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The examination of direct and indirect transmission processes of intergenerational marital instability

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Iowa State University, 1994
The examination of direct and indirect transmission processes of intergenerational marital instability

by

Eunkyung Kim

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department: Human Development and Family Studies
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For the Graduate College

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa

1994
DEDICATION

To: My husband, Jinho, my parents and parents-in-law
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

The country’s divorce rate has almost doubled between 1960 and 1991, rising from 25.8 per 1,000 marriages in 1960 to 50.1 per 1,000 marriages in 1991 (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1993). High divorce rates have resulted in numerous changes in American family life. Perhaps the most important consequence is related to the children whose families were disrupted (Demo & Acock, 1988). The proportion of children experiencing their parents’ marital disruption increased from 22 per cent in the early 1960s to an estimated 46 per cent in the 1980s (Bumpass, 1984). Each year more than 1.1 million children are affected by parental divorce (Kunz, 1991).

The immediate impact of parental marital disruption on children and adolescents has been increasingly documented in the research literature (Camara & Resnick, 1988; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982; Kline, Johnston & Tschann, 1991; Wallenstein & Kelley, 1980). However, relatively few studies have searched for long-term consequences of early family disruption that may persist into adulthood (Amato & Booth, 1991b). According to Pope and Mueller (1976), children from parental marriages disrupted by divorce during their childhood have higher rates of divorce or separation in their own marriages than children from intact parental marriages. In other words, divorce seems to transmit to the next generation.

Considerable evidence indicates that in the United States persons whose parents divorced are more likely to divorce than persons whose parents had stable
marriages (Glenn & Shelton, 1983; Kitson, Babri, & Roach, 1985; Kobrin & Waite, 1984; Kulka & Weingarten, 1979; Kunz, 1991; Mueller & Pope, 1977). Levinger (1976) reported that a history of divorce between the parents of either spouse appeared to contribute to divorce proneness. Continued tolerance for marital difficulty would be lower if parents' marital intolerance was previously experienced.

Based on a national survey, Booth and Edwards (1989) suggested that parental divorce is associated with divorce proneness, marital disagreement, and marital problems. Mott and Moore (1979) also argued that being raised in a broken home was positively associated with marital disruption even after controlling for other socioeconomic variables.

Kulka and Weingarten (1979) reported modest, albeit mixed evidence for the intergenerational transmission of marital instability from an examination of 1957 and 1976 national cross-sectional surveys. The transmission effect was statistically reliable only for women in 1957, and when controls for age and education were applied, only for men in 1976. Using ordinary least square regression analysis, Hanson and Tuch (1984) suggested that the effect of parental marital status on children's marital instability was significant among men, but not among women.

Even though small but positive associations between parental divorce and children's probability of being divorced have been consistently reported, there is little consensus concerning the transmission process of marital instability from the parental generation to the next generation. Some studies have attempted to understand this process by looking at attitudes and commitment to marriage of
children from divorced families (Booth & Edwards, 1989; Mott & Moore, 1979) and by looking at the tendency of children of divorce to marry at an early age (Keith & Finlay, 1988; McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988; White & Booth, 1991). Since their pre-adult experiences have taught children from divorced families how fragile marriages can be, children of divorce may often marry without an expectation that the marriage will be successful and stable (Glenn & Kramer, 1987).

According to Amato and Booth (1991a), individuals who experience parental divorce as children hold more positive attitudes toward divorce in later life than individuals who grew up in intact families. This relationship was a general one and was reported among both men and women of varying ages. When one considers that children's earliest and most prolonged exposure to the institution of marriage is through their parents, it is no wonder that their perceptions of the happiness of their parents' marriages may be strongly associated with their own attitudes toward marriage (Greenberg & Nay, 1982).

Another explanation for intergenerational transmission of divorce was suggested by Mueller and Pope (1977). They provided support for a social control hypothesis of high-risk mate selection among the children of divorce. Because of the lack of parental supervision, young women from divorced families were more likely to marry at a young age, be pregnant at marriage, and marry men with lower socioeconomic status.

A third possible explanation for intergenerational transmission of divorce is that children from divorced families do not have appropriate sex role models. Much
of the modeling of spousal roles by parents who divorce is likely to be inappropriate, and thus the offspring will tend to have problems in their marriages if they emulate their parents (Glenn & Kramer, 1987). In other words, observing a failed parental marriage is unlikely to teach a person how to have a good marriage.

Despite the popularity of the idea of intergenerational transmission of marital instability, the reported association between parental divorce and children's probability of being divorced is not large in magnitude (Bumpass & Sweet, 1972; Kitson et al., 1985). However, consistency in findings of intergenerational transmission of marital instability across sex (Amato & Keith, 1991; Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Keith & Finlay, 1988; Pope & Mueller, 1976) and race (Kulka & Weingarten, 1979; Pope & Mueller, 1976) and across different studies (Kulka & Weingarten, 1979) indicates that the finding is not spurious. The low association, albeit consistent, between parental divorce and children's marital instability might be caused by only observing direct relationships between parental divorce and children's probability of being divorced. Parental divorce appears to be not only directly related to children's marital instability, but also indirectly related to children's marital instability through children's mate selection risk factors (Mueller & Pope, 1977), marital quality (Booth & Edwards, 1989; Dean & Lucas, 1974; Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Spanier, 1976), and marital commitment (Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Thompson & Spanier, 1983). Allowing both direct and indirect associations between parental divorce and children's marital instability will enhance the understanding of the transmission processes within families of divorce (Kitson et al.,
The purpose of this study is to explore the intergenerational transmission mechanisms and to test a comprehensive model of intergenerational transmission of marital instability by allowing both direct and indirect relationships between parental divorce and children's marital instability.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on intergenerational transmission perspectives (Meyer, 1988) combined with Levinger’s (1976) version of exchange theory. Comparatively few rigorous attempts have been made to formulate explanations of marital dissolution. One of the more long-standing and provocative efforts is Levinger's (1976) work postulating that divorce reflects not only the degree of attraction (cohesiveness) to the marriage, but divorce also reflects alternatives and barriers to dissolution. He claims that all relationships have some sources of attraction and some sources of alternate attraction.

A person's attraction in a relationship is directly associated with its perceived rewards and inversely with its perceived costs (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). The general principle of exchange theory is that humans are trying to maximize their profits from their relationships and interaction with others. The dissolution of intimate relationships is often marked by a drastic shift in perceived rewards or costs.

Researchers have usually ignored the existence of restraining forces when considering the degree of cohesiveness (Levinger, 1976). Restraining forces that derive from barriers between people act to keep them apart; barriers around
relationships act to keep people together. Barriers are important for keeping long-term relationships intact. Barriers lessen the effect of temporary fluctuations in interpersonal attraction; even if attraction becomes negative, barriers act to continue the relationship.

In almost every marriage, each spouse has numerous relationships with alternative role partners—family, friends, or fellow employees. Each such alternative relationship is the source of its own attraction and constraints; such alternative forces may compete with forces from inside the marriage relationship. Persistent exploration of alternatives is likely to build up a person's "comparison level for alternatives" (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). If a person has alternative relationships, the person is more likely to find outcomes that appear to exceed those currently obtainable, even if one's present mate is very attractive. Nye, White and Friders (1969) suggested that marital stability is determined by the amount of positive affect toward the spouse, constraints against its dissolution, and the perceived attractiveness of alternatives to the marriage.

The degree of cohesiveness experienced is a function of the marriage partners' positive attraction for each other, the strength of barriers to dissolution, and the "pulling force" of alternative relationships (Edwards & Saunders, 1981). Sources of attraction include affectional rewards, husband's income, home ownership, husband's education, and husband's occupation, as well as similarity in social status, such as religion, education and age (Lewis & Spanier, 1979). Sources of barriers include feelings of obligation to the marital bond; moral
prescriptions associated with religion and church attendance and external pressure, such as primary group affiliation and community stigma (Lewis & Spanier, 1979). Sources of alternative attraction include affectional rewards from a preferred alternate sex partner and economic rewards, such as the wife's opportunity for independent income (Lewis & Spanier, 1979). A decrease in the marriage's attractiveness and/or an increase in the weakness of its boundaries impels individuals toward a dissolution of the marriage (Edwards & Saunders, 1981).

Booth, Johnson, White and Edwards (1985) argued that information on attractions, barriers, and alternatives represents an important step to build a comprehensive theory of marital dissolution. However, Levinger's (1976) version of exchange theory explains the general marital dissolution process but does not consider the developmental history of each marital partner. Each marital partner has his/her own predisposing background that affects his/her marital relationship with a partner. With the same barriers and alternatives, it is probable that some marriages terminate in separation or divorce, and some marriages remain intact, in spite of what may be an intolerable relationship (Lewis & Spanier, 1979).

Predisposing marital characteristics play an important role in this process. An intergenerational transmission perspective might help to explain this process. Several recent studies support the view of cross-generational continuity of marital relationships (Glenn & Shelton, 1983; Kitson et al., 1985; Kobrin & Waite, 1984; Kulka & Weingarten, 1979; Kunz, 1992; Mueller & Pope, 1977). As for the marital relationship, the evidence from studies on divorce, as well as from studies on
"normal" marital function suggests the transmission of marital relationship quality from one generation to the next (Pope & Mueller, 1976; Rutter & Madge, 1976). It is hypothesized that exposure to conflictual marriages in one's own childhood would forecast lower marital satisfaction and higher conflict in the marital relationship (Meyer, 1988). The parental marital instability is passed down through inadequate social control (Pope & Mueller, 1976), inappropriate modeling of spouse roles (Mueller & Pope, 1977), earlier age at marriage (Bumpass & Sweet, 1972; Keith & Finlay, 1988), lower educational attainment (Glenn & Kramer, 1987; McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988) and lower commitment to marriage (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982).

**Hypothesized Model**

Edwards and Saunders' (1981) social-psychological model, which is based on Levinger's exchange model, is the guiding model for this study. While Edwards and Saunders' (1981) model takes into account duality of marital relationships and includes both partners, the model of this study will only focus on individuals, not pairs, for two reasons. First, including both partners in the hypothesized model makes a model very complex. Since the primary purpose of this study is to explore the intergenerational transmission process rather than developing a comprehensive model of marital dissolution, including both partners is beyond the scope of this study. Second, the data set used in this study did not contain both partners. The unit of analysis of this study, therefore, is individuals not pairs.
Edwards and Saunders' (1981) model comprised nine variables. Predisposing background characteristics, relative heterogeneity, barriers and alternatives are seen as exogenous variables in the model. Advanced mate selection adjustment, marital congruity, comparison level of alternatives and commitment level are endogenous variables. Finally, dissolution decision is the outcome variable in their model. However, Edwards and Saunders' model was not developed for research on the intergenerational transmission of marital instability. It is more appropriate for the general process of marital instability. Therefore, a revision of the model is necessary.

The hypothesized model of this study includes nine latent variables. Parental divorce, relative heterogeneity of social background between marital spouses, barriers and alternatives are exogenous variables as in Edwards and Saunders' model. Considering previous findings, socioeconomic status of the family of origin is included as an exogenous variable in this study (Greenberg & Nay, 1982; Keith & Finlay, 1988).

Mate selection risk factors, marital quality and marital commitment are endogenous variables, and marital instability is the outcome variable of the proposed model. Considering previous research findings (Booth & Edwards, 1989; Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Mueller & Pope, 1977), advanced mate selection adjustment is replaced with mate selection risk factors. Edwards and Saunders' (1981) comparison level of the alternative to marriage variable is deleted from the conceptual model, because the data set used for this study did not include this
variable. Even if the variable was in the data set, the controversy over the empirical usefulness of the variable would suggest that the variable be dropped from the model (Edwards & Saunders, 1981). Since the interest of this study is in marital instability, the dissolution decision variable is replaced with marital instability. The postulated pathways that link exogenous variables and endogenous variables are presented in Figure 1. The general purpose of this model is to explain that parental marital instability not only has direct effects but also has indirect effects on children's marital instability through mate selection risk factors, marital quality and marital commitment. A secondary purpose of this study is to assess gender differences in the transmission of marital instability between generations.
Figure 1. Hypothesized model.
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section reviews the literature regarding the intergenerational transmission of marital instability and gender differences in the transmission of marital instability. Effects of parental divorce, effects of socioeconomic status of parents on children’s mate selection, effects of relative heterogeneity on marital quality and on marital instability, effects of barriers and alternatives on marital commitment, effects of mate selection factors on marital quality, and effects of marital quality on marital commitment and marital instability will be discussed. In addition, limitations of previous studies and hypotheses will be stated.

Effects of Parental Divorce

Previous research addressing direct and indirect effects of parental divorce on adult children’s marital instability are reviewed in this section. The effect of parental divorce on marital instability of children is mediated through children’s mate selection risk factors, marital quality, and marital commitment.

Effects of Parental Divorce on Children’s Mate Selection Risk Factors

Using a national sample of white ever-married females, Mueller and Pope (1977) examined the possibility that mate selection risk factors operates as an intervening variable between parent and child generation marital stability. Their study showed that about one-half of the effect of parental instability was mediated by mate selection risk factors, such as age at marriage, education at marriage, occupation of male at time of marriage and premarital pregnancy.
Booth and Edwards (1989) also reported that mate selection becomes an intervening variable between the parent's marital instability and the offspring's marital instability. From the extensive overview of research concerning the effect of divorce on children between 1930 and 1990, Kunz (1991) suggested that children from divorced families were more likely to be involved in high risk mate selection than children from nondivorced families. Glenn and Shelton (1983) reported that adult children who have experienced parental divorce are less able to choose an appropriate partner and maintain an enduring relationship. Keith and Finlay (1988) suggested that parental divorce is associated with earlier age at marriage for both males and females. Glenn and Supancic (1984) concluded that parental divorce might affect divorce-proneness of children through children's education level.

In an investigation of 7,969 women who were between 15 and 44 years old, McLanahan and Bumpass (1988) confirmed mate selection risk factors as an important mediating variable between parental divorce and divorce proneness of children. They evaluated the effects of family structure on five outcomes: early marriage, defined as marriage before age 20; early birth, defined as giving birth before age 20; premarital birth; divorce and remarriage. The findings revealed that women who spent part of their childhood in one-parent families were more likely to marry and bear children early, give birth before marriage, and have their own marriage break up.
Effects of Parental Divorce on Marital Quality

According to Booth and Edwards (1989), parental marital instability had an adverse effect on children's marital relationships, especially for women. The findings demonstrated that parental divorce was positively and significantly related to marital instability, marital disagreements, and marital behavior problems of adult offspring.

Amato and Booth (1991b) suggested that adults who experienced parental divorce as children exhibited higher levels of spousal disagreements and marital problems. Lewis and Spanier (1979) also indicated that parents' marital quality appears to be a good predictor of an individual's marital quality.

Based on the analysis of pooled data from 11 U.S. national surveys, Glenn and Kramer (1987) reported that children of divorce reported lower marital happiness than respondents who lived with both parents. None of the differences were statistically significant, but the consistency of their direction suggested a tendency in the population of the children of divorce to feel less positive about their marriages than other persons.

Using data from two national cross-sectional surveys conducted nearly 20 years apart, Kulka and Weingarten (1979) suggested that adult children from divorce-broken homes are significantly more likely to report having experienced marital problems and to admit having felt inadequate as a spouse. Children from divorced families may be more sensitive to negative feelings about their spousal roles and marital difficulties; children from divorced families value marriage, but at
the same time they are aware of limitations and are perhaps more tolerant toward its alternatives (Amato, 1988; Kulka & Weingarten, 1979).

**Effects of Parental Divorce on Children's Marital Commitment**

Glenn and Kramer (1987) stated that even though children from divorced families were not usually reluctant to marry, they reported that children from divorced families have difficulties making a strong commitment to marriage. It seems likely that when children from divorced families marry, they often withhold a full commitment to the marriage.

