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Family Violence and Divorce: Effects on Marriage Expectations.

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Family Violence and Divorce:
Effects on Marriage Expectations

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ABSTRACT

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Family violence and divorce can have influential effects on marital expectations. The present study analyzes the effects of gender, family violence, and divorce on marital expectations. Participants were 293 students enrolled in an introductory psychology course at a southeastern university. The mean age of the participants was 19.67 with 62.5% being female and 37.5% being male. Participants completed the Conflict Tactics Scale to assess the presence of violence in the participant's family of origin. Participants were also assessed on their parents' marital status and, if applicable, their age at the time of divorce. This information was gathered via a demographic questionnaire in order to group participants into intact and non-intact groups based on their family of origin data. Participants also completed the Marriage Expectation Scale, which assesses future marital expectations by mean scores. A participant's score may indicate pessimistic, realistic, or idealistic marital expectations. Results did not indicate that family violence or divorce had an effect on the participant's marital expectations. Results did indicate statistically significant findings that revealed that men and women differed on marital expectations. Critiques of the present study as well as implications for future research are discussed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 2001, the National Center for Health Statistics reported that 2,254,000 marriages took

place. The marriage rate for that year was 7.8 per 1,000 of the total population. The divorce rate

was 4.0 per 1,000 of the total population. Therefore, divorces took place at more than half the

rate of marriages. In contrast, the divorce rate in 1950 was 2.6 per 1, 000 of the total population.

U.S. divorce statistics indicate that 1 million children are involved in the divorce of their parents

each year (DivorceMagazine.com, 2000). This article also reported that, as of 1998, 20 million

children under the age of 18 lived with only 1 parent. Further, it was reported that these children

of divorce are 50% more likely to divorce than children from intact families. Thus, these

statistics reflect the growing problem of divorce in the last 50 years for the American family as

well as the children of divorce.

The high divorce rate in America has been connected to marital dissatisfaction as a result

of unrealistic marital expectations (Larson, 1988). Research must look deeper into the effects on

children caused by the event of divorce. An article on the effects of divorce on America reports

the physical, emotional, and financial consequences of divorce on children (Fagan & Rector,

2000, ¶1). The physical consequences for children include an increased risk for being exposed

to violence and health problems. The emotional consequences comprise behavioral problems as

well as a higher risk for committing suicide. The financial effects of divorce force many

children to experience poverty after the divorce of their parents as a result of a 50% income drop.

Further, children whose parents have divorced do not perform as well academically and are at a

higher risk for dropping out of school. The broad range of effects children experience as a result

of divorce is not concentrated only in childhood and may carry on into adulthood.

Jones and Nelson (1996) reported that even though children of divorce had a negative

experience in relation to their own parents' marriage, they still believe they can achieve a

positive marital experience. As a result, children of divorce may refuse to acknowledge the

characteristics that make marriage work (Jones & Nelson). Thus, idealistic marital expectations

may result. Wallerstein (1987) reported that children of divorce may continue to believe in

romantic love even 10 years after their parents have divorced. Further, Larson (1988) claimed

that Americans believe their wife or husband will concurrently perform a variety of roles, such

as lover, friend, parent, and counselor. When these idealistic marital expectations are not met,

marital dissatisfactions may take place and divorce may occur. Interestingly, children of divorce

display pessimistic marital expectations if marital violence and/or conflict is present in their

parents' marriage (Grych & Fincham, 1990; Jones & Nelson; Markland & Nelson, 1993).

It is not only the event of divorce that causes negative consequences for the children of

divorce but also marital conflict and/or violence that may affect the reaction experienced by

children involved in divorce. Data from the National Family Violence surveys in 1975 and 1985

reflect that each year over 10 million children in America witness a physically violent act

between their parents (Straus, 1992). For two thirds of these children, it is not an isolated

occurrence of violence. The actual occurrence of this violence has been estimated at 3 times the

reported amount (Straus, 1992). The possible effects witnessing violence has on children are

numerous and may include future marital conflict and future marital violence that may lead to

divorce (Straus, 1992).

The quality of the family environment has proven to be an important factor in the identity

development of young adults (Markland & Nelson, 1993). It appears that the family structure is

not the only factor which may negatively affect the future adjustment of young adults. In the

past, divorce was considered to have the most harmful effects for the children involved in

relation to future adjustment. Research has supported the presence of family conflict as a factor

that may be just as important, if not more important than the negative effects caused by the event

of divorce (Markland & Nelson). Even if a family's structure is intact, the presence of familial

conflict results in reports of a significantly lower self-concept by young adults in the areas of

confidence, sexual identity, and body concept (Markland & Nelson). Further, exposure to familial conflict may cause pessimistic marital expectations to develop for these young adults, which may damage interpersonal relationships later in life.

In conclusion, research has shown that the pattern of marital stability in American society has been weakened as a result of divorce and marital violence and/or conflict. Children of divorce may be greatly affected in terms of marital expectations they carry into their own marriages. They may exhibit unrealistic marital expectations due to the belief that their spouse will perform many roles simultaneously. On the other hand, children of divorce may exhibit idealistic marital expectations due to the belief that a positive marital experience is easy to achieve despite observing their own parents' marital discord.

Last, children of divorce may exhibit pessimistic marital expectations as a result of witnessing marital violence and/or conflict in their own parents' marriage. It is important to look further into the effects of divorce and family-of-origin conflict and/or violence on marital expectations for the purpose of improving the state of marital stability in America. In addition, children who have been involved in their parents' divorce and/or witnessed their parents' marital violence and/or conflict need to be equipped with the skills to develop realistic marital expectations.

<div align="center">Pertinent Theoretical Concepts</div>

Gender Role Theory

In virtually all cultures, individuals are socialized to perform various roles based on gender. Gender roles can be defined as intentions created by society for male or female behavior (Lipman-Blumen, 1984). Socialization can be defined as a "set of mechanisms and processes through which society trains its members to take their place as full-fledged social beings" (p. 53). Socialization explains how gender roles are learned through "describing the fundamental processes by which individuals develop attitudes, expectations, behaviors, values, and skills that

coalesce into roles" (p. 53). Learning gender roles involves arranged and unplanned experiences that promote continuation of behaving in a socially approved role. Socialization representatives such as parents, teachers, peers, and public figures use specific and practical examples of gender roles in order to socialize others. The socialization to perform various roles based on gender begins from birth.

