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The relationship between relational commitment, spousal intimacy, and religiosity and marital satisfaction

Kris Koehne

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Kris Koehne entitled "The relationship between relational commitment, spousal intimacy, and religiosity and marital satisfaction." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Human Ecology.

Julia A. Malia, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Priscilla Blanton, Michael Lane Morris, Schuyler W. Huck

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Kris Koehne entitled "The Relationship Between Relational Commitment, Spousal Intimacy, and Religiosity and Marital Satisfaction." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Human Ecology.


Julia A. Malia, Major Professor


We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Pisicella Blanton

Michael Lane Harris

Samuel W. Duke

Accepted for the Council:


Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of the Graduate School

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
RELATIONAL COMMITMENT, SPOUSAL INTIMACY, AND REGIOSITY
AND MARITAL SATISFACTION**

**A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville**

**Kris Koehne
May 2000**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of three process variables (relational commitment, spousal intimacy, and religiosity) and seven select sociodemographic variables (age, length of marriage, educational attainment, personal income, frequency of church attendance, presence of children, and number of children) on marital satisfaction. Data were collected in 1993 and 1994 as part of a larger research project studying work and the family. The criteria for participation in the study were that participants had to be currently married and employed spouses were invited to participate also.

The sample of the present study included 233 participants (119 men and 114 women, including 94 couples who both filled out the questionnaire) recruited from two suburban churches, a university medical center, a clothing manufacturing plant, and the regional office of a major financial institution in Knoxville, Tennessee, and its surrounding areas. The average sample member was 46 years old and had been married for 21 years.

Since it is likely that many marriage-related variables operate differently for men and women, I decided it was necessary to conduct separate analyses for men and women in my study. Results of stepwise regression analyses indicated that spousal intimacy was a significant predictor of marital satisfaction for both genders in this sample. However, only for women was relational commitment a significant predictor of marital satisfaction. Religiosity did not act as a significant predictor of marital satisfaction for either gender in this sample. Likewise, none of the sociodemographic variables was found to be a significant predictor of marital satisfaction for men or women.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Researchers in the field of close relationships have been trying to identify the determinants of marital satisfaction for decades. Tracing the history of marital satisfaction research from the 1960s to the year 2000 reveals that a primary focus of social science researchers has been to identify, explore, and examine empirical referents of marital satisfaction. However, they have not been as successful as they had hoped at the outset. After reviewing quantitative research on marital satisfaction conducted in the 1980s, Glenn (1990) concluded that this research “produced only a modest increment in understanding of the causes and consequences of marital success” (p. 818), with success viewed as satisfaction in an intact marriage.

I have been interested in learning more about the processes that generate satisfaction or dissatisfaction in marriages because of both my personal experiences and my exposure to marital relationships as a professional. Marital dissatisfaction is widely assumed to be one of the main determinants of marital instability and is thought to be influential in the gradual dissolution of some relationships. But what factors influence whether a spouse is satisfied or dissatisfied, I wondered? Specifically, I had a notion that both intimacy between spouses and a sense of commitment to the marital relationship were pivotal to maintaining marital satisfaction and wanted to explore the role that religiosity may play in couples’ level of satisfaction. I also wanted to learn whether there are gender differences in terms of what variables influence partners’ marital satisfaction. Thus, the purpose of the present study was to examine the process variables of relational commitment, spousal intimacy, religiosity, and select sociodemographic variables (age,

length of marriage, educational attainment, income, church attendance, presence of children, and number of children) as predictors of marital satisfaction in men and women. I selected these variables for investigation guided by a review of the marital satisfaction research literature that suggested their possible importance for marital satisfaction. The findings of the present study provided another piece to add to the marital satisfaction puzzle by contributing to the current body of knowledge regarding variables that influence marital satisfaction outcomes.

Rationale

Why is it important to look at factors that predict whether a spouse is satisfied or dissatisfied with his or her marriage? Approximately two-thirds of newlyweds in the United States are likely to divorce (Ahrons, 1994; Martin & Bumpass, 1989), even though divorce rates in general began leveling off in the 1990s (Ahrons, 1994). Divorces are stressful for spouses and children, although the degree of stress experienced varies (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989).

It is reasonable to think that a dissatisfied spouse is more likely to divorce than a satisfied spouse. Approximately 40% of the problems for which people seek professional help in the United States concern dissatisfaction with their spouses or marriages (Veroff, Kulka, & Douvan, 1981). Burman and Margolin (1992) reported deleterious effects of couple dissatisfaction on such outcomes as mental and physical health. As marital satisfaction declines, family problems increase, leading to high rates of divorce or to stable but unhappy families (Barnett & Gotlib, 1988).

The cost of this trend toward uncoupling of spouses and subsequent impact on their children and society is increasing--a concern to everyone. Identifying what factors

increase or decrease marital satisfaction is important in its own right and can contribute to improved prevention and treatment of marital dysfunctions (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990). Gaining better understanding of marital satisfaction by more clearly identifying what factors lead to its erosion or enhancement would have meaningful application for individual spouses, marriages, families, the therapists who try to assist them, and, indeed, society as a whole.

Statement of the Problem

Even though a lot of attention has been given to examining the multifaceted nature of the marital relationship, the concept of marital satisfaction remains poorly understood. Although social scientists studying marital relationships have identified a significant number of variables that may predict marital satisfaction (e.g., age at time of marriage, religious affiliation, race, geographic residence, income, education levels) (Ahrons, 1994; Martin & Bumpass, 1989; Strong & DeVault, 1995), they have not demonstrated clearly and consistently what variables are good predictors of marital satisfaction. For instance, the factors of relational commitment, spousal intimacy, and religiosity have not been adequately examined.

Selection of Process Variables

The majority of marital satisfaction research studies have focused on background variables such as education, income, and age at time of marriage as factors that may predict marital satisfaction. Noller and Fitzpatrick (1990) suggested that the search for causal variables and predictor variables to explain marital interactions would predominate in research done in the 1990s. Changes in the goals and functions of marital research have resulted in less emphasis on demographic variables by researchers during the past

decade. Accordingly, researchers now are looking at patterns of interactions and processes between spouses as key factors that influence marital satisfaction.

In this study, relational commitment, religiosity, and spousal intimacy are referred to as process variables. Process variables are defined as variables that can increase, decrease, or remain the same, depending on the dynamics of the interactions being examined (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). The direction of movement, positive or negative, is a function of the influence of other variables intrinsic to the marital relationship. Unlike demographic variables (e.g., age, years of marriage, income), which are exogenous (i.e., "entering from and determined from outside the system being studied," Volt, 1993, p. 85), process variables change over time depending on the progressive unfolding nature and intensity of marital interactions.

When you ask couples themselves what is important in their relationship, they often mention commitment. Commitment has been cited as a major determinant of marital satisfaction (Jones, Adams, Monroe, & Berry, 1995). However, the assessment of marital commitment has received relatively little attention in research (Johnson, 1991; Levinger, 1979; Rusbult, 1983). Compared to other key constructs in the empirical literature (e.g., satisfaction, communication), marital commitment has been under-researched (Stanley & Markman, 1992). Researchers rarely have attempted to measure both marital satisfaction and commitment or look at the relationship between these two constructs in the same study (Jones et al., 1995).

When Karney and Bradbury (1995) completed a computer search of the psychological literature (PsycLIT) database, they found 115 articles that looked at the question of what variables predict marital outcomes over time. Surprisingly, in their list

of independent variables used in each study, commitment was cited in only one study. In this metastudy, Karney and Bradbury found that neither intimacy nor religiosity had been used as a predictor variable in any of the 115 articles cited as examining marital outcomes.

Selection of Sociodemographic Variables

Researchers examining the role of certain demographic background variables (e.g., length of marriage, advent of children, church attendance) as predictors of changes in marital satisfaction have reported contradictory findings concerning the nature of the changes (Finkel & Hansen, 1992). In other words, replication of research using the same variables as predictors of marital satisfaction have not shown consistent findings. This observation is disturbing and provides evidence to justify including select sociodemographic in the present study.

Examining the relationships of marital satisfaction with relational commitment, spousal intimacy, and religiosity as well as with selected demographic variables seems likely to present a clearer and more accurate picture of which variables account best for some of the variation in marital satisfaction. Hopefully, the findings of the present study will help to delineate what influence these variables may have on marital satisfaction.

Gender

Since it is likely that certain variables may operate differently in marriages for men and women, I decided it was necessary to conduct separate analyses for each gender. Such a procedure is consistent with Bernard's (1972) contention that it is necessary to talk about two different marriages of any couple: "his" and "hers."

Gender differences in marriage can be viewed in two ways, according to Baucom, Notarius, Burnett, and Haefner (1990). First, a single variable can affect husbands and wives differently. For example, the way wives deal with stress can affect themselves differently than the way their husbands deal with stress affects themselves. Second, husbands' and wives' variables can affect the marriage differently. For example, husbands' background variables (e.g., age at marriage, employment, openness) can affect both spouses differently than do the same variables in their wives' background.

Although marital researchers (e.g., Floyd & Markman, 1983) have suggested that both kinds of gender differences exist, Karney and Bradbury's (1995) meta-analysis does not reveal substantial gender differences of either kind. Generally speaking, in looking at the same variable, researchers have found the effects of that variable are in the same direction and similar magnitude for both husbands' and wives' outcomes. In other words, husbands' and wives' variables tend to have similar effects on the marriage. The findings of Karney and Bradbury's meta-analysis suggest that gender differences in experiences of the marital relationship may have been exaggerated.

Nominal Definitions

Marital satisfaction is defined as spouses' global evaluations of their marriage. Marital satisfaction focuses on spouses' subjective, affective experiencing of their own personal happiness and contentment with their close relationship. It is an attitude concerning the quality of their marital relationship and has been described as a process that is susceptible to changes over time. (Sternberg & Hojjat, 1997)

Relational commitment is defined as the tendency toward marital stability or instability. Commitment includes two central components: (a) an affective component

comprised of feelings of cohesion and solidarity that can vary from high to low and (b) a process component that refers to the degree to which relationship alternatives are being monitored and tested. The affective component is experienced as internal to the individual and is a function of the person's attitudes and values. The process component is experienced as external to the individual and is a function of perceptions of constraints that make it costly for the individual to leave the relationship. In other words, high commitment represents the tendency to maintain the marriage because of bonding with a spouse (cohesion) while experiencing little need to monitor and test alternatives to the marital relationships (process). (Sabatelli & Cecil-Pigo, 1985)

Spousal intimacy is defined as experiencing a sense of voluntary closeness to one's spouse while maintaining distinct boundaries to the self. Closeness that lacks boundaries and is not perceived as voluntary reflects emotional fusion rather than intimacy. Intimate marital relationships are characterized by mutual respect and freely initiated self-disclosure at the same time that the individuality of each spouse is maintained. Willingness and ability to choose to be part of an ongoing, interdependent relationship must accompany intimacy. (Williams, 1981)

Religiosity is defined as the extent to which a participant feels that religious beliefs influence his or her life. A system of religious beliefs includes moral attitudes, ethical values, and codes of conduct and practice that reflect the philosophy of a divine power influencing one's thoughts and behaviors. (Pittman, Price-Bonham & McKenry, 1983)

Objectives of This Study

I derived two objectives for this study. The first objective was to examine the influence of relational commitment, spousal intimacy, and religiosity on marital satisfaction, and the second objective of this study was to examine the influence of selected exogenous demographic variables (age, length of years married, educational attainment, personal income, church attendance, presence of children, and number of children) on marital satisfaction (see Figure 1).

Research Questions

After identifying the objectives for this study, I developed the following two research questions that guided my investigation:

1. What influence do the predictor process variables of relational commitment, spousal intimacy, and religiosity have on husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction?
2. What influence do the exogenous sociodemographic variables of age, length of marriage, educational attainment, personal income, frequency of attending church, having children, and number of children have on husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction?

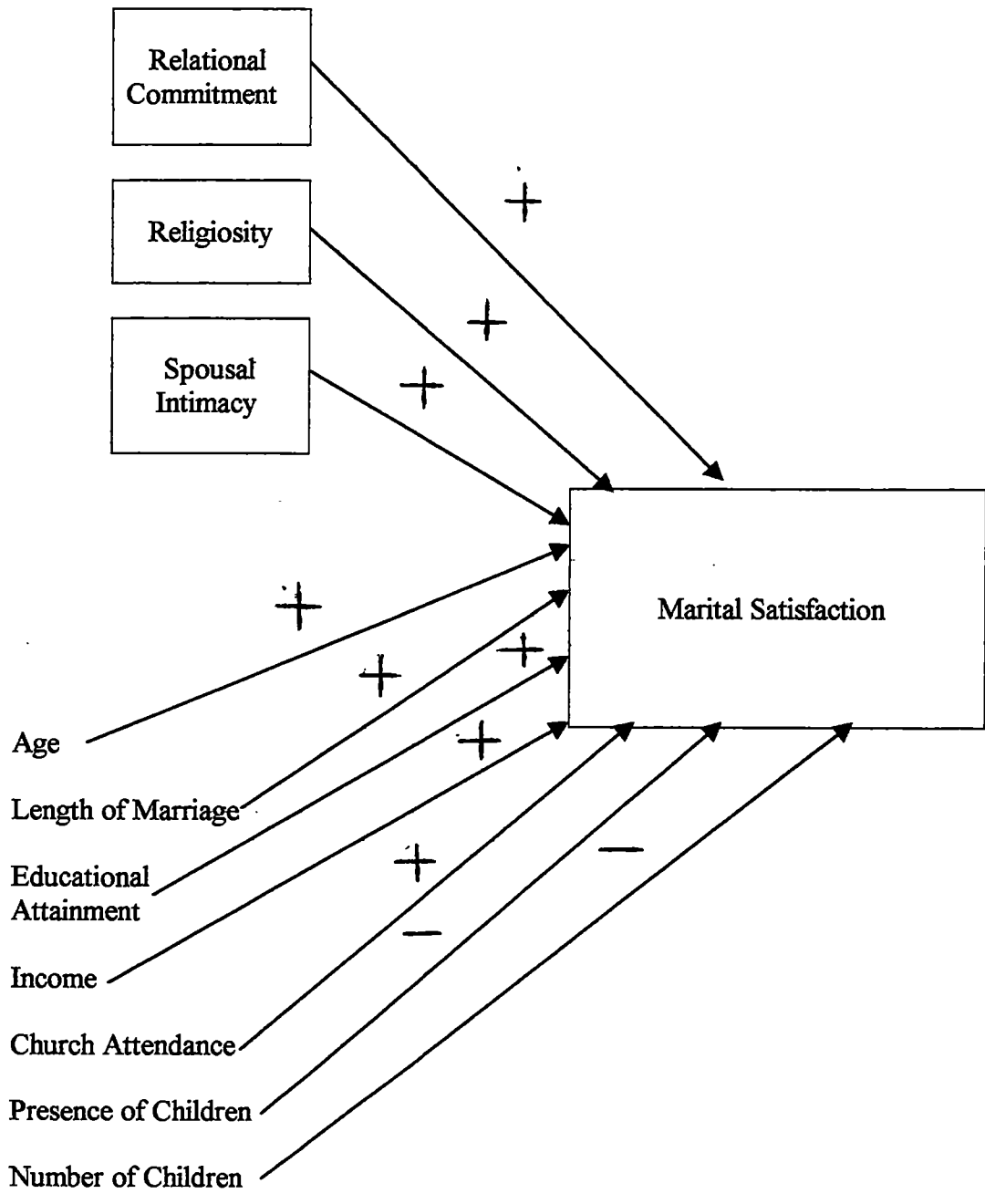


Figure 1

Direct Effects Model: Independent variables predicting marital satisfaction.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

To provide a context of the research that has already been done in the area of marital satisfaction, a review of the literature on marital satisfaction and the other variables utilized in the present study are presented. This literature review serves as a backdrop for interpretation of the findings of the present study.