From an extensive review of literature, Kunz (1991) concluded that compared to children from intact families, children from divorced families tended to have less commitment to marriage and to be more accepting of divorce as an option to an unsatisfactory marriage. The acceptance of divorce as an option appears to be the result of less commitment to marriage (Kunz, 1991).

Kulka and Weingarten (1979) suggested that married men from divorced backgrounds were more likely than those from intact homes to agree that divorce was often the best solution for unresolvable marital problems. Adult women from divorced families of origin viewed the marital role as less important than did women from intact families.

Franklin, Janoff-Bulman and Roberts (1990) conducted two studies to examine the long-term impact of parental divorce on beliefs about the self and others using college-aged young adults. The respondents whose parents had been
divorced viewed their future spouse as less dependable. They were also less optimistic about their own future marriage than young adults from intact families.

Greenberg and Nay (1982) explored marriage-related attitudes of young adults. Their findings suggested a disinhibitory effect of parental divorce on children's attitudes toward divorce. Young adults from separated or divorced families expressed a more favorable attitude toward divorce compared to their counterparts from unhappy-intact families. As a result of personal experience with parental divorce, a child may view divorce as a more viable option to terminate a dysfunctional marriage.

**Effects of Parental Divorce on Children's Marital Instability**

Using a national sample of adults, Amato and Booth (1991b) compared individuals who experienced parental divorce as children with those who did not experience parental marital dissolution. Their findings revealed that respondents from divorced families had the highest score in marital instability when compared to respondents from very happy intact families, moderately happy intact families and unhappy intact families.

There is consistent evidence that children of divorced parents are somewhat more likely to dissolve their own marriages than children of intact marriages (Bumpass & Sweet, 1972; Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Heiss, 1972; Keith & Finlay, 1988; McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988; Mueller & Pope, 1977; Pope & Mueller, 1976).

Kobrin and Waite (1984) also confirmed the idea that children whose parents divorced were more likely to have higher marital instability. Being exposed to
divorce early in life made divorce a familiar, though painful, option for children from divorced families.

Comparing data from five surveys, Pope and Mueller (1976) detected a real, although small, amount of intergenerational transmission of marital instability. For whites, the pattern was consistent among studies and between sexes. For blacks, the four studies of females and two of the three for males indicated higher marital dissolution rates among children from disrupted families.

Glenn and Kramer (1987) suggested that there is a tendency for divorce to run in families and that the association between the divorce-proneness of parents and offspring probably is not spurious. Keith and Finlay (1988) reported that daughters of divorced parents have a higher probability of being divorced. For sons of divorced parents, the probability of ever marrying is lower and divorce is higher for those with lower social class background.

Effects of Socioeconomic Status of Parents on Children's Mate Selection Risk Factors

Using 10,659 subjects, Keith and Finlay (1988) suggested that parental socioeconomic status influenced children's educational attainment and age at marriage. For both males and females, educational attainment was the highest among those whose mothers had completed some years of college education and whose parents were married when respondents were age 16. Despite a parental divorce, respondents from more advantaged backgrounds on average attained fairly high levels of education, some reaching college or higher. Children from lower
socioeconomic backgrounds attained lower levels of education than children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. For females, marriage ages were slightly higher if their mother had college experience. For males, mothers' education made little difference in their marriage age, unless the mother was divorced.

Discontinuing education may increase early marriage, especially for women (Ambert & Saucier, 1984; Marini, 1978). Early marriage during the teen age years is often associated with early entry into parenthood (Keith & Finlay, 1988). Rubin (1976) reported that adolescent females with limited opportunities viewed marriage and parenthood as a means of escaping hardship and establishing an adult identity. Both discontinuing education and low income lead to early marriage or early parenthood (Greenberg & Nay, 1982).

Effects of Relative Heterogeneity on Marital Quality and on Marital Instability

A consistent body of research dealing with marital dissolution indicates that the greater the discrepancy between a couple's background characteristics, the less stability the marital dyad is likely to have (Falk, 1975). When the differences between the marital partners had to do with age (Bumpass & Sweet, 1972), they portended a lower degree of dyadic adjustment prior to marriage and greater instability in the marital relationship itself (Edwards & Saunders, 1981).

Becker (1973) revealed that those who married dissimilar mates reported lower marital satisfaction when compared to those who married similar mates. From their extensive review of the literature, Lewis and Spanier (1979) concluded that
homogamy operated as a norm in mate selection. When the norm of homogamy was violated, the possibility of negative consequences for marital quality and marital stability increased. Lewis and Spanier (1979) hypothesized that the greater the difference in socioeconomic status and/or age for couples, the lower the marital quality. Atkinson and Glass (1985) operationalized age heterogamous marriages as those in which the husbands are at least 5 years younger than their wives. However, Derenski and Landsberg (1981) suggested that for a marriage to be considered age disparate, spouse had to be separated by six or more years. In general, social similarity enhances interpersonal relationships, facilitates adherence to the same social norms and helps avoid friction (Levinger, 1976).

Effects of Mate Selection Risk Factors on Marital Quality

In their study of intergenerational transmission of marital instability, Mueller and Pope (1977) examined intervening variables, which they called mate selection risk factors. Some examples of mate selection risk factors include age, education at marriage, and premarital pregnancy (Kitson et al., 1985; Levinger, 1976; Mueller & Pope, 1977).

Age at first marriage was positively related to marital quality (Bumpass & Sweet, 1972; Furstenberg, 1990; Hanson & Tuch, 1984; Kitson et al., 1985; Levinger, 1976). According to Levinger (1976), early age at marriage not only implies a less mature commitment, but younger spouses have more years than older spouses to be exposed to alternative partners. Lee (1977) also suggested that people who marry early experience lower marital satisfaction because they lack
preparation for marital role performance. Poor role performance decreases satisfaction, which in turn leads to marital instability.

Effects of Marital Quality on Marital Commitment and Marital Instability

The general concept of marital quality encompasses a large range of terms (i.e., marital happiness, marital interaction, disagreement and marital problems), which have been the traditional dependent variables in marriage research (Booth & Edwards, 1989; Lewis & Spanier, 1979). There is ample evidence that indicators of marital quality are strongly correlated with marital stability (Dean & Lucas, 1974; Spanier, 1976). Utilizing a sample of 76 white, middle class couples from a rural midwestern county, Conger, Elder, Lorenz, Conger, Simons, Whitbeck, Huck, and Melby (1990) suggested that marital quality had significant and negative direct effects on marital instability for both husbands and wives.

Edwards and Saunders (1981) also indicated that the state of the marital couple was of critical significance in affecting the dissolution decision. In the past, this state has been variously conceptualized as marital adjustment, satisfaction, happiness, and more recently as marital quality. Edwards and Saunders (1981) argued that marital quality is not a necessary but a sufficient condition that must be considered for marital instability.

Using a national panel of married individuals interviewed in 1980 and 1988, White and Booth (1991) indicated that marital happiness retarded divorce more
when respondents reported higher commitment to marriage as an institution. From their study of 301 married individuals, Sabatelli and Cecil-Pigo (1985) revealed that marital satisfaction significantly predicted marital commitment. Spanier (1976) also reported that higher marital satisfaction and interaction and lower marital disagreement were likely to enhance marital commitment.

Effects of Barriers on Marital Commitment

Levinger (1976) insisted that barriers are important for keeping long-term relationships intact. Barriers lessen the effect of temporary fluctuations in interpersonal attraction; even if attraction becomes negative, barriers act to continue the relationship.

Levinger (1965) defined barriers as feelings of obligation to marital bonds and to dependent children, and to various external pressures, such as primary group affiliations, community stigma, legal and economic constrictions, as well as to religion and church attendance.

Bott (1977) emphasized the importance of connected kinship and friendship networks for stabilizing a couple relationship even in the absence of strong intrapair affection. On the other hand, in such tightly knit networks, the more close kin or friends express disapproval of the marriage, the greater is the likelihood of divorce (Goode, 1964). Lewis and Spanier (1979) also indicated that pressure from primary groups, such as family and friends, was an important predictor of marital commitment.
Sabatelli and Cecil-Pigo (1985) suggested that high levels of interdependence measured by high levels of satisfaction, equity experienced within a relationship, and the presence of strong barriers to the dissolution of the relationship, were associated with high degrees of commitment. For women, fifty-four per cent of the variance in commitment was predicted by equity, satisfaction and barriers. In addition, for both males and females, strength of religious beliefs correlated positively with the perceived barriers to the dissolution of the relationship.

Glenn and Supancic (1984) demonstrated that deeply religious people were less likely to divorce. They reported that white males who attended religious services more than twice a month had lower rates of marital dissolution than those who attended less frequently. Using longitudinal interview data, Booth et al. (1985) suggested that being religious was one of the most important barriers to divorce.

Effects of Alternatives on Marital Commitment

Edwards and Saunders (1981) suggested that alternative attractions include such factors as availability of another partner, the desirability of singlehood, and means of self-support. Levinger (1976) treated economic rewards, such as the wife's opportunity for independent income and affectional rewards from a preferred alternate sex partner, as alternatives. Udry (1981) distinguished two components of marital alternatives. The first was the ability to replace the present spouse with another partner of equal or higher quality. The second was the ability to maintain or improve one's economic status. Lewis and Spanier (1979) reported that
alternatives to marriage negatively influenced the strength of the relationship between marital quality and marital stability.

Several studies indicated a positive relationship between the wife's earnings and marital commitment (Hannan, Tuman & Groeneveld, 1977; Ross & Sawhill, 1975). Ross and Sawhill (1975) suggested a positive relationship between feelings of independence and wife's income. Factors that would promote a feeling of independence in women, such as high wage employment or access to asset income independent of the husband, might provide encouragement for women to leave the marriage. Rusbult (1983) also reported that greater relationship satisfaction and investment, as well as poorer alternatives promoted higher levels of commitment for the overall sample.

Sprecher (1988) examined the relative strength of relationship satisfaction, alternatives, investments inequity, and social support in predicting relationship commitment. Of the variables he examined, relationship satisfaction and alternatives to the relationship were the most important predictors of relationship commitment.

Floyd and Wasner (1994) also reported that commitment was the central mediator for satisfaction and perceptions of alternatives when predicting relationship stability. Their findings suggested that commitment to an intimate relationship resulted directly from feeling satisfied and rewarded in the relationship and perceiving that desirable alternatives were not easily available.
Effects of Marital Commitment on Marital Instability

Social scientists are cognizant that many poorly adjusted marriages remain intact while many marriages with average or even relatively good adjustment may be terminated by divorce (Lewis & Spanier, 1979). Data collected by Spanier (1976), which compared married and divorced samples, further support this statement.

From their study of the circumstances surrounding the termination of marriage, Thompson and Spanier (1983) revealed that personal commitment to marriage made a significant overall and net contribution to the degree of marital instability for both males and females. Their findings showed that commitment to marriage was inversely related to acceptance of marital instability.

Although marital quality and marital stability are highly correlated (Spanier, 1976), it is likely that threshold variables, such as commitment to marriage, barriers to divorce and alternatives to marriage operate as forces which allow some couples to pass over the threshold and separate (and subsequently divorce), while not allowing others to pass over the threshold to divorce (Lewis & Spanier, 1979). Thus, it is probable that there are some marriages of high quality which terminate in separation or divorce and some marriages of less quality which remain intact in spite of intolerable relationships.

Edwards and Saunders (1981) stated that the less interested or committed partner was more prone to leave the marriage. Kitson and Sussman (1976) suggested that marital commitment was greater among spouses who were left than
among those who left. Floyd and Wasner (1994) confirmed the findings that a decreased commitment prompted the decision to terminate the relationship.

Most previous studies clearly reported a direct association between variables such as parental divorce, mate selection risk factors, marital quality, marital commitment, and marital instability. However, except for a few studies (e.g., Amato & Keith, 1991; Mueller & Pope, 1977), most studies did not consider how these variables are related to each other as a whole. That is, most preceding studies ignored indirect relationships among variables in this study. The goal of the present research is to investigate the process of intergenerational transmission of marital instability by examining both direct and indirect effects of parental divorce on children's marital instability.

Gender Differences in the Intergenerational Transmission of Marital Instability

One of the important variables that critically affects children's adjustment to parental divorce is children's gender (Demo & Acock, 1988). The view that sons are more adversely affected by parental divorce than daughters has been widely discussed and is presumed to be a firmly established finding (Demo & Acock, 1988; Kudek, 1993; Zaslow, 1989). However, the picture from recent studies about gender differences is somewhat different from established findings.

Amato and Keith (1991) conducted a meta-analysis assessing long-term consequences of parental divorce for adult well-being. Their findings reported two gender differences. First, parental divorce was more strongly associated with single
parent status of males than females. In other words, parental divorce increased the risk of being a single parent more for males than for females. Their second finding demonstrated that for educational attainment, parental divorce had a stronger impact on females than on males.

From their study regarding the effect of parental divorce on the divorce-proneness of offspring, Glenn and Kramer (1987) reported that the estimated total effect of parental divorce was stronger for white females than for any other sex-race category. The adjusted percentage of those ever-divorced or legally separated was greatest for white females from divorced families, followed by white males, black males and black females from divorced families.

Glenn and Shelton (1983) also confirmed gender differences in the intergenerational transmission of marital instability. For males, the adjusted percentage of ever-divorced/separated for those whose parents had divorced was 28.9 per cent, just over a third greater than the divorce rate of those whose parents' marriages were intact. For females, the divorce rate was 59.3 per cent greater for those whose parents had divorced than for those from intact families.

Using two national cross-sectional survey data sets from 1957 and 1976, Kulka and Weingarten (1979) revealed that the intergenerational transmission of marital instability was supported only by women in 1957, and, when controls for age and education were applied, only by men in 1976. They also reported that married women from divorced backgrounds in 1976 might have considered the marital role less important to them than their married peers from intact home backgrounds. Men
in 1976, on the other hand, showed no differences. Married men from divorced families when compared to those from intact families were more likely to agree that divorce was often the best solution for unresolvable marital problems.

Keith and Finlay (1988) indicated that daughters of divorced parents have a higher probability of being divorced. For sons of divorced parents, the probability of ever marrying is lower, while the probability of divorcing is higher only if they come from lower social class backgrounds. An examination of empirical studies pertinent to the gender differences did not reveal uniform support.

Summary

The review of literature suggests that marital instability is transmitted from generation to generation. The findings consistently reported that parental divorce is a major contributor to marital instability of children. Even though there was no uniform directional support, the preceding studies revealed gender differences in the intergenerational transmission of marital instability.

Previous research also revealed that the premarital background of spouses, such as parental socioeconomic status, relative heterogeneity between spouse and mate selection risk factors, were important contributors to one's marital relationship. Barriers to marital dissolution, alternatives to marriage, marital quality and marital commitment have significant effects on one's marital instability.

Limitations of Previous Studies

There are several methodological weaknesses in the marital instability literature. First, many of the studies are based on diverse samples. Some studies
include both males and females (Amato & Booth, 1991b; Booth & Edwards, 1989; Keith & Finlay, 1988; Kulka & Weingarten, 1979); some include men only (Cutright, 1971); others women only (Mott & Moore, 1979; Mueller & Pope, 1977; Thronton, 1978); and others are limited to white (Bumpass & Sweet, 1972) or black (Heiss, 1972; Sweet & Bumpass, 1974) respondents. In light of the evidence suggesting that the process of separation and divorce varies across demographic groups (Hanson & Tuch, 1984), research focusing on special populations should not be generalized to populations including both sexes and all ethnic groups. In terms of sex difference, research findings demonstrate that females from divorced families have a greater probability of being divorced than males from divorced families (Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Keith & Finlay, 1988). With regard to racial differences, research including both blacks and whites indicates differences both in the extent of instability and in the variables that affect instability (Hanson & Tuch, 1984).

