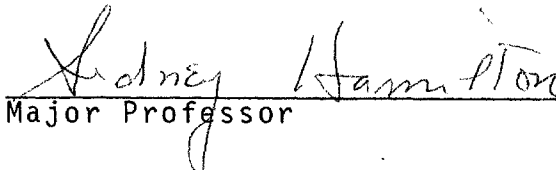
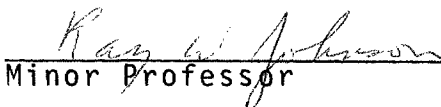
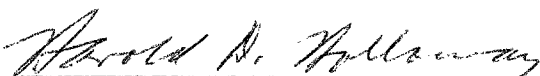


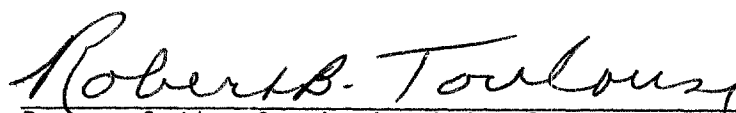
AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PERSONALITY  
ADJUSTMENT, SOCIAL INTERACTION ABILITIES, AND  
MARITAL ADJUSTMENT

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The problem with which this investigation was concerned was that of determining the relationships between personality adjustment, social interaction abilities and marital adjustment. The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, California Psychological Inventory, Polyfactor Test for Marital Difficulties and Marriage Adjustment Inventory were used to identify five factors measuring these variables. The following hypotheses were investigated:

1. There will be a significant relationship between individual personality adjustment and marital adjustment as measured by the instruments used in this study.

2. There will be a significant relationship between marital harmony and social interaction abilities as measured by the instruments used in this study.

The 46 subjects used in this study were drawn from a population seeking marital counseling at a private clinic in Fort Worth, Texas. A Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was computed between all factors and tested for significance using a .05 level of confidence as the criterion for accepting the hypotheses.

Significant, low-order correlations were found between marital adjustment and both personality adjustment and

interaction abilities as measured in the study. Analysis of statistical results confirmed the hypotheses. However, the correlation coefficients found were generally low and a position of multiple causation of marital disharmony was advanced as a reasonable interpretation of the data.

Results of this study indicate the complexity of the marriage relationship and the difficulty in identifying and quantitatively measuring the variables involved. Great care should be taken before assigning emphasis to any single variable as the major factor in marital disharmony.

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MARITAL ADJUSTMENT

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the  
North Texas State University in Partial  
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The development of marriage counseling as a separate entity within the fields of counseling and psychotherapy has occurred at a much faster rate than has the accompanying growth of theory. In 1968, Peterson reviewed the literature for the past 25 years and reached the conclusion that "there is not a single mention in the exceptionally pervasive review by Hill . . . of significant theory building in this field" (22, p. 146). A review of the literature in the related areas of social psychology, sociology, and counseling show this conclusion to be accurate. Comprehensive theories of marital disharmonies and the marriage relationship are seldom encountered in the literature, and most authors conclude that research is still in the exploratory, hypothesis-testing stage. A major difficulty is that researchers in the area usually approach the marital relationship with concepts and techniques borrowed from their own areas of training, thus making it difficult to develop relationships between sociological, psychological, and biological research data. Hill states, "Each of the scholars working in these areas has brought his own style of deriving propositions and of arraying them developmentally" (16, p. 27). Hill is accurate again when he comments on

" . . . the increasing number of multidisciplinary projects undertaken despite the lack of a fully acceptable multidisciplinary conceptual framework for giving them integration" (16, p. 27).

A theoretical structure which will cover all of the diverse data will have to relate theories from the contributing fields and integrate them conceptually. One of the basic patterns that is emerging from research is the categorization of efforts into three general research areas. These areas are personality research, social interaction variables, and situational influences specific to the marriage relationship. Beatman and associates evaluated their treatment program and discovered this pattern beginning to appear:

. . . it became increasingly clear that our casework treatment plan for dealing with marital troubles had to be based on a diagnostic understanding of the marriage as well as our diagnostic appreciation of the individual marriage partner . . . (5, p. 264).

This awareness led to the following summary of the situation:

Thus the seeds were sown for a three-dimensional picture in casework treatment, integrating the following:

- (1) Social factors and their impact on personal and family functioning.
- (2) The personality structure of the individual.
- (3) Interaction, either as a resource or an impediment to family stability (5, p. 264).

