems theory: Beginning with wholes*. Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis.
- Hawkins, A. J., Wardle, L. D., & Coolidge, D. O. (2002). *Revitalizing the institution of marriage for the twenty-first century: An agenda for strengthening marriage*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Heaton, T. B. (2002). Factors contributing to increasing marital stability in the United States. *Journal of Family Issues*, 23(3), 392-409.
- Heaton, T. B., & Albrecht, S. L. (1991). Stable unhappy marriages. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 53(3), 747-758.
- Heaton, T., B., Albrecht, S. L., & Martin, T. K. (1985, August). The timing of divorce. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 47, 631-639.
- Heaton, T. B., & Pratt, E. (1990). The effects of religious homogamy on marital satisfaction and stability. *Journal of Family Issues*, 11, 191-207.
- Hinkley, G. B. (1995, November). The family: A proclamation to the world. *Ensign*, 25, 102.
- Hirschl, T. A., Altobelli, J., & Rank, M. R. (2003). Does marriage increase the odds of affluence? Exploring the life course probabilities. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 65, 927-938.

- Horn, W. F. (2004). *Testimony of Wade F. Horn, assistant secretary for children and families, Department of Health and Human Services*. Before the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, Subcommittee on Children and Families, United States Senate. Retrieved October 20, 2004, from <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/olab/testimony/2004/>
- Hoyt, M. F. (2002). Solution-focused couple therapy. In A. S. Gurman & N. S. Jacobson (Eds.), *Clinical handbook of couple therapy* (3rd ed., pp. 335-369). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Huber, J., & Spitze, G. (1980). Considering divorce: An expansion of Becker's theory of marital instability. *American Journal of Sociology*, *86*, 75-89.
- Hunt, R. A., & King, M. B. (1978). Religiosity and marriage. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *17*(4), 399-406.
- Ireland, J. (2003). Why poverty remains high: The role of income, growth, economic inequality, and changes in family structure, 1949-1999. *Demography*, *40*(3), 499-519.
- Jarchow, C. (2003). *Welfare reform: Strengthening marriage and two-parent families* (National Conference of State Legislatures). Washington, DC: The National Conference of State Legislatures.
- Johnson, M. P. (1973). Commitment: A conceptual structure and empirical application. *Sociological Quarterly*, *14*, 395-406.
- Johnson, M. P., Caughlin, J. P., & Huston, T. L. (1999). The tripartite nature of marital commitment: Personal, moral, and structural reasons to stay married. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *61*, 160-177.
- Johnson, S. M., & Denton, W. (2002). Emotionally focused couple therapy: Creating secure connections. In A. S. Gurman & N. S. Jacobson (Eds.), *Clinical handbook of couple therapy* (3rd ed., pp. 221-250). New York: Guilford Press.
- Johnson, D. J., & Rusbult, C. E. (1989). Resisting temptation: Devaluation of alternative partners as a means of maintaining commitment in close relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *57*(6), 967-980.
- Johnson, C. A., Stanley, S. M., Glenn, N. D., Amato, P. A., Nock, S. L., Markman, H. J., & Dion, M. R. (2002). *Marriage in Oklahoma: 2001 baseline statewide survey on marriage and divorce* (Tech. Rep. No. SO2096OKDHS). Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma Department of Human Services.

- Kanter, R. M. (1968). Commitment and social organization: A study of commitment mechanisms in utopian communities. *American Sociological Review*, 33(4), 499-517.
- Kapinus, C. A., & Johnson, M. P. (2003). The utility of family life cycle as a theoretical and empirical tool: Commitment and family life-cycle stage. *Journal of Family Issues*, 24(2), 155-184.
- Kaplan, R. M., & Saccizzo, D. P. (1997). Psychological testing: Principles, applications, and issues. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Karney, B. R., & Bradbury, T. N. (1995). The longitudinal course of marital quality and stability: A review of theory, method, and research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 118, 3-34.
- Kaslow, F., & Robison, J. A. (1996). Long-term satisfying marriages: Perceptions of contributing factors. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 24(2), 153-170.
- Kelley, H. H., & Thibaut, J. W. (1978). *Interpersonal relations: A theory of interdependence*. New York: Wiley.
- Keysar, A., & Kosmin, B. A. (1995). The impact of religious identification on differences in educational attainment among American women in 1990. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 34, 230-241.
- Klein, D. M., & White, J. M. (1996). *Family theories: An introduction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kosmin, B. A., Mayer, E., & Keysar, A. (2001). *American religious identity survey* (Last modified 29 April 2004) (Adherents 41,000 statistics and religious geography citations published membership adherent statistics for over 4,200 religions, churching, denominations etc.). Retrieved August 26, 2004, from www.Adherents.com: www.Adherents.com
- Kreider, R. M., & Simmons, T. (2003). *Marital status: 2000* (U. S. Census Bureau No. C2KBR-30). Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.
- Kuhn, M. H., & McPartland, T. S. (1954). An empirical investigation of self-attitudes. *American Sociological Review*, 19, 68-76.
- Larson, L. E., & Goltz, J. W. (1989). Religious participation and marital commitment. *Review of Religious Research*, 30, 387-400.