Second, many of the studies are based on small, nonrepresentative samples. The results of studies based on samples of volunteers recruited from a clinical population (Bloom, Hodges, Kern & McFadden, 1985), newspaper advertisements (Burns, 1984) or snow-ball sampling (Grandvold, Pedler, & Schellie, 1979) may differ from those selected through probability samples of the population (Amato & Booth, 1991; Booth et al., 1985). Even in large probability samples of the general population, the number of individuals from divorced families is generally a small proportion of the total, thus restricting the kinds of analyses that are possible (Kitson et al., 1985).
Third, research findings on marital instability involve variations in the operationalization of instability. It is difficult to find many researchers whose operational definitions of marital instability exactly coincide (Hanson & Tuch, 1984). Amato and Booth (1991), Booth & Edwards (1989), and Booth, Johnson, White, and Edwards (1985) defined marital instability as the propensity to dissolve a marriage by divorce or permanent separation as distinct from dissolution itself.

Many investigators analyzed marital instability using an ever-divorced/never-divorced dichotomy (Bumpass & Sweet, 1972; Thronton, 1978). Lewis and Spanier (1979) defined marital stability as “the formal or informal status of a marriage as intact or not intact, and unstable marriage as one which is willfully terminated by one or both spouses” (p. 269).

Such divergent definitions of marital instability cause some contradictory findings making it hard to generalize the findings from one study to the other (Hanson & Tuch, 1984). Using two nationally representative samples, Hanson and Tuch (1984) examined whether different definitions of marital instability yielded different results. They operationalized marital instability in two quite different terms: one was divorced/not-divorced-in-the-last-five-years; the other was ever-divorced/never-divorced. Their findings indicated that marital status of parents was not a significant predictor of children’s marital instability when divorced/not-divorced-in-the-last-five-years was used as the dependent measure. However, when the ever-divorced/never-divorced measure was the outcome of interest, the effect of parental marital status was significant among men, but not among women.
Fourth, there has been a lack of comparison groups or control groups (Kitston et al., 1985). Without a comparison group, findings are hard to generalize to the general population. If comparisons are made by marital status, the question is in designating which group should be the comparison group for the divorced family. According to Kitson et al. (1985), intact families seem the most appropriate comparison group when only one group is used because marriage is the norm; the majority of the divorced remarry rather than stay single, and many of the divorced have children.

Fifth, there has been very little longitudinal research of marital instability (Barber & Eccles, 1992). The cross-sectional designs used to assess effects do not allow for the examination of causal directions or developmental effects. The use of longitudinal studies will allow the assessment of temporal order in the study.

To overcome these limitations, this study uses a nationally representative three wave sample including both sexes and a variety ethnic groups. This makes it possible to generalize the results to the general population. In addition, each variable was operationalized based on the previous literature.

Statement of Hypotheses and Research Questions

Statement of Hypotheses

The review of literature has consistently shown that parental divorce has a direct relationship on children's marital instability (Bumpass & Sweet, 1972; Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Heiss, 1972; Keith & Finlay, 1988; Mueller & Pope, 1977; Pope & Mueller, 1976). The effect of parental divorce on children's marital instability is
mediated through mate selection risk factors, marital quality and marital commitment (McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988; Pope & Mueller, 1976). These findings suggest the following hypothesis:

(1) If a respondent has experienced parental divorce, the respondent is more likely to have higher mate selection risk factors, lower marital quality, lower marital commitment and higher marital instability.

Parental socioeconomic status has a positive effect on children’s educational attainment and age at marriage (Greenberg & Nay, 1982; Keith & Finlay, 1988). These findings suggest the following hypothesis:

(2) The lower the parent’s socioeconomic status, the higher a respondent’s mate selection risk factors (i.e., respondent’s age at first marriage, respondent’s educational level and spouse’s educational level).

The body of research assessing marital dissolution indicates that the greater the discrepancy between individual background characteristics, the less stability the marital dyad is likely to have (Falk, 1975). Some empirical evidence suggests that those who married dissimilar mates report lower marital satisfaction when compared to those who married similar mates (Becker, 1973; Grover, Russell, Schumm, & Paff-Bergen, 1985). These findings suggest the following hypothesis:

(3) The greater the relative heterogeneity of social background between a respondent and spouse, the lower the respondent’s marital quality and the higher the respondent's marital instability.
Research has consistently reported that mate selection risk factors, such as early marriage and lower education, are highly associated with lower marital quality (Kitson et al., 1985; Levinger, 1976; Lewis & Spanier, 1979). These findings suggest the following hypothesis:

(4) The higher the mate selection risk factors, the lower the marital quality.

White and Booth (1991) suggested that marital happiness retarded divorce more when respondents had higher commitment to marriage as an institution. Sabatelli and Cecil-Pigo (1985) stated that marital satisfaction significantly predicted marital commitment. Conger et al. (1990) demonstrated that marital quality had a strong negative direct effect on marital instability. These findings suggest the following hypothesis:

(5) The higher the marital quality, the higher the marital commitment and the lower the marital instability.

Edwards and Saunders (1981) suggested that barriers to marital dissolution and alternative attractions to marriage acted as external push and pull forces bearing on the maintenance of marital relationships. Spanier and Lewis (1979) reported that barriers are important factors for marital commitment. Alternatives to marriage is one of the most important predictors of relationship commitment (Floyd & Wasner, 1994; Rusbult, 1983; Sprecher, 1988; Udry, 1981). These findings suggest the following hypothesis:

(6) The higher the barriers and the lower the alternatives, the higher marital commitment.
Edwards and Saunders (1981) stated that the less interested or committed marital partners were, the more prone they were to dissolve marriage. Spanier (1976) noted that commitment to marriage was a threshold variable between marital quality and marital stability. These findings suggest the following hypothesis:

(7) The higher the marital commitment, the lower the marital instability.

Before testing the hypotheses, this study will assess the adequacy of the measurement model and overall fit of the model. This study will also examine the direct and indirect impact of parental divorce on children's marital instability. Finally, utilizing the same model, but with different time measures, this research will evaluate how a changed time frame might influence the hypothesized model and fit indices.

Research Questions

In addition to the seven hypotheses, this study will explore two group comparisons. The first comparison is concerned with gender differences in the process of the intergenerational transmission of marital instability.

Glenn and Shelton (1983) reported gender differences in the intergenerational transmission of marital instability. Studies have consistently reported sex differences in response to parental divorce, but how large the differences were and which sex was more influenced by parental divorce was not consistent. There is not sufficient information from previous studies about the direction of the relationship between gender and the process of the intergenerational transmission of marital
instability. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the nature of this relationship.

The second comparison involves respondents from intact families and respondents from divorced families, separately. This test will be conducted without the parental divorce variable. Amato and Booth (1991b) reported that respondents from divorced families scored higher than respondents from happy intact families in spousal disagreement, marital problems, and marital instability. Amato and Booth (1991a) also suggested that individuals who experienced parental divorce as children had lower marital commitment than individuals who grew up in intact families. However, the comparison of marital relationships between adult children from divorced families and adult children from intact families is a relatively untapped area. The present study investigates the relationship between premarital background, barriers, alternatives and marital relationships for these two groups.
CHAPTER III. METHOD

This study used data from the Study of Marital Instability over the Life Course conducted by Amato and Booth (1991b). Previous publications using this data set have included a variety of research areas, such as divorce (Amato & Booth, 1991a, 1991b; Booth & White, 1980), the parent-child relationship (White, Brinkerhoff, & Booth, 1985), cohabitation (Booth & Johnson, 1988), late marriage (Bitter, 1986) and female employment (Booth, Johnson, White, & Edwards, 1984). Concerning marital instability, researchers have investigated how parental divorce affected adult children's well being (Amato & Booth, 1991b), courtship (Booth, Brinkerhoff, & White, 1984), attitude toward divorce (Amato & Booth, 1991a) and marital happiness (Amato & Booth, 1991a). These studies have assessed the direct relationship between parental divorce and other variables in the study.

This research expands knowledge of previous studies in three important ways: First, this study focuses on the intergenerational transmission of marital instability. Second, this study tests a hypothesized model based on intergenerational transmission perspectives (Meyer, 1988) combined with Levinger's (1976) version of exchange theory. Third, the present research explores both, the direct and indirect relationship between parental divorce, premarital background, and current marital relationship, especially marital instability.

Methodological issues of this study are presented in three sections. The first part of the chapter will present sampling procedures and sample characteristics.
The second part of the chapter will introduce the measures used in this study. The third portion of the chapter will discuss the research design of this study.

Sampling

The data for this study come from the Study of Marital Instability Over the Life Course, a three-wave panel study conducted between 1980 and 1988 and carried out at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (Amato & Booth, 1991b). In 1980, telephone interviews were conducted with a national sample of 2,033 married individuals under 55 years of age. Sample households were chosen through a clustered random-dialing procedure to reduce selection costs. It was estimated that the respondents were sufficiently dispersed geographically. An additional random procedure was used to select the husband or wife if both lived in the household.

The response rate in the 1980 survey was estimated to be 65 per cent. Sample characteristics were compared with estimates by the United States Census, and the sample was found to be representative with respect to age, race, household size, presence of children and religion (Amato & Booth, 1991b).

In 1983, completed interviews were obtained from 1,578 people of the original sample (78%), and in 1988, 1,341 individuals (65%) completed a third interview. Sample attrition between 1980 and 1988 was 34 per cent. This includes attrition for such reasons as refusals and respondents who died or could not be located.

A comparison of the characteristics of the panel as it existed in 1980 with the group in 1988 revealed remarkable similarity (Amato & Booth, 1991). A probit
analysis was undertaken to test the extent to which demographic variables affected the probability of not being included in the second and third interviews. Only home ownership, education and sex of respondents were related to being reinterviewed. Overall, selection bias from panel attrition appeared to be minimal, and the sample remained broadly representative of the target population (Amato & Booth, 1991).

This research included respondents who participated in all three interviews, presently married couples living together, and raised by one or both of their natural parents. The data for pre-marriage variables is based on wave 1 data. The data source for after-marriage variables includes wave 2 marital quality, barriers and alternatives and wave 3 marital commitment and marital instability. This study is a longitudinal study to find out how parental divorce influences children's marital relationships, especially marital instability.

After taking the effects of item nonresponse into account with listwise deletion of missing values, this study includes 816 subjects consisting of 316 males (38.7%) and 500 females (61.3%). Of the 816 subjects, 97 subjects (11.9%), consisting of 39 males and 58 females, experienced parental divorce or permanent separation before age of 18.

The average age of respondents was 38.11 years with a standard deviation of 8.89. The females' age ranged from 20 to 58, with a mean of 37.45, and a standard deviation of 8.71. Males ranged in age from 21 to 58, with a mean of 39.15 and a standard deviation of 9.08. Males (20.61 years) and females (20.53 years) reported a very similar average of marital duration. Both males (91.8%) and
females (91.2%) were predominantly white, with only 8.6 per cent reporting different ethnicity.

The average age at first marriage was 21.30 years with a standard deviation of 3.19. Females age at first marriage ranged from 14 to 36, with a mean of 20.68 and a standard deviation of 2.96. Males age at first marriage ranged from 15 to 35, with a mean of 22.28 and a standard deviation of 3.29. Average marital duration was 20.56 years. Only 10.4 per cent of males and 11.4 per cent of females married more than once.

Family annual income for respondents showed a similar distribution for both male and female respondents. Over 52 per cent of respondents' family income was greater than $30,000. Male respondents reported more years of schooling than female respondents. While over 21 per cent of male respondents reported more than 17 years of schooling, only 9.8 per cent of female respondents reported more than 17 years of schooling. The frequency distributions for selected sample characteristics, such as age, education, race, family income, number of marriage, duration of marriage and age at first marriage are shown in Table 1.

Measures

The questionnaires were designed by the Sociological Bureau at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Since this study explores how premarital background, especially parental divorce, related to marriage and marital instability of the children's generation, this research will use only a part of the questions from
Table 1

Frequency Distributions and Percentages for Selected Sample Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Respondent in 1983</th>
<th>Males</th>
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<th>Females</th>
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<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>26-30</td>
<td>43</td>
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<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>22.1</td>
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<td>23.3</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>22.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>19.6</td>
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<tr>
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<td>64</td>
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<td>104</td>
<td>12.8</td>
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<tr>
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<td>500</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>816</td>
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| Mean                      | 39.15 |     | 37.45  |     | 38.11  |     |
| Standard Deviations       | 9.08  |     | 8.71   |     | 8.89   |     |

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<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
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<td>500</td>
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<td>816</td>
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</table>

(table continues)
| Table 1 (continued) |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                     | Males           | Females         | Total           |
| Years of Schooling in 1983 | N   | %   | N   | %   | N   | %   |
| 1 year through 8 years   | 3   | 1.0 | 2   | 0.4 | 5   | 0.6 |
| 9 years through 12 years | 102 | 32.2| 214 | 42.8| 316 | 38.7|
| 13 years through 16 years | 144 | 45.6| 235 | 47.0| 379 | 46.5|
| 17 years and over        | 67  | 21.2| 49  | 9.8 | 116 | 14.2|
| Totals                  | 316 | 100.0| 500 | 100.0| 816 | 100.0|
| Mean                    |      |      | 14.58|      |      | 13.72| 14.05|
| Standard Deviation      |      |      | 2.97|      |      | 2.28| 2.60|
| Family Income in 1983   | N   | %   | N   | %   | N   | %   |
| Less than $10,000       | 6   | 1.9 | 7   | 1.4 | 13  | 1.6 |
| $10,001 - $20,000       | 30  | 9.5 | 62  | 12.5| 92  | 11.3|
| $20,001 - $30,000       | 101 | 32.1| 182 | 36.7| 283 | 35.0|
| $30,001 - $40,000       | 71  | 22.5| 110 | 22.2| 181 | 22.3|
| $40,001 - $50,000       | 55  | 17.5| 65  | 13.1| 120 | 14.8|
| $50,001 and over        | 52  | 16.5| 70  | 14.1| 122 | 15.0|
| Missing                 | 1   |      | 4   |      | 5   |      |
| Totals                  | 316 | 100.0| 500 | 100.0| 816 | 100.0|
| Mean                    |      |      | 35,515.87|      |      | 33,573.59| 34,327.99|
| Standard Deviation      |      |      | 14,933.23|      |      | 14,383.60| 14,621.09|
| Number of Marriage in 1980 | N   | %   | N   | %   | N   | %   |
| Once                    | 283 | 89.6| 443 | 88.6| 726 | 89.0|
| Twice                   | 27  | 8.5 | 51  | 10.2| 78  | 9.5 |
| Three or more times     | 6   | 1.9 | 6   | 1.2 | 12  | 1.5 |
| Totals                  | 316 | 100.0| 500 | 100.0| 816 | 100.0|

(table continues)
Table 1 (continued)

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<td>500</td>
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Mean: 20.61, 20.53, 20.56
Standard Deviation: 9.01, 8.80, 8.88

<table>
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<th>Age at First Marriage in 1983</th>
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Mean: 22.28, 20.68, 21.30
Standard Deviation: 3.29, 2.96, 3.19
the original instrument. All of the questions used in this study are presented in the Appendix. The model of this study includes five exogenous variables (i.e., parental divorce, parental socioeconomic status, relative heterogeneity of social background, barriers and alternatives). Mate selection risk factors, marital quality, and marital commitment are mediating variables. Marital instability is the outcome variable of this study.

First of all, a definition of marital instability is needed. One of the problems in the study of marital instability is the development of a useful and clear definition of marital instability. Marital instability has been used more or less interchangeably with such concepts as marital dissolution, divorce, marital disruption, low marital quality, and less frequently, desertion. In this study, marital instability is defined as the propensity to dissolve a marriage by divorce or permanent separation as distinct from dissolution itself (Booth et al., 1985).