Gender

Before reporting on my literature review of the variables specific to the model I developed for the present study, I want to first briefly present information about gender differences that have been reported in other areas of marital relations research. Gender differences have been reported often in the context of marital interactions, as well as observed in the separate spheres of husbands and wives external to their marriage.

In the context of marital interactions, some researchers have suggested that gender may exert important influence on partners' satisfaction with their marriages. Acitelli and Antonucci (1994) reported that wives seem to be more responsive to their husbands' support than husbands are to their wives' support. Thus, husbands' supportive behaviors may shape the development and outcome of the marital relationship more than wives' supportive behaviors do. Also, Fowers (1991) and others have noted that men tend to be somewhat more satisfied with their marriages than women are.

In contrast to findings reported by Markman and Hahlweg (1993), who found that husbands reported higher levels of satisfaction in their marriage than wives,

Sternberg and Hojjat (1997) found that wives in their study consistently reported higher levels of satisfaction than did husbands across their marriages. Although this finding was unexpected, it is consistent with some other recent research. Karney and Bradbury (1995) also found wives' satisfaction level to be equal to or even higher than that of their husbands. This shift in research findings may reflect societal changes that have moved toward more equalization of opportunities for women and given wives more avenues for finding contributors to their sense of identity.

Gender differences have been found in terms of the best predictors of marital outcomes, such as marital stability and emotional well-being. Mathews, Wickrama, and Conger (1996) found that wives' perceptions were the best predictor of marital stability. Gottman (1994) suggested that a wife may act as a barometer of the emotional well-being of a marriage as well as of other intimate relationships. In contrast, Buehlman (1991) concluded that the husband's perceptions would provide the most accurate indicators of the long-term fate of a marriage.

Gender differences also have been reported in how husbands and wives experience negativity (Gottman, 1994). When conflict leads to negativity, husbands experience flooding (i.e., physiological overload measured by objective physiological measures) that affects them more quickly, more intensely, and for a longer period of time than do their wives. Men tend to have shorter fuses and flooding of longer duration, or they even may go into relational withdrawal (i.e., what Gottman calls stonewalling). It often takes mere criticism to set husbands off, whereas wives require something at least on the level of contempt. In short, generally wives have longer fuses and calm down more quickly, while husbands have shorter fuses and

take longer to calm down. Gottman and Krokoff (1989) suggested that the best way for married couples to deal with conflict is for husbands to acknowledge and embrace their wives' anger and for wives to persist in getting their husbands to face areas of disagreements.

Gender differences have been observed also in the individual spheres of husbands and wives external to their direct marital interactions. In the area of friendships, two generalizations Rubin (1985) has proposed are that (a) women have more friendships than men and (b) female friendships are different in content and quality than male friendships. Women appear to do more initiating and spend more energy in seeking and nurturing friendships. In addition, the comparative number of friendships women have may be related to the relative ease with which men can terminate friendships. Women may have a more difficult time terminating friendships because their friendships are closely woven into many aspects of their lives. Women tend to have friendships characterized by a high degree of trust and a true sense of acceptance, commitment, continuity, and honesty. Women usually are willing to disclose more of their private selves with friends than are men. In addition, women tend to be more comfortable with being vulnerable to others. Men more often are unwilling to feel too vulnerable too quickly in building a friendship because of the competitive nature of men's friendships. According to Rubin, women's friendships more often are based on reciprocity, or mutual sharing of information about each other, whereas men's friendships tend to be more restrictive about sharing intimate thoughts and feelings and are based more on shared activities. Female friendships are

experienced more face-to-face, whereas male friendships are experienced more side-to-side, according to Rubin's analysis.

There are research findings also that suggest that equity issues influence marital satisfaction for both husbands and wives. Thompson and Walker (1989) reported that what determines a sense of fairness regarding the division of household labor varies by gender, with husbands being more satisfied with their marriages if their wives do more than their fair share of housework and childcare. Barnett and Baruch (1987) found that those wives whose husbands did what their wives perceived as their fair share of household work were more satisfied with their marriages and less critical of their husbands. The researchers concluded that wives view their husbands and marriages more positively when division of household labor is more balanced.

As evidenced above, there are suggested gender differences in how husbands and wives experience different aspects of their lives. If gender differences are seen in some dimensions of their lives, it seems reasonable to think there also could be important gender differences in how husbands and wives experience the interaction of commitment, intimacy, and religiosity in relation to marital satisfaction.

Marital Satisfaction Literature

Research reports have suggested there is need for a better understanding of the relationships among variables that influence marital satisfaction. Karney and Bradbury (1995) reported that nearly 200 variables have been examined and nearly 900 different findings have been reported in longitudinal research on marriage. It is evident that increased understanding of influences on marital satisfaction is of major interest to researchers.

Attempts to define marital satisfaction have been problematic. Some family researchers have criticized the concept of marital satisfaction as being vague, ill-defined, and value-laden (Donohue & Ryder, 1982; Lively, 1969; Ryder, 1967; Spanier & Cole, 1976).

There is evidence that couples' reports of marital satisfaction vary across the life span (Olson et al., 1983). However, as mentioned earlier, studies in this area have produced contradictory findings concerning the nature of these changes (Finkel & Hansen, 1992). Empirical findings have shown that marital satisfaction may take one of three courses across time: (a) It may increase over the course of marriage; (b) it may decline over time; or (c) it may show a curvilinear pattern. Early research consistently showed marital satisfaction declining the longer a couple had been married (e.g., Rollins & Cannon, 1974). More recent research, however, has shown a relatively steady increase in marital satisfaction over the course of marriage (e.g., Gilford, 1986). Jones et al. (1995) reported that marital satisfaction was unrelated to length of marriage. Other researchers have reported that marital satisfaction tends to decline after the early years of marriage (e.g., Paris & Luckey, 1966). One group of researchers (Anderson, Russell, & Schumm, 1983), whose findings have been cited frequently, have reported a more complex curvilinear pattern in which marital satisfaction increases over the early years of marriage, declines during the child-rearing and middle years, and increases again in the later years. Vaillant and Vaillant (1993) examined trends in marital satisfaction over the course of 40 years. They reported that as couples progressed through the marital life cycle, their satisfaction remained relatively stable, particularly in the middle and later years. On the other

hand, when couples were asked to think back over their marriage and to rate their satisfaction at various points, there was some evidence of curvilinear patterns.

Sternberg and Hojjat (1997) tested whether length of marriage has a simple relationship with marital satisfaction (with marital satisfaction tending to increase or decrease) or a more complex one (increase-decrease-increase over the course of marriage). Their findings provided little evidence of a simple relationship, either positive or negative, between length of marriage and marital satisfaction. The curvilinear patterns that they observed were consistent with the patterns identified by Olson et al. (1983).

The most frequent explanation offered for a curvilinear relationship between length of marriage and marital satisfaction centers on the presence of children in the home (Olson et al., 1983). The findings supporting this notion suggest that the presence of children has a negative impact on marital satisfaction. However, it is important to recognize that presence of children is likely to be confounded with length of marriage. In other words, groups that differ in terms of the presence or absence of children are likely to differ also in length of marriage. To separate out these two variables, Sternberg and Hojjat (1997) compared the marital satisfaction reported by three different groups (those who never had children, those who had children who were no longer living at home, and those who still had children living at home) after controlling for length of marriage. Group differences remained significant. The findings suggest that the greater marital satisfaction reported by those without children cannot be explained simply in terms of their having been married for a shorter length of time. The findings of the study also suggest that the

lower marital satisfaction reported by those with children is partly a function of their greater length of marriage and partly a function of the actual presence of children.

A number of researchers have suggested that gender may exert an important influence on marital satisfaction, as discussed previously, but reports of how gender functions with regard to marital satisfaction vary. Although some researchers have found that men tend to describe their relationship more positively than women, Feeney, Noller, and Ward (1997) reported finding no gender differences in marital satisfaction in their study of 355 married couples. Fowers (1991) reported that husbands were somewhat more satisfied with their marriages than wives, and Markman and Hahlweg (1993) found similar results. However, Sternberg and Hojjat (1997) reported that wives consistently reported higher levels of marital satisfaction than did husbands. Although this finding is surprising and stands in contrast to popular lore, it is consistent with other recent research. In Karney and Bradbury's (1995) meta-analysis of 115 articles, they looked at the question of what variables predict marital outcomes over time and found wives' satisfaction consistently reported to be equal to or even higher than that of their husbands. This shift in research findings may reflect societal changes that have given wives increasingly more options.

It has been argued that patterns of change in reported marital satisfaction may be a product of differing methods used by researchers (Sternberg & Hojjat, 1997). The curvilinear pattern seems to be more common in cross-sectional studies than in longitudinal studies. An explanation for findings from cross-sectional studies that have shown such increase of marital satisfaction in later life is that the pattern may

partly reflect the loss of the most unhappy couples from long-term married groups because of divorce. However, other researchers have shown that cross-sectional reports of greater marital satisfaction in later life do not stem from other confounding variables, such as growing financial security (Anderson et al., 1983).

Theories of Marital Satisfaction

In reviewing research literature on marital satisfaction, I noted several theories that have been identified or cited as influential in understanding marital relationships. These theoretical frameworks are presented as ways to help the reader understand how marital satisfaction can develop and change over time in a marriage.

Social Exchange Theory. Social exchange theory is the most frequently cited theoretical framework in research on marriage and marital relationships (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Social exchange theory focuses on how relationships develop, are maintained, and dissolve. Applying social exchange theory to marital interactions, we see couples constructing their behavior through rational thought by which they seek to maximize rewards and minimize costs. Kelly and Thibaut (1978) have suggested that people's exchange of rewards and punishments is the essence of social interactions and constitutes the most important underlying dynamic of all relationships.

It was from the work of Thibaut and Kelley (1959) that social exchange theory developed widespread appeal among social scientists looking at marital relationships. In their classic book and its 1998 follow-up, these authors articulated their theory of interdependence, a midrange theory that states that relationships grow,

develop, deteriorate, and dissolve as a consequence of an unfolding social exchange process.

Levinger (1965), another important social exchange theorist, suggested that marital success (i.e., staying married) or failure (i.e., divorce) depends on individual patterns' weighing of three dynamic processes: (a) attractions of the relationship (e.g., emotional security, sexual fulfillment, social status), (b) barriers to leaving the relationship (e.g., financial expenses, religious constraints), and (c) the presence of attractive alternatives outside the relationship (e.g., preferred partners, escape from the current relationship). In other words, marriages end when the attractions of the relationship are few, the barriers to leaving the relationship are weak, and the alternatives to the relationship are enticing for at least one of the partners. In contrast, marriage will continue when the attractions of the relationship are many, the barriers to leaving the relationship are strong, and the alternatives to the relationship are unattractive for both partners' bottom lines, even though the emotional calculus used to get to their respective bottom lines may be based on very different variables being weighed.

Lewis and Spanier (1979) formed an exchange theory-based typology of marital relationships in which marital satisfaction and marital quality (i.e., stability) were conceptualized as orthogonal (i.e., independent) dimensions of marital outcomes. Within this conceptual perspective, marriages can be identified as one of four types: (a) satisfied and stable, (b) satisfied but unstable, (c) unsatisfied but stable, or (d) unsatisfied and unstable. For example, unsatisfied but stable couples are couples for whom the attractions within the relationship may be low but the barriers

to leaving the relationship are high. Satisfied-unstable relationships are those couples for whom attractions within the relationship may be adequate but barriers to leaving the relationship are low and alternatives outside of the relationship are even more attractive. It is through changing their perceptions of attractions, barriers, and alternatives that a married couple can move from one type to another.

Behavioral Theory. Another frequently cited theoretical framework used in understanding marital satisfaction is behavioral theory. Unlike social exchange theory, which focuses on intrapersonal processes, behavioral theory focuses on stimulus-response models of specific behaviors. The primary premise of behavioral theory is that rewarding or positive behaviors enhance global evaluations of the marriage, while punishing or negative behaviors do harm (Markman, 1981).

Behavioral theory has been expanded to include attributions that spouses make about their partner's behaviors (Gottman, 1994; Weiss, 1984). Unlike social exchange theory that focuses on perceptions spouses have, behavioral theory suggests that cognitive responses affect marriages through their influence on subsequent interactional behaviors. Over time, the accumulations of positive to negative behaviors gradually influence partners' respective global judgments of marital satisfaction (Gottman, 1994).

Family Stress Theory. Family stress theory also has been used in describing changes in couples' marital satisfaction. Unlike social exchange that is intrapersonal and behavioral theory that is interpersonal, family stress theory focuses on the direct effects of external as well as internal events or situations on processes within marital relationships. According to Hill's (1949) ABC-X model of family stress, stressor

events or situations (Factor A) require some adaptation from each spouse. Spouses have types and varying levels of resources (Factor B) available to them and also may arrive at different definitions of the stressor (Factor C) that modify the impact the stressor on their lives. The extent to which their collective available resources are sufficient to meet the demands inherent to the couple's joint definition of a stressor event determines the degree of stress experienced as a couple, which can range from low stress to crisis, and ultimately (Factor X), how the couple manage the situation.

Family stress theory has been used to explain and predict marital outcomes, using the assumption that declines in marital satisfaction and the occurrence of separation or divorce reflect failures to recover from crisis. Basically, the notion is that couples experiencing more stressful events would be expected to be more vulnerable to negative marital outcomes, and this effect should be mediated by the couples' levels of resources and their definitions of stressful events and situations in their lives.