- Le, B., & Agnew, C. R. (2003). Commitment and its theorized determinants: A meta-analysis of the investment model. *Personal Relationships, 10*, 37-57.
- Lehrer, E. L., & Chiswick, C. U. (1993). Religion as a determinant of marital stability. *Demography, 30*(3), 385-404.
- Levinger, G. (1976). A socio-psychological perspective on marital dissolution. *Journal of Social Issues, 52*, 21-47.
- Mahoney, A., Pargament, K. I., Jewell, T., Swank, A. B., Scott, E., Emery, E., & Rye, M. (1999). Marriage and the spiritual realm: The role of proximal and distal religious constructs in marital functioning. *Journal of Family Psychology, 13*(3), 321-338.
- Mahoney, A., Pargament, K. I., Tarakeshwar, N., & Swank, A. B. (2001). Religion in the home in the 1980s and 1990s: A meta-analytic review and conceptual analysis of links between religion, marriage, and parenting. *Journal of Family Psychology, 15*(4), 559-596.
- Marks, L. (2004). Sacred practices in highly religious families: Christian, Jewish, Mormon, and Muslim perspectives. *Family Process, 43*(2), 217-231.
- Marston, P. J., Hecht, M. L., Manke, M. L., McDaniel, S., & Reeder, H. (1998). The subjective experience of intimacy, passion, and commitment in heterosexual loving relationships. *Personal Relationships, 5*, 15-30.
- Martin, T. C., & Bumpass, L. L. (1989). Recent trends in marital disruption. *Demography, 26*, 37-51.
- Matthija, K. (1999, March). Father involvement in childrearing and the perceived stability of marriage. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 61*(2), 409-422.
- Merrill, R. M., Lyon, J. L., & Jensen, W. J. (2003). Lack of secularizing influence of education on religious activity and parity among Mormons. *Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion, 42*(1), 113-124.
- Miller, W. R., & Thoresen, C. E. (2003). Spirituality, religion, and health: An emerging research field. *American Psychologist, 58*, 24-35.
- Murstein, B. I., & MacDonald, M. G. (1983). The relationship of exchange-orientation and commitment scales to marriage adjustment. *International Journal of Psychology, 18*, 197-311.

- Myers, R. (1990). *Classical and modern regression with applications* (2nd ed.). Boston: Duxbury Press.
- Nelson, L. J. (2003, Summer). Rites of Passage in emerging adulthood: Perspectives of young Mormons. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 100, 33-49.
- Noone, R. J. (1988). Symbiosis, the family, and natural systems. *Family Process*, 27, 285-293.
- Norton, A., & Miller, L. F. (1992). *Marriage, divorce, and remarriage in the 1990s* (Current Population Reports No. Series P23-180). Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office.
- Norval, D. (1998). The course of marital success and failure in five American 10-year marriage cohorts. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 60(3), 75-82.
- Pasley, K., Kerpelman, J., & Guilbert, D. E. (2001). Gendered conflict, identity disruption, and marital instability. *Journal of Social and Personality Relationships*, 18(1), 5-28.
- Pearsall, J. (Ed.) (1999). *Oxford dictionary* (10th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Petersen, L. R. (1994). Education, homogamy, and religious commitment. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 33(2), 122-134
- Pinsof, W. M. (2002). The death of "till death us do part:" The transformation of pair-bonding in the 20th century. *Family Process*, 41(2), 135-157.
- Previti, D., & Amato, P. R. (2003, August). Why stay married? Rewards, barriers, and marital stability. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 65, 561-573.
- Robinson, L. C. (1994). Religious orientation in enduring marriage: An exploratory study. *Review of Religious Research*, 35, 207-218.
- Robinson, L. C., & Blanton, P. W. (1993). Marital strengths in enduring marriages. *Family Relations*, 42, 38-45.
- Rogers, S. J. (2004). Dollars, dependency, and divorce: Four perspectives on the role of wives' income. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66, 59-74.