**Exogenous Latent Variables**

The model of this study has five exogenous variables: parental divorce, relative heterogeneity, parental socioeconomic status, barriers and alternatives.

**Parental divorce.** Parental divorce is a dichotomous variable asking whether the natural parents divorced or permanently separated before respondents' reaching age 18, and is coded as 1) no divorce or permanent separation and 2) divorced or separated permanently.

**Parental socioeconomic status.** Socioeconomic status is measured by two variables: father's years of schooling and mother's years of schooling. These two
variables are continuous variables. Father's years of schooling is defined as the highest year of schooling obtained by the respondent's father. Mother's years of schooling is defined as the highest year of schooling obtained by the respondent's mother.

**Relative heterogeneity.** The relative heterogeneity was measured by age differences between spouses. Age difference is a continuous variable defined as the difference between the respondent's and the spouse's age at marriage.

**Barriers.** This latent variable was measured by three marital bond items: how important are the following things to keep your marriage together: 1) respondent's dependence on spouse; 2) religious beliefs, and 3) family or friends' disapproval of divorce. A higher score indicates higher marital bond. The scale has an alpha reliability coefficient of 0.50. The low reliability might cause low factor loadings and/or weaken the association between barriers and the other variables.

**Alternatives.** Alternatives are defined as alternatives to marital dissolution. Alternatives consist of two observable variables; wife's income and remarriage probability. Wife's income is defined as the percentage of household income contributed by the wife. A higher percentage means higher contribution of the wife to family income. Remarriage probability is defined as attractiveness of alternative relationships and obtained by the following question: "How difficult do you think it would be for you to find another husband/wife?" Since these two items are single items, the reliability and the validity are not established.
Mediating Variables

The model of this study has three mediating variables: mate selection risk factors, marital quality, and marital commitment.

**Mate selection risk factors.** This latent variable is measured by age at first marriage, respondent's years of schooling and spouse's years of schooling. Age at first marriage is a continuous variable and is defined as age of the respondent at first marriage. Respondent's years of schooling and spouse's years of schooling are continuous variables. Since these two are single items, the reliability and the validity are not established. Age at first marriage, respondent's years of schooling, and spouse's years of schooling were recoded so high scores indicate higher mate selection risk factors.

**Marital quality.** Marital quality is defined as the subjective evaluation of a married couple's relationship. It has four distinctive dimensions: marital happiness, marital interaction, disagreement and marital problems. Using interview data from the first wave panel, the Sociological Bureau developed six scales reflecting separate components of marriage: marital satisfaction, marital interaction, marital disagreement, marital problems, marital instability, and commitment to marriage. Marital happiness is measured by the sum of 11 items of the marital happiness scale: 1) extent of understanding received from spouse; 2) amount of love received; 3) extent of agreement about things; 4) sexual relationship; 5) spouse as someone who takes care of things around the house; 6) spouse as someone to do things with; 7) spouse’s faithfulness; 8) overall marital happiness; 9) compared to other
marriages, respondent's marriage is better, same or not as good; 10) comparing marriage to three years ago, it is getting better, staying the same, or getting worse; and 11) strength of feelings of love respondent has for spouse. The scale has possible scores ranging from 11 to 34. High scores indicate greater happiness. The scale has an alpha reliability coefficient of .89 (Amato & Booth, 1991b).

Marital interaction is defined as the frequency for partners' joint engaging in five different activities. It is measured by the summary score of five items of the Marital Interaction Scale. The Marital Interaction Scale is based on respondents' reports on how often they jointly engaged in five different activities, ranging from almost always, usually, occasionally, to never. The activities were 1) eat main meal together; 2) go shopping together; 3) visit friends together; 4) work around home together; and 5) go out together. The scale has possible values from 5 to 20. Higher scores indicate greater interaction. The alpha coefficient is .63, an acceptable level of reliability for five items (Johnson, White, Edwards & Booth, 1986).

Marital disagreement is defined as the severity of conflict between spouses. It is computed by the sum of four items of the Marital Disagreement Scale. The Marital Disagreement Scale was developed using the following items: 1) disagreements about whether one of you is doing his/her share of the housework; 2) frequency of disagreements with spouse; 3) arguments involving physical abuse, and 4) serious quarrels with spouse within the last two months. Items are recoded so high scores indicate low marital disagreement and high marital quality. The
alpha coefficient of this scale is .54 (Johnson, et al., 1986). The low reliability of
this scale may be caused by the low frequencies of item 3 and item 4. Indeed, only
29.9 per cent of the respondents reported they had serious quarrels during the last
two months. Also, 19.4 per cent of the respondents reported spouse abuse ever
happened in their marriage. However, this study uses the summary scale not
individual items.

Marital problems are the opposite of marital satisfaction and is defined as the
extent to which personal traits and behaviors of either spouse have led to problems
in the marriages. It is measured by the sum of 13 marital problems items. The
Marital Problems Scale contains the following items: 1) gets angry easily, 2) gets
easily hurt; 3) is jealous; 4) is domineering; 5) is critical; 6) is moody; 7) won't talk to
the other; 8) has sexual relationship with others; 9) has irritating habit; 10) is not
home enough; 11) spends money foolishly; 12) drinks or uses drugs; and 13) has
been in trouble with the law. Higher scores indicate lower marital problems. The
alpha reliability coefficient of this scale was .76 (Amato & Booth, 1991b).

Marital commitment. Marital commitment is measured by the following four
variables: 1) couples are able to get divorced too easily today; 2) it is okay for
people to get married thinking that if it does not work out they can always get a
divorce; 3) the personal happiness of an individual is more important than putting up
with a bad marriage; 4) marriage is for life even if the couple is unhappy. These
four variables are coded as 1) strongly agree, 2) agree, 3) disagree, and 4) strongly
disagree. The first and fourth item are recoded so higher scores indicate higher
commitment. The reliability coefficient for the commitment scale is .51 (Booth & Edwards, 1989). This low reliability may cause low factor loadings.

**Outcome Variable**

This study has one outcome variable, marital instability, which has one indicator.

**Marital Instability.** Marital instability is defined as the propensity to divorce including both a cognitive component and actions. Marital instability is measured by the sum of the following items: 1) Have you ever thought your marriage might be in trouble? 2) Have you ever talked with family members, friends, clergy, counselors, or social workers about problems in your marriage? 3) As far as you know, has your spouse ever thought your marriage was in trouble? 4) How often have you thought that you might enjoy living apart from your spouse? 5) Have you or your spouse ever seriously suggested the idea of divorce? 6) Have you talked about dividing up the property? 7) Have you talked about consulting an attorney? 8) Have you consulted an attorney? 9) Have you talked about filing a divorce? 10) Have you or your husband/wife filed a divorce or separation petition? 11) Because of problems people are having with their marriage, they sometimes leave home either for a short time or as a trial separation. Has this even happened in your marriage? 12) Sometimes married people think they would enjoy living apart from their spouse. How often do you feel this way?
The scale consists of the above items tapping both frequency and timing of the indicators. The reliability of the scale is .93. Higher scores indicate greater marital instability (Booth, Johnson, & Edwards, 1983).

Research Design

In the conceptual model of this study, parental divorce, relative heterogeneity, socioeconomic status, barriers and alternatives to marriage are regarded as exogenous variables with mate selection risk factors, marital quality, and marital commitment as mediating variables. Marital instability is considered the outcome variable of this study. The five exogenous variables (i.e., parental divorce, parental socioeconomic status, relative heterogeneity, barriers and alternatives) are correlated with each other.

The conceptual model includes three time frames. Parental divorce, relative heterogeneity, socioeconomic status, and mate selection risk factors are pre-marriage time frame variables. Marital quality, barriers, alternatives, marital commitment and marital instability are post-marriage variables. The data for pre-marriage variables was based on wave 1. The data sources for marital quality, barriers to divorce, and alternatives to the marital relationship were wave 2 data. The data sources for marital commitment and marital instability were from wave 3.

Clearly, in any cross-sectional study with measures being taken at the same point in time, causal ordering can always be controversial. In the absence of longitudinal research, it is difficult to answer adequately a variety of important questions regarding the process by which relationships develop and deteriorate.
over time. Using the longitudinal design of a three panel study, this study attempts to overcome the weaknesses of cross-sectional studies. By including all three waves in the hypothesized model, this study will focus on the process of transmission of marital instability.

**Data Analyses**

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS-X) was used for the analyses. Pearson correlations were computed for all indicators of exogenous variables and endogenous variables in the study. Preliminary descriptive statistics included frequencies of all variables and identification of missing values.

Using LISREL VII, a series of general structural equation models were computed to examine the relationships among the variables. There are three advantages of using general structure equation model. The primary advantage of the general structural equation analysis is that the simultaneous factor and path analysis takes into account the effects of the amount of measurement error that always exists in measured variables. As a result, the latent variables provide more accurate estimates of the real effects of the underlying constructs of true interest (Hayduk, 1987). Second, the method also provides fit statistics that give some information about the adequacy of the model in explaining the data (Hayduk, 1987). Therefore, the main strength of the general structural equation modeling is the potential for clearly depicting and testing a theory as a whole (Huba & Harlow, 1986). Third, general structural equation modeling also provides an understanding of the relationships among endogenous variables.
This study includes five different sets of analyses. The first analysis involves testing the measurement model of the hypothesized model. The testing of the measurement model shows the relationships between latent variables and observable variables.

The second analysis involves testing the null model and fully recursive model assessing the fit of the model. The results from these two models provide a comparison basis for the hypothesized model. The comparison of models is evaluated by Chi-Square ($\chi^2$) difference tests. If the hypothesized model reduces the $\chi^2$ significantly compared to the null model, and the $\chi^2$ difference between the hypothesized model and the fully recursive model is not significant, then the hypothesized model is a better and more parsimonious model to explain the data.

The third analysis involves testing the hypothesized model. For the hypothesized model, $\chi^2$ results and goodness of fit indices (GFI) will be used to estimate the overall fit of the hypothesized model. If the GFI is higher than 0.9, it indicates that a model explains the data well (Bollen, 1989). To evaluate specific parameter estimates, t-value will be inspected. If t-values are greater than 1.96 for each regression coefficient, the regression coefficient is significant. The modification indices will also be assessed. Modification indices are convenient tools to show where the hypothesized model might not fit the data well. If modification indices are consistent with the previous literature and theory, then modification can be accepted. Fourth, the modification of the hypothesized model was computed with different time frames.
Finally, two additional model comparisons were examined. The first model comparison involves testing gender differences. The hypothesized model will be tested separately for males and females. Factor loadings for the measurement model and each regression coefficient of the hypothesized model will be compared for males and females to assess gender differences in the process of intergenerational transmission of marital instability. The second model comparison assesses the differences between respondents from intact families and respondents from divorced families.
CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

The results of analyses are presented in six sections. The first section of this chapter presents the correlations among the variables included in the study. The second part of the chapter reports the factor loadings of the measurement model. The third part of the chapter compares the fit indices of the null model and fully recursive model with those of the hypothesized model. The fourth section of the chapter summarizes the regression model and fit indices of the hypothesized model, based on the hypotheses presented earlier. Fifth, additional analyses will be investigated. Finally, misspecification of the hypothesized model will be reported.

Correlational Findings

Table 2 presented the Pearson product moment correlation coefficients, standard deviations and means between 21 variables included in the study. The correlation analysis used listwise deletion and included a total sample of 816 individuals. The results show high correlations among indicators of the same construct (e.g., high correlations between father’s education and mother’s education, high correlations among respondent’s dependency on spouse, religious beliefs, and family disapproval), except for two indicators of the latent variable “alternatives.” Parental divorce was significantly correlated with “possibility of finding another spouse,” \( r(816) = .11, p < .01 \), year of schooling of spouse, \( r(816) = .11, p < .01 \), respondent's marital disagreement, \( r(816) = -.07, p < .05 \), marital problems,
Table 1

Correlation Matrix

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<th>5</th>
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<tr>
<td>3. Mother's Education</td>
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Mean       1.12  10.99  11.19  2.62  2.06  2.05  1.44  20.94
Standard Deviation     0.32  3.75  2.98  2.68  0.76  0.87  0.68  22.22

Note. *p<.05. **p<.01.
Respondent's education, spouse's education, and age at marriage were recoded so high scores indicate higher mate selection risks.
Marital disagreement and marital problems were recoded so high scores indicate higher marital quality.
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>15.70</td>
<td>12.04</td>
<td>14.10</td>
<td>28.24</td>
<td>15.44</td>
<td>9.03</td>
<td>9.46</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These findings indicate that parental divorce significantly correlated with children's marital relationship. If a respondent experienced parental divorce in their early life, they were more likely to believe there was a higher possibility to find another spouse, select a spouse with lower education, have higher marital problems, higher marital disagreement and higher marital instability.

Marital instability was significantly and negatively related to marital quality indicators, which were marital happiness, \( r(816) = -0.34, p < 0.01 \), spousal interaction, \( r(816) = -0.21, p < 0.01 \), marital disagreement, \( r(816) = -0.30, p < 0.01 \), and marital problems, \( r(816) = -0.35, p < 0.01 \), and two indicators of barriers [i.e., respondent's dependency on spouse, \( r(816) = -0.10, p < 0.01 \), and religious beliefs, \( r(816) = -0.13, p < 0.01 \)]. In addition, marital instability was significantly and positively associated with parental divorce, \( r(816) = 0.14, p < 0.01 \), father's education, \( r(816) = 0.09, p < 0.01 \), and "possibility of finding another spouse," \( r(816) = 0.11, p < 0.01 \). These findings suggest that respondents who displayed higher levels of marital instability were more likely to have lower marital quality, lower barriers, and more possibilities to find another spouse.

Measurement Model of the Hypothesized Model

Table 3 contains the observed indicators that are used to measure the latent constructs depicted in Figure 1. The standardized factor loadings as well as measurement errors are listed next to each item. These coefficients provide some preliminary information on the psychometric properties of the variables measured in the present study.
Table 3

Measurement Model of the Hypothesized Model for Total Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Total N=816</th>
<th>Measurement Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( \Lambda )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Divorce (wave 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Divorce</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental SES (wave 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's Education</td>
<td>0.767</td>
<td>0.412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's Education</td>
<td>0.703</td>
<td>0.506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative Heterogeneity (wave 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Difference</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers (wave 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R's Dependency on Spouse</td>
<td>0.422</td>
<td>0.622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Beliefs</td>
<td>0.705</td>
<td>0.503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Disapproval</td>
<td>0.326</td>
<td>0.894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternatives (wave 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife's Income</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>0.997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can Find Other Spouse</td>
<td>0.810</td>
<td>0.343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mate Selection Risk Factors (wave 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at First Marriage</td>
<td>0.389</td>
<td>0.849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent's Schooling</td>
<td>0.878</td>
<td>0.229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse's Schooling</td>
<td>0.571</td>
<td>0.673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Quality (wave 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Happiness</td>
<td>0.725</td>
<td>0.474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spousal Interaction</td>
<td>0.483</td>
<td>0.767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Disagreement</td>
<td>0.660</td>
<td>0.564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Problems</td>
<td>0.715</td>
<td>0.489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Commitment (wave 3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples Divorce Easily</td>
<td>0.482</td>
<td>0.768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK to Divorce</td>
<td>0.371</td>
<td>0.862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness is Important</td>
<td>0.457</td>
<td>0.791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage is for Life</td>
<td>0.656</td>
<td>0.570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Instability (wave 3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Instability</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \chi^2 \) = 544.87 (df=169)
Goodness of Fit Index = 0.939
Adjusted GFI = 0.916

Note. Number of parents divorced=97 (11.9%), Intact families=719 (88.1%).
The reliability and validity of the observed indicators are reflected in the factor loadings that are associated with each item (Bollen, 1989). Although there are no firmly established guidelines in the literature, Krause (1993) suggested that factor loadings in excess of .40 are generally adequate.