On this basis, then, it seems reasonable to examine these three areas and develop some idea of the relationships involved. Any comprehensive theory that emerges will have to be based on an understanding of the manner in which and amount that these



relationships contribute to the marriage relationship. Future research into any of these areas should be done with a mind to contributing to comprehensive theory building. An effort needs to be made to use concepts and techniques which can be integrated and applied in any area, as well as adding to a further understanding of the total marital relationship. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to examining each of these areas as they are presented in the literature.

#### Review of Literature

Psychology and psychiatry were the professions which became involved in marital counseling initially. Traditional psychotherapeutic methods were first used with marital disharmonies and several limitations and problems were quickly noted. First was the realization that seemingly normal, healthy individuals were also involved in pathological marriage situations and that there was no treatment of choice in these cases. Secondly, the relative ease with which a couple can obtain a socially acceptable divorce limited the motivation that would keep individuals in traditional therapies. Many people would prefer a divorce to placing themselves in individual long-term psychotherapy. In respect to counseling theory this position is best stated by Miller:

Regardless of whether the partners are being treated by 1 or 2 therapists, it is emphasized that the use of analytic techniques starts under a handicap unless the individuals are taught from the onset that while the disturbed marriage is the presenting complaint, essentially, each

partner is visiting the therapist for the treatment of his own specific and individual neurosis as it operates within the framework of the disturbed marriage (20, p. 136).

Albert Ellis reached the same conclusion and expressed his support of the idea that individual personality was the major contributing factor in marital disharmony by saying,

It would appear, on the basis of recently published cases of marital counseling, as well as on the basis of the writer's own counseling experience, that a great many of the individuals who came for counseling are more or less emotionally disturbed individuals, that their problems cannot be handled adequately in merely two or three sessions, and that, call it what we may, some form of psychotherapy, or the helping of these counsees to understand their personal and interpersonal selves, is necessary for even a partially satisfactory resolution of their problems (13, p. 65).

Much of the research in the area of marital disharmonies reflects an implicit acceptance of the idea that personality factors play a major role in marital adjustment. There are numerous studies of this nature. Barry, Anderson, and Thomason (3) reported a study involving 521 married male alcoholics. They were grouped according to marital adjustment, using judges' rating of their personality adjustment through analysis of their MMPI profiles. Five MMPI variables appeared to significantly differentiate between groups. The well adjusted marital group was found to be more stable, more mature, less suspicious, less depressed, less withdrawn, and evidencing greater Ego strength.

A similar study by Cattell and Nesselroade (10) used 176 married couples and studied the personality factors in each partnership. The stably married group showed eight significant

correlations between partners' personalities, while the unstable group measured only five significant correlations. The authors interpreted this to support a theory of marital adjustment which relates "likeness" of personality factors with marital adjustment.

This hypothesis was further refined in a study by Pickford and associates (23), who analyzed husband and wife differences and their marital adjustment on the Guilford-Zimmerman Temperament Survey. Not only were personality factors found to be significantly related to marital happiness, but so were extreme differences between the husband's and wife's scores. This sort of limited theory building is seen most often in the psychological literature.

Review of sociological literature showed a different emphasis. There was a common rejection of personality as the major factor in marital disharmony and the suggestion that social interaction factors are a major cause. Pollack reflects this thinking when he rejects personality as the common variable in marital disharmony.

Concentration on one individual in diagnosis or therapy is based on the assumption that the solution of the intrapsychic conflicts in one partner in a human relationship will have beneficial consequences for the solution of the intrapsychic conflicts of the other. Although such may be the fact in certain constellations, it can not be taken for granted. Actually, it is interesting to note that practitioners in both psychiatry and social work have pointed out that the improvement of one family member sometimes results in the deterioration of another (24, p. 16).

Ackerman (1) also rejects personality as the solely contributing factor. His thinking is that neurosis in one partner will not necessarily create problems in the marriage. This is supported by research done by Beatman and his associates. They state:

Empirically, we have discovered that the degree of presence or absence of neurotic behavior in one or both partners in a marriage is not the only determining factor in appraising the stability or instability of the family as a whole (5, p. 266).