Attachment Theory. The final theoretical framework that has been particularly influential in attempting to understand marital satisfaction is attachment theory. Bowlby (1969) suggested that the nature of marital relationships could be influenced by spouses' history of attachment relationships (particularly the nature of the mother-infant relationship), which determines the nature of subsequent relationships throughout the individual's life course. Marital satisfaction of couples depends largely on the partners being able to meet each other's basic needs for comfort, care, and sexual gratification (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). These researchers argue that close marital relationships reflect enduring styles of attachment developed

in infancy and early childhood. Thus, an individual's early experiences in close relationships will shape the nature and subsequent development of the marital relationship over time (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Marital Commitment Literature

Societal changes during the last hundred years have contributed to a cultural erosion of marital commitment across time (Worthington, 1990). Social changes such as an increased proportion of wives working outside the home, increased stress experienced at home and work for some couples, and the high value placed on individualism are forces that seem to be pulling couples apart. As a result of these and other factors, marital commitment has been receiving increasing attention in terms of both theories of personal relationships (e.g., Johnson, 1985; Levinger, 1979) and research on personal relationships (e.g., Johnson, 1982; Rusbult, 1983) in recent times.

Research on marital commitment includes widely divergent definitions and conceptualizations (Pramann, 1986). There has been little agreement and consistency among researchers in defining the concept of marital commitment, including what commitment is and how it operates in intimate relationships (Murstein & MacDonald, 1983; Wyatt, 1983). Nock (1995) reported that, although commitment is used frequently to describe individuals and relationships, it is rarely defined and even less often researched.

Sabatelli, Cecil-Pigo, and Pearce (1982) included two components in their definition of commitment: (a) an affective component comprised of feelings of solidarity and cohesion that can vary on a continuum from low to high and (b) a

process component that refers to the degree to which relationship alternatives are being monitored and tested. Scanzoni (1979) suggested that commitment mediates relationship stability by increasing the experience of dyadic cohesion and limiting the number of alternatives explored.

Even though there is a lack of clarity among definitions of marital commitment used by scholars, it is possible to identify recurring dimensions or aspects of commitment represented in the research literature (Brewer, 1993). Commitment to a relationship may be described with respect to three global dimensions (Adams & Jones, 1997). The first common dimension of commitment involves an attractive component. The attractive component is an individual's commitment to his or her partner based on personal dedication, devotion, attachment, and love (Adams & Jones, 1997). This attractive component of commitment is relationship-enhancing and strongly associated with relational satisfaction. Sabatelli and Cecil-Pigo (1985) found high levels of satisfaction to be associated with high levels of commitment. The influence of commitment on marital relationships is assumed to be due to features of the partner or the relationship that are perceived as rewarding, pleasurable, and valuable (Adams & Jones, 1997). This is probably the commitment component that Cuber and Harroff (1965) referred to when describing an intrinsic marriage, one in which the two people marry and remain married because of commitment to the other person as a unique person. Stanley and Markman (1992) identified this attractive dimension of commitment as personal dedication, referring to the desire of an individual to maintain or improve the quality of the marital

relationship for the joint benefit of both spouses. In other words, both spouses want to improve the marriage, sacrifice for it, invest in it, and seek their partner's welfare.

A second common dimension of commitment involves a constraining force component (Adams & Jones, 1997). This constraining force is the idea that external factors may prevent the dissolution of a relationship even when a person's motivation to leave it is high. In other words, a spouse may stay married to avoid the consequences of marital dissolution (e.g., disapproval of friends, the cost of getting a divorce) or for fear of change and the unknown. This dimension may help explain why spouses continue in unsatisfying marriages because of concerns for dependent children or out of the belief that they could not find an alternative partner. This is probably the commitment component that Cuber and Harroff (1965) referred to when describing an extrinsic marriage, one in which two people marry and remain married because of their commitment to the institution of marriage. Stanley and Markman (1992) identified this constraining force as a constraint commitment, referring to forces that constrain spouses to maintain their marriage regardless of their level of personal dedication. Constraints may arise from either external or internal pressures, and they favor marital stability by making termination of the marriage more economically, socially, personally, or psychologically costly.

And finally, a third dimension of commitment commonly found in the scholarly literature on marital relationships is the idea that commitment involves a sense of moral obligation (Adams & Jones, 1997). An example of this would be having a sense of obligation or belief in the sanctity of marriage as a covenant. Some researchers have discussed this moral obligation in terms of commitment to the

marital relationship as an important social institution, warranting care and protection (Johnson, 1991), while other researchers have connected moral obligation to religious integrity (Barber, 1974).

These three dimensions of commitment strongly resemble the commitment framework presented by M. P. Johnson (1991). He suggested that spouses remain married because they want to (personal commitment), because they ought to (moral commitment), or because they have to (structural commitment). Johnson's model parallels two other approaches to commitment: Levinger's (1965) cohesiveness model and Rusbult's (Rusbult & Verette, 1991) investment model. These models differ in how they categorize concepts, the importance they place on moral factors, and how explicitly they focus on the dyadic level. All three, however, share the view that commitment is a psychological state rooted in private judgments. In other words, the level of commitment spouses think that their mates feel is highly contingent on many factors (e.g., expression, self-disclosure).

Even though commitment is important in other relationships (e.g., dating, cohabitation, engagement), it may be more salient in the context of marriage, which tends to be characterized by an interpersonal, social, and legal complexity that is absent in most other relationships (Cupach & Metts, 1986). Couples with varying degrees of intimacy and involvement are likely to differ in their perceptions of their relationships. These differences are a function of growth and development as relationships evolve from acquaintanceship to marriage (Levinger, 1983). For example, in dating relationships, individuals would be expected to express less commitment to their current partner and relationship than would married individuals.

Research findings have shown that commitment in marriage is an important predictor of positive aspects of marital relationships. First, spouses who are more committed also tend to be more accommodating to one another (Rusbult & Verette, 1991; Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991). Second, committed spouses communicate more effectively (Brewer, 1993; Robinson & Blanton, 1993). Third, committed spouses solve problems more effectively than spouses who report lower commitment (Brewer, 1993). Fourth, committed spouses are more content with their lives than spouses who report lower commitment (Roberts, 1979). Ferguson (1993) found that happily married couples indicate that commitment is one of the most important factors contributing to the success of their marriage. This finding was confirmed by a study by Jones et al. (1995) that found marital commitment significantly positively related to years of marriage.

Researchers also have used commitment to account for why couples who are dissatisfied stay married. An extreme example involves spouses who remain in an abusive relationship (Strube & Barbour, 1983). A less extreme but common example is when spouses who are no longer satisfied with one another nevertheless are either unable or unwilling to divorce.

Looking at marital commitment in the context of religious orientation, Worthington (1990) used Rusbult's (1983) work to create a social exchange model of Christianity. Christianity is built on the notion of covenant--an agreement between people to seek the welfare of others even at personal cost to self (Bromley & Busching, 1988). For the Christian who understands marriage as a covenant, marriage is a permanent, intimate, love relationship that requires placing the other

person's needs above one's own. In that sense, spouses do not deserve happiness; they receive it through grace and mercy. Therefore, using Rubult's (1983) investment model of commitment, one would anticipate marriage satisfaction to be high because the Christian spouses' expectations for covenant-based marriage are for little likelihood of divorce and because a happy marriage is viewed not as a right but as a blessing. At the same time, their personal investment in the marriage is high because of the person's belief in the importance of their marriage covenant.

One problem that researchers face is the question of how commitment and marital satisfaction can be retained as distinct variables with their high level of intercorrelation (Sabatelli & Cecil-Pigo, 1985). Perhaps, these two constructs (commitment and satisfaction) simply are asking, in slightly different ways, about something that respondents and marriage researchers generally regard simply as marital satisfaction. However, noting the voluntary nature of commitment makes considering the difference between commitment and satisfaction important. Marital satisfaction ebbs and flows over time whereas commitment remains as a volitional choice.

Spousal Intimacy Literature

Social psychologists point out that we all have a basic need to establish intimate relationships. "There is a universal and primitive longing to be attached, to relate, to belong, to be needed, and to care" (Rice, 1983). People have intimate relationships with friends and relatives, but marriage offers us a unique kind of intimacy.

A number of different variables influence spousal intimacy. Harvey and Bray (1991) hypothesized that levels of intimacy individuals have experienced in relationship to their parents are reproduced in the relationship they create with their own spouse. Brayfield (1992) reported that spouses with higher levels of education tend to experience more intimacy in their marriages.

In a study examining whether number of children had an effect on marital intimacy in a sample of 355 couples, Feeney et al. (1997) reported that those couples who had more children reported less intimacy in their spousal interactions. Likewise, those couples who never had children reported the highest levels of intimacy in their own marriages. With respect to the relationship between the transition to parenthood and marital adjustment, it makes sense to anticipate that marital intimacy may increase or decrease depending at least in part upon the direction it was going before the birth of a child. Belsky's research (Belsky & Pensky, 1988; Belsky & Rovine, 1990; Belsky, Spanier, & Rovine, 1983) substantiates this.

Most people assume verbal expression to be at the heart of spousal intimacy. It also is assumed that wives rely on verbal expression more than men, leading to the conclusion that wives are therefore more capable of intimacy than men. Strassburger (1998) found that women do rely on verbal expression more than men. However, defining spousal intimacy in terms of only verbal expression obscures other ways spouses create intimacy. In the same study, Strassburger found that women created intimacy by spending time with their husbands together with family and friends, while husbands preferred sharing various kinds of activities (such as helping, taking walks, and holding hands) to create intimacy with their wives. Previous research had

suggested that spouses' marital satisfaction is highest when they share similar styles of creating intimacy (Bagarozzi, 1999).

Spousal intimacy most often has been associated with self-disclosure. While early approaches focused on self-disclosure as the simple sharing of relevant information (Jourard, 1971), more recent approaches have emphasized the process-oriented, communicative aspects of intimacy. For example, Clark and Reis (1988) suggested that intimacy is a process in which one person expresses important self-relevant feelings and information to another and, as a result of the other's response, comes to feel known, validated, and cared for. Komarovsky (1962) reported that there is a strong relationship between marital happiness and self-disclosure. In happy marriages, husbands are just as likely as their wives to share intimate emotions with their partners. In addition, some husbands in happy marriages are more likely than their wives to reveal personal information about themselves, and their self-disclosure tends to be far more intimate than that of their wives.

Early work on the development of intimacy in marital relationships occurred within the framework of social penetration theory (Altman, 1973). Social penetration theory posits that self-disclosure is important in the development of intimacy. Intimacy is operationalized in terms of overt verbal exchange. A marital relationship is intimate when the spouses discuss a wide range of intimate or private issues; the greater the depth of the self-disclosure, the greater is the intimacy.

Tolstedt and Stokes (1983) reported that intimacy is positively correlated with marital satisfaction. Lee (1988) found that fewer than 30% of women and 40% of

men reported confiding in their spouses. Those who confided in their spouses had markedly higher levels of marital satisfaction than those who did not.

Navran (1967) found that happily married couples participated in more open and rewarding communication, which is more than simply talking. Burke, Weir, and Harrison (1976) found that the greater the likelihood of self-disclosure, the higher the level of marital satisfaction. Levinger and Senn (1967) reported that satisfied spouses disclosed their feelings more fully than did dissatisfied spouses. Miller, Corrales, and Wackman (1975) found that when both partners in a marriage reported high levels of self-disclosure, they also both reported high levels of marital satisfaction. Hendrick (1981) also reported that self-disclosure was a good predictor of marital satisfaction. These studies suggest that self-disclosure and marital satisfaction are closely linked: the more disclosure, the more intimacy, and the more intimacy, the more satisfaction with one's marriage. However, both Gilbert (1976) and Cozby (1976) have suggested that the relationship between self-disclosure and marital satisfaction may be curvilinear with marital satisfaction lowest as self-disclosure reaches either extreme. In other words, these researchers have suggested that either too little or too much self-disclosure may lower marital satisfaction. It seems plausible that too much self-disclosure in a relationship can be threatening to the partner or take the surprise out of the relationship, resulting in a loss of balance in the marriage.

Religiosity Literature

Religiosity has been defined as a complex, multidimensional phenomenon (Glock, 1962; Glock & Stark, 1965). Some theorists have described religiosity as a pervasive world view and have warned against trying to assess it by scales bound to a

particular religious faith (Clayton & Gladden, 1974). So, for the purposes of the present study, religiosity is defined as the importance one ascribes to religious beliefs and teachings about life and marriage.

Religiosity, like marriage, is a social institution based on principles. Since religious principles deal with areas of norms, values, and attitudes, it makes sense that the level of religiosity a spouse feels can influence his or her view of and criteria for evaluating the marital relationship. With this in mind, it seems reasonable to think that there may be a relationship between religiosity and marital satisfaction and that high levels of religiosity strengthen and stabilize marital relationships. And, in fact, research findings have suggested that people who are highly involved with religion report higher marital satisfaction (Schumm, Bollman, & Jurich, 1982).

Glen and Supancic (1984) suggested that participation in church activities can play a role in marital stability. Call and Heaton (1997) found that church attendance is positively associated with marital stability for both men and women, that couples have the lowest risk of divorce when both spouses attend church regularly, and that differences in spouses' church attendance increase the risk of dissolution. People highly committed to a religion consistently have been found to have lower divorce rates than low-committed or nonreligious people (Spilda, Hood, & Gorsuch, 1985). Call and Heaton (1997) also reported that wives' religious beliefs concerning relational commitment are more important to the stability of the marriage than husbands' beliefs.

Feeney et al. (1997) reported that higher levels of religiosity were associated with higher ratings of intimacy in a sample of 355 married couples. These results are

consistent with a number of other studies indicating that religiosity has a positive influence on spouses' marital satisfaction. In general, these findings suggest that religion provides a belief system that supports positive family life and constructive family behavior (Thomas & Cornwall, 1990). However, in a second study of 84 married couples, Feeney et al. (1997) reported that religiosity did not significantly predict intimacy in that sample. This finding, in contrast to those of the researchers' other study, may be attributable to differences between the two samples of couples; only a small minority of the second sample described themselves as very religious.

Explanations for the influence of religiosity on marriage often suggest related processes by which religiosity enhances marital satisfaction. First, religion may create a bond or connectedness between a husband and wife that increases their marital satisfaction. This bond is developed through sharing an important value, by the verbal exchange of religious philosophies, and during time spent together in church activities. Robinson (1994) noted the importance of religion in strengthening spousal intimacy. White and Booth (1991) also noted that religious beliefs and behaviors are linked to increased marital satisfaction and stability. Second, if a couple's religion emphasizes the importance of marriage, spouses may feel greater commitment to their marriage (Larson & Goltz, 1989). The prior discussion of Bromley and Busching's (1988) and Worthington's (1990) work regarding the notion of covenant commitment in Christian marriage in the marital commitment literature section of this chapter is an example of such a related process by which religiosity enhances marital satisfaction. Third, religious proscriptions on nonmarital sex may act as a barrier against divorce by reducing the acceptability of sex with other partners

after marriage (Call & Heaton, 1997). Fourth, couples' mutual attendance at church promotes a shared perspective that is conducive to a more stable and satisfying marriage (Lehrer & Chiswick, 1993).