The data presented in Table 3 reveal that the factor loadings range from 0.05 to 0.878. Four observed variables (i.e., family disapproval, wives' income at wave 2, age at first marriage and "OK to divorce") had factor loadings lower than 0.40. Wives' income proportion in wave 2 yielded an especially low factor loading of 0.054, indicating that this observed variable was not highly correlated to the other indicators of the same construct [i.e., $r(816)=0.04$]. Even though the literature suggests that these two variables conceptually belong together, the findings from the measurement model indicate that empirically these two observable variables do not correlate highly enough to measure the same latent variable. Thus, it was decided to treat these two indicators as two latent variables.

The higher the proportion of measurement error, the lower the reliability and validity of an observed indicators. Measurement errors in Table 3 revealed that the latent variables explain as little as 0.3 per cent and as high as 77.1 per cent of the variance of the observable indicators. While some of the individual item estimates were low, taken together, these coefficients suggest that the observed indicators have reasonably good psychometric properties.

The measurement model was also evaluated by several goodness of fit indices. The Chi-Square test was statistically significant, $\chi^2(169, N=816)=544.87,$
This suggests that the covariance matrix implied by the measurement model differed from the covariance matrix of the observed data. One feature of $\chi^2$, and indeed most tests of significance, is that with large sample size even minute differences tend to be detectable as being more than mere sampling fluctuation and hence significant (Hayduk, 1987). This feature of $\chi^2$ has received considerable attention in the literature and prompted several suggestions for corrective strategies. Three such corrective strategies are available. The first corrective strategy is formed by taking the ratio of the $\chi^2$ value to degree of freedom. Wheaton, Benegt, Duane, and Gene (1977) suggested that a $\chi^2$ five times the degrees of freedom is reasonable, and Carmines and Mclver (1981) suggested two or three times is more acceptable. The ratio for the measurement model was 3.2:1, which was regarded as acceptable.

Another strategy is computing alternative fit indices which are the goodness of fit index (GFI) and the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI). The goodness of fit index measures the relative amount of variances and covariances in a sample that are predicted by the model (Bollen, 1989). The adjusted goodness of fit index adjusts for the degrees of freedom of a model relative to the number of variables (Bollen, 1989). Fit indices are typically scaled so that 1.0 indicates a perfect fit between the model and the data. Although there is no ambiguous way to determine the minimum acceptable level of fit, a value of 0.9 provides a rough guideline (Bentler & Bonett, 1980; Bollen, 1989). For the measurement model, the goodness
of fit index (GFI=0.939) and adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI=0.916) were all adequate. These findings suggest a satisfactory overall fit between the measurement model and the data.

The results from measurement model called for a minor revision, treating the two indicators of alternatives as two latent variables. The revised hypothesized model now has six exogenous variables because the alternative latent variable was separated into "economic independence" and "alternative spouse." The revised hypothesized model is presented in Figure 2. The measurement model of the revised hypothesized model is presented in Table 4. The factor loadings for the revised hypothesized model were similar to the original hypothesized model, except for the two alternative latent variables. Since these two latent variables of alternatives, which are economic independence and "alternative spouse," have only one indicator, factor loadings and squared factor loadings for these two latent variables are 1.

With the reduction of four degrees of freedom and $\Delta \chi^2=11.32$, the revised model, $\chi^2(165, N=816)=533.55$, $p<.05$, was a significant improvement over the hypothesized model, $\chi^2(169, N=816)=544.87$. Therefore, the revised model was supported as a better model explaining the data than the original model. Hereafter, the revised model will be referred to as the hypothesized model.
Figure 2. Revised model.
Table 4

Measurement Model of the Revised Model for Total Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Total N=816</th>
<th>Measurement Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parental Divorce (wave 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Divorce</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental SES (wave 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's Education</td>
<td>0.765</td>
<td>0.415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's Education</td>
<td>0.703</td>
<td>0.506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative Heterogeneity (wave 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Difference</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers (wave 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R's Dependency on Spouse</td>
<td>0.421</td>
<td>0.823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Beliefs</td>
<td>0.703</td>
<td>0.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Disapproval</td>
<td>0.325</td>
<td>0.894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Independence (wave 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife's Income</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Spouse (wave 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can Find Other Spouse</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mate Selection Risk Factors (wave 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at First Marriage</td>
<td>0.389</td>
<td>0.849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent's Schooling</td>
<td>0.879</td>
<td>0.227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse's Schooling</td>
<td>0.571</td>
<td>0.674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Quality (wave 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Happiness</td>
<td>0.725</td>
<td>0.474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spousal Interaction</td>
<td>0.483</td>
<td>0.767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Disagreement</td>
<td>0.660</td>
<td>0.565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Problems</td>
<td>0.714</td>
<td>0.490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Commitment (wave 3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples Divorce Easily</td>
<td>0.476</td>
<td>0.773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK to Divorce</td>
<td>0.362</td>
<td>0.869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness is Important</td>
<td>0.462</td>
<td>0.786</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marriage is for Life</td>
<td>0.663</td>
<td>0.561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Instability (wave 3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Instability</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 533.55 \text{ (df=165)} \]

Goodness of Fit Index

Adjusted GFI

Note. Number of parents divorced=97 (11.9%), Intact families=719 (88.1%).
Model Comparisons

The fit of the null model and fully recursive model were assessed against the hypothesized model. Table 5 summarizes the fit indices for the null model, hypothesized model and fully recursive model. The null model is the most restricted model and assumes that there are no relationships among the variables in the study except for the relationships among the exogenous variables. The fully recursive model is the least restricted model and assumes that all variables are related to each other. The results from these two models provide a comparison basis for the hypothesized model. The comparison of models was computed with the $\chi^2$ difference test.

As would be expected, with lesser restrictions, the hypothesized model $[\chi^2(165, N=816)=533.55, \text{GFI}=0.940, \text{AGFI}=0.916]$ provided a good fit to the data and a better fit than the null model $[\chi^2(210, N=816)=2761.78, \text{GFI}=0.710, \text{AGFI}=0.680]$. The improvement in fit of the hypothesized model was very significant, $\Delta \chi^2 (45) = 2,228.23, p<.001$, and thus the hypothesized model was supported as a better model to explain the data.

The second step in model comparison was to compare the hypothesized model to the fully recursive model. The comparison between the hypothesized model to the fully recursive model argues that $H_0$: unrelated paths between exogenous variables and endogenous variable, among endogenous variables are equal to zero. vs. $H_a$: at least any one of these paths is not equal to zero.
Table 5

Model Comparisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$\chi^2$ (df)</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>$\Delta\chi^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta_1$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Null Model</td>
<td>2761.78 (210)</td>
<td>0.710</td>
<td>0.680</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesized model</td>
<td>533.55 (165)</td>
<td>0.940</td>
<td>0.916</td>
<td>2,228.23 (45)</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully recursive Model</td>
<td>487.74 (149)</td>
<td>0.945</td>
<td>0.914</td>
<td>45.81 (16)</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The differences between the hypothesized model and the fully recursive model, $\Delta\chi^2(16)=45.81$, $p<.001$, was significant. This result implies that at least one path, which was set equal to zero in the hypothesized model, was not equal to zero. This misspecification indicates that one did not specify the model in an optimal functional form. Misspecification is not innocuous, and it is likely that all models are misspecified. Therefore, how seriously misspecified is a more important assessment.

The normed fit index, $\Delta_1$, can tell how much the hypothesized model improved over the null model and how much the fully recursive model improved over the hypothesized model. The normed fit index measures the proportionate reduction in the fitting function or $\chi^2$ values when moving from the baseline model to the maintained model (Bollen, 1989). It can also be viewed as the "incremental" improvement in fit for the maintained model relative to the baseline model. In this study, the null model serves as the baseline model. The hypothesized model
improved 81 per cent over the null model. The fully recursive model, however, yielded only a 2 per cent improvement over the hypothesized model. The improvement of 2 per cent is relatively small compared to the 81 per cent improvement. Therefore, the degree of misspecification of the hypothesized model over the fully recursive model may not be that serious.

In addition, the value of $\chi^2$ is heavily influenced by sample size. In large samples the statistic has the power to detect even small deviations from a perfect fit. It is, therefore, necessary to consider alternative indices to evaluate the goodness-of-fit of a model. The ratio between $\chi^2$ and degrees of freedom ($\chi^2$:df=3.2:1), goodness of fit index (GFI=0.940), and adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI=0.916), all suggest a satisfactory overall fit between the hypothesized model and data.

Hypothesized Model for the Total Sample

Figure 3 depicts the results of the regression model for the hypothesized model. All path coefficients in Figure 3 report completely standardized regression coefficients. The values reflected in parentheses are standardized regression coefficients. The differences between completely standardized coefficients and standardized coefficients are that the standardized solution standardizes the latent variables, but not the observed variables: A completely standardized solution standardized both observed and latent variables (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1988). Analyses of the path coefficients in this study are based on the completely
Figure 3. Completely standardized path coefficients for the total sample.

Note: The values in parentheses reflect the standardized regression coefficients and $R^2$ values.

*Approaching $p<.05$ significance level.
standardized coefficients. However, the reason to report the standardized solution in Figure 3 is that coefficients in the decomposition of effects, to be explored later, are based on the standardized solution. Both significant and non-significant path coefficients for the hypothesized model are reported.

This study stated seven hypotheses related to the hypothesized model. The first hypothesis of this study proposed that if a respondent had experienced parental divorce, the respondent would be more likely to have higher mate selection risk factors, lower marital quality, lower marital commitment and higher marital instability. The findings in Figure 3 reveal that parental divorce played an important role in the hypothesized model. As predicted, parental divorce was significantly related to marital quality ($\gamma=-0.084, p<.01$) and marital instability ($\gamma=0.085, p<.01$).

The association between parental divorce and mate selection risk factors approached the $p<.05$ significance level ($\gamma=0.06, p<.10$). The findings from this study indicated that if a respondent had experienced parental divorce, the respondent was more likely to have higher mate selection risk factors, lower marital quality and higher marital instability. Parental divorce was negatively associated with marital commitment in this model. However, the association between parental divorce and marital commitment ($\gamma=-0.04$) was not statistically significant. The first hypothesis was partially supported in this study.

The second hypothesis of this study stated that the lower the parents' socioeconomic status, the higher the respondent's mate selection risk factors. As predicted, parental socioeconomic status was strongly and negatively
related to mate selection risk factors ($\gamma=-0.544, p<.001$). This finding suggests that the lower the parents' socioeconomic status, the more likely respondents were to marry early, to have lower education, and to marry a spouse with lower education. Thus, the second hypothesis of this study was supported by the above findings in the present study.

The third hypothesis of this study proposed that the greater the relative heterogeneity of social background between a respondent and spouse, the lower the respondent's marital quality and the higher respondent's marital instability. The findings from this study showed that relative heterogeneity between spouse was a significant predictor of marital quality ($\gamma=-0.124, p<.001$), while the association between relative heterogeneity and marital instability ($\gamma=-0.014$) was not significant. These findings suggest that the relationship between relative heterogeneity and marital instability may not be direct but indirect. The third hypothesis was partially supported by findings in the present study.

The fourth hypothesis of this study was that the higher the mate selection risk factors, the lower marital quality. The path between mate selection risk factors and marital quality was not significant ($\beta=-0.03, p>0.05$). The fourth hypothesis was not supported by the present study.

The fifth hypothesis of this study was that the higher the marital quality, the higher marital commitment and the lower marital instability. The path between marital quality and marital commitment was not statistically significant ($\beta=0.054$,
revealing that marital quality was not a strong predictor of marital commitment in this study. However, the effect of marital quality on marital instability was substantial ($\beta=-0.445$, $p<.001$). Thus, a respondent with a higher marital quality was more likely to have lower marital instability. The fifth hypothesis was partially supported by findings in the present study.

The sixth hypothesis was that the higher the barriers and the lower the alternatives, the higher marital commitment. Barriers had a larger positive impact on marital commitment. The association between barriers and marital commitment ($\beta=0.568$, $p<.001$) was the largest among the paths in the hypothesized model, indicating that if a respondent had higher barriers to marital dissolution, he or she was more likely to have higher commitment to marriage as an institution.

The association between marital commitment and economic independence (i.e., percentage of wives' income contribution to family income) approached significance ($\beta=-0.078$, $p<.10$). If wives contributed more to family income, the respondents was more likely to have lower marital commitment. However, "alternative spouse" was not a significant predictor of marital commitment ($\beta=-0.034$, $p>.05$) for the total sample. Thus, the sixth hypothesis was partially supported by findings in the present study.

The seventh hypothesis was that the higher marital commitment, the lower marital instability. Figure 3 revealed that, as anticipated, marital commitment was negatively and significantly associated with marital instability ($\beta=-0.188$, $p<.05$).
Thus, respondents with higher marital quality were more likely to score low on marital instability. The seventh hypothesis was supported by findings in the present study.

As shown in Figure 3, the model specification of this study was not perfect. Several hypothesized paths were not statistically significant. This suggests that one could obtain a more parsimonious model by deleting these five paths: \( \gamma_{31} \) (parental divorce -> marital commitment), \( \gamma_{43} \) (relative heterogeneity -> marital instability), \( \gamma_{36} \) (alternative spouse -> marital commitment), \( \beta_{21} \) (mate selection risk factors -> marital quality), and \( \beta_{32} \) (marital quality -> marital commitment). Nevertheless, statistically non-significant paths were retained because findings with regard to these relationships were of substantive interest of the present study.

Four fit indices were examined to evaluate the overall fit of the hypothesized model. The results of the Chi-Square test, \( \chi^2(165, N=816)=533.55, p<.001 \), goodness of fit index (GFI=0.940), adjusted goodness fit index (AGFI=0.916) and ratio of \( \chi^2 \) to degrees of freedom (\( \chi^2:df=3.21:1 \)) suggest a satisfactory overall fit between hypothesized model and the data. In addition, 26 per cent (\( R^2=0.26 \)) of the variance of marital instability was explained in this model.

**Direct, Indirect and Total Effect**

Estimates of the direct, indirect and total effects for all of the linkages in the hypothesized model are presented in Table 6. The direct effect represents the impact of one variable on another without mediation by any other variable in the
Table 6

Decomposition of Effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable/Independent Variable</th>
<th>Causal Effects(^a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mate Selection Risk Factors (wave 1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Divorce</td>
<td>0.232(^b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental SES</td>
<td>-0.235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Quality (wave 2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Divorce</td>
<td>-0.728*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental SES</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative Heterogeneity</td>
<td>-0.130*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mate Selection Risk Factors</td>
<td>-0.068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Commitment (wave 3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Divorce</td>
<td>-0.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental SES</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative Heterogeneity</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>0.577*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Independence</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Spouse</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mate Selection Risk Factors</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Quality</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Instability (wave 3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Divorce</td>
<td>0.099*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental SES</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative Heterogeneity</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic Independence</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Spouse</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mate Selection Risk</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Quality</td>
<td>-0.060*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Commitment</td>
<td>-0.216*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \(^a\)Standardized regression coefficient.  
\(^b\)Parameter estimate at least twice as large as its standard error.  
\(^c\)Approaching p<0.05 significant.
model (e.g., the effect of parental divorce on mate selection risk factors). In contrast, the indirect effect of a construct is mediated by at least one intervening variable. Finally, the total effect is a summary statistic that captures the effect of one construct on another operating through all the designated paths in a model (Hayduk, 1987). The total effect is computed by simply taking the sum of the direct and indirect effects. An effect is significant when the parameter estimate is at least twice as large as its standard error.