The event of birth for boys into the "blue world" as described by Lipman-Blumen (1984) is symbolized by a blue blanket that marks the beginning of socialization into a prescribed gender role. The goal for boys is to achieve masculinity. The "blue world" is characterized by ideas that encourage boys to directly confront the environment and to take the world by storm. Lipman-Blumen suggests that independent and direct action by way of force, power, competition, and aggression are how boys should meet goals and accomplishments. Again, direct action is emphasized in achievement through measuring discipline, supplies, and outcomes. The male role demands independence, control of oneself, and control over others, especially females (Lipman-Blumen).

On the other hand, Lipman-Blumen (1984) describes girls as being born into the "gentle pink world," which is symbolized by a pink blanket. As soon as girls are born, they are treated as much more fragile than boys. For girls to achieve their prescribed gender role, femininity is the goal. The "gentle pink world" is characterized by girls being required to stay closer to home to assure they will be kept from physical danger. Clothing that is tailored to a delicate "little lady" also suppresses their ability to play in a physically active manner. Girls staying close to home also can be connected to their household duties that are assigned at young ages. Various messages are sent to girls, such as, "Be a little lady," and encourage involvement in household duties.

Toys are another device through which children are taught gender roles. Advertising in the toy industry usually pairs the appropriate gender-typed toy to a girl or boy (Richmond-Abbott, 1992). As a result, society socializes its members to associate certain toys to be played

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with by either girls or boys. It is often found that parents will encourage play with a gender-typed toy that is appropriate for their child. Specific toys that are gender typed often encourage a certain kind of play that is embedded in either a male gender role or a female gender role.

Richmond-Abbott (1992) stated, "Girls are more likely to get passive toys such as dish sets, clothes, and coloring books" (p. 72). In addition, girls more often receive toys such as sewing machines, ovens, dolls, dollhouses, and irons, which teach domestic activities that are presumed to be performed later in life. After girls grow out of their "baby" dolls, "Barbie" dolls are introduced as a model for how girls should look. Even though "Barbie" dolls have progressed in diversity and range of activities that are considered appropriate, the dolls still promote certain characteristics that are training tools for gender roles.

On the other hand, "Boys are more likely to get toys that encourage creativity and manipulation: chemistry sets, erector sets, toy trains, and tool chests" (Richmond-Abbott, 1992, p. 72). Action toys, mobile toys, and sports equipment encourage careers that require similar interests. Boys have their own form of dolls, such as a "GI Joe" or a fighting character, that cater to characteristics that boys are supposed to possess. Generally, boys are socialized to display excitement and toughness through their toys.

In addition, "Even unisex equipment, such as bicycles, is differentiated in style, price, and use between boys and girls" (Richmond-Abbott, 1992, p. 73). For example, a girl who receives a pink "Barbie" bicycle will receive the message that she is to be a "little lady" when riding her bike. On the other hand, a boy who receives a red "Hotwheels" bike will receive the message that he is to be tough and masculine when riding his bike. Games are another example where girls and boys receive messages about their gender roles.

The nature of play in games for girls is strikingly different from boys. Girls most often play in small groups from childhood to the teenage years (Lipman-Blumen, 1984). Girls will engage in play that is characterized by low structure and high cooperation (Richmond-Abbott, 1992). Early on in play girls learn that to be competitive is considered unfeminine (Lipman-

Blumen). It becomes apparent to girls that relationships are held at a high standard and are to be considered more important than competition. As a result of learning that accomplishments are met within the context of relationships, girls form appropriate life strategies to take on life's goals. In contrast, play for boys consists of a different set of guidelines in accordance to their male gender role.

The nature of play in games for boys takes place in large groups with an emphasis on competition (Richmond-Abbott, 1992). The characteristics of boys' play include high structure and high strategy while maintaining competition and cooperation. Boys will play with other boys they may not like who can contribute skills to the group. This carries over into their future ability to be a team player in the teenage years and on into adulthood. Again, boys are expected to be tough and masculine while competing under any circumstances presented in order to win. Girls and boys use the socialization lessons from their childhood to help guide them into their adolescent years.

Throughout adolescence the messages boys learn in childhood continue to be important in order for boys to be considered masculine (Richmond-Abbott, 1992). The characteristic of toughness through physical appearance is sometimes necessary to prove oneself as masculine in physical fights and/or organized sports. An adolescent boy who has a strong body-build gains popularity because it is desirable to be an athletic boy. Boys who are physically attractive are also more popular because more positive attributions are made about those who are physically attractive. Another realm that is associated with social prestige in adolescence is sports. A boy who is involved in sports continues to access the lessons learned in childhood play in order to achieve the goal of winning.

An additional aspect of the adolescent boy which is important in Gender Role Theory is the concept of "being cool" (Richmond-Abbott, 1992). Boys are taught that expressing emotions is not appropriate for their gender. It is necessary to show that one can be calm in all situations to prove ones fearlessness and adequacy. Being cool is another example that allows boys to

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demonstrate their masculinity. Adolescent girls also continue to demonstrate the social messages learned in childhood.

Physical attractiveness determines social prestige with girls just as with boys (Richmond-Abbott, 1992). Body image is an important factor that causes adolescent girls to have low self-esteem. A girl who considers herself to be unattractive and have a poor body generally also does not consider herself worthy as a human being. Girls also place great importance upon "being liked," which is associated with popularity. A problem with these adolescent ideals that girls think lead to femininity is low control regarding results. In order to achieve popularity, a girl depends upon a boy's recognition. Girls and boys use the socialization lessons from their childhood and adolescence and translate the lessons into appropriate gender-typed roles as adults.

There is a period in adolescence that is described as the "generation gap" between parents and children (Lipman-Blumen, 1984). Lipman-Blumen suggests that a power struggle between the parents' gender role values versus the children's generational values takes place. As children grow, their value systems are influenced by both peers and parents. As children grow older, the generation gap decreases in strength (Lipman-Blumen). As the children become adults, they adopt a combination of interpersonal, family, and social values based on experiences from their own generation. They also are influenced by gender role experiences that have taken place in their life. Families are the place where children learn most about the gender roles they will take on as adults.