Summary

The literature review presented here has looked at the process variables of marital satisfaction, marital commitment, spousal intimacy, and religiosity. Noted throughout the literature review were gender differences within the process variables, relationships between the process variables, the impact of other sociodemographic variables on marital satisfaction, and it is evident that the influences of the relevant variables among each other and on marital satisfaction are complex and often times unclear. It was for this reason that I was curious to see how the findings from the present study would support or refute previous research.

CHAPTER III

Methods

The purpose of this study was to look at variables that may influence marital satisfaction—both process variables (degree of relational commitment, spousal intimacy, religiosity, and marital satisfaction) and selected sociodemographic variables. To do this, I chose to make use of an existing data set, the Work and the Family Project (Dr. Priscilla White Blanton, Professor of Child and Family Studies at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, principal investigator). The data were collected in three waves during 1993 and 1994.

Sample

To be eligible to participate in the Work and the Family Project study, participants had to be currently married and employed at the time of data collection. The individuals contacted were asked to invite their spouses to participate also. Both marriage partners were asked to fill out and return individual questionnaires separately. Both spouses were asked to have completed their respective questionnaires before discussing their responses together, to not change any response during or after discussion with their partner, and to mail their completed questionnaire in separate envelopes that had been provided for them.

Selection

All subjects were recruited from Knoxville, Tennessee, or the surrounding area. Data were collected from couples connected with five facilities in the area: a clothing manufacturing facility, a financial institution, a university medical center, and two suburban Protestant churches.

Clothing Manufacturing Facility and Financial Institution. Potential subjects at the clothing manufacturing facility and at the financial institution were given letters at their workplace that described the project and explained that participation in the study would enable them to become eligible to win four free university football tickets (see Appendix A). Interested potential subjects were given packets containing letters of introduction to the project (see Appendix B), letters of informed consent (see Appendix C), two project questionnaires, and two self-addressed stamped return envelopes so that the subjects (employee and spouse) could return the questionnaires separately.

Hospital Employees. A letter explaining the project and the football ticket raffle (see Appendix A) and an addressed stamped postcard that interested employees were requested to return to the researchers were distributed to hospital employees with their paychecks. Packets containing letters of introduction to the project (see Appendix B), letters of informed consent (see Appendix C), two project questionnaires, and two self-addressed stamped return envelopes were mailed to hospital employees and their spouses who had returned postcards expressing interest in participating in the project.

Suburban Churches. Packets containing letters of introduction to the project (similar to that in Appendix B but worded appropriately for members rather than employers of the churches), letters of informed consent (see Appendix C), two project survey questionnaires, and two self-addressed stamped return envelopes were given to members of two suburban churches. Packets mailed to those member couples who had returned postcards were the same as those mailed to other participants.

General Demographics

The sample were 233 participants who resided in Knoxville, Tennessee, or its surrounding suburban area. They were asked to provide general demographic information as background data (see Appendix D). The participants consisted of 119 (51%) men and 114 (49%) women, including 94 married couples who both filled out questionnaires (see Table 1).

Men. One hundred nineteen men participated in the study. Based on descriptive statistics (see Tables 1 and 2), the typical male participant was 48 years old, married for 21 years, attended church 4 or 5 times a month, had attended or graduated from college, worked in a managerial or blue-collar position, and earned approximately \$35,000 per year. One-third of the men in the sample earned in excess of \$50,000.

Women. One hundred fourteen women participated in the study. Based on descriptive statistics (see Tables 1 and 2), the typical female respondent was 45 years old, married for slightly less than 21 years, attended church 4 or 5 times a month, had attended or graduated from college, worked in a managerial or blue-collar position and earned approximately \$25,000 per year. One-fifth of the women in the sample earned less than \$5,000 per year.

Participants indicated their ethnic or racial background to be as follows: Approximately 224 (96%) were Caucasian American, 4 (2%) were African American, 3 (1%) were Native American, and 1 was (>1%) Oriental American. One participant did not indicate any response on this optional question.

Table 1

Age and Years of Marriage for Men and Women

Respondents' Gender		Respondents' Age	Length of Marriage
Men	<u>n</u>	119	116
	Mean	47.93	21.71
	<u>SD</u>	12.96	3.86
	Range	21-83	1-55
Women	<u>n</u>	114	114
	Mean	44.70	20.74
	<u>SD</u>	12.33	13.77
	Range	22-78	1-55
Total Sample	<u>N</u>	233	230
	Mean	46.35	21.23
	<u>SD</u>	12.73	13.80
	Range	21-83	1-55

Table 2

Educational Attainment

Men		
	Frequency	Percent
Junior High	4	3.4
High School	20	16.8
Some College	29	24.4
Bachelors	25	21.0
Masters	27	22.7
Doctorate	13	10.9
Other	1	.8
Total Sample	119	100.0

Women		
	Frequency	Percent
High School	26	22.8
Some College	31	27.2
Bachelors	36	31.6
Masters	17	14.9
Doctorate	2	1.8
Other	2	1.8
Total Sample	114	100.0

A frequency distribution of educational attainment levels ranged from completing junior high through receiving doctoral degrees. Over half ($n = 120$, or 52%) of the sample (55% of the men and 48% of the women) reported receiving bachelor's through doctoral degrees (see Table 2).

Employment status reported by the participants indicated nearly half of the sample ($n = 111$, or 48%) were employed as professional or technical workers. However, the majority (52%) were working class employees (63 of the men and 59 of the women).

Annual personal income (not including spouses' income) ranged from less than \$5,000 to over \$50,000. Three participants did not record income and were not included in the analyses of personal income. More than half ($n = 123$, or 54%) of the total sample earned less than \$25,000 per year. Gender differences in income were greatest in the lowest and highest personal income brackets, with 21 (19%) of the women and only 3 (3%) of the men reporting personal incomes of less than \$5,000 per year. This pattern was reversed in the higher income bracket levels, with 38 (32%) of the men and only 4 (4%) of the women earning \$50,000 or more in personal annual income. Participant income levels are representative of a middle-class socio-economic status but with an overrepresentation of working class families compared to the general U.S. population.

Operational Definitions of Process Variables

Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction was defined as the sum of the participant's scores on the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) (Mitchell, Newell, & Schumm, 1983). A

high score reflects a high degree of marital satisfaction, whereas a low score reflects a low degree of marital satisfaction. The KMSS consists of three items. The range of possible scores is from 3 to 21 (see Appendix E).

Relational Commitment

Relational commitment was defined as the sum of the scores on the Relational Commitment Measure (RCM) (Sabatelli & Cecil-Pigo, 1985). A high score reflects a high degree of commitment, whereas a low score reflects a low degree of commitment. The RCM consists of five items. The scores can range from 5 to 25 (see Appendix F).

Spousal Intimacy

Spousal intimacy was defined as the sum of the scores on the spousal scale of the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire (PAFS-Q) (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984). A low score reflects a high degree of intimacy, whereas a high score reflects fusion. The spousal scale consists of nine items. The scores can range from 9 to 45 (see Appendix G).

Religiosity

Religiosity was defined as the sum of the two-item religiosity scale. A low score reflects a low degree of religiosity and a high score reflects a high degree of religiosity. The scores on these two items can range from 2 to 8 (see Appendix H).

The sample's sociodemographic information (i.e., gender, age, length of marriage, educational attainment, personal income, number of children) was collected by single-item questions (see Appendix D). Presence of children was a constructed variable derived from the response to the number of children living in the household

question. To measure frequency of church attendance, Dr. Blanton developed a single-item question with four levels of response options: 1-2 times, 3-4 times, 5-6 times, or 7 or more times during the past month. A low frequency was interpreted to reflect a low degree of church attendance and a high frequency a high degree of church attendance.

Measurement

The data available from participants included responses to questions designed to measure their marital satisfaction, relational commitment, spousal intimacy, and religiosity at the time they filled out the questionnaire. The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (Mitchell et al., 1983) was used to measure marital satisfaction, the Relational Commitment Measure (Sabatelli & Cecil-Pigo, 1985) was used for the measurement of relational commitment, and the Spousal Intimacy Subscale of the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire (Bray et al., 1984) was used to measure spousal intimacy. Specific to Dr. Blanton's Work and the Family Project study, two questions were developed as a scale to measure religiosity.

Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale

Mitchell et al. (1983) developed the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) as an assessment tool for measuring marital satisfaction. The scale taps three dimensions of marital satisfaction: as an institution, as a relationship, and as a perception of one's spouse. The KMSS is a three-item paper-and-pencil test, based on a 7-point Likert-type scale, that can be self-administered and takes only a few minutes complete. Response choices range from (1 = extremely dissatisfied) to (7 = extremely satisfied).

In terms of psychometric properties, Schumm, Nichols, Schectman, and Grigsby (1983) reported a reliability score for the KMSS using Cronbach's alpha of $r = .98$, and Jeong, Bollman, and Schumm (1992) reported a Cronbach's alpha of $r = .96$ for the KMSS. Mitchell et al. (1983) reported a test-retest reliability of $r = .71$. Gender differences in the reliability of the KMSS have been reported. For instance, Schumm, Hess, Bollman, and Jurich (1981) reported lower alphas for husbands than for wives. In the present study, Cronbach's alphas were $r = .98$ for men and $r = .97$ for women, both well within the standards for deeming the instrument reliable. For scale reliability testing, $r \geq .70$ is considered a reliable measure (Huck, Cormier, & Bounds, 1974).

With respect to validity, the KMSS has been shown to correlate significantly with the Quality Marriage Index (Norton, 1983) and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976), two widely recognized instruments in this field of study.

Ideally, a scale should be characterized by high reliability, a normal distribution of responses, and minimal correlations with social desirability (Schumm et al., 1983). While research reports of studies using the KMSS indicate acceptable reliabilities, normal distributions of responses and correlations with social desirability for the scale have been questioned. In their study of 84 married mothers, Schumm et al. (1983) reported a skewness value of -2.20 and a kurtosis value of 6.32 , which reflect departures from normality. In the same study, marital satisfaction was highly correlated with a marital social desirability indicator ($r = .44$).

Schumm et al. (1986) have recommended using the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale because of its ability to reliably measure the degree of marital

satisfaction with so few items. White, Stahmann, and Furrow (1994) also have endorsed using the KMSS as a brief, reliable, and valid measure of marital satisfaction when compared to the longer Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (MAT). Guided by these recommendations, the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale was chosen as the best instrument to measure spouses' degree of marital satisfaction.

Relational Commitment Measure

The Relational Commitment Measure (RCM) was designed by Sabetelli and Cecil-Pigo (1985) as an assessment tool for measuring the level of relational commitment in marriage. Relational commitment in ongoing pairs is the tendency toward relational stability (staying married) and was operationally defined following the social exchange views of commitment. In the development of this assessment tool, the goal was to construct a scale that measures commitment as reflecting two dimensions: (a) the degree of cohesion felt in the relationship (e.g., "I often feel constrained by our relationship") and (b) the degree to which the alternatives to the marital relationship are monitored (e.g., "If I had to do it over again, I would probably marry someone else").

The RCM is a paper-and-pencil test that can be self-administered in just a few minutes. The partner participants were encouraged to fill out the form separately, not discuss their answers with each other before completing the measure, and not change their answers after discussion with each other. The initial version of the RCM consisted of 5 items, and participants' responded to a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The reliability of the Relational

Commitment Measure as reported by Sabatelli and Cecil-Pigo (1985) was computed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The authors reported a Cronbach's coefficient of $r = .82$ for a sample of 301 respondents. It is expected that the degree to which a marital relationship was judged to compare favorably with expectation would positively covary with the degree of commitment to the relationship (Sabatelli & Cecil-Pigo, 1985). In the present study, Cronbach's alphas were $r = .85$ for men and $r = .83$ for women, deemed reliable for both genders.

Spousal Intimacy Subscale

The Spousal Intimacy Subscale of the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire (PAFS-Q) was used in the present study. The PAFS-Q is a family assessment measure of concepts and outcomes from intergenerational family therapy and theory (Bray et al., 1984). The PAFS-Q is a self-report measure that assesses three-generational family relationships identified by intergenerational theory. The three-generational family relationships assessed include current relationships with parents, spouse or other significant dyadic relationship, and children. In intergenerational family theory, current perceptions of family relationships are considered more important than historical viewpoints and memories of relationships (Williamson & Bray, 1988).

The PAFS-Q contains 132 items that are grouped into eight nonoverlapping scales. Only one scale, the spousal intimacy scale, was used in the present study. The spousal intimacy scale consists of 9 items that assess the degree of intimacy and satisfaction respondents experience with their spouse or significant other (examples: "My sex life with my mate is quite satisfactory," "My mate and I are fond of each

other”). All items are rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from excellent to very poor or strongly agree to strongly disagree. Valences of items are recoded so larger scores indicate more intimacy.

Reliability of the PAFS-Q has been demonstrated in several studies. Bray et al. (1984) reported test-retest alpha coefficients' means of .90 and .89. In a separate study reported in the same article (Bray et al., 1984), the authors reported internal consistencies ranging from .74 to .96. In the present study, Cronbach's alphas were $r = .91$ for men and $r = .94$ for women, deemed reliable for both genders.

With respect to validity, the PAFS-Q spousal intimacy subscale correlates with other measures of family functioning to a moderate degree. The PAFS-Q spousal intimacy subscale correlated significantly with the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales (FACES; Olson, Bell, & Portner, 1978). Bray, Harvey, and Williamson (1987) reported significant correlations between the PAFS-Q spousal intimacy subscale and the Symptom Index, which measures physical and psychosomatic symptoms and stress, in a clinical sample.

Religiosity Scale

Two questions were included in the questionnaire to assess religiosity: (a) “How important are your religious beliefs in guiding how you live your life?” and (b) “How much influence would you say religious teachings have on your understanding of marriage?” Participants rated the two questions on a 4-point Likert-type scale. Cronbach's alphas were $r = .85$ for men and $r = .79$ for women, deemed reliable for both genders.

The computed alphas reported for each of the process variable measurements used in the present study are consistent with earlier studies, except for the religiosity scale, which was developed specifically for the Work and the Family Project, so no alpha comparisons are available for it.