One of the explorative purposes of this study is to assess both direct and indirect effects of parental divorce on children's marital instability. Table 6 reports three significant indirect effects of parental divorce, relative heterogeneity and barriers on marital instability. Parental divorce had a strong direct and indirect impact on marital instability. This finding supports the notion that parental divorce was not only directly related to children's marital instability but also indirectly related to children's marital instability. In fact, the indirect effects ($\beta=0.054$, $p<.001$) of parental divorce via mate selection risk factors, marital quality and marital commitment accounted for thirty-five percent of the total effect. However, most of the indirect effect of parental divorce on marital instability was mediated by marital quality.

Relative heterogeneity had a significant indirect effect ($\beta=0.008$, $p<.01$) on marital instability via marital quality and marital commitment. This finding suggests that the effects of relative heterogeneity on marital instability was mediated by
marital quality and marital commitment. Barriers to marital instability also had a significant negative indirect effect ($\beta = -0.125, p < .01$) on marital instability via marital commitment.

Modification of the Hypothesized Model

Contemporaneous vs. Past Influence Model

An analysis was computed using a different time frame for barriers and alternatives. The contemporaneous model includes wave 3 barriers, "economic independence" and "alternative spouse" instead of wave 2 barriers and alternatives. The past influence model is the hypothesized model with wave 2 barriers and alternatives. The purpose of this analysis was to find out how a changed time frame might influence the $\chi^2$ and fit indices of the model. Table 7 summarizes the factor loadings for this model. Factor loadings for the contemporaneous model were very similar to the "past influence" model. Multiple correlation coefficients ($R^2$) for the marital instability were similar for both models ($R^2 = 0.25$ for the contemporaneous model and $R^2 = 0.26$ for the past influence model). With the same degrees of freedom (df=165), the wave 3 contemporaneous model, $\chi^2(165, N=822) = 563.55$, $p < .001$, yielded an increased $\chi^2$ of 30.00 when compared to the wave 2 past influence, hypothesized model, $\chi^2(165, N=816) = 533.55$, $p < .001$. In addition, the contemporaneous model reported a somewhat lower GFI (0.936) and AGFI (0.910) compared to the hypothesized model (GFI=0.940, AGFI=0.916). The results
Table 7

Measurement Model of the Contemporaneous Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total N=822</th>
<th>Measurement Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parental Divorce (wave 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Divorce</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental SES (wave 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's Education</td>
<td>0.783</td>
<td>0.387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's Education</td>
<td>0.690</td>
<td>0.523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative Heterogeneity (wave 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Difference</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers (wave 3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R's Dependency on Spouse</td>
<td>0.330</td>
<td>0.891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Beliefs</td>
<td>0.895</td>
<td>0.198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Disapproval</td>
<td>0.261</td>
<td>0.932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Independence (wave 3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife's Income</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Spouse (wave 3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can Find Other Spouse</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mate Selection Risk Factors (wave 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at First Marriage</td>
<td>0.383</td>
<td>0.854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent's Schooling</td>
<td>0.893</td>
<td>0.203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse's Schooling</td>
<td>0.559</td>
<td>0.667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Quality (wave 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Happiness</td>
<td>0.720</td>
<td>0.482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spousal Interaction</td>
<td>0.484</td>
<td>0.766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Disagreement</td>
<td>0.663</td>
<td>0.560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Problems</td>
<td>0.709</td>
<td>0.497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Commitment (wave 3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples Divorce Easily</td>
<td>0.458</td>
<td>0.786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK to Divorce</td>
<td>0.377</td>
<td>0.858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness is Important</td>
<td>0.481</td>
<td>0.769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage is for Life</td>
<td>0.662</td>
<td>0.562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Instability (wave 3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Instability</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² 563.55 (df=165)
Goodness of Fit Index 0.936
Adjusted GFI 0.910
suggest that the past influence, wave 2, hypothesized model was a better model compared to the wave 3 contemporaneous model.

Figure 4 presents the path coefficients of the contemporaneous model in comparison to the "past influence" model. The model yielded similar path coefficients compared to those of the wave 2 hypothesized model. However, the association between parental divorce and mate selection risk factors and the association between economic independence and marital commitment were not significant in this model. The findings from this analysis suggest that the hypothesized model using wave 2 barriers and alternatives explained the data better than the contemporaneous model using wave 3 barriers and alternatives to marriage. Wave 3 marital commitment were better predicted by wave 2 alternatives instead of wave 3 alternatives, suggesting that rather than current wives’ contribution to family income, previous income contribution is a more important predictor of marital commitment.

Additional Analyses

Two additional analyses were computed. First, additional analysis examined the gender differences in the process of intergenerational transmission of marital instability. The second analysis was conducted without the parental divorce variable for respondents from divorced families (n=97) and respondents from intact families (n=719) separately.
Figure 4. Completely standardized path coefficients for the contemporaneous model and past influence model.

Note. The values in parentheses reflect the completely standardized coefficients and $R^2$ values for the past influence model.

*Approaching $p<.05$ significance level.
Gender Differences in the Process of the Intergenerational Transmission of Marital Instability

One purpose of this study was to explore gender differences in the process of the intergenerational transmission of marital instability. Table 8 displays the measurement model for males and females.

While respondents' dependency on spouse and age at first marriage had factor loadings lower than 0.40 for males, for females "OK to divorce" and "happiness is important" yielded factor loadings lower than 0.40. Family disapproval as an indicator of barriers did not work very well for either males or females. However, parental socioeconomic status and marital quality yielded similar factor loadings for both males and females. These results from the measurement model indicate reasonable measurement equivalence for males and females.

The Chi-Square results \( \chi^2 \) goodness of fit index (GFI=0.896 for males, GFI=0.937 for females), adjusted goodness fit index (AGFI=0.855 for males, AGFI=0.912 for females), \( \chi^2 \) ratio to degrees of freedom (\( \chi^2:df=2.4:1 \) for males, \( \chi^2:df=2.1:1 \) for females) and multiple correlation coefficient (\( R^2=0.19 \) for males, \( R^2=0.31 \) for females) suggest that the hypothesized model fits the data rather well for females, but not as well for males. However, the goodness of fit index is approaching 0.9 for males implying an acceptable match between the model and
### Table 8
Measurement Model of Hypothesized model for Males and Females

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males n=316 (\Lambda) Measurement Error</th>
<th>Females n=500 (\Lambda) Measurement Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parental Divorce (wave 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Divorce</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental SES (wave 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's Education</td>
<td>0.894</td>
<td>0.696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's Education</td>
<td>0.670</td>
<td>0.711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative Heterogeneity (wave 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Difference</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers (wave 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R's Dependency on Spouse</td>
<td>0.359</td>
<td>0.467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Beliefs</td>
<td>0.788</td>
<td>0.655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Disapproval</td>
<td>0.316</td>
<td>0.345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Independence (wave 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife's Income</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Spouse (wave 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can Find Other Spouse</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mate Selection Risk Factors (wave 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at First Marriage</td>
<td>0.249</td>
<td>0.494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent's Schooling</td>
<td>0.843</td>
<td>0.897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse's Schooling</td>
<td>0.665</td>
<td>0.595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Quality (wave 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Happiness</td>
<td>0.742</td>
<td>0.729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spousal Interaction</td>
<td>0.490</td>
<td>0.490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Disagreement</td>
<td>0.611</td>
<td>0.681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Problems</td>
<td>0.627</td>
<td>0.755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Commitment (wave 3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples Divorce Easily</td>
<td>0.468</td>
<td>0.512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK to Divorce</td>
<td>0.507</td>
<td>0.231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness is Important</td>
<td>0.546</td>
<td>0.390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage is for Life</td>
<td>0.690</td>
<td>0.632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Instability (wave 3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Instability</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\chi^2)</td>
<td>398.89 (df=165)</td>
<td>354.65 (df=165)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodness of Fit Index</td>
<td>0.896</td>
<td>0.937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted GFI</td>
<td>0.855</td>
<td>0.912</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Number of parents divorced=97 (11.9%), Intact families=719 (88.1%).
data for males. The multi-group analysis, which analyzed the data from both males and females simultaneously, yielded a $\chi^2$ of 753.54 with 330 degrees of freedom ($p<.001$).

Figure 5 displays the results of the LISREL analysis derived from the hypothesized model for both males and females. All path coefficients reported are completely standardized regression coefficients. Both, significant and non-significant path coefficients are reported.

The results from the regression analyses revealed similarity and differences of path coefficients between males and females. Parental divorce ($\gamma=0.100$, $p<.10$ for males, $\gamma=0.075$, $p<.10$ for females), marital quality ($\beta=-0.387$, $p<.001$ for males, $\beta=-0.470$, $p<.001$ for females), and marital commitment ($\beta=-0.137$, $p<.05$ for males, $\beta=-0.231$, $p<.01$ for female) were significant predictors for marital instability for both males and females. Also, the association between parental socioeconomic status and mate selection risk factors ($\gamma=-0.492$, $p<.001$ for males, $\gamma=-0.572$, $p<.001$ for females) and the association between barriers and marital commitment ($\gamma=0.610$, $p<.001$ for males, $\gamma=0.532$, $p<.001$ for females) were very strong for both gender groups. Parental divorce ($\gamma=-0.102$, $p<.05$) and relative heterogeneity ($\gamma=-0.200$, $p<.001$) were significant negative predictors for marital quality for females. However, the association between parental divorce and marital quality was not significant ($\gamma=-0.04$), and the association between relative heterogeneity and marital quality entirely disappeared ($\gamma=0.00$) for males. While the relationship between the
Figure 5. Completely standardized path coefficients for the males and females.

Note. The values in parentheses reflect the completely standardized regression coefficients and R^2 values for females.

*Approaching p<.05 significance level.
two latent variables of alternatives [i.e., economic independence (r=-0.100, p<.10) and alternative spouse (r=-0.112, p<.10)] and marital quality approached significance for females, the paths were not significant for males.

**Parents Divorced vs. Intact Family Model**

The second analysis compares the respondents from intact families and respondents from divorced families. This analysis was conducted without the parental divorce variable. It was tested for respondents from intact families and respondent from divorced families separately. Table 9 reports the measurement model for the two groups.

While factor loadings of age at first marriage for intact families (A=0.372) were lower than 0.40, factor loadings of age at first marriage for respondent from divorced families were 0.459. Family disapproval as an indicator of barriers and "OK to divorce" as an indicator of marital commitment yielded factor loadings lower than 0.40 for both groups. Except for these three indicators, all other indicators produced similar and acceptable factor loadings for both groups.

The multiple correlation coefficient for both, the intact family model (R^2=0.24) and the divorced family model (R^2=0.28) were similar. The multi-group analysis, which analyzed data of respondents from divorced and respondents from intact families simultaneously, yielded a χ^2 of 742.40 with 308 degrees of freedom (p<.001). The model for respondents from divorced families yielded a χ^2(154,
Table 9

Measurement Model for Two Models, Parents Divorced vs. Intact Family

|                               | Parent Divorced | Intact Family |
|                               | \( n=97 \)     | \( n=719 \)   |
|                               | \( \Lambda \) Measurement Error | \( \Lambda \) Measurement Error |
| Parental SES (wave 1)         |                 |               |
| Father's Education            | 0.678 0.541     | 0.774 0.401   |
| Mother's Education            | 0.680 0.537     | 0.706 0.501   |
| Relative Heterogeneity (wave 1)|                 |               |
| Age Difference                | 1.000 0.000     | 1.000 0.000   |
| Barriers (wave 2)             |                 |               |
| R's Dependence on Spouse      | 0.451 0.797     | 0.411 0.831   |
| Religious Beliefs             | 0.940 0.116     | 0.681 0.536   |
| Family Disapproval            | 0.176 0.969     | 0.352 0.876   |
| Economic Independence (wave 2)|                 |               |
| Wife's Income                 | 1.000 0.000     | 1.000 0.000   |
| Alternative Spouse (wave 2)   |                 |               |
| Can Find Other Spouse         | 1.000 0.000     | 1.000 0.000   |
| Mate Selection Risk Factors (wave 1)|       |               |
| Age at First Marriage         | 0.459 0.789     | 0.372 0.861   |
| Respondent's Schooling        | 0.997 0.006     | 0.880 0.225   |
| Spouse's Schooling            | 0.485 0.765     | 0.570 0.676   |
| Marital Quality (wave 2)      |                 |               |
| Marital Happiness             | 0.717 0.485     | 0.739 0.453   |
| Spousal Interaction           | 0.634 0.599     | 0.467 0.782   |
| Marital Disagreement          | 0.694 0.518     | 0.645 0.583   |
| Marital Problems              | 0.765 0.415     | 0.695 0.517   |
| Marital Commitment (wave 3)   |                 |               |
| Couples Divorce Easily        | 0.474 0.776     | 0.490 0.760   |
| OK to Divorce                 | 0.333 0.889     | 0.378 0.857   |
| Happiness is Important        | 0.454 0.794     | 0.454 0.794   |
| Marriage is for Life          | 0.786 0.381     | 0.634 0.598   |
| Marital Instability (wave 3)  |                 |               |
| Marital Instability           | 1.000 0.000     | 1.000 0.000   |
| \( \chi^2 \)                  | 240.30 (df=154) | 502.10 (df=154)|
| Goodness of Fit Index         | 0.818           | 0.932         |
| Adjusted GFI                  | 0.752           | 0.908         |
The goodness of fit indices suggest that the model did not explain the data as well for respondents from divorced families. On the other hand, the intact family model yielded a \( \chi^2(154, n=719)=502.10 \), goodness of fit index of 0.932 and an adjusted goodness of fit index of 0.908. The consistent results across the fit indices suggests a satisfactory overall fit between the model for respondents from intact families and the data. However, the number of respondents from divorced families was relatively small (\( n=97 \)) for analysis with LISREL. Therefore, caution should be used to interpret the results for the divorced family model.

Figure 6 displays the path coefficients of the two models. The relationship between parental socioeconomic status and mate selection risk factors (\( \gamma=-0.54, p<.01 \) for intact families, \( \gamma=-0.527, p<.01 \) for divorced families), between marital quality and marital instability (\( \gamma=-0.453, p<.01 \) for intact families and \( \gamma=-0.405, p<.01 \) for the divorced families) between barriers and marital commitment (\( \gamma=0.576, p<.01 \) for intact families, \( \gamma=0.432, p<.01 \) for divorced families), and between marital commitment and marital instability (\( \beta=-0.175, p<.05 \) for intact families and \( \beta=-0.283, p<.01 \) for divorced families) were significant for both groups. The relationship between relative heterogeneity and marital quality was significant for respondents from intact families, but not for the respondents from divorced families. The directions of the relationships in the model were exactly the same for both groups.
Figure 6. Completely standardized path coefficients for the respondents from intact families and divorced families.

Note. The values in parentheses reflect the completely standardized regression coefficients for respondents and $R^2$ values from divorced families.

*Approaching $p<.05$ significance level.
Misspecification of the Hypothesized model

The fully recursive model suggested that two paths, which were set to zero in the hypothesized model, were significant. Parental socioeconomic status ($\gamma=0.105$, $p<.05$) was a strong, negative predictor of marital instability of children. In addition, economic independence ($\gamma=-0.099$, $p<.05$) had a significant negative, direct effect on mate selection risk factors. However, wives' income after marriage cannot predict age at marriage of respondents or respondents' and spouses' educational level. Lower socioeconomic background may predict higher marital instability.
CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter will present a discussion of the results reported in Chapter IV. In addition, implication, limitations of the present study, and suggestions for future research will be considered.