Lipman-Blumen (1984) describes the socialization of gender roles as a lifelong experience during which adults go through different phases. Although different combinations of families exist more often today than they did 50 years ago, the socialization of specific gender roles has still maintained the basic elements. First, one will learn the difference between being a girl or a boy. Second, one will learn that one is a girl or boy. Third, one will learn the different

expectations based on being a girl or a boy. Gender Role Theory is able to provide support for the effects of family violence and divorce on marital expectations.

Boys are socialized that aggression is an acceptable means to achieving goals. This message continues into adolescence as boys are taught that sometimes physical aggression is a way to prove themselves in relationships. Some may carry masculinity to extremes and resort to using violence in intimate relationships. As a result of the socialization that has taken place over the lifespan, males may consider violence in intimate relationships a way of continuing to achieve goals at any cost.

On the other hand, girls are socialized to be caretakers. In addition, girls are also socialized that it is the norm for boys to be aggressive (Lipman-Blumen, 1984). As a result, girls often follow instead of lead and learn to become women that are also followers. Girls and women are taught to be second-class citizens in social and sexual situations. For example, being the quarterback's girlfriend or the doctor's wife may bring acknowledgment from the association to a male and not a woman's individual characteristics. Therefore, the pattern that takes place perpetuates and forces women to rely on being caretakers while accepting aggressive behavior in men.

One might expect that future marital expectations will be impacted as a result of the socialization of boys and girls who have acquired idealistic, pessimistic, or realistic expectations about their roles in future relationships. As caretakers, women may excuse or try to fix the aggressive behavior of men. Men may continue to exhibit aggressive behavior because of the socialization they have been taught. Families are the place where children learn most about the gender roles they will adopt as adults (Lipman-Blumen, 1984). Just as children are socialized to learn gender roles throughout stages of life, children learn future marital expectations from different experiences witnessed in their family.

Girls who witness aggressive behavior from their fathers toward their mothers may use this experience as a guide regarding gender roles and future marital expectations. In addition,

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boys who witness aggressive behavior from their fathers toward their mothers may also be influenced by this experience. Also, a child who experiences the divorce of his or her parents may learn lessons that contribute to the development of pessimistic, idealistic, or realistic future marital expectations. Hence, a child may use his or her own family of origin as a guide to direct the development of future marital expectations in his or her family of origin. Therefore, the attitudes and behaviors of Gender Role Theory may influence the impact that family violence and divorce have on future marital expectations.

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory contributes to the present research by reinforcing the influence of social experiences in the process of acquiring pessimistic, idealistic, or realistic future marital expectations. Bandura (1977) discussed the process of developing behavior through either firsthand experience or attending to another's behavior. Social learning by response consequences takes place when individuals observe or experience behaviors causing either positive or negative responses. Specific behaviors can be chosen or eliminated based on this process of differential reinforcement. As a result, many roles are achieved through response consequences such as passing on knowledge, provoking motivation via rewards, and immediately causing responses to strengthen.

The role of passing on knowledge through response consequences enables individuals to attend to various responses pertaining to specific behaviors. In addition, individuals are able to develop decisions about behaviors in certain settings, which will steer future behavior. Next, response consequences work to motivate individuals to perform certain behaviors based on possible consequences, rewards, or lack of both, based on previous experiences. This role of response consequences causes individuals to pay attention to situations that will result in the highest reward. Last, an individual's willingness to perform certain behaviors is strengthened when one becomes mindful of rewards connected to the behavior.

Bandura (1977) stated, "Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action" (p. 22). Bandura identified four operations of observational learning, including attention, retention, motor reproduction, and motivation processes, which result in the acquisition of knowledge.

Attentional processes are important because the one observing must be aware of the details of the behavior taking place (Elliott, Kratochwill, Cook, & Travers, 2000). One will be able to imitate this behavior if close attention is paid to the details of the model. Second, an observer needs to be able to form a picture in his or her mind of the behavior being observed. This allows for the observer to retain the behavior so it can be imitated. Third, motor reproduction processes allow an observer to reproduce the observed behavior. Elliott et al. recognized that motor reproduction is important in order for "learning's mechanisms to be used: stimulus-cognition-response-reinforcement" (p. 222). Fourth, motivational processes consist of an observer being motivated by the circumstances surrounding a specific behavior. As a result, the observer will be motivated to perform a behavior based on the incentives he or she may achieve whether through vicarious or self-reinforcement.

Unlike operant conditioning, reinforcement in observational learning can function as a preceding effect. Observational learning concentrates on ones ability to perform desired behaviors based on anticipation of rewards that have been previously identified. The first element of reinforcement is a preceding incentive. Second, the preceding incentive is followed by attending to an ideal stimulus. Third, the individual proceeds to complete symbolic coding, mental organization, and drilling. Finally, a response in the form of a specific behavior results from the process. Additional paths of reinforcement are present in observational learning according to Social Leaning Theory such as external, vicarious, and self-reinforcement.

External reinforcement is an effective way to produce desired behaviors through the use of incentives (Wolman, 1977). Various schedules of reinforcement result in varied behavior.

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Types of incentives may include social acceptance, lack of privileges, praise, social rejection, tangible reward, punishment, social affect, and social attention. Vicarious reinforcement causes individuals to select and reject certain behaviors based on their observation of how successful or negative it was for others. Individuals who observe another enact a behavior with negative consequences may choose to change certain aspects of the behavior hoping they might obtain success. Self-reinforcement allows individuals to set consequences for ones own behavior. Reward, punishment, or lack of consequence is decided based on the importance of the behavior performed by the individual.

One individual can cause another to develop anticipated expectations based on hearsay regarding an experience (Bandura, 1977). For example, a person who has experienced suffering from an event may influence another's preconception about an event. Expectancy learning takes place either symbolically or vicariously. Often individuals will behave specifically toward an event based on preconceived symbolic ideas that lack firsthand experience. Vicarious expectancy learning involves behavior resulting from directly observing another individual in a specific situation. The one observing will adopt the behavior of the model and apply it to similar situations.

A person's environment, behavior, and personal factors equally influence one another. Bandura (1977) termed this concept *reciprocal determinism* in order to describe the process one uses to make decisions regarding which behaviors he or she is going to choose to perform. Consequently, the goal is for individuals to make decisions that will result in the best possible outcome regarding behavior.