- Rogers, S. J., & Amato, P. R. (1997). Is marital quality declining? The evidence from two generations. *Social Forces*, 75(3), 1089-1101.
- Rosen-Grandon, J. R., Myers, J. E., & Hattie, J. (2004). The relationship between marital characteristics, marital interaction processes, and marital satisfaction. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 82(1), 58-69.
- Rost, H. T. D. (1986). *The golden rule: A universal ethic*. Oxford, UK: George Ronald.
- Rusbult C. E. (1980). Commitment and satisfaction in romantic associations: A test of the investment model. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 16, 172-186.
- Rusbult, C. E. (1983). A longitudinal test of the investment model: The development (and deterioration) of satisfaction and commitment in heterosexual involvements. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 45, 101-117.
- Rusbult, C. E., Bissonnette, V. L., Arriag, X. B., & Cox, C. L. (1998a). Accommodation processes during the early years of marriage. In T. N. Bradbury (Ed.), *The developmental course of marital dysfunction* (pp. 74-113). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Rusbult, C. E., & Buunk, B. P. (1993). Commitment processes in close relationships: An interdependence analysis. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 10, 175-204.
- Rusbult, C. E., Drigotas, S. M., & Verette, J. (1994). The investment model: An interdependence analysis of commitment processes and relationship maintenance phenomena. In D. Canary & L. Stafford (Eds.), *Communication and relational maintenance* (pp. 115-139). New York: Academic Press.
- Rusbult, C. E., & Martz, J. M. (1995). Remaining in an abusive relationship: An investment model analysis of nonvoluntary dependence. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 21(6), 558-571.
- Rusbult, C. E., Martz, J. M., & Agnew, C. R. (1998b). The investment model scale: Measuring commitment level, satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size. *Personal Relationships*, 5, 357-391.
- Rusbult, C. E., Verette, J., Whitney, G. A., Slovik, L. F., & Lipkus, I. (1991). Accommodation processes in close relationships: Theory and preliminary empirical evidence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60, 53-78.

- Sabatelli, R., & Sheehan, C. (1993). Exchange and resource theories. In P. G. Boss, W. J. Doherty, R. LaRossa, W. R. Schumm, & S. K. Steinmetz (Eds.), *Sourcebook of family theories and methods: A contextual approach* (pp. 385-411). New York: Plenum Press.
- Saluter, A. (1996, March). *Marital status and living arrangements: March 1994* (U. S. Bureau of the Census No. P20-484). Washington, DC: Current Population Reports.
- Scanzoni, J., & Arnett, C. (1987). Enlarging the understanding of marital commitment via religions, devoutness, gender role preferences, and locus of control. *Journal of Family Issues*, 8, 135-156.
- Schovanec, B., & Lee, C. (2001). Culture and divorce: The relationship of values and attitudes in a protestant sample. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 36(1/2), 159-177.
- Schramm, D. (2003, June 25). *The costly consequences of divorce in Utah: The impact on couples, communities, and government*. Unpublished manuscript, Utah State University at Logan.
- Schramm, D. G., Marshall, J. P., Harris, V. W., & George, A. (2003). *Marriage in Utah: 2003 Baseline statewide survey on marriage and divorce* (Utah's Governor's Commission on Marriage, Utah State University Extension). Salt Lake City, Utah: Utah Department of Workforce Services.
- Schumm, W. R. (1985). Beyond relationship characteristics of strong families: Contrasting a model of family strengths. *Family Perspective*, 19(1), 1-9.
- Seligman, M., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55, 5-14.
- Seltzer, J. A. (2004). Cohabitation in the United States and Britain: Demography, kinship, and the future. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66, 921-928.
- Shrum, W. (1980). Religion and marital instability: Change in the 1970s? *Review of Religious Research*, 21, 135-147.
- Smith, D. A., & Jarjoura, G. R. (1988, February). Social structure and criminal victimization. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 25, 27-52.
- Smock, P. J. (2000). Cohabitation in the United States: An appraisal of research themes, findings, and implications. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 1-20.