Structural equation modeling was used to test seven hypotheses in this study. The first hypothesis examined the direct and indirect effects that parental divorce had on respondent's mate selection risk factors, marital quality, and marital instability. Second, the effects of parental socioeconomic status on mate selection risk factors were investigated. Third, the effects of relative heterogeneity on marital quality and marital instability were explored. Fourth, the effects of mate selection risk factors on marital quality was tested. Fifth, the effects of marital quality on marital commitment and marital instability were explored. The sixth analysis was concerned with the effects of barriers and alternatives on marital commitment. Seventh, the effects of marital commitment on marital instability were tested. Additionally, the modification of the hypothesized model was computed. Finally, two additional model comparisons were examined: a comparison of models for females and for males and a comparison between respondents from intact and divorced families.
Effects of Parental Divorce on Mate Selection, Marital Quality, Marital Commitment and Marital Instability

The hypothesis, if a respondent had experienced parental divorce, the respondent was more likely to have higher mate selection risk factors, lower marital quality, lower marital commitment and higher marital instability, was partially supported. The positive association between parental divorce and respondents' mate selection risk factors approached significance. This finding confirmed previous research that children from divorced families were more likely to be involved in high risk mate selection than children from non-divorced families (Booth & Edwards, 1989; Kobrin & Waite, 1984; Kunz, 1991; Mueller & Pope, 1977). The relationship between parental divorce and high risk mate selection factors can be explained by the idea that parental divorce and its aftermath contributed to early marriage by lessening educational opportunities, by often creating an unpleasant home situation from which marriage seemed to offer an escape, and by creating an emotional readiness that impels adolescents toward early establishment of close heterosexual relationships (Glenn & Kramer, 1987). However, the association between parental divorce and respondents' mate selection risk factors only approached significance in this study. Teenage marriages were more likely to end in divorce than marriages contacted at later ages (Kitson et al. 1985). Since the data only included respondents who were married and lived with a spouse at the time of testing, people who were already divorced or separated could not be
included in this study. That might weaken the association between parental divorce and the respondents' mate selection risk factors in this study.

A significant and negative association between parental divorce and respondents' marital quality was reported. Also, the correlational findings of this study support the notion that respondents from divorced families report higher marital problems and marital disagreement. This is consistent with previous findings that parental marital instability has adverse effects on children's marital relations (Amato & Booth, 1991b; Booth & Edwards, 1989; Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Kulka & Weingarten, 1979). These findings suggest that failed parental marriages serve as an inappropriate model of spousal roles to the children. In addition, coming from a background of marital disharmony may foster the development of a more complex cognitive and affective view of the marital relationship which involves sensitizing individuals to perceive marital difficulties which might otherwise go unnoticed.

Parental divorce significantly and positively predicted children's marital instability. This finding supported previous evidence that children of divorced parents are somewhat more likely to have higher marital instability than children of intact marriages (Amato & Booth, 1991b; Bumpass & Sweet, 1972; Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Heiss, 1972; Keith & Finlay, 1988; McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988; Mueller & Pope, 1977). Exposure to divorce early in life may contribute to children's awareness of divorce as an alternative option they can choose. This finding confirms the notion of intergenerational transmission of marital instability.
Contrary to previous findings, parental divorce was not a significant predictor of marital commitment. The low association between parental divorce and children's marital commitment might be caused by the indicators of marital commitment in the present study. The latent variable of marital commitment was comprised solely of items dealing with the perception of divorce in an abstract sense and did not necessarily reflect the respondents' attitude about their own marriage (Booth & Edwards, 1989).

The results from the decomposition of effects suggest that parental divorce had a strong direct and indirect effects on marital instability, especially through marital quality. This finding could be interpreted in two ways. First, even though respondents experienced parental divorce early in life, respondents with supportive spouses could have lower levels of marital instability. Similar to findings from this study, the literature on intergenerational transmission of family violence supports the notion that the availability of emotional support from one's spouse plays an important role in enabling individuals to change or break the cycle of violence (England, Jacovitz, & Sroufe, 1988). Second, as presented in correlational findings, if respondents experienced parental marital divorce, they were more likely to have higher marital disagreement and marital problems. Further, higher marital problems and higher marital disagreement lead to higher marital instability. Failed parental marriages serve as an inappropriate model of spousal roles to children.

The direct effect of parental divorce on children's marital instability explained sixty-five per cent of the total effect. The rest, thirty-five per cent of the total effect,
was accounted for by indirect influences. This finding supports the notion that parental divorce not only directly affects children's marital instability but also indirectly influences children's marital instability, perhaps explaining why previous research has suggested a low, albeit consistent, association between parental divorce and children's marital instability (Bumpass & Sweet, 1972; Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Heiss, 1972; Kitson et al. 1985; Kobrin & Waite, 1984; Mueller & Pope, 1977). The small effect was perhaps caused because previous research only allowed for a direct relationship between parental divorce and children's marital instability. Therefore, future studies need to include both direct and indirect paths between parental divorce and marital instability.

Effects of Socioeconomic Status of Parents on Children's Mate Selection Risk Factors

The second hypothesis that the lower the parents' socioeconomic status, the higher a respondents' mate selection risk factors was supported by the present study. Father's and mother's education were strong negative predictors of mate selection risk factors. This result confirms previous research findings that parental socioeconomic status influenced children's educational attainment and age at marriage (Ambert & Saucier, 1984; Keith & Finlay, 1988; Marini, 1978). It should be noted that respondents from more advantaged backgrounds were more likely to attain higher education, marry later, and meet spouses with higher educational levels, whether parents were divorced or not. These findings suggest that divorce is
less disruptive, if the level of socioeconomic resources available to the child is not severely lessened.

Economic necessity may promote the early assumption of adult roles and force offspring to drop out of school in order to contribute time and money to the family household (Weiss, 1979). Adolescent females with limited economic resources may also see marriage and parenthood as a means of escaping economic hardship (Rubin, 1976).

Effects of Relative Heterogeneity on Marital Quality and on Marital Instability

The third hypothesis that the greater relative heterogeneity of social background between respondents and their spouses, the lower the respondents' marital quality and the higher the respondents' marital instability, was partially supported by the present study. Relative heterogeneity between spouses was a significant negative predictor of marital quality. This result confirmed previous research findings that the greater the difference in age between couples, the lower the marital quality (Falk, 1975). In general, social similarity seems to enhance interpersonal relationships, facilitates adherence to the same social norms and helps avoid friction (Levinger, 1976).

The relative heterogeneity between spouses, however, was not a significant predictor of marital instability. This finding failed to support previous research that the age difference between marital partners predicts a lower degree of dyadic
adjustment and greater instability in the marital relationship itself (Becker, 1973; Bumpass & Sweet, 1972).

The low association between relative heterogeneity and marital instability suggests that relative heterogeneity may indirectly affect marital instability rather than directly. Indeed, the decomposition of effects revealed that relative heterogeneity had a significant indirect effect on marital instability through its association with marital quality. Marital quality and marital commitment mediated the relationship between relative heterogeneity and marital instability. Levinger (1976) stated that evidence of age dissimilarity on marital instability is modest. Its effects appeared contingent on other variables such as similarity in interest or in physical health. Despite that evidence, it was not clear under what condition heterogamous marriages were less successful or durable than homogamous ones. To free themselves from the disjunctive forces of their dissimilarity, these partners may well develop an enduring marital cohesiveness (Levinger, 1976). If couples dissimilar in age fail to develop high marital quality, then they may be at risk for marital instability. Therefore, the effect of relative heterogeneity on marital instability may be mediated by marital quality.

Effects of Mate Selection Risk Factors on Marital Quality

The hypothesis, that the higher the mate selection risk factors, the lower marital quality was not supported by the present study. Mate selection risk factors were not associated with marital quality. This finding failed to support previous research findings that age at first marriage and education of respondents and their
spouses were related to marital quality (Bumpass & Sweet, 1972; Furstenberg, 1990; Hanson & Tuch, 1984). However, this finding was consistent with findings reported by Grover et al. (1985) that the relationship between age at marriage and marital satisfaction was not significant.

A possible explanation for the lack of association between mate selection risk factors and marital quality is that teenage marriages were more likely to end in divorce than marriages contacted at later ages (Kitson et al. 1985). Since the data only included respondents who were married and lived with a spouse at the time of the data collection, people who had already divorced or who were separated could not be included in this study. This might weaken the association between mate selection risk factors and marital quality in this study.

Another possible explanation is that the two indicators of mate selection risk factors (i.e., spouse’s and respondent’s education) did not reflect educational level at marriage. These two indicators only served as proxies necessarily collected at wave 1 because there was no information available about the respondent’s and spouse’s education at marriage. This substitution may disguise the true effects of education at marriage on marital quality.

Effects of Marital Quality on Marital Commitment and Marital Instability

The hypothesis that the higher the marital quality, the higher the marital commitment and the lower marital instability, was partially supported by the present study. Marital quality was not significantly related to marital commitment. This
finding fails to confirm previous research linking marital satisfaction with marital commitment (Sabatelli & Cecil-Pigo, 1985; White & Booth, 1991).

The low association between marital quality and marital commitment might be explained by the relatively weak indicators of marital commitment in the present study. Another possibility is that, as explained earlier, the latent variable of marital commitment in this study was comprised solely of items dealing with the perception of divorce in an abstract sense and did not necessarily reflect the respondent's attitude about their own marriage (Booth & Edwards, 1989). The latent variable of marital commitment in this study likely measured commitment to marriage as an institution rather than commitment to the present marriage.

Marital quality was a strong negative predictor of marital instability in this study. Not surprisingly, the results suggest that the higher the marital quality, the lower the marital instability. This finding confirms previous literature indicating that strong marriages exert a negative direct effect on marital instability (Conger et al., 1990; White & Booth, 1991). Lenthall (1977) has made a conceptual distinction between marital quality and marital stability. He has conceptualized marital quality as a function of the comparison between one's marital expectations and marital outcomes. In contrast, marital stability was conceptualized as a function of the comparison between marital quality, one's best available marital alternatives and barriers, and marital outcome. Lewis and Spanier (1979) suggested that among marital quality, alternatives and barriers, the quality of most American marriages was the primary determinant of whether a marriage would remain intact. Since
divorce has become increasingly accepted, permitted, and accessible as an alternative to unhappy marriages, individuals in low quality marriages find it easier to leave those relationships which they consider irretrievably broken. Many couples remain married only when they maintain the degree of motivation, affection, companionship, and love to justify their continuation of the marriages (Lewis & Spanier, 1982).

Effects of Barriers and Alternatives on Marital Commitment

The hypothesis that the higher the barriers and the lower the alternatives, the higher marital commitment, was partially supported in the present study. Barriers was a strong positive predictor of marital commitment.

The association between barriers and marital commitment was the strongest among all paths in the hypothesized model. Even though marital commitment in this study measured commitment to marriage as an institution, high barriers, such as respondents' dependency on spouse, religious beliefs, and family's disapproval of divorce, were strong predictors of marital commitment. This finding is consistent with previous literature indicating that barriers are important predictors of marital commitment (Sabatelli & Cecil-Pigo, 1985; Spanier & Lewis, 1979).

In addition, barriers exerted a significant indirect effect on marital instability through marital commitment. Higher barriers increased marital commitment, and in turn higher marital commitment reduced marital instability. This finding suggests that dependency on spouse, religious beliefs, and the family's disapproval play an important indirect role in the dissolution of a marital relationship. If one's
dependency on spouse, strength of religious beliefs, and the family's disapproval to dissolve the relationship are high, the person is more likely to be committed to the marriage. In turn, higher marital commitment leads to lower marital instability.

Alternatives were negatively related to marital commitment in this study. The association between "economic independence" and marital commitment approached significance. As reported in previous research, the wives' contribution to family income seems to be a significant negative predictor of marital commitment (Hannan et al., 1977; Ross & Sawhill, 1975). However, this association only approached significance. A possible reason for this weak effect might be revealed by the results from the gender comparison. The association between marital commitment and economic independence approached significance only for females, but not for males. The wives' earnings served as a proxy for "independence" for wives, but not for husbands. This explanation is supported by findings of Udry (1981) who reported that income ratio was a strong predictor of alternatives for wives, but not for husbands.

The path between "alternative spouse" and marital commitment was not significant. The possibility of finding another spouse was not a significant predictor for marital commitment. This finding was inconsistent with previous findings that the possibility to find another spouse was an important predictor of relationship commitment (Sprecher, 1988; Udry, 1981).

However, other research has pointed out that there is a low association between the likelihood of finding another spouse and marital commitment (Floyd &
Wasner, 1994), indicating that availability of other relationships was not a significant predictor of commitment. Taken together, findings in this study failed to support previous research that poorer alternatives promoted higher commitment to relationships (Rusbult, 1983; Sprecher, 1988).

Effects of Marital Commitment on Marital Instability

The hypothesis that the higher marital commitment, the lower marital instability, was supported by the present study. As expected, marital commitment was a significant negative predictor of marital instability. Even though the latent variable “marital commitment” in this study did not assess the commitment to current marriage, commitment to marriage as an institution significantly predicted marital instability. This finding confirmed commitment as a crucial variable in predicting marital instability (Edwards & Saunders, 1981; Kitson & Sussman, 1976; Lewis & Spanier, 1979). The less interested or committed a partner was, the more dissolution prone, since the outcomes to be obtained in continuing the relationship were considerably fewer than those to be gained by the more involved spouse. Commitment was a salient factor to reassert further continuity of the relationship.

About 26 per cent of variance of marital instability was predicted by the variables in the model. The fit of the hypothesized model to the data was assessed with several fit indices. The $\chi^2$ results, goodness of fit indices and $\chi^2$ ratio for the hypothesized model suggested a satisfactory overall fit between the hypothesized model and the data.
Modification of the Hypothesized Model

Contemporaneous vs. Past Influence Model

One of the exploratory questions in this study was how a changed time frame might influence the model and fit indices. The comparison of fit indices and the $\chi^2$ results between the wave 2, hypothesized model and the contemporaneous model which used wave 3 barriers and alternatives, suggests that the hypothesized model was a better model compared to the wave 3, contemporaneous model.

Inspecting the regression coefficients revealed that the path between economic independence and marital commitment was not significant in the contemporaneous model. The findings suggest that the variable of economic independence has time-lagged effects. Rather than current wives' contribution to family income, previous income contribution is a more important predictor of marital commitment. Perhaps one's marital commitment is not so much dependent on current economic independence as it would be on the developmental history of economic independence.

Additional Analyses

Gender Differences in the Intergenerational Transmission of Marital Instability

A secondary purpose of this study was to investigate gender differences in the process of the intergenerational transmission of marital instability. Findings from the measurement model indicated sufficient measurement equivalence between males and females. However, some differences in factor loadings were noticed. The largest difference of factor loadings was age at first marriage as an
Age at first marriage played a more important role for females when compared to males. One possible reason for the difference is that about 36 per cent of all female respondents reported that they had married before age 20. Less than 20 per cent of male respondents reported that they had married before age 20.

Fit indices and $\chi^2$ results revealed that the hypothesized model fits the data rather well for females, but not as well for males. However, the goodness of fit index approached 0.9 for males, suggesting an acceptable match between the model and the data.

For both males and females, parental divorce and marital quality and marital commitment were significant predictors of marital instability. In addition, the path between parental socioeconomic status and mate selection and the path between barriers and marital commitment were very strong for both groups.

Parental divorce was a significant predictor of marital quality for females, but not for their male counterparts. This result supports findings by Kulka and Weingarten (1979) that married women from divorced families may consider the marital role less important to them than their married counterparts from intact families. Married men, on the other hand, did not confirm these results.

This finding might be explained by the frequency of contact with the father. Amato and Booth (1991) reported that compared with respondents who had the same quality of father-child relationship after the divorce, respondents who felt less close to their father had less marital happiness, less spousal interaction, as well as
marginally more spousal disagreements. In previous research, noncustodial fathers were more likely to maintain contact with their sons rather than with their daughters and were more likely to provide child support payments to sons than to daughters (Amato & Keith, 1991). Therefore, less frequent contact with fathers might have contributed to marital problems for daughters. Since this study did not include frequency of contact between children and noncustodial fathers, there was no direct evidence to support this explanation. However, the findings from Amato and Booth (1991b), which used the same data set, revealed that compared with individuals from intact families, both males and females from divorced families had less contact with their fathers, but the difference was considerably greater for females than for males. Their results indirectly support the notion that less frequent contact of fathers might have contributed to marital problems for daughters.