Social Learning Theory contributes to the topics of family violence, divorce, and marital expectations by reinforcing the influence of social experiences in the process of acquiring pessimistic, idealistic, or realistic future marital expectations. Behaviors that a child may experience firsthand or observe from another person contribute to the development of expectations for his or her own behavior in similar situations. Based on whether the experienced

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or observed events are positive or negative, children may adopt expectations that will continue to guide their behavior. Response consequences may affect a child's expectations through information about experiences, rewards from certain behavior, or through the strengthening of responses for certain behavior.

Children are reinforced by many role models, but their parents are the main reinforcement in children's lives (Richmond-Abbott, 1992). If violence is experienced or observed, it may be replicated based on whether it was perceived to be associated with positive or negative consequences. In a family where violence is a frequent occurrence, children may choose to imitate this behavior based on their perception of its effectiveness as a conflict tactic.

Divorce is another event a child may experience that will influence his or her future behaviors based on effects experienced directly or observed in other family members. Children also may observe effects of divorce in peers. The reinforcement consequences connected to various experiences associated with divorce are the key to children choosing to perform behavior that may affect their own marital expectations. Expectations about relationships that children experience or derive from their experiences with others will guide future action in their own relationships. Positive and negative experiences may cause children to perform certain behaviors that may cause idealistic, pessimistic, or realistic marital expectations to be formed.

Family Systems Theory

Family Systems Theory is a theory of human behavior that focuses on the family as an emotional unit in order to explain the multifaceted interactions in this unit (Kerr, 2002). The family is considered an emotional unit because of the powerful emotional connection its members share, regardless of their feelings about being emotionally close with each other. The powerful emotional connections experienced by each family influences the beliefs, feelings, and behaviors of the family members in an intense way. The family members seek the attention, approval, and support of each other. In addition, the family members react to each member's

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needs, expectations, and distress. As a result, the family members experience interdependence based on connected and reactive interactions.

At times, families use their interdependence in order to achieve cooperation with one another (Kerr, 2002). At other times, the interdependent nature of the family can cause problems as a result of increased conflict. Certain family members may try to mediate the negative effects, which may include feeling overwhelmed, lonely, or out of control. A particular member may feel compelled to absorb the anxiety caused by the family conflict. Consequently, this family member may develop psychiatric, medical, or social neuroses (Kerr, 2003).

A family's level of interdependence produces individual family members who have different levels of differentiation of self (Kerr, 2003). Differentiation of self can be described as the ability of a person to achieve independent functioning without the ongoing need for emotional reinforcement from others (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). A person with a strong differentiated self is able to resist relationship pressures and think about situations objectively. This concept is important to illustrate the family's influence over how its members think, feel, and behave, which impacts future thoughts, feelings, and behavior (Kerr, 2002).

Another concept in Family Systems Theory is the nuclear family emotional system. The nuclear family emotional system explains specific relationship patterns of behavior within a family that cause problems to develop (Kerr, 2002). The four patterns addressed in the nuclear family emotional system are marital conflict, dysfunction in one spouse, impairment of one or more children, and emotional distance. The pattern of emotional functioning of a family will determine which pattern(s) of behavior will develop as a problem within a family (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). As conflict increases within a family, problems in the four relationship patterns will increase (Kerr, 2003). Thus, the four relationship patterns cause anxiety in the family to be placed in specific areas of the family (Kerr, 2002). This concept is important because it provides support for the role families play in causing individuals to develop dysfunctional relationship patterns in their family of creation based on their family-of-origin experiences.

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The final concept in Family Systems Theory that contributes to the present research is called multigenerational transmission process. Multigenerational transmission process explains the connection between individual differences and multigenerational trends in functioning, which are exhibited by family members throughout different generations (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). The multigenerational transmission process takes place on various levels, such as deliberate teaching and learning as well as habitual and unconscious programming of emotional reactions and behaviors (Kerr, 2002). Deliberate and unconscious programming in a family results in children absorbing and responding to the attitudes, behaviors, and values of their parents. Therefore, siblings develop various levels of differentiation of self. Usually, one sibling has a higher level and one sibling has a lower level of differentiation of self (Kerr & Bowen).

Subsequently, individuals choose mates with a similar level of differentiation of self (Kerr, 2002). This process of selection results in different siblings having marriages that have different levels of differentiation. As the relationship patterns that caused the siblings and their marriages to achieve certain levels of differentiation continue, their children will achieve different levels of differentiation (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). This process will continue to take place throughout future generations resulting in more stable families for people who are highly self-differentiated (Kerr, 2002). Individuals who have a higher level of self differentiation are more productive members of society. On the other hand, individuals who have a lower level of self differentiation are more unstable and dependent on others and experience more problems in life.

The level of differentiation that a person achieves can affect his or her overall functioning and success in every aspect of life (Kerr, 2002). Therefore, multigenerational transmission process is important to explain how the family unit may transmit future marital expectations. Specifically, the experience of a divorce may affect the level of differentiation a person achieves. As a result, that person may develop dysfunctional relationship patterns that cause pessimistic or idealistic future marital expectations. The same process may take place because a person

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witnessed family violence in his or her family of origin. Consequently, a person may develop

distorted future marital expectations that do not reflect realistic attitudes and beliefs about

marriage. The consequences of this progression may entail increased marital instability and

family violence, which may be transmitted to future generations through the multigenerational

transmission process.

<center>Empirical Findings</center>

Importance of Conflict

That there is a generally negative impact on children who have witnessed a physically

violent act between their parents has been strongly supported through research. Henning,

Leitenberg, Coffey, Turner, and Bennett (1996) surveyed 617 women in regard to witnessing

parental violence prior to 16 years of age. Out of the 617 women, 123 reported witnessing a

physically violent act between their parents. The participants were also given measures that

assessed their psychological and social adjustment. The results indicated that the women who

reported witnessing a physically violent act between their parents presented with lower

psychological and social adjustment than women who reported never observing violence

between their parents. The researchers obtained these results after controlling for other family

issues that may have caused psychological and social maladjustment such as child abuse,

viewing parental verbal arguments, and the child's perception of the level of parental caring. A

limitation of this study was the absence of controlling for other possible family issues that could

contribute to long-term psychological or social maladjustment, such as alcohol and drug abuse,

parental mental health problems, and parental legal involvement.

McCloskey, Figueredo, and Koss (1995) studied mothers and their children in battered

women's shelters. The researchers were interested in exploring the different problems that

children experience and the ability for family support to help the children weather the problems.