- Spanier, G. B. (1976). Measuring dyadic judgment: New scales for assessing the quality of marriage and similar dyads. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 38, 15-28.
- Sprecher, S. (1999). "I love you more today than yesterday:" Romantic partners' perceptions of changes in love and related affect over time. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76, 46-53.
- Stack, S., & Eshleman, J. R. (1998). Marital status and happiness: A 17-nation study. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 60, 527-536.
- Stanley, S. M., & Markman, H. J. (1992, August). Assessing commitment in personal relationships. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 54(3), 595-604.
- Stanley, S. M., Markman, H. J., & Whitton, S. W. (2002). Communication, conflict, and commitment: Insights on the foundations of relationship success from a national survey. *Family Process*, 41(4), 659-675.
- Stanley, S. M., Whitton, S. W., & Markman, H. J. (2004). Maybe I do: Interpersonal commitment and premarital or non marital cohabitation. *Journal of Family Issues*, 25(4), 496-519.
- Stark, R. (2002). Physiology and faith: Addressing the "universal" gender difference in religious commitment. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 41(3), 495-507.
- Story of Sinuhe. (1958.). (J. A. Wilson Trans.). In J. B. Pritchard (Ed., *The ancient near east: An anthology of texts and pictures* (pp. 1-11). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Sullivan, K. (2001). Understanding the relationship between religiosity and marriage: An investigation of the immediate and longitudinal effects of religiosity on newlywed couples. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 15, 610-621.
- Teachman, J. (2003). Premarital sex, premarital cohabitation, and the risk of subsequent marital disruption among women. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 65, 444-455.
- Thibaut, J. W., & Kelley, H. H. (1959). *The social psychology of groups*. New York: Wiley.
- Thorndike, R. M., & Dinnel, D. L. (2001). *Basic Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

- Thornton, A., & Camburn, D. (1989). Religious participation and adolescent sexual behavior and attitudes. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 51, 641-653.
- Thornton, A., & Young-DeMarco, L. (2001). Four decades of trends in attitudes toward family issues in the United States: The 1960s through the 1990s. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 63(4), 1009-1038.
- True to the faith: A gospel reference.* (2004). Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
- U.S. Catholic Church. (2003). *Catechism of the Catholic church* (2nd ed.). New York: Doubleday.
- U. S. Census Bureau. (2001a). *Number, timing, and duration of marriages and divorces* (Current Population Reports No. (Series P70-80)). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- U. S. Census Bureau. (2001b). *2001 statistical abstract of the United States*. 2002. Retrieved October 7, 2004, from Washington, DC/U. S. Government Printing Office: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/01statab/stat-ab01.html>
- U. S. Department of Justice. (1993). *Highlights from 20 years of surveying crime Victims: The national crime victimization survey, 1973-1992* (U. S. Bureau of Justice Statistics). Washington DC: U. S. Department of Justice.
- Utah's Vital Statistics. (2002). *Marriages and divorces: 1999 and 2000* (Tech. Rep. No. 218). Salt Lake City, UT: Center for Health Data, Office of Vital Records and Statistics.
- Van Lange, P. A. M., Rusbult, C. E., Drigotas, S. M., Arriaga, X. B., Witcher, B. S., & Cox, C. L. (1997). Willingness to sacrifice in close relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72(6), 1373-1395.
- Waite, L. J. (1995). Does marriage matter? *Demography*, 32, 483-507.
- Waite, L. J., & Gallagher, M. (2000). *The case for marriage: Why married people are happier, healthier, and better off financially*. New York: Doubleday.
- Wall, J., & Miller-McLemore, B. (2002, March). Marital therapy caught between person and public: Christian traditions on marriage. *Pastoral Psychology*, 50(4), 259-280.
- Walsh, F. (1998). *Strengthening family resilience*. New York: Guilford Press.

- Weaver, A. J., Samford, J. A., Morgan, V. J., Larson, D. B., Loenig, H. G., & Flannelly, K. J. (2002). A systematic review of research on religion in six primary marriage and family journals: 1995-1999. *The American Journal of Family Therapy, 30*, 293-309.
- Weigel, D. J., & Ballard-Reisch, D. S. (2002). Investigating the behavioral indicators of relational commitment. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 19*(3), 403-423.
- Welch, B. L., & Johnson, C. A. (2003). *2003 Utah marriage movement statewide baseline survey: Technical report and results* (Bureau for Social Research, Oklahoma State University). Stillwater, OK: Bureau for Social Research.
- Whitehead, B. D. (2004). Testimony before the Sub Committee on Children and Families for the Committee of Health, Education, Labor, Pensions, U. S. Senate. Retrieved November 23, 2004, from Rutgers University, NJ: <http://marriage.rutgers.edu/Publications/Print/Print%20Whitehead%.TESTIMONY.htm>
- Whitehead, B. D., & Popenoe, D. (2003). The state of our unions: The social health of marriage in America 2003 (5th ed.). Retrieved June 20, 2004, from The National Marriage Project: <http://marriage.rutgers.edu/Publications/Print/PrintSOOU2003.htm>
- Whitton, S. W., Stanley, S., & Markman, H. J. (2002). Sacrifice in romantic relationships: An exploration of relevant research and theory. In H. T. Reiss, M. A. Fitzpatrick & A. L. Vangelisti (Eds.), *Stability and change in relationship behavior across the lifespan* (pp. 156-181). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Wieselquist, J., Rusbult, C. E., Foster, C. A., & Agnew, C. R. (1999). Commitment, pro-relationship behavior, and trust in close relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 77*(5), 942-966.
- Williams, L. M., & Lawler, M. G. (2001). Religious heterogamy and religiosity: A comparison of interchurch and same-church individuals. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 40*(3), 265-278.
- Wilmoth, J., & Koso, G. (2002). Does marital history matter? Marital status and wealth outcomes among pre-retirement adults. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 64*, 743-754.
- Wilson, J., & Musick, M. (1996). Religion and marital dependency. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 35*(1), 30-40.