Further support for this position is given by Bernard, who says,

. . . at least about half of remarriages, even those involving divorced persons, seem to be as successful as first marriages, suggesting that in these cases a "team factor" and not intrinsic personality defects was involved in the failure of the preceding marriage (6, p. 56).

The position taken by many theorists and researchers is that social interaction is a major causal factor in marital difficulties. Eisenstein expressed the idea by saying,

Nevertheless, neurotic people can and do make good marriages, while many relatively healthy persons contract discordant and unhappy unions. The cause and outcome of a marriage are determined not merely by the personality difficulties of each partner but by the way the two personalities interact (12, p. vii).

Interaction as the focus of marital counseling is even being accepted by some psychoanalysts as a necessary concept.

Blank and Blank commented that

One of the most commonly employed techniques involves the concept of accepting the patient "where he is." For some counselors this means

that, since the marital partner places his perception of the problem in the area of interaction, it is the interaction that should be the focus of treatment (7, p. 164).

Additional support for the viewpoint of interaction is a statement by Mudd and Goodwin: "The focus in counseling is thus on learning to understand the reciprocal interaction between the two partners . . ." (21, p. 29). There are several other good discussions concerning the role of social interaction in marital adjustment. The more relevant ones are by Blinder (8), Ard (2, p. 213), Ruesch and Bateson (25), Satir (26), and Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (29).

A study by Clements (11) is an example of research based on this viewpoint. He described a study using 40 stable and 40 unstable married couples and correlating their marital adjustment with their sensitivity to the spouse. Non-significant results were found when the groups were compared on awareness of one's own behavior and its effects on the spouse. Although results were non-significant, the basic assumption was that interaction should be a factor in the marriage relationship. A study by Bauman, Roman, Barello, and Meltzer (4) used a concept of marital intelligence as a means of studying family interaction. Fifty couples with one spouse in a psychiatric day hospital were studied concerning decision making abilities and the factors involved in problem solving as a marital unit. In their summary, Bauman, et al. suggested the following:

Interaction testing appears to be a feasible and reliable technique for the investigation

of marital intelligence and decision making, and offers to be of use in family diagnosis and research (4, p. 494).

The third research orientation involves viewing the marriage relationship in terms of situational factors and unique problems within the relationship. From a theoretical viewpoint this is expressed clearly in a statement by Fisher: "The focus of marriage counseling is always on the marital relationship, which is a third entity, different and apart from the two persons who make it up" (14, p. 258). This viewpoint has also been considered in more recent psychoanalytic thinking. Laidlaw represents the thinking of many psychoanalytically oriented marriage counselors:

A departure from the traditional patient centered approach, the constellation approach begins with a thorough understanding of the patient and the marital situation. Once this is defined the marriage itself is viewed as the central problem (18, p. 131).

Factors which are operating in the marriage and cannot be viewed as interaction or personality variables are often the subject of investigation. Hurley and Silvert (17) suggested the use of cognitive dissonance theory as a conceptual framework to study the marriage relationship. Using married couples, the authors confirmed the relationship between congruency of mate image and marital adjustment. A large number of studies have been done relating to this type of thinking. Studies investigating this area considered: age at marriage (19), and the effect of interracial, international and interfaith marriages (27, 9). In all of these

studies the basic assumption is that unique situational variables are major factors in marital adjustment.

The question which should now be asked concerns the validity of these underlying assumptions. It is apparent that there is theoretical and empirical support for all three positions. A comprehensive theory of marital adjustment could explain these results by adapting a position of multiple causation. There is some evidence in the literature for this position. Straup evaluates the situation in this manner:

The problem of marital maladjustment is so complicated that there will probably never be complete agreement on the subject. The best we can hope to do at the present is resort to the familiar view of multiple causation, with the hope that eventually more precision will emerge (28, p. 300).

Goodwin and Mudd (15) also support multiple causation as the most accurate picture of marital disharmonies. There is no empirical evidence in the literature which attempts to examine the relationships between personality, social interaction, situational factors, and marital adjustment. This study will attempt to fill that gap. It should be possible to show empirically that both personality adjustment and social interaction abilities are related to marital adjustment. It has been shown that one of these concepts is a basic assumption in almost all research and theory building attempts.

### Hypotheses

Therefore, the following hypotheses were proposed.