Results support a connection between the mother's and children's mental health problems as

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being related to the family's experienced or witnessed violence. The children's mental health was assessed using the Child Behavior Checklist and the Child Assessment Schedule. The mothers' reported mental health issues were assessed using the Brief Symptom Inventory. Scores on these inventories reflected general psychological symptoms for the mothers and children. McCloskey et al. (1995) conceptualized children's mental problems as varying between numerous internalizing and externalizing processes. Internalizing processes can be defined as turning an issue toward oneself and dealing with it in a way, such as through depression. Externalizing issues can be defined as when an issue is dealt with by turning outward to others, such as in the case of interpersonal aggression or angry outbursts. It was also found that when children exposed to family violence were given family support it did not ease the psychological effects of the violence. Importantly, McCloskey et al. pointed out that this exposure to family violence may psychosocially delay children in a way that may affect adjustment in adulthood.

Researchers have also looked at the relationship among witnessing parental conflict, child coping, and child adjustment. O'Brien, Margolin, and John (1995) investigated these variables with 83 families where the children reported on frequency and intensity of witnessed conflict, coping skills, and symptoms related to mental health problems. The parents reported on child hostility, internalizing, and externalizing behaviors. The results indicated that children who used strategies that caused them to be included in parental conflict had higher levels of depression, anxiety, hostility, and low self-esteem. The parents also indicated higher levels of child hostility. On the other hand, those children who used coping skills that caused them to be independent of parental conflict had decreased levels of anxiety. When a child turned to sources outside the family for support, the mother indicated fewer internalizing behaviors. This study provides support for the idea that maladjustment can result when children are drawn into the middle of parental conflict.

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Divorce

        The effects children experience as a result of divorce can range from increased coping skills on one end to psychosocial problems on the other end. Schwartz and Kaslow (1997) point out that the effects of divorce on children do not always have to be negative. Some children make the transition from an intact to non-intact home with increased coping skills. On the other hand, even though divorce may be the best solution for a dissolved marriage, it often leaves long-lasting effects on children that may take place in the form of psychosocial problems. One of the possible psychosocial problems may include idealistic or pessimistic future marital expectations that negatively affect relationships and future marriages.

        It is possible that gender differences may impact ones attitude concerning divorce. Black and Sprenkle (1991) studied the attitudes of college students from intact and non-intact homes. Students from both intact and non-intact homes viewed divorce in a neutral or indifferent manner. Men were more favorable in their attitudes concerning divorce than women. Experiencing parental divorce at an earlier age resulted in a more neutral attitude toward divorce. The non-intact group experienced more intergenerational marital instability as evidenced by data from grandparent and parental marital status. The study is important to point out the gender differences in attitudes toward divorce.

Marital Expectations

        Kozuch and Cooney (1995) reinforce the idea that ones marital attitudes are altered depending on parental marital status and the level of famiy conflict in the home. Kozuch and Cooney found that children from divorced families who reported high conflict were more likely to believe it is acceptable to cohabitate before marriage than the participants whose parents were not divorced. The participants from divorced homes also believed it was less important to be brought up by two parents than the participants from intact homes. Individuals from intact homes who reported a high level of conflict agreed less on a statement that marriage was a

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lifetime commitment than individuals from non-intact homes who reported a low level of conflict. Participants from the divorced group did not believe marriage had to be a lifetime commitment and reported more acceptance of the possibility of permanent singlehood than participants from intact homes. Individuals who reported low family conflict were less accepting of divorce than participants who reported high family conflict. These results highlight some specific ways in which marital beliefs may be molded by parental divorce and/or family conflict.

Livingston and Kordinak (1990) researched marital role expectations to assess the long-term effects of divorce on young adults as a way to explain the intergenerational transmission of marital instability. The results showed a three-way interaction among gender, level of religiosity, and parental divorce status. It was found that males from non-intact homes who were more religious had more egalitarian marital role expectations. Livingston and Kordinak suggest that the role-model rationale be expanded to increase support for the connection between the role-model rationale and intergenerational transmission of marital instability.

Jones and Nelson (1996) studied college students' marital expectations from intact and non-intact homes. All participants completed the Love Attitudes Scale, Dean Romanticism Scale, and the Marriage Expectation Scale. Jones and Nelson were not able to support their hypothesis that college students from non-intact homes would hold more pessimistic or idealistic expectations of marriage. In addition, support was not provided for students from intact homes to have more realistic expectations of marriage. A lack of family conflict as an independent variable was a limitation of this study that may have contributed to the results. Jones and Nelson were able to establish the Marriage Expectation Scale as a valid research tool for assessing future marital expectations during this study. The validity of the scale was based on the equally internal consistent performance of the Marriage Expectation Scale, Love Attitudes Scale, and Dean Romanticism Scale in the study.

<center>Statement of Problem</center>

Family violence and divorce are both problems in American society. In 2001, the

National Center for Health Statistics reported that divorces took place at more than half the rate

of marriages. Since 1950, the divorce rate has increased from 2.6 to 4.0 per 1,000 of the total

population. This increase reflects the growing problem of divorce in the last 50 years for the

American family. It is not just the event of divorce that causes negative consequences for the

children involved.

The presence of family conflict and/or violence also is a growing problem that concerns

many children. Data from the National Family Violence surveys in 1975 and 1985 reflect that

each year over 10 million children in America witness a physically violent act between their

parents (Straus, 1992). As a result of being exposed to family violence and/or divorce, children

may have difficulty forming realistic expectations about interpersonal relationships, which may

cause them to develop pessimistic or idealistic future marital expectations. Based on the

information concerning family violence and divorce as problems in American society, this study

will look further into the issues of reported historical family-of-origin violence and divorce in

terms of their effects on future marital expectations.

<u>Hypotheses</u>

    <u>Design I</u>

1. Men and women will differ on marital expectations as measured by mean scores on
   the Marriage Expectations Scale.
2. Participants from non-intact homes will report more idealistic marital expectations
   than participants from intact homes.
3. Participants who report violence in their family of origin will report more
   pessimistic marital expectations than participants who do not report violence.

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4. Participants who report physical abuse in their family of origin will report more pessimistic marital expectations than participants who do not report abuse.

Design II

5. Males and females will differ on frequency of assignment to idealistic, realistic, and pessimistic marital expectations.