- Worthington, E. L. (1998, February). An empathy-humility-commitment model of forgiveness applied within family dyads. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 20(1), 59-77.
- Yovetich, N. A., & Rusbult, C. E. (1994). Accommodative behavior in close relationships: Exploring transformation of motivation. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 30, 138-164.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Sample Characteristics and Variable Correlation Tables

Table A1

Sample Characteristics

Demographic characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Age		
18 to 24	409	31.1
25 to 44	463	35.2
45 to 64	296	22.5
65 and older	147	11.2
Total	1,316	100.0
Religion		
Latter-day Saints (LDS)	937	72.0
Protestant	82	6.3
Catholic and Jewish	46	3.5
Other	38	2.8
No religion	200	15.4
Total	1,302	100.0
Marital status		
Married	757	57.5
Divorced	90	6.9
Widowed	41	3.1
Separated	4	0.3
Never married	424	32.2
Total	1,317	100.0
Education level		
< High school	122	9.3
High school degree	342	26.2
Some college	390	29.9
Trade, technical or vocational	96	7.4
College degree	236	18.1
Postgraduate work	119	9.1
Total	1,305	100.0

(table continues)

Demographic characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
Race		
Caucasian	1,199	91.0
Hispanic/Latino	53	4.0
Asian	25	2.0
American Indian/Alaska Native	20	1.5
Other	19	1.5
Total	1,263	100.0
Income Level		
< \$20,000.00 per year	249	20.5
\$20,000 to \$39,999 per year	331	27.2
\$40,000 to \$59,999 per year	246	20.2
\$60,000 to \$79,999 per year	180	14.8
\$80,000 to \$99,999 per year	83	06.8
>\$100,000	129	10.6
Total	1,217	100.0

(Welch & Johnson, 2003)

Table A2

Intercorrelations of Dependent and Independent Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Commitment to spouse (Dedication)	1.00***	.32*** (1030)	-.33*** (1028)	.06* (1020)	.15*** (1019)	.04 (964)	-.03 (871)	.26*** (1030)	-.16*** (016)	.34*** (1020)	.31*** (1021)
2. Commitment to marriage (Moral Obligation)		1.00	-.07* (1028)	.07** (1304)	.27*** (1304)	.09** (1144)	.09** (871)	.33*** (1316)	-.20*** (1300)	.45*** (1304)	.46*** (1306)
3. Constraint commitment			1.00	.00 (1019)	-.06 (1018)	-.02 (944)	-.05 (870)	-.13*** (1028)	-.00 (1015)	-.14*** (1019)	-.11** (1020)
4. Gender				(1.00)	.104*** (1304)	.32*** (1136)	.02 (871)	.01 (1305)	.05 (1297)	-.09** (1302)	-.13* (1303)
5. Education level					1.00	.38*** (1134)	-.02 (870)	.21*** (1304)	-.02 (1296)	.26*** (1301)	.23*** (1303)
6. Age first married						1.00	-.15*** (871)	.009 (1144)	.003 (1130)	.07* (1135)	.05 (1137)
7. Years in current marriage							1.00	.235*** (871)	-.09** (867)	.06 (869)	.14** (870)

(table continues)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
8. Cohabitation								1.00	^a -.27*** (1300)	^a .403*** (1304)	^a .49*** (1306)..
9. Religious preference									1.00	^a -.188*** (1297)	^a .62*** (1299)
10. Religious values										1.00	^a .67*** (1304)
11. Frequency of religious attendance											1.00

Note. number in parentheses = *n*; ^a designates Spearman's Rho correlation All other correlations use Phearson R correlation

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Appendix B. Analysis of Variance Multiple Comparisons Tables

Table B1

Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons of Frequency of Religious Attendance with Commitment to Spouse (Dedication)