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant relationship between individual personality adjustment and marital harmony as measured by the instruments used in this study. It is expected that a psychologically well adjusted person will have fewer marital difficulties. This assumption is basic to all marital counseling theories which concentrate their efforts on the individual (20, 13).

Hypothesis II: There will be a significant relationship between marital harmony and social interaction abilities as judged by the instruments used in this study. A common area of concentration by researchers is the ability of individuals to engage in meaningful and satisfying social interaction (12, 7). The basic assumption in this research is that the marriage relationship will suffer fewer difficulties if the partners are skilled in interaction abilities.



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## CHAPTER II

### METHOD AND PROCEDURE

This chapter presents the method used to obtain the data for the study. A description of the subjects of the study is provided, as well as a description of the instruments used. Finally, the procedure by which the data were collected is presented, and the method of statistical testing of the hypotheses is briefly outlined.

#### Subjects

The subjects for this study were forty-six married individuals who were experiencing marital difficulties. All of the subjects were in marriage counseling at a private outpatient clinic located in Fort Worth, Texas. A previous study has indicated that this clinic serves a socio-economic clientele which closely approximates a socio-economic cross-section of the metropolitan area served (6). Therefore, this sample may be considered as representative of those persons in this geographic area who seek marital counseling. The entire population was Caucasian and evenly divided between males and females. The ages of the male subjects ranged from twenty-one to fifty-four years with a mean of 36.4. The women's ages varied from twenty to fifty-one years and had a mean of 34.2 years.

### Procedure

The sample used in this study was obtained from the files of the clinic and chosen according to two criteria. First, the availability of test scores was considered. Those individuals who had been given a marriage battery containing the required tests were used; there was no attempt made to administer missing tests at a later date. This insured that all of the tests were being answered with the same marriage situation in mind. Second, all individuals were eliminated when marital counseling was not the primary mode of treatment. This criterion did not reject persons being seen separately for individual problems, but served to restrict the population to those whose primary complaint was their marriage situation.

The subjects were administered the marriage battery on their initial visit to the clinic. This battery consisted of the California Psychological Inventory (CPI), the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), the Marital Adjustment Inventory (MAI) and the Polyfactor Test for Marital Difficulties (Polyfactor). These tests are routinely given to couples seeking marital counseling in order to help the marriage counselor determine the dynamics and extent of the problem.

The subject's scores from these tests were grouped to measure five factors, two of personality adjustment, two of social interaction abilities and an index of marital

adjustment. The first factor (Factor I) was defined as the scaled score on the Social Introversion (si) subscale of the MMPI. This scale has been demonstrated to measure the tendency towards social introversion or extraversion, or avoidance or welcoming of social contracts with others (4). The second factor (Factor II) was defined as the standard score total of seven CPI subscales. These scales also measure social variables and are titled as follows: Scale 1, Dominance; Scale 3, Sociability; Scale 4, Social Presence; Scale 8, Socialization; Scale 11, Good Impression; Scale 13, Achievement via Conformance; Scale 14, Achievement via Independence.

Factor III measured personality adjustment and was defined as the total standard score on eight MMPI subscales. They are Scale 1, Hypochondria; Scale 2, Depression; Scale 3, Hysteria; Scale 4, Psychopathic Personality; Scale 6, Paranoia; Scale 7, Psychasthenia; Scale 8, Schizophrenia; Scale 9, Hypomania. Factor IV also reflected personality adjustment and was the combined total of standard scores on nine CPI subscales. They are titled as follows: Scale 2, Capacity for Stress; Scale 5, Self-Acceptance; Scale 6, Sense of Well-Being; Scale 7, Responsibility; Scale 9, Self-Control; Scale 10, Tolerance; Scale 15, Intellectual Efficiency; Scale 16, Psychological Mindedness; and Scale 17, Flexibility.

Factor V was a measure of marital adjustment achieved by combining the total scores of the MAI and the Polyfactor. A statistical analysis of these factors was performed using

Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient and Fisher's transformation to a z statistic (9). It was expected from the hypothesis that a significant relationship would be found between Factors I, II and V and between Factors III, IV and V.

#### Description of Instruments

The California Psychological Inventory (CPI) consists of 480 true-false items and is self-administering for both individuals and groups. The author states that it is intended for use with "normal" subjects of high school age and older. The CPI attempts to measure characteristics which have " . . . wide and pervasive applicability to human behavior . . . " and which are " . . . related to the favorable and positive aspects of personality rather than to the morbid and pathological" (3). Its scales cover areas of personality adjustment and " . . . characteristics important for social living and interaction." Test-retest reliability on the CPI scales ranges from .48 to .87. Validity coefficients of correlations for the scales have repeatedly been established at better than the .01 level.