6. More participants who reported family violence will be classified as having pessimistic marital expectations on the Marriage Expectations Scale than participants who did not report family violence.

7. More participants who reported physical abuse will be classified as having pessimistic marital expectations on the Marriage Expectations Scale than participants who did not report physical abuse.

8. More participants from non-intact homes will be classified as having idealistic marital expectations on the Marriage Expectations Scale than participants from intact homes.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

Participants

The participants were 293 students (male = 110, female = 183) enrolled in introductory psychology courses at a southeastern university. The mean age of the participants was 19.67 with a range of 18 years of age to 45 years of age. The mean age was very skewed in the 18-19-year-old category with 196 participants falling in this age range. In the study, 89.4% of the participants were Caucasian, 4.8% African American, 3.1% Other, 1.4% Asian American, and 1.4% Hispanic American. There were 26 participants excluded for data analysis because they had previously been married.

Measures

The Marriage Expectation Scale (MES), which measures future marital expectations, was used in this study (Jones & Nelson, 1996). Jones and Nelson studied college students' marriage expectations from intact and non-intact homes with the purpose of establishing the Marriage Expectation Scale (MES). The scale is designed to assess the marriage expectations of individuals who have never been married. The scale consists of 40 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The items assess expectations of various elements of marriage such as compatibility, equality, and intimacy. Each item was profiled to fall into one of the three categories by a panel of experts in the field. All items were recoded from a 5-point scale to a 3-point scale. Pessimistic responses were coded as one; realistic responses were coded as two; and idealistic responses were coded as three. A participant's score could range from 40-120. Mean scores in the highest range (80-120) indicate unrealistic-idealistic marriage expectations. Mean scores from the middle (40-80) indicate realistic marriage expectations. Mean scores from the lowest range (<40) indicate unrealistic-

pessimistic marriage expectations. The alpha coefficient for the MES was +.80 during the pilot test and +.79 during the study. The data support a high internal consistency for this scale.

A second measure used in this study was the Conflict Tactics Scales (Straus, 1979). This scale measures the self-reported presence of violence in the participant's family of origin. The participant responded to statements inquiring about the number of times the participant's parents used various conflict tactics at any point while the participants were living at home. The responses were based on parent-to-parent interaction. The conflict tactics statements are broken down into three categories including discussion, verbal aggression, and violence.

The presence of violence in a participant's family of origin is established when it is reported that any conflict tactics in the "violence subscale" have been used. The definition of violence was looked at from two levels using the Conflict Tactics Scales. First, violence was defined using a broader definition that included violent physical acts likely to cause pain (throw something at him/her, slapping). Each participant only had to report one occurrence of a violent physical act to fall under the broader definition of family violence. Second, violence was more narrowly defined as physical abuse. This definition was a more severe definition that included acts likely to cause injury, such as kicking, hitting with a fist, using a knife, and biting. Again, each participant only had to report one occurrence of a physically abusive act to fall into the more narrowly defined physical abuse group.

Each participant recorded the frequency of each conflict tactic based on a scale ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (more than 20 times). For the items marked 0 (never), the participant recorded if the conflict tactic had ever happened. The alpha coefficients reported for form N for the discussion category were reported to fall within .52-.82. The verbal aggression category was reported to fall within .44-.85. The violent category was reported to fall within .79-.91. The data support a high internal consistency for this scale.

A demographic questionnaire was used to assess the marital status of the participant's parents. If the participant's parents were divorced, the participant reported his or her age at the

time of the divorce. Only participants over the age of 6 at the time of their parents' divorce were included in the study due to the operational definition for grouping non-intact participants. In addition, the participant's marital status was assessed. Due to the design and purpose of the Marriage Expectation Scale, which measures future marital expectations, only the participants who reported having never been married were included for data analysis. Also, the participant's gender, age, race, and level of education were assessed.

Procedure

Prior to collecting data, Institutional Review Board approval was obtained. The demographic questionnaire, Marriage Expectation Scale, and Conflict Tactics Scale made up the packet of materials given to the participants. The participants were offered extra credit in their introductory psychology course for their involvement in the study per the policies of the Department of Psychology. Alternative arrangements for commensurate extra credit were made between the student and professor if the student did not wish to participate. The participants were instructed by the experimenter to complete the packet of materials and respond honestly and accurately. The participants were instructed to turn in their packet of materials at the front of the classroom when finished. A handout was distributed along with the packet of materials explaining that the participants did not have to answer questions that made them feel uncomfortable. Contact information was also given for the purpose of answering any questions or needs concerning the study or to learn about the results of the study if desired.

Research Design

Design I

A 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 Univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare groups for mean score differences in marital expectations. Independent variables were male versus female, intact versus non-intact home of origin, violent versus non-violent, and abuse versus non-abuse.

<u>Design II</u>

Because the Marriage Expectation Scale is probably easiest to understand as a nominal variable, a Chi-square design was used to determine the impact of independent variables on frequency distributions in idealistic, realistic, and pessimistic marriage expectation categories. Independent variables were gender, violence/abuse, intact/non-intact.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

In research design I, a 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 Univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare groups for mean score differences in marital expectations. Independent variables were male versus female, intact versus non-intact home of origin, violent versus non-violent, and abuse versus non-abuse. Hypothesis 1 stated that men and women would differ on marital expectations as measured by mean scores on the Marriage Expectations Scale. Hypothesis 1 was not supported, F(1, 279) = .15, p >.05 (see Table 1). Hypothesis 2 stated that participants from non-intact homes would report more idealistic marital expectations than participants from intact homes. Hypothesis 2 was not supported, F(1, 279) = .68, p >.05 (see Table 1). Hypothesis 3 stated that participants who reported violence in their family of origin would report more pessimistic marital expectations than participants who did not report violence. Hypothesis 3 was not supported, F(1, 279) = .31, p >.05 (see Table 1). Hypothesis 4 stated that participants who reported physical abuse in their family of origin would report more pessimistic marital expectations than participants who did not report abuse. Hypothesis 4 was not supported, F(1, 279) = .12, p >.05 (see Table 1).