Characteristic	Frequency of religious attendance	Frequency of religious attendance comparison group	Mean difference	<i>p</i>
Commitment to spouse (dedication)	Never or almost never	Occasionally	0.28	.268
		1 to 3 times per month	-0.45	.062
		One or more per week	-1.48	.000
	Occasionally	Never or almost never	-0.28	.268
		1 to 3 times per month	-0.74	.007
		One or more per week	-1.77	.000
	1 to 3 times per month	Never or almost never	0.45	.062
		Occasionally	0.74	.007
		One or more per week	-1.03	.000
	One or more per week	Never or almost never	1.48	.000
		Occasionally	1.77	.000
		1 to 3 times per month	1.03	.000

Table B2

Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons of Frequency of Religious Attendance with Commitment to Marriage (Moral Obligation)

Characteristic	Frequency of religious attendance	Frequency of religious attendance comparison group	Mean difference	<i>p</i>
Commitment to marriage (moral obligation)	Never or almost never	Occasionally	-0.09	.807
		1 to 3 times per month	-1.63	.000
		One or more per week	-4.30	.000
	Occasionally	Never or almost never	0.09	.807
		1 to 3 times per month	-1.54	.000
		One or more per week	-4.21	.000
	1 to 3 times per month	Never or almost never	1.63	.000
		Occasionally	1.54	.000
		One or more per week	-2.66	.000
	One or more per week	Never or almost never	4.30	.000
		Occasionally	4.21	.000
		1 to 3 times per month	2.66	.000

Table B3

Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons of Frequency of Religious Attendance with Years in Current Marriage

Characteristic	Frequency of religious attendance	Frequency of religious attendance comparison group	Mean difference	<i>p</i>
Years in current marriage	Never or almost never	Occasionally	- 4.33	.077
		1 to 3 times per month	-0.41	.856
		One or more per week	- 5.47	.001
	Occasionally	Never or almost never	4.33	.077
		1 to 3 times per month	3.92	.121
		One or more per week	-1.15	.573
	1 to 3 times per month	Never or almost never	0.41	.856
		Occasionally	-3.92	.121
		One or more per week	-5.07	.004
	One or more per week	Never or almost never	5.47	.001
		Occasionally	1.15	.573
		1 to 3 times per month	5.07	.004

Table B4

Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons of Frequency of Religious Attendance with Religious Values

Characteristic	Frequency of religious attendance	Frequency of religious attendance comparison group	Mean difference	<i>p</i>
Religious values	Never or almost never	Occasionally	-0.71	.002
		1 to 3 times per month	-2.01	.000
		One or more per week	-4.64	.000
	Occasionally	Never or almost never	0.71	.002
		1 to 3 times per month	-1.30	.000
		One or more per week	-3.93	.000
	1 to 3 times per month	Never or almost never	2.01	.000
		Occasionally	1.30	.000
		One or more per week	-2.63	.000
	One or more per week	Never or almost never	4.64	.000
		Occasionally	3.93	.000
		1 to 3 times per month	2.63	.000

Table B5

Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons of Religious Preference with Commitment to Spouse (Dedication)

Characteristic	Religious preference	Religious preference	Mean difference	<i>p</i>
Commitment to spouse (dedication)	LDS	Other	1.96	.000
		Protestant	1.06	.000
		No religion	1.66	.000
	Other	LDS	-1.96	.000
		Protestant	-0.90	.009
		No religion	-0.31	.342
	Protestant	LDS	-1.06	.000
		Other	-0.90	.000
		No religion	0.59	.044
	No religion	LDS	-1.66	.000
		Other	0.31	.342
		Protestant	-0.59	.044

Table B6

Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons of Religious Preference with Commitment to Marriage (Moral Obligation)

Characteristic	Religious preference	Religious preference	Mean difference	<i>p</i>
Commitment to marriage (moral obligation)	LDS	Other	2.88	.000
		Protestant	2.73	.000
		No religion	3.95	.000
	Other	LDS	-2.88	.000
		Protestant	-0.15	.782
		No religion	1.08	.031
	Protestant	LDS	-2.73	.000
		Other	0.15	.782
		No religion	1.22	.009
	No religion	LDS	-3.95	.000
		Other	-1.08	.031
		Protestant	-1.22	.009

Table B7

Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons of Religious Preference with Education Level

Characteristic	Religious preference	Religious preference comparison group	Mean difference	<i>p</i>
Education	LDS	Other	0.48	.003
		Protestant	0.19	.206
		No religion	0.29	.022
	Other	LDS	-0.48	.003
		Protestant	- 0.30	.157
		No religion	-0.19	.334
	Protestant	LDS	-0.19	.206
		Other	0.30	.157
		No religion	0.11	.561
	No religion	LDS	-0.29	.022
		Other	0.19	.334
		Protestant	-0.11	.561

Table B8

Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons of Religious Preference with Years in Current Marriage