Sociodemographic Variables

To collect sociodemographic information, participants were asked to fill out a series of single-item questions developed specifically for the Work and the Family Project (see Appendix D). Demographic data included gender, age, length of marriage, educational attainment, income, frequency of church attendance during the past month, and number of children living in the household. In addition, presence of children was a constructed variable derived from the participant's response to the question about the number of children living in the household.

Procedures

Data Collection

The study used secondary data that were collected as part of Dr. Priscilla Blanton's Work and the Family Project. Participants received instructions that both partners were to fill out their questionnaires separately without discussing the items before or during responding. To ensure methodological consistency, all potential respondents at the five facilities where the sample was recruited received the same instructions and were subject to the procedures. All potential participants received hand-delivered or mailed letters that described and explained the research study. If individuals chose to participate, they became eligible to win four free university football tickets (see Appendix A). Those individuals interested in participating were

given packets containing letters of introduction to the study (see Appendix C), letters of informed consent (see Appendix B), two (one for the wife, one for the husband) Work and the Family Project survey questionnaires, and two self-addressed stamped return envelopes. Two envelopes were included in the packet so that the spouses could return their completed questionnaires separately.

The Work and the Family Project survey questionnaire contained a sociodemographic background history and a variety of instruments that assessed many aspects of work and family life. However, for the purpose of this present study only selected sociodemographic background variables were used (age, gender, length of marriage, educational attainment, income, church attendance, presence of children, and number of children). Four instruments were used: (a) the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (see Appendix E), (b) Relational Commitment Measure (see Appendix F), (c) the Spousal Intimacy Subscale of the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire (see Appendix G), and (d) two questions that measured religiosity (see Appendix H).

Data Management

The Work and the Family Project data were examined in the present study using the SPSS Version 10.0 statistical software program. The first step was to visually scan the raw data, looking for missing data, outliers that might distort summary statistics, and inaccurate data recordings. Data from returned questionnaires had been entered into the computer from a project notebook. Computer printouts were compared to original questionnaires as an additional measure of accuracy. Data entry was subjected to cross checking to ensure accuracy.

Both religiosity items (IMPREL, RELMAR), the nine spousal intimacy subscale items (PAFS 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20) and five relational commitment items (RCM 1-5) were recoded so that all questions were consistent in terms of positive and negative valences, with positive responses on the high end of each scale. Missing data (i.e., no response recorded) and inaccurate data (i.e., a recorded score not in the parameters of the question) were excluded from data analyses. For example, eighteen participants did not record a valid church attendance score, and I decided to not include them in statistical analyses. Missing ordinal and ratio data (Likert-type scales, age, years of marriage) were replaced with mean values. The intent of this study was to generalize from a sample to a population, and the mean item score was used to replace missing ordinal or ratio data usually has a distinct advantage in this situation because the mean can be manipulated mathematically in ways that are inappropriate to either the median or mode (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 1988).

Research Questions

I developed the following research questions to test in this study:

1. What influence do the predictor process variables of relational commitment, spousal intimacy, and religiosity have on husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction?
2. What influence do the exogenous sociodemographic variables of age, length of marriage, educational attainment, personal income, frequency of attending church, having children, and number of children have on husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction?

Based on a direct effects model as depicted in Figure 1, which illustrates my notion of how relational commitment, spousal intimacy, religiosity, and the selected sociodemographic variables may influence marital satisfaction, I have developed the following hypotheses for testing:

1. The predictor process variables of relational commitment, spousal intimacy, and religiosity will predict an increase in the criterion variable of marital satisfaction.
2. The predictor sociodemographic variables of age, length of marriage, educational attainment, personal income, and church attendance will predict an increase in the criterion variable of marital satisfaction, whereas the presence of children and the number of children will predict a decrease in the criterion variable of marital satisfaction.

These hypotheses were tested separately for men and women because there is reason to believe that certain variables might operate differently in the marriages of men and women (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Methodologically, choosing to conduct separate analyses also help address the issue of autocorrelation between matched husbands' and wives' responses.

Data Analyses

SPSS Statistical Package Version 10.0 was used for all data analyses. Before beginning to test the study's hypotheses, I screened the process variables to examine the extent to which the data in the Work and the Family Project data set met the assumptions of the intended regression analyses (independence of variables, equal variances, normal distributions). To determine if the data met these assumptions, I

used independent samples t tests to test for variable independence, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to test for normality, and the Levene test for equal variances.

The primary data analyses for this study involved testing the two hypotheses. The statistical analyses of stepwise multiple regression and forced-entry multiple regression were used to assess the predictive power of the independent variables on marital satisfaction. Stepwise selection enters variables into a model one by one (or step by step). The first variable entered at Step 1 is the one with the strongest positive or negative simple correlation with the dependent variable. At Step 2 (and each subsequent step), the variable with the strongest partial correlation enters. At each step, the hypothesis that the coefficient of the entered variable is 0 is tested using its t statistic. And at each step, the model tests variables already in the model for removal. This is the most commonly used method when there have been high correlations found among the independent variables. In cases where no variable steps in, it means no analyses can be computed. When this is the case, forced-entry multiple regression (when all variables in a block are entered in a single step) is performed. (SPSS, 1999)

Prior to conducting stepwise and forced-entry multiple regression analyses, intercorrelations and independent sample t tests were computed on all independent variables for men and women.

CHAPTER IV

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics of process variables were computed for men and women.

For men, the means for the process variables were as follows: (a) marital satisfaction = 16.77 (SD = 4.93, range = 3 - 21), (b) relational commitment = 21.46 (SD = 3.51, range = 8 - 25), (c) religiosity = 6.62 (SD = 1.55, range = 2 - 8), and (d) spousal intimacy = 38.27 (SD = 5.83, range = 22 - 45). For women, the means for the process variables were as follows: (a) marital satisfaction = 16.19 (SD = 5.21, range = 3 - 21), (b) relational commitment = 21.45, (SD = 3.90, range = 9 - 25), (c) religiosity = 6.88 (SD = 1.26, range = 2 - 8), and (d) spousal intimacy = 38.49 (SD = 6.78, range = 10 - 45) (see Table 3).

Descriptive statistics for the noncategorical selected sociodemographic variables were computed by gender. For men, the means for the noncategorical variables were as follows: (a) age = 47.93 years (SD = 12.96, range = 21 - 83) and (b) length of marriage = 21.71 years (SD = 13.86, range = 1 - 55). For women, the means for the noncategorical variables were as follows: (a) age = 44.70 years (SD = 12.33, range = 22 - 78) and (b) length of marriage = 20.74 years (SD = 13.77, range = 1 - 55) (see Table 1).

Descriptive statistics for the categorical sociodemographic variables were computed. Of the total number of participants' responses to the question about church affiliation (N = 226), 48% (n = 112) of the participants indicated being affiliated with

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and Independent Samples t Tests of Process Variables for Men and Women

Respondents' Gender		Marital Satisfaction	Relational Commitment	Spousal Intimacy	Religiosity
Men	<u>n</u>	119	114	119	117
	Mean	16.77	21.47	38.27	6.62
	<u>SD</u>	4.93	3.51	5.84	1.57
	Range	3-21	8-25	22-45	2-8
Women	<u>n</u>	114	112	113	112
	Mean	16.19	21.46	38.49	6.88
	<u>SD</u>	5.21	3.90	6.78	1.26
	Range	3-21	9-25	10-45	2-8
Total Sample	<u>N</u>	233	226	232	229
	Mean	16.49	21.46	38.38	6.75
	<u>SD</u>	5.06	3.70	6.30	1.42
	Range	3-21	8-25	10-45	2-8

Independent Samples t Tests

	t	df	Significance (2-tailed)
Marital Satisfaction	.87	231	.38
Relational Commitment	.02	224	.99
Spousal Intimacy	-.26	230	.79
Religiosity	-1.39	227	.17

$p \leq .05$

Baptist churches, while 14% ($n = 32$) of the sample reported being affiliated with other Christian church denominations, 35% ($n = 82$) with nonChristian or unidentified unknown religious denomination, and 3% ($n = 7$) missing data. In terms of previous marital status, 20% ($n = 46$) of the total sample reported having been married before, whereas 77% ($n = 180$) reported not being previously married (and 3% of the respondents did not answer this question). In terms of paid employment, the average work week of men in the sample, was 36 hours ($SD = 21.48$, range 0 – 99) with 71% ($n = 77$) of the men averaging 40 hours or more hours a week. Women averaged 27 hours a week ($SD = 18.83$, range 0 – 78), with 55% ($n = 59$) of the women averaging 40 or more hours a week. Of the total sample, 58% ($n = 136$) reported having children, 21% ($n = 48$) indicated they did not have children, and 21% ($n = 49$) did not record a response to the item. In terms of number of children living at home, 29% ($n = 68$) reported having two children, 17% ($n = 40$) reported having one child, and 21% ($n = 48$) reported having no children living in the household.

Intercorrelations

Intercorrelations of the predictor variables and the criterion variable were calculated using Pearson's Product-Moment correlation coefficients. Separate correlations were run for men and women.

For men, the predictor variables that were reported as significantly correlated with marital satisfaction were relational commitment ($r = .24$, $p = .01$) and spousal intimacy ($r = .32$, $p = .00$). Religiosity ($r = -.05$, $p = .62$) was not significantly correlated with marital satisfaction and accounted for very little of the variance in marital satisfaction.

None of the sociodemographic variables was significantly correlated with marital satisfaction (age, $r = .00$, $p = .98$; length of marriage, $r = -.00$, $p = .99$; educational attainment, $r = .01$, $p = .94$; income, $r = -.03$, $p = .79$; church attendance, $r = .01$, $p = .95$; presence of children, $r = .03$, $p = .79$; number of children, $r = .00$, $p = .98$) (see Table 4).

For women, the predictor variables that were reported as significantly correlated with marital satisfaction were relational commitment ($r = .53$, $p = .00$) and spousal intimacy ($r = .57$, $p = .00$). The correlation between religiosity and marital satisfaction was not significant ($r = .11$, $p = .26$). None of the sociodemographic variables was significantly correlated with the criterion variable (age, $r = .14$, $p = .15$; length of marriage, $r = .11$, $p = .25$; educational attainment, $r = .08$, $p = .39$; income, $r = -.07$, $p = .43$; church attendance, $r = -.05$, $p = .63$; presence of children, $r = -.12$, $p = .27$; number of children, $r = -.14$, $p = .19$) (see Table 5).

Reports of both men and women were significantly correlated on the following variables: age and number of children, etc. Differences between the genders' significant ($p \leq .05$) intercorrelations among the independent variables were analyzed by comparing the information given in Tables 4 and 5. Men's responses were significantly correlated between (a) religiosity and commitment ($r = .22$, $p = .02$), (b) spousal intimacy and religiosity ($r = .30$, $p = .00$), (c) educational attainment and length of marriage ($r = .21$, $p = .03$), (d) income and religiosity ($r = .22$, $p = .02$), (e) income and education ($r = .50$, $p = .00$), (f) number of children and education ($r = .22$, $p = .04$), and (g) number of children and income ($r = .33$, $p = .00$), while women's responses were not significantly

Table 4

Matrix of Pearson's Product-Moment Correlations Coefficients for Men (n = 119)

	Marital Satisfaction	Relational Commitment	Spousal Intimacy	Religiosity	Age	Years of Marriage	Education	Personal Income	Church Attendance	Presence of children	Number of children
Marital Satisfaction	1.00										
Relational Commitment	.24**	1.00									
Spousal Intimacy	.32**	.63**	1.00								
Religiosity	-.05	.22*	.30**	1.00							
Age	.00	.08	.09	.02	1.00						
Years of Marriage	-.00	.11	.14	.13	.82**	1.00					
Education	.01	.06	.12	.15	.05	.21*	1.00				
Personal Income	-.03	.16	-.03	.22*	.02	.14	.50**	1.00			
Church Attendance	.01	.13	.12	.50**	.03	.19	.14	.21*	1.00		
Presence of Children	.03	-.15	-.23*	.07	-.25*	-.12	.10	.18	.07	1.00	
Number of Children	.00	-.13	-.18	.12	-.24*	-.06	.22*	.33**	.24*	.75**	1.00

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Table 5

Matrix of Pearson's Product-Moment Correlations Coefficients for Women (n = 114)

	Marital Satisfaction	Relational Commitment	Spousal Intimacy	Religiosity	Age	Years of Marriage	Education	Personal Income	Church Attendance	Presence of children	Number of children
Marital Satisfaction	1.00										
Relational Commitment	.53**	1.00									
Spousal Intimacy	.57**	.76**	1.00								
Religiosity	.11	.13	.18	1.00							
Age	.14	.09	.08	.12	1.00						
Years of Marriage	.11	.09	.05	.12	.87**	1.00					
Education	.08	-.11	-.11	-.08	.08	.06	1.00				
Personal Income	-.07	-.11	.02	-.09	-.00	-.05	.15	1.00			
Church Attendance	-.05	.12	.03	.53**	-.03	.01	.01	-.28**	1.00		
Presence of Children	-.12	-.15	-.24*	.09	-.38**	-.24*	.04	-.09	.15	1.00	
Number of Children	-.14	-.09	-.21*	.18	-.29**	-.20	.14	-.18	.27*	.78**	1.00

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

correlated. Women reported a higher correlation between (a) children's presence and length of marriage ($r = -.24, p = .02$) and (b) number of children and spousal intimacy ($r = -.21, p = .05$).

Hypotheses Testing

Prior to testing the research hypotheses of this study, I tested the process variables to see if they met the assumptions of the intended regression analyses (equal variances, normal distributions, independence of variables). To determine if the data met these assumptions, I used the Levene test to test for equal variances, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to test for normality, and independent samples t tests to test for variable independence.

The Levene statistic was used to test the hypothesis of equality of variance for each of the process variables (marital satisfaction, relational commitment, spousal intimacy, and religiosity) for the genders. A low significance value ($p \leq .05$) would indicate that the variance on each process variable differed significantly between men and women. The Levene statistics and p values for the data were as follows:

(a) marital satisfaction (1.43, $p = .23$), (b) relational commitment (.76, $p = .39$), (c) spousal intimacy (1.71, $p = .19$), and (d) religiosity (7.27, $p = .00$). Thus, only the Levene statistic and p value for religiosity indicated that the variance differed significantly between men and women.