In research design II, because the Marriage Expectation Scale is probably easiest to understand as a nominal variable, a Chi-square design was used to determine the impact of independent variables on frequency distributions in idealistic, realistic, and pessimistic marriage expectation categories. Independent variables were gender, violence/abuse, intact/non-intact. Hypothesis 5 stated that males and females will differ on frequency of assignment to idealistic, realistic, and pessimistic marital expectations. Hypothesis 5 was supported x^2(279) = 9.95, p >.007. The main difference was found in participants who reported realistic marital expectations, with 121 females and 53 males assigned to this category. In contrast, there were 59 females and 52 males assigned to the pessimistic marital expectations category. Further, few

participants reported idealistic marital expectations with 3 females and 5 males being assigned to this category. Hypothesis 6 stated that more participants who reported family violence would be classified as having pessimistic marital expectations than participants who did not report family violence. Hypothesis 6 was not supported, $x^2(279) = 4.83$, $p > .05$. Hypothesis 7 stated that more participants who reported physical abuse would be classified as having pessimistic marital expectations than participants who did not report physical abuse. Hypothesis 7 was not supported, $x^2(279) = 5.61$, $p > .05$. Hypothesis 8 stated that more participants from non-intact homes would be classified as having idealistic marital expectations than participants from intact homes. Hypothesis 8 was not supported, $x^2(279) = .08$, $p > .05$.

Table 1

Analysis of Variance for Design I

	Type III Sum of squares	*df*	Mean square	*F*	Sig.
Sex					
Hypothesis	5.054	1	5.054	.15	NS
Parents					
Hypothesis	23.685	1	23.685	.68	NS
Violent					
Hypothesis	10.68	1	10.968	.31	NS
Abusive					
Hypothesis	4.242	1	4.242	.12	NS
Sex * Parents					
Hypothesis	133.265	1	133.265	3.82	NS
Sex * Violent					
Hypothesis	95.989	1	95.989	2.75	NS
Sex * Abusive					
Hypothesis	35.685	1	35.685	1.02	NS
Parents * Violent					
Hypothesis	4.096	1	4.096	.12	NS
Parents * Abusive					
Hypothesis	29.557	1	29.557	.85	NS
Sex * Parents * Violent					
Hypothesis	1.182	1	1.182	.03	NS
Sex * Parents * Abusive					
Hypothesis	119.440	1	119.440	3.42	NS

Table 2

Cell Numbers for Analysis of Variance for Design I

		Value label	N
1 = female	1.00		183
1 = male	2.00		110
parents			
married	1.00		207
parents			
divorced	2.00		86
violent	.00	No violence	150
	1.00	Yes violence	143
abusive	.00	No abuse	236
	1.00	Abusive	57

Table 3

Mean Scores for Marriage Expectation Scale: Analysis of Variance

1 = female, 2 = male		Violent	Mean
1.00		no violence	87.718
	87.503	yes violence	87.288
2.00		no violence	88.149
	86.881	yes violence	85.613

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The expected outcomes based on the hypotheses developed for this study were partially fulfilled. First, hypotheses 1 and 5, which were related to the impact of gender on marital expectations, were partially fulfilled. In design II, Chi-square results indicated that a significant difference existed between men and women on marital expectations. Therefore, hypothesis 5 was confirmed. The main difference in marital expectations among participants existed in the realistic marital expectations category, with 121 females and 53 males being assigned to this category. Therefore, the females were more realistic in their marital expectations. In addition, the females were also more pessimistic in their marital expectations, with 59 females and 52 males being assigned to this category. Although few participants were assigned to the idealistic marital expectations category, the males were more idealistic in their marital expectations, with 3 females and 5 males being assigned to this category. These results indicate that men and women have very different ideas about marriage that need to be examined through further research. However, when the same hypothesis was analyzed using an ANOVA, significant results were not found.

Second, hypotheses 2 and 8, which were related to the impact of divorce on marital expectations, were not fulfilled. These hypotheses were based on research by Jones and Nelson (1996) that looked at marital expectations of college students from non-intact and intact homes. The expected outcomes that participants from non-intact homes would report more idealistic marital expectations than participants from intact homes was not fulfilled. Third, hypotheses 3, 4, 6, and 7, which were related to the impact of family violence and physical abuse on marital expectations, were not fulfilled. Jones and Nelson, who looked at marital expectations of college students from non-intact and intact homes, listed family conflict as a limitation of their study. Therefore, the current research included family conflict as an independent variable. The

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expected outcome that participants who reported family violence or physical abuse in their family of origin would report more pessimistic marital expectations than participants who did not report family violence or physical abuse was not fulfilled. However, an interaction was found among gender, intact or non-intact family of origin, and physical abuse. This finding indicates that these variables do appear to affect ideas about future marital expectations, which need to be assessed further in future research.

Several limitations have had an influence on the findings in this research study. First, the Marriage Expectations Scale (MES) appeared to be a weak instrument for several reasons. The MES seemed to have a weak face validity, which may have steered the participants to answer the items in a realistic manner even though they may have held other beliefs about marriage. As a result, most of the participants reported realistic marital expectations on the MES. In addition, the items on the MES do not appear to focus on elements that would make marriage work but on elements that may be involved in finding a partner with many similarities. Further, the MES placed a small amount of emphasis on factors outside marriage that may affect marital expectations, such as other interpersonal relationships. Consequently, the MES should be examined in further detail before being used in future research on marital expectations.

Another limitation of the present study included the process by which data were collected regarding family violence. The researchers were not able to accurately assess when the reported family violence or physical abuse took place because the participants were only asked to report their parents' marital status. As a result, many participants who reported family violence or physical abuse may have witnessed these actions after their parents were divorced, among a parent and a stepparent, or among their parents while they were married. This limitation did not allow for an accurate assessment of the extent which the participants witnessed family violence and physical abuse.

A final limitation included the sample of participants who were surveyed for this study. The participants were selected from a college campus and did not reflect the general population.

In addition, the participants were all students in introductory psychology classes. As a result, the participants also may not represent the general population of the university campus. Further, the age of the participants was very skewed in the 18-19 category, with 196 participants falling in this age range. Consequently, a limited age may have also affected the results in this study. A more diverse age range may have allowed for more participants who have reflected on their life experience and how it has affected their future marital expectations to be included.

Future research needs to be conducted in the area of marital expectations in order to gain more information about the variables that impact an individual's future marital expectations. One suggestion for future research includes examining the differences among men and women regarding marital expectations. Researchers need to obtain an accurate assessment of men's and women's thoughts about marriage before other variables related to marriage are assessed. As a result, a more reliable picture of variables that may affect marital expectations may arise.