Characteristic	Religious preference	Religious preference	Mean difference	<i>p</i>
Years in current marriage	LDS	Other	4.88	.063
		Protestant	3.21	.138
		No religion	7.33	.001
	Other	LDS	-4.88	.063
		Protestant	-1.67	.612
		No religion	2.46	.452
	Protestant	LDS	-3.21	.138
		Other	1.67	.612
		No religion	4.13	.156
	No religion	LDS	-7.33	.001
		Other	-2.46	.452
		Protestant	-4.13	.156

Appendix C: Interview Introduction and Instrumentation

INTERVIEWER INTRODUCTION

2003 UTAH MARRIAGE MOVEMENT BASELINE STATEWIDE SURVEY

Hello, this is _____ and I'm calling from the Bureau for Social Research. We are conducting a research study on the topic of marriage and family relationships in Utah on behalf of Utah State University.

Am I speaking with an adult over the age of 18?

We are conducting a 15-minute interview of citizens in Utah. The purpose of this study is to provide an accurate report on marriage and family relationships in Utah.

The survey asks your opinion of marriages and families in Utah and gathers some information about your own marital or relationship history.

Would this be a good time to do the interview? Before we begin, I want to assure you that all your answers will be kept confidential.

Socio-Demographic Survey Questions for Study

QDD16 Gender

Record respondent's gender.

1. Male
2. Female
8. unsure/don't know

QDD2 Education Level of Respondent

What is the highest grade in school that you finished, and got credit for, or the highest degree you have earned?

1. less than high school graduate
2. high school graduate
3. some college
4. trade/technical/vocational training
5. college graduate
6. postgraduate work/degree
8. unsure/don't know
9. refused

AGEFRSTM Age first married (constructed variable)

Age of respondent when first married.

Step 1

QMD24 (skip if respondent is widowed, divorced, separated, never been married)

How old were you when you married your current spouse?

Open-response format Range: 1-110 years old

888. don't know
999. refused

Step 2

QMD25 (those not currently married but have been married at some time)

How old were you when you first got married?)

Range: 1-110 years old

888. don't know
999. refused

Step 3

Values for QMD24 and QMD25 were combined but QMD24 values were only copied under the condition that respondents were only married once and were currently married.

YRSINCMR Years in Current Marriage (constructed variable)

Number of years in current marriage computed from the number of years that have lapsed since respondent's current marriage (age at current marriage is subtracted from

age).

EVRCOHAB Ever cohabitated (constructed variable)

Indicates whether or not the respondent has ever cohabitated.

If respondent met conditions of cohabitation, lived with current spouse before marriage, or lived with a previous spouse before marriage, living currently with a partner.

EVRCOHAB = 1

Otherwise, EVRCOHAB = 0

Survey Questions for Study

Please answer each of the following questions by indicating how strongly you agree or disagree with the idea expressed.

QRQ3A

My relationship with my spouse/partner is more important to me than almost anything else in my life. Do you. . .

1. strongly agree
2. agree
3. neither agree nor disagree
4. disagree
5. strongly disagree
8. don't know
9. refused

QRQ3B

I may not want to be with my spouse/partner a few years from now. Do you. . .

1. strongly agree
2. agree
3. neither agree nor disagree
4. disagree
5. strongly disagree
8. don't know
9. refused

QRQ3C

I like to think of my spouse/partner and me more in terms of "us" and "we" than "him/her". Do you. . .

1. strongly agree
2. agree
3. neither agree nor disagree
4. disagree
5. strongly disagree
8. don't know
9. refused

QRQ3D

I feel trapped in this marriage/relationship but I stay because I have too much to lose if I leave. Do you. . .

1. strongly agree
2. agree
3. neither agree nor disagree

4. disagree
5. strongly disagree
8. don't know
9. refused

QAT3

When there are children in the family, parents should stay married even if they do not get along. Do you. . .

1. strongly agree
2. agree
3. neither agree nor disagree
4. disagree
5. strongly disagree
8. don't know
9. refused

QAT4

Sure, divorce is bad, but a lousy marriage is even worse. Do you. . .

1. strongly agree
2. agree
3. neither agree nor disagree
4. disagree
5. strongly disagree
8. don't know
9. refused

QAT5

Society would be better off if divorces were harder to get. Do you. . .

1. strongly agree
2. agree
3. neither agree nor disagree
4. disagree
5. strongly disagree
8. don't know
9. refused

QAT7

People who have children together ought to be married. Do you. . .

1. strongly agree
2. agree
3. neither agree nor disagree
4. disagree
5. strongly disagree

8. don't know
9. refused

QR16

How often do you attend religious services? Would you say. . .