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic was used to test the hypothesis that the data for each process variable (marital satisfaction, relational commitment, spousal intimacy, and religiosity) were normally distributed for each gender. A low significance value

($p \leq .05$) for either gender would indicate that the distribution of the process variables' data differed significantly from the distribution of a normal population. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistics and p values for the men were as follows: (a) marital satisfaction (.25, $p = .00$), (b) relational commitment (.16, $p = .00$), (c) spousal intimacy (.13, $p = .00$), and (d) religiosity (.25, $p = .00$). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistics and p values for the women were as follows: (a) marital satisfaction (.24, $p = .00$), (b) relational commitment (.18, $p = .00$), (c) spousal intimacy (.21, $p = .00$), and (d) religiosity (.26, $p = .00$). Thus, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic and p value for each of the process variables indicated that the distribution of the data for men and women differed significantly from a normal distribution.

Independent samples t -test comparisons were computed for gender against each of the process variables, with the significance level set at $p \leq .05$. Results of the t test of each of the four process variables with gender indicated no significance:

(a) marital satisfaction ($t = .87$; $p < .38$), (b) relational commitment ($t = .02$; $p < .99$), (c) religiosity ($t = -1.39$; $p < .17$), and (d) spousal intimacy ($t = -.26$; $p < .79$) (see Table 3). Thus, the responses of men and women in the sample regarding the process variables did not differ significantly from each other.

Then, independent t -test comparisons were computed for gender against each of the noncategorical demographic variables using $p \leq .05$ as the alpha setting. None of the results of the t -test comparisons of each noncategorical variable with gender was significant: (a) age ($t = 1.95$; $p = .05$) and (b) length of marriage ($t = .53$; $p < .60$) (see Table 6). Thus, the responses of men and women in the sample regarding the

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics and Independent t Tests of Age and Length of Marriage for Men and Women

Respondents' Gender		Respondents' Age	Length of Marriage
Men	<u>n</u>	119	116
	Mean	7.93	21.71
	<u>SD</u>	12.96	13.86
	Range	21-83	1-55
Women	<u>n</u>	114	114
	Mean	44.70	20.74
	<u>SD</u>	12.33	13.77
	Range	22-78	1-55
Total Sample	<u>N</u>	233	230
	Mean	46.35	21.23
	<u>SD</u>	12.73	13.80
	Range	21-83	1-55

Independent Samples t Test

	t	df	Significance (2-tailed)
Age	1.95	231	.05
Length of Marriage	.53	228	.60

$p \leq .05$

noncategorical demographic variables did not differ significantly from each other. Therefore, knowing which subsample (men or women) a response came from would give not clue about what the response would be.

As mentioned above, the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale did not meet the standards of the normality assumption. This was confirmed by skewness and kurtosis measures. The ratio of each statistic to its standard error can be used as a test of normality (SPSS, 1999). If the ratio is less than -2 or greater than $+2$, you reject normality. Testing the responses of the sample in this study resulted in a ratio of -8.654 for skewness and 2.817 for kurtosis. Therefore, the assumption of normality was not met for this sample's responses to the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale.

This finding was not surprising. Several studies have reported the scale's tendency to produce response distributions that violate the normality assumption (Schumm et al., 1981; Schumm, et al., 1985). This violation may be attributed to methodological issues. Schumm et al. (1985) speculated that the majority of the participants filling out this scale would have been married and happy, whereas unhappy spouses tend to dissolve their marriage and, therefore, would not have been included in the studies.

Also, participants volunteered to be part of the present study. It seems logical that these participants may be biased toward higher levels of marital satisfaction, or at least not low levels. Finally, social desirability bias could be expected to act as a force that would produce high marital satisfaction scores. These factors could explain why the KMSS response distribution was highly positively skewed.

Appropriate data transformations were attempted in order to normalize the data but were unsuccessful. I consulted with two statisticians who each recommended I employ power transformations of squaring, cubing, or inserting numerical values. Attempts to normalize the data using each of these three methods were unsuccessful.

Ultimately, I decided to proceed with the planned hypothesis-testing analyses because it is safe to relax the normality assumption if the sample is greater than 100 (Sirkin, 1995). Bradley (as cited in Keppel, 1991) notes that asymmetrical distributions represent less of a deterrent to linear models when the sample size is greater than 50 less stringent in terms of sample size, and this sample included over 200 participants.

Multiple regression analyses were performed to examine all the variables predicted to influence marital satisfaction in the study's hypotheses. Regression analyses were run separately for men and women to test each hypothesis for each gender subsample. Two types of multiple regression analyses were used. Stepwise multiple regression analyses were run first, and, if no variable entered the equation, forced-entry multiple regression analyses then were computed. Analyses were run for the predictor process variables (relational commitment, spousal intimacy, and religiosity) on marital satisfaction to test Hypothesis 1. A second set of analyses were run for the predictor sociodemographic variables (age, length of marriage, educational attainment, income, church attendance, presence of children, and number of children) on marital satisfaction to test Hypothesis 2.

Testing Hypothesis 1

Stepwise regression analyses looked at the predictive value of the three predictor process variables (relational commitment, religiosity, and spousal intimacy) in explaining the variance in marital satisfaction. The first step in predicting marital satisfaction for men was significant ($F = 13.42$, $p = .00$) and accounted for about 10% of the variance. Spousal intimacy ($t = 3.66$, $p = .00$) was the only variable to enter the equation, and, therefore, it was deemed the best predictor of marital satisfaction for men. Relational commitment ($t = .55$, $p = .59$) and religiosity ($t = -1.73$, $p = .91$) did not enter the equation because neither of them met the p -value criterion of .05 (see Table 7).

Two steps were produced for women. Step 1 was significant in predicting marital satisfaction ($F = 39.74$, $p = .00$) and accounted for almost 30% of the variance in marital satisfaction. Relational commitment ($t = 6.30$, $p = .00$) was the only variable to enter Step 1, and, therefore, it was deemed the best predictor of marital satisfaction. Spousal intimacy ($t = 2.41$, $p = .02$) and religiosity ($t = .36$, $p = .72$) did not enter the equation because neither met the .05 p -value criterion. Step 2 also was significant in predicting marital satisfaction ($F = 23.80$, $p = .00$). Both relational commitment ($t = 2.50$, $p = .01$) and spousal intimacy ($t = 2.41$, $p = .02$) entered the equation, which accounted for about 34% of the variance in marital satisfaction. Thus, adding spousal intimacy to the equation accounted for an additional 4% of variance in marital satisfaction. Religiosity ($t = .04$, $p = .97$) did not enter the equation because it did not meet p -value criterion of .05. The Step 2 equation was deemed the better model for explaining women's marital satisfaction because its variance was greater than that of Step 1 (see Table 8).

Table 7

Stepwise Multiple Regression with Process Variables on Marital Satisfaction for Men (n = 119)

	B	Standard Error	Beta	t	Significance	Collinearity
(Constant)	6.41	2.86		2.24	.03	
Spousal Intimacy	.27	.07	.32	3.66	.00	1.00

Step 1 $F = 13.42$ $p = .00$ $R = .321$ $R^2 = .10$

Excluded Variables

	Beta	t	Significance	Collinearity
Relational Commitment	.06	.55	.59	.61
Religiosity	-.18	-1.73	.09	.91

B = Unstandardized Coefficients

Beta = Standardized Coefficients

$p \leq .05$

Table 8

Stepwise Multiple Regression with Process Variables on Marital Satisfaction for Women (n = 114)

	B	Standard Error	Beta	t	Significance	Collinearity
Step 1						
(Constant)	.90	2.45		.37	.71	
Relational Commitment	.71	.11	.55	6.30	.00	1.00
Step 2						
(Constant)	-1.62	2.61		-.62	.54	
Relational Commitment	.42	.17	.32	2.50	.01	.44
Spousal Intimacy	.23	.10	.31	2.41	.02	.44
Step 1	$F = 39.74$	$p = .00$	$R = .55$	$R^2 = .30$		
Step 2	$F = 23.80$	$p = .00$	$R = .59$	$R^2 = .34$		
Excluded Variables						
	Beta	t	Significance	Collinearity		
Step 1						
Spousal Intimacy	.31	2.41	.02	.44		
Religiosity	.03	.36	.72	.99		
Step 2						
Religiosity	.00	.04	.97	.97		

B = Unstandardized Coefficients

Beta = Standardized Coefficients

$p \leq .05$

Testing Hypothesis 2

Following stepwise regression analyses of the process variables, stepwise regressions were performed on the selected sociodemographic variables (age, years of marriage, education, income, frequency of church attendance, presence of children, and number of children) for men and women. For both genders, stepwise regression analyses both entered and removed all sociodemographic variables. Thus, the model predicting marital satisfaction did not identify any sociodemographic variables that met the .05 *p*-value criterion. In other words, no sociodemographic variables or subset of them could account for a significant amount of the variance in marital satisfaction.

Forced-entry regression analyses for men and women then were performed with the sociodemographic variables to examine relationships that had not been significant in predicting marital satisfaction. For the men, forced-entry regression analysis with the sociodemographic variables were reported as follows: age ($t = .05$, $p = .96$), length of marriage ($t = -.71$, $p = .48$), educational attainment ($t = -.35$, $p = .73$), income ($t = .40$, $p = .69$), church attendance ($t = .27$, $p = .79$), presence of children ($t = -.32$, $p = .75$), and number of children ($t = .12$, $p = .91$). The equation predicting marital satisfaction was not significant ($F = .22$, $p = .98$) and accounted for only 2% of the variance (see Table 9). Inspection of Beta coefficients associated with the t statistics and p values indicated that the slopes of the relationships between the sociodemographic variables and marital satisfaction were not significant.

For the women, forced-entry regression analyses with the sociodemographic variables were reported as follows: age ($t = .70$, $p = .49$), length of marriage

Table 9

Forced-Entry Multiple Regression with Sociodemographic Variables for Men
(n = 119)

	B	Standard Error	Beta	t	Significance	Collinearity
(Constant)	17.08	4.77			3.58	.00
Age	.00	.10	.01	.05	.96	.31
Length of Marriage	.00	.09	-.15	-.71	.48	.33
Education	-.18	.53	-.05	-.35	.73	.68
Income	.14	.35	.06	.40	.69	.65
Church Attendance	.15	.54	.04	.27	.79	.84
Presence of Children	-.68	2.14	-.06	-.32	.75	.44
Number of Children	.00	.82	.02	.12	.91	.40

$F = .22$ $p = .98$ $R = .15$ $R^2 = .02$

B = Unstandardized Coefficients

Beta = Standardized Coefficients

$p \leq .05$

not significant ($F = .34, p = .94$) and accounted for only about 3% of the variance (see Table 10). Inspection of the Beta coefficients associated with the t statistics and p values indicated that the slopes of the relationships between the sociodemographic variables and marital satisfaction were not significant.

It should be noted that relational commitment was significantly correlated with marital satisfaction but did not explain enough of the variance to enter the stepwise regression equation. Relational commitment entered the first step of the stepwise regression equation while both relational commitment and spousal intimacy entered the second step of the stepwise regression equation. The correlation between religiosity and marital satisfaction was not significant ($r = .11, p = .26$) and did not account for enough of the variance to enter the stepwise regression equation.

Results of regression analyses that tested both research hypotheses for men is represented in Figure 2. Results of regression analysis that tested both research hypotheses for women is represented in Figure 3. Standardized Beta coefficients are reported in both figures.

Table 10

Forced-Entry Multiple Regression with Sociodemographic Variables for Women
(n = 114)

	B	Standard Error	Beta	t	Significance	Collinearity
(Constant)	15.16	4.15			3.65	.00
Age	.00	.09	.14	.70	.49	.31
Length of Marriage	.00	.07	-.16	-.84	.40	.34
Education	.32	.50	.07	.60	.55	.95
Income	-.23	.25	-.11	-.91	.36	.84
Church Attendance	.00	.52	.00	.03	.98	.85
Presence of Children	-.33	2.16	-.03	-.15	.88	.32
Number of Children	-.27	.90	-.06	-.30	.77	.31

$F = .34$ $p = .94$ $R = .17$ $R^2 = .03$

B = Unstandardized Coefficients

Beta = Standardized Coefficients

$p \leq .05$

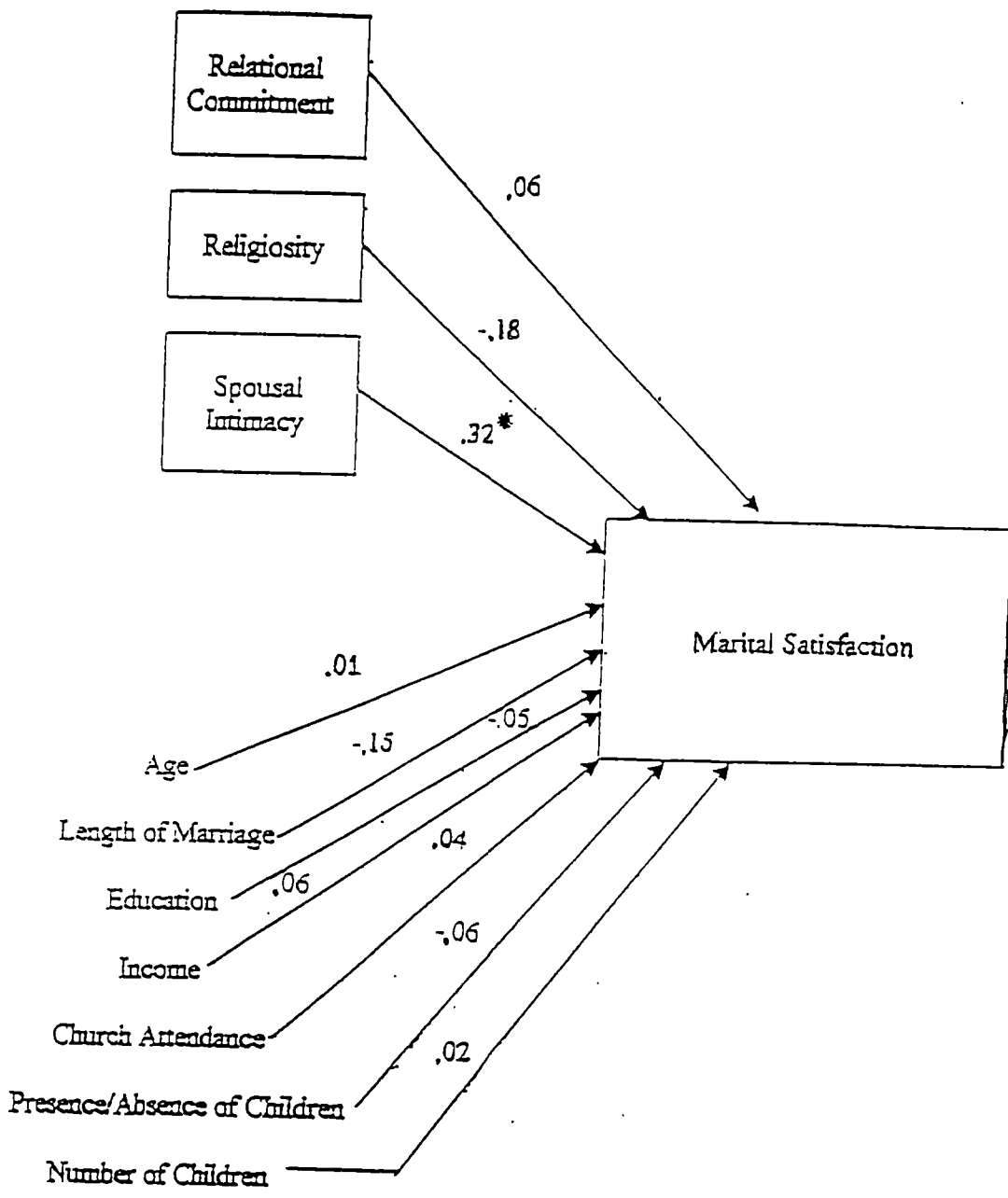


Figure 2

Results of regression analysis testing both research hypotheses for men
 * $p \leq .05$