The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) is a 550 true-false item test and is self-administering for individuals and groups. The authors of the MMPI state that it is useful with both normal and abnormal populations. Test-retest reliability on numerous studies ranges from .46 to .91. Good validity has been established for all of the subscales and is reported extensively in the literature (5).

The Marriage Adjustment Inventory (MAI) contains 157 short questions regarding problems to which the respondent replies by circling H for husband, W for wife and H-W for both husband and wife. It was standardized on 237 subjects and has face or inherent validity (8). A critic states:

In view of the lack of any data on reliability and the fact that validity is limited to inherent content of items, marital status and self-ratings, there is some question about the use of the MAI in individual diagnosis for therapeutic purpose. But the paucity of test materials in the field of marriage counseling justifies the experimental use of the MAI . . . (7).

The fourth test used was the Polyfactor Test for Marital Difficulties. The scale consists of eighty-five incomplete sentences which are completed by the respondent and then judged by the respondent on a four-point scale as to how much difficulty they represent in the marriage. The test is self-administering for individuals and groups. Split-half reliability coefficients of correlation have been reported as .92 for wives' total scores and .95 for husbands' total scores (2). A concurrent validity study yielded a correlation coefficient of .63, significant at the .01 level for the husbands' total scores, and a correlation coefficient of .70, significant at beyond the .01 level for the wives' total scores (1).



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## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS

To test the hypothesis of this study--that personality adjustment and social interaction abilities are significantly related to marital adjustment--a Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was computed comparing each of Factors I through IV with Factor V. Factors I and II represented social interaction variables as measured by a total of standard scores on the MMPI and CPI respectively. Factors III and IV were measures of personality adjustment represented by standard score totals on scales of the MMPI and CPI respectively. Factor V was considered as an index of marital adjustment using the combined scores of the MAI and the Polyfactor. A summary of these data are presented in Table I.

TABLE I  
SUMMARY OF MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS  
OF FACTORS I, II, III, IV, AND V

Factor	$\bar{X}$	S.D.
I	51.869	11.050
II	328.152	58.790
III	487.239	67.608
IV	537.978	81.674
V	159.934	57.975

The level of significance needed to support the hypothesis of this study was set at the .05 level of confidence. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients were computed and tested for significance using Fisher's transformation to a normally distributed  $z$ -statistic (1, p. 230). These data are represented in Table II.

TABLE II  
SUMMARY OF CORRELATIONS AND LEVELS OF SIGNIFICANCE  
BETWEEN FACTORS I, II, III, IV AND V

Factors	r	P
V x I	+.0624	.3483
x II	-.2552	.0436*
x III	+.2489	.0516
x IV	-.2838	.0274*

\*P < .05.

Examination of the data shows that the correlation coefficient for Factor II meets the .05 level of significance established and therefore lends support to the hypotheses concerning marital adjustment and social interaction ability. The correlation coefficient for Factor I is not significant and fails to support the hypotheses. The hypotheses concerning personality adjustment and marital harmony are supported by the significant correlation coefficient of Factor IV. Factor III lacked .0016 of being significant and must be considered highly suggestive although not meeting the criterion set for the

study. Additional correlation coefficients were computed between Factors I and II and between Factors III and IV. It was assumed that the paired factors measured similar traits and would show significant correlations. These data are presented in Table III.

TABLE III  
SUMMARY OF CORRELATIONS AND LEVELS OF  
SIGNIFICANCE FOR PAIRED FACTORS

Factors	r	P
I x II	-.6795	.0001*
III x IV	-.5566	.0001*

\* $P < .05$ .

A reasonable interpretation of the data would suggest, then, that Hypothesis I was supported by the correlation of Factor II and that Hypothesis II was supported by the correlations of Factors III and IV. Both paired factors appear to measure similar traits because of the high correlations found.

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## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY

The results of this study indicated that marital adjustment, as measured by the instruments used, is related to the personal adjustment and social interaction abilities of the individual marriage partners. A position of multiple causation of marital disharmony was supported. The data showed support for both hypotheses, but yielded relatively low correlations.