1. never, or almost never
2. occasionally, but less than once per month
3. one to three times per month
4. one of more times per week
8. don't know
9. refused

QR11

What is your religious preference? Is it. . .

1. Catholic
2. Jewish
3. Latter-day Saints (Mormon)
4. Protestant
5. some other religion
6. no formal religion
8. unsure/don't know
9. refused

(Specific responses for #5 "some other religion" were entered verbatim)

QR13 (skip if response to religious preference was #6 no formal religion)

My outlook on life is based on my religion. Do you. . .

1. strongly agree
2. agree
3. neither agree nor disagree
4. disagree
5. strongly disagree
8. don't know
9. refused

QR14 (skip if response to religious preference was #6 no formal religion)

Although I believe in my religion, many other things are more important in my life. Do you. . .

1. strongly agree
2. agree
3. neither agree nor disagree
4. disagree
5. strongly disagree
8. don't know

9. refused

QR15 (skip if response to religious preference was #6 no formal religion)

My faith helps me know right from wrong. Do you. . .

1. strongly agree
2. agree
3. neither agree nor disagree
4. disagree
5. strongly disagree
8. don't know
9. refused

QR17

All things considered, how religious would you say that you are?

1. not at all religious
2. slightly religious
3. moderately religious
4. very religious
8. unsure/don't know
9. refused

Appendix D. Confidentiality Agreement and Contact Records Disposition Categories

BUREAU FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH
OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

Staff Confidentiality Agreement

The Bureau for Social Research was created to support and facilitate social and behavioral science research at Oklahoma State University and beyond. Our research projects sometimes ask sensitive and confidential information from research participants. Truthful and accurate respondent information is critical to the accuracy of results and procedures.

As a result, the nature of the information collected by staff working for the Bureau for Social Research requires a commitment of confidentiality to protect research participants' rights to privacy. Frequently a commitment of confidentiality is a prerequisite to facilitate participation by respondents in research projects. Therefore, we have made, and will continue to offer, a commitment of confidentiality to respondents and research sponsors. Because unauthorized breaches of that confidentiality would violate assurances we have given that are essential to obtaining truthful and accurate information, thereby impinging on our ability to produce accurate and reliable products, unauthorized disclosure of research information would result in a greater harm than benefit to the public interest. As a result, the Bureau for Social Research requests that each employee read and sign the following confidentiality agreement as a condition of employment.

I HEREBY AGREE NOT TO RELEASE THE FOLLOWING PRIVILEGED INFORMATION TO ANY NON-BUREAU PERSONNEL WITHOUT PROPER AUTHORIZATION FROM A DULY AUTHORIZED EMPLOYEE OR AGENT OF THE BUREAU FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH:

1. Information leading to the identification of study participants
2. Questionnaire forms, questions, and materials,
3. Individual participant responses and research results, and
4. Unpublished tabulations of research results.

I FURTHER AGREE:

5. To refrain from discussing material relating to individual respondents with persons other than project staff, and
6. To see that information is released only to authorized personnel.

I UNDERSTAND THAT VIOLATION OF THIS AGREEMENT WOULD
RESULT IN DISMISSAL AND COULD RESULT IN CIVIL ACTION.

Signed

Date

Witness

Date

CONTRACT RECORD DISPOSITION CATEGORIES

2003 UTAH MARRIAGE MOVEMENT BASELINE STATEWIDE SURVEY

There are 10 possible disposition categories for each contact that was made. A brief explanation for each of these disposition categories is presented below:

DISPOSITION	EXPLANATION
Completed	All questions on the interview schedule were asked/answered.
Partial	The interview began, and the respondent answered QH1, but the interview terminated before the respondent answered the last question
Disconnected/not working	The telephone number was not in operation.
Not a Home Phone	The telephone number was not a residential telephone number. For example, the number was for a business or government office.
Physical/Language Problem	The target respondent was reached, but could not complete the interview because of physical (such as hearing impairment) or language difficulties. (Note: interviews were conducted in English, and when necessary, the interview was also conducted in Spanish).
Refusal and Second Refusal	The target respondent declined participation, even after appropriate prompts by the interviewer.
Callback	A callback appointment was scheduled

Answering Machine	The first time a respondent's answering machine was reached, the interviewer left a message stating the nature of the survey and that the household would receive another call from the BSR. The message also suggested that the respondent could call the BSR to ensure inclusion of his/her opinion.
No Answer	After the phone rang five times without being answered, the interviewer assigned this disposition. Records with this disposition were re-attempted again during the interviewing shift (approximately two hours later), or during the next day's interviewing shift.
Busy	Telephones that rang busy were coded as "busy" and reattempted approximately 20 minutes later.