Second, a solid instrument that takes into account all elements of marriage needs to be used so that researchers are able to gain an accurate picture of the future marital expectations of the participants used in marital expectation research. Consequently, a more extensive assessment tool on marital expectations than the one used in this study needs to be developed. A final suggestion for future research includes using a sample that represents the general population and consists of a wide variety of age ranges. This suggestion will allow for the use of a group of participants who may have more mature ideas about their future marital expectations to be included.

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APPENDIX A

Demographic Questionnaire

Age: _____

Circle One:
Sex:
    1) Female
    2) Male

Circle One:
    1) Freshman
    2) Sophomore
    3) Junior
    4) Senior
    5) Graduate
    6) Other: _____

Circle One:
    1) African American
    2) Asian
    3) Hispanic
    4) Caucasian
    5) Other: _____

Circle One:
Parents' Marital Status:
    1) Married
    2) Divorced
    3) Never married
    4) Other: _____

Circle One:
Your Marital Status:
    1) Married
    2) Single, Never Married
    3) Single, Married Previously
    4) Other: _____

Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS)

No matter how well a family gets along, there are times when they disagree, get annoyed with each other, want different things, or just have spats or fights because they are in a bad mood, are tired, or for some other reason. Families also have many different ways of trying to settle their differences. This is a list of things that might happen when having differences. Complete this questionnaire by thinking back to when you were growing up; respond to the following items based on how you remember your family. If in doubt, rate your family as you remember it as being in the last year you lived at home. Please circle how many times your parents did each of these things in interaction with each other.

Parents during your childhood
1 = Once
2 = Twice
3 = 3-5 Times
4 = 6-10 Times
5 = 11-20 Times
6 = More than 20
0 = Never

A.	Discussed an issue calmly	1 2 3 4 5 6 0
B.	Got information to back up his/her side of things	1 2 3 4 5 6 0
C.	Brought in, or tried to bring in, someone to help settle things	1 2 3 4 5 6 0
D.	Insulted or swore at him/her	1 2 3 4 5 6 0
E.	Sulked or refused to talk about an issue	1 2 3 4 5 6 0
F.	Stomped out of the room or house or yard	1 2 3 4 5 6 0
G.	Cried	1 2 3 4 5 6 0
H.	Did or said something to spite him/her	1 2 3 4 5 6 0
I.	Threatened to hit or throw something at him/her	1 2 3 4 5 6 0
J.	Threw or smashed or hit or kicked something	1 2 3 4 5 6 0
K.	Threw something at him/her	1 2 3 4 5 6 0
L.	Pushed, grabbed or shoved him/her	1 2 3 4 5 6 0
M.	Slapped him/her	1 2 3 4 5 6 0
N.	Kicked, bit, or hit him/her with a fist	1 2 3 4 5 6 0
O.	Hit or tried to hit him/her with something	1 2 3 4 5 6 0
P.	Beat him/her	1 2 3 4 5 6 0
Q.	Choked him/her	1 2 3 4 5 6 0
R.	Threatened him/her with a knife or gun	1 2 3 4 5 6 0
S.	Used a knife or fired a gun	1 2 3 4 5 6 0

APPENDIX C

Marriage Expectation Scale (MES)

Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
●	●	●	●	●
1	2	3	4	5
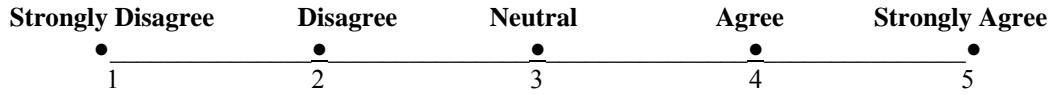
Please respond to the following statements using the above scale. Simply mark the response that first comes to your mind. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers, and the statements may be interpreted differently according to the individual. Please mark your answers on the computer-scored sheet using a No. 2 pencil. ***Imagining what your future marriage might be like****, mark the response that first comes to mind. Thank you!*

_____ 1. My marriage will be more intense than any of my other close relationships.

_____ 2. We will both place the same amount of emphasis on sex.

_____ 3. My partner and I will be similar in our habits of cleanliness.

_____ 4. Keeping the finances straight will be difficult.

_____ 5. Asking each other for help will not be a problem.

_____ 6. My partner will be quite attractive.

_____ 7. We will have certain household chores that each of us will do.

_____ 8. Time alone will not be as important as time together.

_____ 9. Maintaining romantic love will be a key factor to our marital happiness.

_____ 10. My spouse will want to have children at the same time I do.

_____ 11. My partner will absolutely be willing to "follow me" to another city if I'm promoted.

_____ 12. Our marital satisfaction will be reflected by our sex life.

_____ 13. My partner will have a great sense of humor.

_____ 14. We will both be willing to see a marriage counselor if necessary.

_____ 15. My spouse and I will be quite affectionate with each other.

_____ 16. Having children will improve marital satisfaction for both of us.

_____ 17. My spouse will instinctively know what I want and need to be happy.

_____ 18. My partner will have trouble understanding me.

_____ 19.   It will not bother me if my spouse loses his or her "shape."

_____ 20.   My partner will cherish me.

_____ 21.   My partner will always listen to me.

_____ 22.   I will be able to change my partner by pointing out his/her shortcomings.

_____ 23.   We will get angry with each other.

_____ 24.   Sex will always be exciting.

_____ 25.   We will always express feelings openly.

_____ 26.   We will always agree about whose side of the family we will spend holidays with.

_____ 27.   Decisions will be made together at all times.

_____ 28.   I will be suspicious of my partner's fidelity.

_____ 29.   All our fights will be resolved quickly.

_____ 30.   My partner will forget important dates such as our anniversary.

_____ 31.   My spouse will automatically like my side of the family.

_____ 32.   We will share equally the household chores.

_____ 33.   My spouse will always consult me when making decisions.

_____ 34.   We will always have extreme emotional closeness.

_____ 35.   My spouse and I will argue a lot.

_____ 36.   My partner and I will eat meals together all the time.

_____ 37.   We will share all of the same interests.

_____ 38.   I will have trouble getting along with the in-laws.

_____ 39.   My partner will agree with me if I tell him or her to change something about him/herself.

_____ 40.   My spouse will never be attracted to people of the opposite sex.

VITA

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