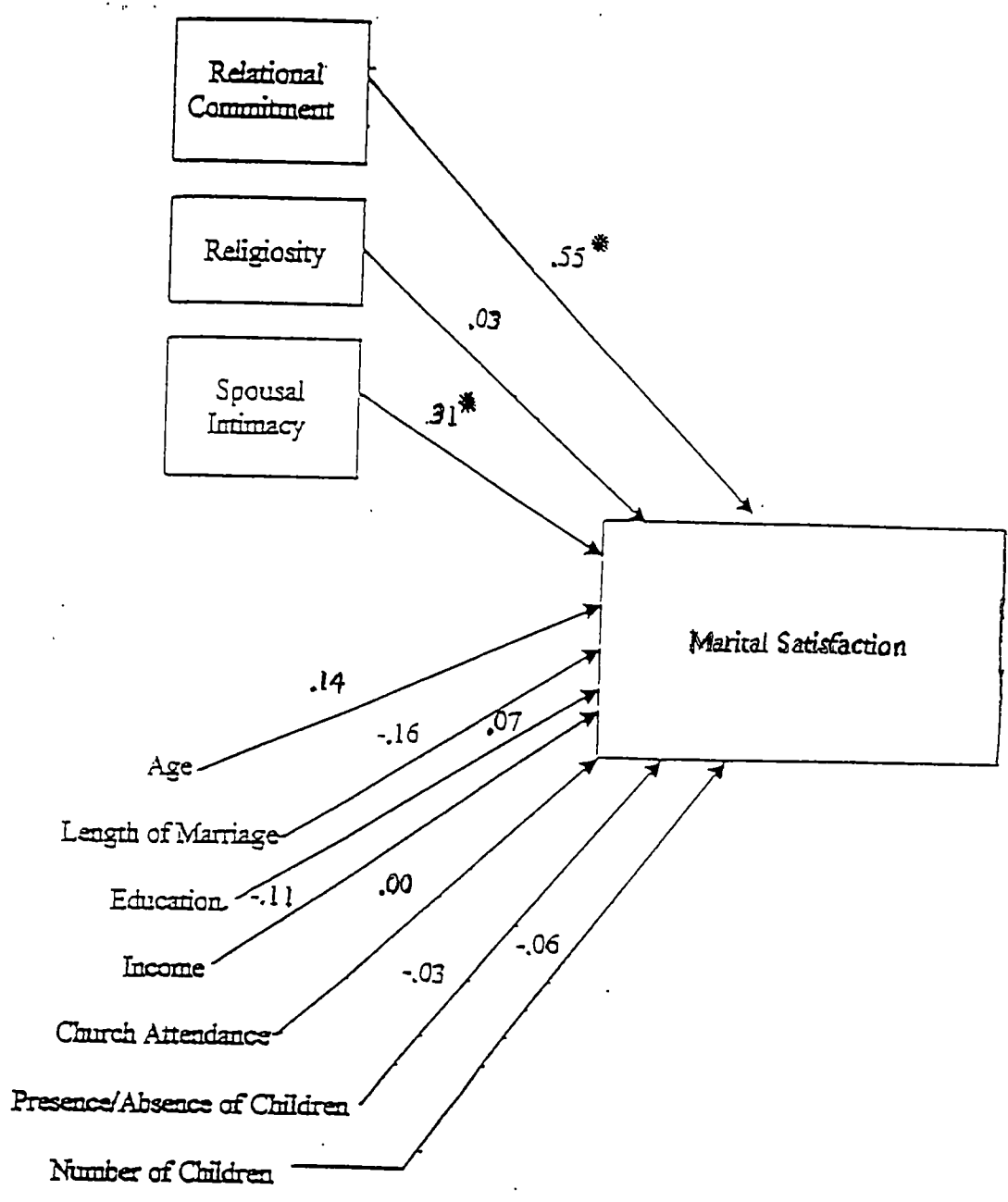


Figure 3

Results of regression analysis testing both research hypotheses for women
* $p \leq .05$

CHAPTER V

Conclusions and Discussion

Results of testing the first research hypothesis indicated that marital satisfaction could be significantly predicted for this sample in a reduced model that included spousal intimacy and relational commitment but not religiosity. For men, spousal intimacy was the most significant predictor of marital satisfaction. For women, relational commitment was the most significant predictor of marital satisfaction, and in addition, spousal intimacy was also significant. Results of testing the second hypothesis indicated that the selected sociodemographic variables were not significant predictors of marital satisfaction for either men or women in this sample. These findings are discussed below.

Discussion of the Findings

The results of this study are surprising in a number of ways. Variables historically reported to be predictive of marital satisfaction (length of marriage, church attendance, having children, number of children, and religiosity) turned out to make very little difference for this study's participants. Length of marriage, church attendance, having children, and number of children did not predict marital satisfaction in the present study. Of particular surprise was that both church attendance and religiosity, often thought to be associated with high levels of marital satisfaction, demonstrated no direct predictive power.

At first gender differences seemed virtually missing from this data set. Conducting t tests revealed no gender differences on any of the predictor variables or on the criterion variable, marital satisfaction. However, in terms of the regression models, relational commitment entered the regression model for women but not for men. Men

and women reported having very similar experiences in their marriages. Visual inspections of bar graphs showed striking similarities in participant responses, with scale scores by men and women almost identical.

In one area, the results of this study did confirm a commonly held assumption: Spouses who reported high levels of spousal intimacy reported being more satisfied with their marriages. Additionally, women who were highly committed to their marriages reported having higher levels of marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1

Numerous studies have reported gender differences in marital satisfaction. Historically, studies have shown husbands to be more satisfied with their marriages than wives (Fowers, 1991). However, the present study found no significant gender differences in reports of marital satisfaction, which is consistent with later studies such as that of Feeney et al. (1997). I cannot explain why the wives in this study on average expressed as much satisfaction with their marriages as husbands. I would speculate that it might have to do with the employment status of the women in the survey sample. The women in this sample worked an average of 27 hours of paid employment each week. As wives enter the workforce or take advantage of wider opportunities now available to them, they may experience more satisfaction with their lives in general, which, in turn, may positively influence their level of marital satisfaction. In the present study, the majority (78%) of women were employed, possibly accounting for a lessening of gender differences. In other words, both women and men in the study had families and also were employed, and that may account for their similarly high marital satisfaction levels.

Relational commitment was the best predictor of marital satisfaction for women. Johnson (1991) and other theorists (Adams & Jones, 1997) have discussed the role of what is called attractive commitment, the tendency to stay in a relationship based on personal dedication, devotion, attachment, and love. This component of commitment is probably what Sabetelli et al. (1982) referred to as an affective component comprising feelings of solidarity and cohesion. Examining the relational commitment scale (Appendix F) indicated that three of the five scales (scales 1, 4, and 5) address the affective component. This attractive component is relationship enhancing and strongly associated with marital satisfaction. Finding relational commitment to be the best predictor of women's marital satisfaction in the present study supports the conclusion from Sabetelli and Cecil-Pigo's (1985) study that higher levels of satisfaction are associated with high levels of commitment.

Findings from the present study suggest that probably there are differences in the way that men and women experience relational commitment. Women may experience commitment as a distinct experience that taps an affective component comprised of feelings of cohesion and solidarity based on personal dedication, devotion, and attachment. Such a tendency for wives to maintain their marriage because of bonding with their spouse (cohesion) may represent more of a personal commitment to their marriage than men experience.

For women in the present study, spousal intimacy, as well as relational commitment, was a significant predictor of marital satisfaction. The data demonstrated that spousal intimacy is important to marital satisfaction for both genders but actually more so for men. These findings are consistent with the assumption of a universal

longing to be attached to and relate to others (Rice, 1983). In fact, spousal intimacy may offer a unique kind of intimacy that is more meaningful and valued because of shared experiences.

In this sample, the majority of the women frequently attended church, and that church most often was Baptist. Christianity is built on the notion of covenant, an agreement to seek the welfare of the other even at personal cost to self (Bromley & Busching, 1988). Using Rusbult's (1983) investment model of commitment, one would anticipate marriage satisfaction to be increased because the Christian spouses' expectations for covenant-based marriages are for little likelihood of divorce and their personal investment in marriage is high because of their belief in the importance of the marriage covenant.

Rubin (1985) found numerous gender differences in the area of intimacy, including evidence that women engage in more self-disclosure and other intimacy-building behavior than men. Inspection of the results of regression analyses in the present study revealed that spousal intimacy was the most significant predictor of marital satisfaction for men, whereas for women relational commitment was the most significant predictor of marital satisfaction. This may not be as surprising as it first may seem, given the prevalence of high marital satisfaction scores in the data set. Research has shown that high levels of intimacy and high levels of marital satisfaction are correlated (Komarovsky, 1962); therefore, it may be surmised that husbands in the study, with their high levels of marital satisfaction, also may engage in higher levels of intimacy-building behavior. With the high degree of marital satisfaction reported by both men and women in the present study, it is not surprising that spousal intimacy was a

significant predictor of marital satisfaction for both genders. Further study would be needed to confirm this.

Spousal intimacy building is defined in terms of increased self-disclosure (Clark & Reiss, 1988) and/or sharing activities (e.g., taking walks, holding hands) (Strassburger, 1998). Generally, men build intimacy through sharing activities, and women build intimacy through self-disclosure. Close inspection of the nine scale items that comprise the spousal intimacy subscale shows that it addresses both types of intimacy, which may account for its strong predictive power for both genders.

The findings of the present study indicate that both husbands and wives reported a high level of religiosity. Johnson, Caughlin, and Huston (1999) found in their study of 91 married couples that husbands reported a marginally higher level of religiosity than wives. The finding of high levels of religiosity reported by both men and women in the present study may be due to the high degree of marital satisfaction reported by both genders (even though the reverse direction of causality did not hold true), supporting White and Booth's (1991) findings that religious beliefs are linked to increased marital satisfaction.

Religiosity did not reach statistical significance levels in predicting marital satisfaction for either gender and was excluded by the regression models. This may be due to a phenomenon referred to as marital conventionalization. Edmonds (1967) argued that empirical findings observed between measures of religiosity and marital satisfaction were spurious artifacts of the common contamination of such measures with social desirability and response bias. In other words, marital conventionalization may mask or discount positive associations between a religious variable and a measure of marital

happiness. However, because there were no measures to assess social desirability or response bias, results of the present study cannot confirm or disconfirm this proposition. The implications of marital conventionalization for marital satisfaction measures are important, but underestimating the importance of at least some religious variables in predicting marital satisfaction out of concern for marital conventionalization would be unjustified.

The lack of expected findings regarding influence of religiosity on marital satisfaction in this sample could be related to the restricted range of respondents' scores on the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale. If appropriate transformation of the data could have been performed successfully, evidence of an influence of religiosity on marital satisfaction may have surfaced.

In addition, failure to find evidence of influence of religiosity on marital satisfaction could be a methodological issue. Glock (1962) defined religiosity as a complex, multidimensional phenomenon. In the present study, religiosity was defined as the influence of religious beliefs and teachings on our lives and marriage. Perhaps the religiosity scale used in the present study was an imperfect measure that could not adequately tap this very complex variable.

I did consider the possibility of religiosity acting as a mediator or moderator between the process variables and marital satisfaction. Karney and Bradbury (1995) reported that examination of variables acting as mediators or moderators is rarely done in research. However, after examining the low correlations and regression coefficients in evidence between religiosity and relational commitment, spousal intimacy, and marital

satisfaction in this data set, I decided there was not enough evidence to support following through with this endeavor.

Hypothesis 2

Surprisingly, respondents in the present study reported similar sociodemographic data for age, length of marriage, education, income, church attendance, having children, and number of children. The similarity of responses by gender could be the result of the sampling procedure. Of the 233 participants, 94 couples (a total of 188 individuals) filled out the survey, which may account for these demographic similarities.

Results of t tests indicated no gender differences on sociodemographic variables. In addition, the regression models entering all the sociodemographic variables as predictors of marital satisfaction demonstrated very low regression coefficients for both genders. In other words, the sociodemographic variables in the present study did not significantly account for any of the variance in marital satisfaction for either husbands or wives. None of the sociodemographic variables showed evidence of effecting systematic increases or decreases in marital satisfaction. These findings support the general findings of Karney and Bradbury's (1995) meta-analysis that that husbands' and wives' variables tend to have similar effects on marital satisfaction, although Karney and Bradbury did identify a couple of exceptions (income and education). For example, husbands' income has a positive effect on both spouses' perceptions of their marriage, and wives' income has a negative effect on both spouses' marriage perceptions. However, in the present study, these gender differences were not found. Subtle gender differences were found by examining intercorrelations, but these differences were not reflected in the regression models as predicting marital satisfaction. Even though each of these intercorrelations

was not significant by gender, they do provide a glimpse of slight gender differences (probably idiosyncratic) for this particular sample.

Although the results of the present study demonstrated relative absence of gender differences, the findings are in line with a new and growing body of literature. Findings of the present study are in agreement with those of Karney and Bradbury (1995) and Feeney et al. (1997) that suggest that past reports of large gender differences in other variables' effects on marital satisfaction may have been exaggerated and that consequent expectations were incorrect.

Implications for Research

The present study demonstrated relatively little variability in ethnic and demographic makeup. A study that includes more ethnic diversity reflected by minority representation would be helpful.

Examination of sociodemographic characteristics in the present study revealed the majority of the participants were working class who frequently attended church. Greater economic diversity in the sample would be helpful as well. In light of the demographic homogeneity of the sample, it is important to be cautious about generalizing findings beyond the specific group examined. Replication of this study using random sample methodology in order to provide findings that could be generalized to the larger population is warranted. However, such studies are not done often due to practical considerations, and convenience samples are the rule.