Personality adjustment, as measured by Factor IV, had the highest correlation coefficient ( $r=.2838$ ) with marital adjustment. However, a correlation this low will account for less than 7 percent of the variability in Factor V. Thus, while being significantly correlated with marital adjustment, there are no grounds for assuming personality adjustment to be the major variable in marital harmony. Factor II was also found to be significantly correlated with marital adjustment. This supports the view that interaction abilities are related to marital harmony. The same care, however, should be taken in interpreting this relationship. The low-order correlations found ( $r=.0624$  and  $r=.2552$ ) argue against placing heavy emphasis on the interaction between marital partners.

If the data in this study are accurate, then personality and interaction abilities, as measured by the instruments

used, account for less than 20 percent of the variables involved in marital adjustment. This reflects the difficulty in accurately assessing a complex human relationship such as marriage.

A position of multiple causation must be assumed to account for all of the factors which the literature shows to be involved. This would also seem to be the best interpretation of the data in this study. The difficulty in evolving a comprehensive theory of marital adjustment can be accounted for by the complexity of the relationship and the lack of any easily identifiable variables. Anyone attempting to theorize in this area should keep in mind the low correlations found and should not assign excessive importance to any single variable.

Several factors were present which may have significantly affected the data. It can be expected that only those persons who were experiencing serious marriage problems would seek counseling. The resulting use of only pathological marriage situations in the sample may have had an effect on the data. Reasonable caution in interpreting the data and generalizing to a broader population should be used. If situational and unique marital factors are considered in evaluating the state of the marriage, then it is possible that the low correlations found in a pathologically biased marriage sample were the result of such variables. The effects of the variables studied may be different in a normal marriage population.

An improvement in the design would have been to include a random sample of individuals who had not sought counseling. This would allow greater confidence in making the necessary generalization to the entire population.

A second factor which should be considered is the size of the sample. Cohen (1, p. 50) describes a procedure to estimate the size population necessary to achieve reliable results. Using the suggestion of setting a desired power value at .80, a sample size of 45 was computed. This would indicate that the sample used was large enough to insure a reasonable degree of confidence.

The failure of Factor I to relate significantly with marital adjustment ( $r=.062$ ) was surprising in view of the significant correlation of Factor II ( $r=.255$ ) and the highly significant correlation between the two factors ( $r=.6795$ ). A possible explanation is that while Factor I consists of the standard score of the Q scale on the MMPI, Factor II was the standard score total of seven CPI scales. It is possible that the Q scale of the MMPI correlates highly with one or more of the CPI scales which do not add strength to the correlation between II and V. Additional research designed to evaluate the specific relationships of these variables could be done using simple correlational techniques, and would give added information as to the type of interaction skills needed in a successful marriage.



Another criticism could be directed towards the instruments used to measure marital adjustment. Good research demonstrating the validity of these tests is scarce. Of particular concern is the possibility that these tests reflect the subject's own perception of the marriage situation rather than the actual situation itself. What effect this would have on the results can not be determined. Until more research is done in the area of marital testing or new, more valid tests are developed, this sort of question must remain unanswered.

#### Summary

The present study was conducted to determine the role of personality adjustment and social interaction ability in the marriage relationship. Forty-five individuals who had sought marriage counseling were selected for the sample. Each individual completed a marriage battery consisting of the California Psychological Inventory, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, the Marriage Adjustment Inventory and the Polyfactor Sentence Completion Survey of Marital Difficulties.

Five factors were established for each subject as follows: Factor I, the standard score of the 0 scale of the MMPI; Factor II, the standard score total of seven CPI scales dealing with interpersonal relations; Factor III, the standard score total of eight MMPI scales measuring personality adjustment; Factor IV, the standard score total of nine CPI scales also reflecting personality adjustment; Factor V, the combined total

of scores on the MAI and Polyfactor which measure marital adjustment. The hypotheses formulated were that personality adjustment and social interaction abilities would show a significant relationship to marital adjustment as measured by the instruments used.

A Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was computed between each of the factors and the results indicated that the hypotheses would be confirmed. However, the correlation coefficients found were generally low and a position of multiple causation was advanced as a reasonable interpretation of the data. Possible reasons for the failure to obtain a more significant relationship were discussed and the implications for generalizing to the general population were examined.

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