Most participants in this sample rated themselves as satisfied with their current marriage. Scores on the KMSS were positively skewed, and, as mentioned earlier, the entire sample generally was highly satisfied with their marriage. Replicating the study

but including a sample of relatively dissatisfied spouses would be beneficial. One possible replication study would be to survey a sample of married couples recently separated.

The religiosity profile of this sample showing high rates of church attendance may be atypical when compared with other regions of the country. Recruiting was done in two churches, further complicating the effort to obtain a sample representative of the church-going habits of the general U.S. population. While I believe the sampling procedures, which recruited participants from employment sites in addition to the churches, captured a range of religious beliefs, the sample is probably more religiously inclined than the general population. The influence of religiosity on marital satisfaction may be more salient in other areas of the country. This sample-related issue should be addressed in comparative research because it is unclear how regionalism may have affected the results.

This study used a quantitative approach to examine gender differences in what contributes to marital satisfaction. A follow-up study using qualitative interviewing techniques would be valuable to further explore how spousal intimacy, relational commitment, and religiosity may contribute to marital satisfaction. Especially interesting would be to ask open-ended questions to reveal how these process variables may change as a function of other variables. Using observational, narrative, and diary data also would be potentially valuable in studying marital satisfaction. Use of these qualitative techniques would add a richer texture to findings by providing participants with the opportunity to describe their lived experiences in ways that simply are not possible in quantitative research.

All four of the process variables in this study are constructs with dynamic properties. For this reason, the findings represent at best a snapshot of the interplay of relational commitment, spousal intimacy, and religiosity with marital satisfaction taken at a single point of time in the lives of our participants. Unlike most demographic variables, spousal intimacy, relational commitment, and religiosity can increase, decrease, or stay the same—and so can marital satisfaction. The goal of future research should be implementation of longitudinal designs that would answer important questions regarding the development and maintenance of spousal intimacy, relational commitment, religiosity, and marital satisfaction over time.

Since the analysis in this study relied on a self-report instrument, the findings may be influenced to some extent by response biases or may have been inflated by common method variance. It would be useful to examine the relationship between spousal intimacy, relational commitment, religiosity, and marital satisfaction by multiple methods to see how these three factors predict specific behaviors in marriage (such as direct observation of conflict resolution, communication efficacy, and diffusion of responsibility for household tasks).

Results of the present study indicated significant correlations between two of the independent process variables (relational commitment and spousal intimacy). If independent variables are highly intercorrelated, spurious effects may be present. To improve upon the present study, future research with greater variation among the respondents' levels of marital satisfaction also would provide opportunity to examine possible interaction effects among the independent process variables (as moderators). In addition, more complex models, including possible mediator variables, could be tested.

The present study contributed to the body of knowledge about variables contributing to marital satisfaction. This study, like previous research, has examined variables as possible predictors of marital satisfaction. I recommend that future research efforts, before examining more variables and becoming broader, should first examine variables more deeply in order to advance the field toward a more thorough explanation of marital satisfaction.

Implications for Practice

Given the current high rate of divorce in the United States, alleviation of marital distress and prevention of marital and family breakdown is a priority for clinicians and family life educators, as well as researchers. The results of this study have shown that spousal intimacy and relational commitment are important predictors of marital satisfaction. From a clinician's perspective, an important aspect of helping marital couples through difficulties would be educating the spouses on techniques and strategies for enhancing spousal intimacy. Professionals counseling couples should be sensitive to the multifaceted nature of intimacy (e.g., verbal, physical) and should help couples evaluate their position on the various dimensions of intimacy (Tolstedt & Stokes, 1983). This could be done by helping couples to express their feelings and by encouraging couples to engage in activities that are pleasurable to both of them.

In addition to building spousal intimacy, the development of greater commitment to the relationship would be a key step in therapy. Helping spouses to understand that commitment can come in several forms and that trying new skills in therapy can give "voice" to making their marital relationship better (Rusbult, Zembrodt, & Gunn, 1982).

Implications go beyond a clinical population. Professionals providing educational programs to couples drawn from normal populations in community-based settings would do well to include prevention and intervention strategies to help the couples increase their levels of intimacy and commitment if they wish to enhance their mutual satisfaction as marriage partners. Separate workshops could be developed for husbands and wives. Workshops for husbands would teach intimacy-building activities, whereas workshops for wives would teach both effective communication skills and intimacy-building skills. Helping couples to believe that their marriage comes first and that commitment to one another and effective communication has top priority would help nurture their relationship and increase their marital satisfaction.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations to this study. First, methodological weaknesses included exclusive use of self-reports and use of a measure of new and not previously tested reliability (the religiosity scale). Second, not controlling for social desirability and other response biases on the marital satisfaction scale may have masked the predictive power of process variables. To address this issue in future research projects, I would recommend taking an alternative approach that would include controlling for marital conventionalization.

Third, there were two concerns about the church attendance scale. First, the question was formatted such that there was no response option for participants to indicate that they had not attended any religious services. Second, the question asked frequency at attendance of religious services in the past month. Adding a response option of “no

attendance of religious services” and requesting the average frequency of attending religious services over the past year may have produced very different data.

My attempts to normalize the KMSS data were unsuccessful. Power transformations of the data failed to produce a bell-shaped distribution. As a result, minimal variation in marital satisfaction scores made it difficult to identify predictive variables.

The sampling procedure employed in this study places limits on the generalizability of the findings. The typical respondent was working class and frequently attended church. Therefore, the results should be interpreted with these limitations in mind.

Strengths of the Study

One strength of the study was the sample size. Having 233 participants allowed statistical analysis not possible with smaller samples. Additionally, adequate numbers of each gender and relatively equal gender representation was very helpful, since this study examined gender differences.

The length of the survey questionnaire and the range of topics it dealt with made it possible to examine the relationships among a number of variables potentially important to marital satisfaction. A total of 11 variables were considered in the present study's analysis.

Summary

This study examined the predictive power of a model containing the process variables of spousal intimacy, relational commitment, and religiosity on marital satisfaction. For men, the regression model containing spousal intimacy was significant

in predicting marital satisfaction. For women, the regression model containing both relational commitment and spousal intimacy was significant in predicting marital satisfaction. These findings suggest that spousal intimacy is important to the marital relationship for both men and women. However, for women, relational commitment is also important to the marital relationship. For both genders, a regression model containing selected sociodemographic variables was not found to be significant in predicting participants' marital satisfaction.

Identifying variables that predict marital satisfaction has challenged social researchers for decades. This study contributes to the body of knowledge concerning variables that predict marital satisfaction, which is of vital concern to families. Future research will contribute to our understanding of the complex interrelationships between marital satisfaction and other variables. This topic will continue to be an important area of study as the need grows to improve and maintain the quality of family life.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

DESCRIBE YOUR MARRIAGE & HAVE A CHANCE TO
WIN 4 TICKETS TO A UT FOOTBALL GAME

I am a professor in the Department of Child and Family Studies at UT. I have taught courses about families and carried out studies of families at UT since 1972. I am married and have two small children and I am very aware of juggling the demands of work and family. I am very committed to helping gather information about families so strategies can be identified to help families cope with the many tasks that face them today.

I am conducting a study of marriage and would like to invite you to participate. There is much we need to know about how men and women function as husbands and wives. All the information we gather from you will be confidential and will be reported only in group form. I am pleased that (company) has given me access to their employees and I will provide information to (company) that may prove helpful in planning services and programs for best meeting the needs of their personnel.

The study involves completing a questionnaire that will take 30-45 minutes of your time. The questions ask you describe your marriage. I would also like for your spouse to participate, and questionnaires for both of you to complete will be mailed to you at your home address. If you are interested in participating, please fill in the information on the attached postage-paid postcard and mail to me.

As a way of showing appreciation for your investment of time in completing the questionnaires, a drawing from cards filled out by those returning questionnaires will be held. The winner will receive four tickets to a home UT football game this fall!

You can help other families by giving a little of your time to me. Please help me to accumulate much needed information and families such as yours. Such information is crucial if policies and programs are to be planned in ways that can support and strengthen families.

Sincerely,

Priscilla White Blanton, Ed.D.
Child and Family Studies
University of Tennessee
Knoxville, TN 37996-1900
Phone: 974-5316

APPENDIX B

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to complete the accompanying questionnaire. We are gathering information from couples like you and your spouse, who are currently married and who are interested in helping us learn more about the family.

Please respond to ALL of the statements and questions, answering them as quickly as you can according to the way you feel at the moment (not the way you usually feel or felt last week). If you want to talk over your responses to the questionnaire with your spouse, please wait until you have both finished filling out the surveys. Also, please do not make any changes on the form, either during or after any such discussion.

Read each question or statement carefully. If you have trouble giving the exact answer to a question, answer the best you can but be sure to answer each one. There are no right or wrong answers. Again, answer according to the way they feel at the present time.

Before beginning the "Marriage Survey," please find the enclosed Informed Consent Form, explaining confidentiality and the reporting of group data from the project. After reading the consent form, please continue on to the "Marriage Survey."

When you have completed the survey, please return the survey as soon as possible in the stamped, addressed envelope provided. Again, your time and effort are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Priscilla Blanton, Ed.D.
Professor
115 Jesse Harris Building
Department of Child and Family Studies

Robert S. Combs, D.Min.
Ph.D. Student

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

We would like for you to understand our commitment to the following safeguards in your interest:

1. The purpose of this study is to gather information about families in order to better understand how men and women function as husbands and wives.
2. Your confidentiality as a participant will be maintained by the use of code numbers of names and materials. The data gathered will be reported in summary form with no reference to you personally. Individual data and participant identities will not be share with anyone.
3. You are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation in this study at any time without penalty.
4. Answers to questions you may have about the procedures of this study are available at any time. Contact:
Dr. Priscilla White Blanton
Department of Child and Family Studies
The University of Tennessee
Knoxville, TN 37996
Phone: 974-5316
5. We do not anticipate that participation in our project will involve any risks for you, but if responding to the questionnaire creates concern for you and/or your spouse, we will be happy to refer you to a trained professional. In addition to the insight you may gain from reflecting on yourself and your family, the group results from this study may be of interest to you and will be available to you upon your request.
6. It will probably take about 45 minutes of your time to complete the "Marriage Survey."

RETURNING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ THIS FORM AND, ON THE BASIS OF INFORMED CONSENT, AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

APPENDIX D

Sociodemographic Information

1. Age: _____
2. Gender: _____ Male _____ Female
3. How would you describe your ethnic or racial background? (Optional)
 1. _____ White/American, Caucasian
 2. _____ African American, Black
 3. _____ Native American, Indian
 4. _____ Latin American, Hispanic
 5. _____ Oriental American, Pacific
4. Present Marital Status:
 1. _____ Single
 2. _____ Married
 3. _____ Widowed
 4. _____ Divorced
 5. _____ Married or Separated
 6. _____ Widowed & Remarried
 7. _____ Divorced & Remarried
 8. _____ Other (please specify) _____
5. Length of present marital status: _____
6. Have you been married previously?
 1. _____ Yes
 2. _____ No
7. Number of children currently living in your household:
 1. _____ Daughters Ages: _____
 2. _____ Sons Ages: _____
8. Highest degree earned:
 1. _____ Elementary school (grades K-5)
 2. _____ Junior High (grades 6-8)
 3. _____ High School (grades 9-12)
 4. _____ Bachelors
 5. _____ Masters
 6. _____ Doctorate
 7. _____ Other _____
9. What is your religious affiliation? (Please give full name of your denomination)

10. On the average, how many hours a week do you work in paid employment? _____
11. What is your personal pre-tax income? Do not count your spouse's income, but do indicate your other income allowances (i.e., car, house, or social security allowance)
- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. _____ less than \$5,000 | 6. _____ \$20,000 to \$24,999 |
| 2. _____ \$5,000 to \$7,499 | 7. _____ \$25,000 to \$34,999 |
| 3. _____ \$7,500 to \$9,999 | 8. _____ \$35,000 to \$49,000 |
| 4. _____ \$10,000 to \$14,999 | 9. _____ \$50,000 or more |
| 5. _____ \$15,000 to \$19,999 | |
- 12a. What is your current employment position or title? _____
- 12b. In which of the following categories would you say your current job fits? Choose only one category _____
1. Professional, technical, and kindred workers
 2. Managers, officials, and proprietors, except farm
 3. Clerical, sales, and kindred workers
 4. Craftspeople, crew managers, and kindred workers
 5. Machine operators
 6. Laborers, except farm and mine
 7. Farmers and miners
13. How often have you attended religious services in the past month?
- 1-2 times _____
- 3-4 times _____
- 5-6 times _____
- 7+ times _____

APPENDIX E

Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Extremely Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Mixed	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Extremely Satisfied

1. ____ How satisfied are you with your marriage?
2. ____ How satisfied are you with your husband/wife as a spouse?
3. ____ How satisfied are you with your relationship with you husband/wife?

APPENDIX F

Relational Commitment Measure

Use the following scale to answer items 1 to 5.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

1. ___ If I had to do it all over again, I would probably marry someone else.
2. ___ I often feel constrained by our relationship.
3. ___ I miss the freedom of being single.
4. ___ If I had to do it all over again, I would probably remain single.
5. ___ I feel very loyal to my partner.

APPENDIX G

The Spousal Intimacy Subscale of the Personal Authority in the Family System
Questionnaire

Use the following scale to answer items 1 to 9.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

1. ___ My sex life with my mate is quite satisfactory.
2. ___ My mate and I have many interests which we choose to share.
3. ___ My mate and I frequently talk together about the significant events in our lives.
4. ___ My mate and I like to get together for conversation and recreation.
5. ___ My mate and I can trust each other with the things that we tell each other.
6. ___ My mate and I frequently show tenderness toward each other.
7. ___ My mate and I are fair in our relationship with each other.
8. ___ My mate and I have mutual respect for each other.
9. ___ My mate and I are fond of each other.

APPENDIX H

Religiosity Scale

1. How important are your religious beliefs in guiding how you live your life?

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
Very Important	Pretty Important	Not too Important	Not Important At All

2. How much influence would you say religious teachings have on your understanding of marriage?

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
Very Much	Pretty Much	Not too Much	Not Much At All

VITA

Kris Koehne was born in Gary, Indiana, on June 23, 1950. He attended public schools in Oregon and graduated from Pendleton High School in June 1969. He completed his Bachelor of Science degree in 1993 at Eastern Oregon State University, Oregon, majoring in psychology. He completed his Masters degree in 1996 at Idaho State University, Idaho, majoring in psychology. In the fall of 1996, Kris began Ph.D. studies at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in the Child and Family Studies Department. He graduated in 2000. Kris began working with Tennessee's Early Intervention Systems in July of 1999.