However, the weak paths between parental divorce and marital relationship for males may be caused by the small number of males from divorced families (n=39). One of the limitation of studying the transmission of marital instability is that even in large probability samples of the general population, the number of individuals who are from divorced or separated families is generally a small proportion of the total population (Kitson et al., 1985).

The path between relative heterogeneity and marital quality was very significant for females but disappeared for males, suggesting that the age difference between spouses was strongly and negatively related to females’ marital quality. This study, therefore, suggests that living with an older husband may be more
difficult than living with a partner of similar age. Living with older husbands may imply inequity of the relationship for wives. The role of equity in ongoing relationships and the perception that both partners are equally participating in the relationship emerges as an important indicator of marital relationships (Sabatelli & Cecil-Pigo, 1985). Therefore, wives may feel disadvantaged when living with an older husband who may gain advantages in status from the age difference.

The paths of economic independence and "alternative spouse" with marital commitment approached significance for females, but not for males. The percentage of females' income contribution to family income served as a proxy for the "independence" effects for females, but not for their male counterparts. This finding may reflect the fact that, when considering the dissolution of a marital relationship, a wife may perceive her losses to be more global (economic, property, status, etc.), owing to the fact that she more often will retain custody of her children than will her spouse.

The path between "alternative spouse" (i.e., possibility of finding another spouse) and marital commitment approached significance for females, but not for males. Studies using gender-balanced samples (Floyd & Wasner, 1994) have consistently reported that the impact of alternatives on commitment was not significant. Therefore, two indicators of alternatives, percentage of wives' contribution to family income and possibility of finding another spouse, only worked for females. These findings suggest that exchange perspectives work better for
females than for males. Perhaps there is no relationship between marital commitment and alternatives for males. Since marital dissolution does not lead to a sharp decline in the economic situation of men (Barber & Eccles, 1992), wives' income may not be an important alternative for them. In addition, with increasing age, males are more likely to find another spouse than are females. Therefore, these two alternative variables may not influence males' commitment to marriage. Maybe other indicators would work better as alternatives for males. Future studies need to consider different indicators to explain alternatives to marriage for males.

Taken together, findings of this study revealed that there are gender differences in the intergenerational transmission of marital instability. In addition, this study suggests that the hypothesized model works better for females than males.

**Parents Divorced vs. Intact Family Model**

The model for adult children from divorced families and the model for adult children from intact families were compared without the parental divorce variable. The results from the \( \chi^2 \) test, the goodness of fit index, the adjusted goodness of fit index and the \( \chi^2 \) ratio consistently suggest a satisfactory overall fit between the model for respondents from intact families and the data compared to the model for respondents from divorced families. The low GFI and AGFI of the parental divorce model imply misspecification of the model.
The direction and the significance of the relationship were very similar for both groups, except for the relationship between relative heterogeneity and marital quality. Relative heterogeneity was a significant predictor of marital quality for the respondents from intact families, but not for the respondents from divorced families. One possible reason for the difference is that respondents from divorced families marry a spouse of similar age early. Almost all of the 97 respondents from divorced families reported less than 8 years of age differences with their spouses. On the other hand, age differences for the respondents from intact families ranged from 0 to 16 years.

**Misspecification of the Hypothesized Model**

The findings from the fully recursive model suggest that parental socioeconomic status is a significant predictor of marital instability. In addition, economic independence has a significant negative, direct effect on mate selection risk factors. The misspecification of this path may be caused for two reasons. First, the significance of these two paths could be sample specific. Second, the hypothesized model was misspecified. However, the path between economic independence and mate selection risk factors is not a reasonable choice considering the temporal order of two variables.

The findings from the fully recursive model indicate that respondents with low economic status have higher marital instability. Findings of previous studies suggest that children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds attain lower levels of education and marry earlier than children with higher socioeconomic backgrounds.
(Keith & Finlay, 1988). Discontinuing education and early marriage may cause higher marital instability. Therefore, respondents from lower socioeconomic status may be more at risk for higher marital instability. This finding suggests a revision of the hypothesized model.

Summary

The purpose of this research was to test a model of intergenerational transmission of marital instability. In addition, gender differences in the process of intergenerational transmission of marital instability were assessed. An important aspect of the present study was to test the direct and indirect intergenerational transmission processes of marital instability.

This study revealed three important findings. First, the effects of parental divorce on children's marital instability were both direct and indirect through marital quality. Second, premarital background, such as socioeconomic status of parents and relative heterogeneity between spouses before marriage, are very important to explain marital relationships. Third, there were gender differences in the process of intergenerational transmission of marital instability. The hypothesized model explained marital relationships for females better than for males. Parental divorce, relative heterogeneity, and alternatives exerted a strong impact on the marital relationship for females when compared to their male counterparts.

More specifically, the results indicated that parental divorce was positively related to mate selection risk factors and marital instability, and negatively related to marital quality. In addition, parental divorce had significant indirect effects on
marital instability via marital quality. Findings of this study confirmed the intergenerational transmission of marital instability. The findings of this study suggest that parental divorce had both direct and indirect effects on children's marital instability.

Parental socioeconomic status was a negative significant predictor of mate selection risk factors. Relative heterogeneity was a negative predictor of marital quality. Higher marital commitment was predicted by higher barriers and lower economic independence. Marital quality and marital commitment were negative predictors of marital instability.

This study revealed gender differences in the intergenerational transmission of marital instability. The fit indices suggest that the hypothesized model fit better for the female sample. Parental divorce, marital quality and marital commitment were significant predictors of marital instability for both males and females. In addition, the path between parental socioeconomic status and mate selection and the path between barriers and marital commitment were strong for both genders. Parental divorce was a strong predictor of marital quality for women only. While the path between relative heterogeneity and marital quality for females was strong, the same association disappeared for their male counterparts. The two alternatives predicted marital commitment for females, but not for males.

The comparison of a contemporaneous versus a past influence model demonstrated that the past influence model was a better model compared to the wave 3, contemporaneous model. The regression coefficients also indicated that
wave 3 marital commitment were better predicted by wave 2 alternatives than wave 3 alternatives. The comparison of models for adult children from divorced families and adult children from intact families suggests that the model for adult children from intact families was a better model compared to the model for adult children from divorced families.

Taken together, this study supports the intergenerational transmission perspective (Meyer, 1988) that exposure to conflict marriage in one's own childhood would forecast lower marital satisfaction, higher conflict and higher instability in the marital relationship (Meyer, 1988; Pope & Mueller, 1976; Rutter & Madge, 1976). The findings from this study also underline the importance of predisposing marital characteristics, such as parental socioeconomic status and relative heterogeneity, in explaining marital relationships.

For the total sample, this study partially supports exchange theoretical perspectives. Levinger (1976) suggest that marital stability is determined by the amount of positive affect toward the spouse, constraints against its dissolution (barriers), and the perceived attractiveness of alternatives to the marriage. The major source of attraction consists of affectional rewards (Lewis & Spanier, 1979). Sources of barriers include feelings of obligation to the marital bond; moral prescriptions associated with religion and church attendance, as well as external pressure (Lewis & Spanier, 1979). Sources of alternative attraction include affectional rewards from a preferred alternate sex partner and economic independence. A decrease in the marital attraction, barriers and/or an increase in
the alternatives to marriage impels individuals toward a dissolution of the marriage (Edwards & Saunders, 1981).

In this study, the degree of attraction to the marriage (marital quality), barriers and economic independence played important roles in the prediction of marital instability. In contrast to exchange theory perspectives, the availability of an "alternative spouse" was not a significant predictor of marital commitment. This study partially supports exchange theories.

However, for the female sample, marital quality, barriers, "economic independence" and "alternative spouse" were important factors to explain marital instability. The findings from the female sample support Levinger's (1976) version of exchange theory and support the notion that early contact with disruptive marriages of one's parents exerts a significant effect on the adjustment a person makes to his or her own marriage.

Implications

The results of this study highlight the importance of parental divorce in marital relationships. This finding may have long-range implications for the dissolution of marriages. Marital dissolution, because of general societal and cultural features, could be expected to have a lagged effect of increasing even more for the next generation of adults. Growing up with only one parent leaves individuals without an opportunity for day to day observations of the role performance of husband or wife. In addition, observing a failing marital relationship in parents may serve as a negative model for children's roles as spouses.
At the level of prevention, conflicts between parents can have negative effects on their children. Parents need to be sensitive to how their children react to marital turmoil and to be prepared to seek outside help if these reactions prolong. At the treatment level, family level therapy may serve as a successful treatment (Minuchin, 1974).

Despite the strong impact of early exposure to parental marital disruption, change is possible with intervention. Pope and Mueller (1976) suggested that the possibility of extra-family socialization supports during a person's early childhood plays an important role in socializing children to have stable relationships.

In addition, better marriage education should be included in high school curricula to help to realize more realistic marriage and parenting roles. This education should cover all adolescents, not only children from divorced families. Such programs might be helpful in reducing the rate of teenage pregnancy, early marriage and eventually divorce rate.

Intervention programs should be provided for individuals and couples who have higher levels of marital instability. The prevention programs can help recognize the effects of parental turmoil on adult children, as well as potential effects on the current husband-wife relationship and on the relationship to children. Since findings of this study suggest marital quality as an important mediating factor between parental divorce and marital instability, the effect of parental divorce on the current spousal relationship is very important for people to recognize. Spousal
support may be important in mediating the effect of parental divorce on marital instability.

This study reported differential effects of parental divorce on daughters and sons. In addition, the marital relationship of daughters was more severely affected by parental divorce when compared to sons. This finding calls for differential intervention programs for females and males.

Limitations

Even though this study tried to overcome the weaknesses of previous studies, there are still several limitations. The first possible limitation of this study is the exclusive reliance on self-report survey measures. Self-reports may be highly inaccurate and subject to various forms of response bias (Kulka & Weingarten, 1979).

Second, people who had divorced prior to the interview of this study and who had not remarried were excluded. If experiencing family disruption during childhood lowers marital quality in adulthood, and if this, consequently, is linked to divorce, then some individuals with unsuccessful marriages would not have had the opportunity to be included in this study. This omission would underestimate the impact of parental divorce on the marital relationship.

Third, a positive fit between a model and the data cannot rule out alternative explanations for associations among measured variables (Hayduk, 1987). Thus, other theory-driven models are possible. Different assumptions about the factor
composition of latent constructs or their order as exogenous and endogenous variables would lead to a different solution.

Fourth, even with large probability samples of the general population, the number of individuals who are from divorced or separated families is only a small proportion of the total population. This may weaken the power of the analysis.

Fifth, since this study used a secondary data set, very important variables, such as commitment to current marriage, respondents' and spouses' education at marriage could be assessed better. The measure of commitment in this study was comprised solely of items dealing with the individuals' perception of divorce in an abstract sense and does not necessarily reflect the respondents' attitude about their own marriages (Booth & Edwards, 1989). This may cause the relatively low association between marital commitment and other variables in this study. Respondents' and spouses' education at marriage were substituted with respondents' and spouses' education at wave 1. Since there is a possibility that the respondent and spouse obtained more education after marriage, this substitution may result in inaccuracy and different factor associations in this study.

Sixth, the measurement of marital commitment and barriers yielded very low alpha reliability. These low reliabilities may cause a lower association between these two variables and the other variables in the study. Thus, results related to marital commitment and barriers should be interpreted with caution.
Future Research

Suggestions for future research include using longitudinal studies. Such studies can capture the real picture of intergenerational transmission of marital instability and can reduce the reliance on retrospective questions (Kitson, 1990). Prospective studies that begin before a divorce is filed and perhaps even before it is contemplated also control biases from selecting into the divorced status and may show true changes in status for persons who experience divorce (Duncan & Hoffman, 1985).

Cross-cultural research on intergenerational transmission of marital instability is needed, especially in societies with differing rates of divorce and in those societies that are in transition from more traditional patrilineal cultures. Such research could clarify the relative contribution of particular social conditions versus more universal reactions to parental divorce. Cultural differentiation within the American population also would help clarify the relative contribution of particular ethnic versus universal contribution of parental divorce.

Past research regarding gender differences reported inconsistent patterns in the intergenerational transmission of marital instability. This study provided information that there are gender differences in the process of intergenerational transmission of marital instability. Further studies need to clarify these differences in the intergenerational transmission of marital instability by including gender as a controlling variable.
This study is in agreement with Floyd and Wasner’s (1994) study to suggest that alternatives are not important predictors for marital commitment for gender-balanced samples. However, these findings are inconsistent with other previous research findings (i.e., Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Sprecher, 1988; Udry, 19881). Future studies needed to clarify these differences.

The present research also underlined the importance of predisposing backgrounds of the marital partners in their marital relationship. Therefore, further research needs to include this variable in research on marital relationships.

This study and previous research reported that exposure to parental divorce as a child is an important risk factor for children's marital relationships, especially for marital instability. However, not all children from divorced homes have problems in their marital relationship and have high marital instability. It is important to determine why this is so, and what might protect from negative consequences. One of the mediating variable suggested in this study is marital quality. Having a supportive spouse and high marital quality could lessen the risk of a cycle of marital instability. Further studies are needed to identify variables that distinguish people who broke the cycle of marital instability from people who continue the cycle of high marital instability from generation to generation.

Finally, the fully recursive model suggested a significant direct relationship between parental socioeconomic status and marital instability. Future research needs to elaborate on this relationship.
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APPENDIX. MEASURES

Parental Divorce

1. Have your natural parents divorced or permanently separated?
   1) No, 2) Yes, divorced, 3) Yes, separated

2. How old were you when your parents divorced or separated? (ask only if parents ever divorced or separated)

Parental Socioeconomic Status

3. What was the highest year of schooling obtained by your father?
   Record years ________

4. What was the highest year of schooling obtained by your mother?
   Record years ________

Relative Heterogeneity

5. Fill in the marital history chart below. You may use your own words and alter the questions to suit the circumstances. In each case, begin with the earliest marriage and work across the chart. Continue through the chart until you have reached current marital status.

Note. The questions in this study only reflect a subset of the original questionnaire.
Respondent's marital history chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marriage Number</th>
<th>Age at Marriage</th>
<th>Intact Yes</th>
<th>Intact No</th>
<th>Reason for end</th>
<th>Death</th>
<th>Divorce</th>
<th>Sep.</th>
<th>Age at end</th>
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**Barriers**

6. A lot of things help to keep marriages together. I'm going to mention some things and I would like you to tell me if they are very important, somewhat important, or not very important in keeping your marriage together.

A. Your dependency on your spouse
   - Very imp.
   - Somewhat imp.
   - Not very imp.

B. How important are your religious beliefs in keeping your marriage together

C. Family or friends would disapprove of divorce

**Alternatives**

7. What percentage of the total family income do you contribute?
   - Per cent

What percentage of the total family income does your (husband/wife) contribute?
   - Per cent
8. How difficult do you think it would be for you to find another (husband/wife)?
Would it be very difficult, somewhat difficult, not too difficult, or not difficult at all?
1) Very difficult, 2) Somewhat difficult, 3) Not too difficult, 4) Not difficult at all,
5) Would not look

**Mate Selection Risk Factors**

9. Fill in the marital history chart below. You may use your own words and alter the
questions to suit the circumstances. In each case, begin with the earliest
marriage and work across the chart. Continue through the chart until you have
reached current marital status.

### Respondent's marital history chart

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<tr>
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<th>Intact</th>
<th>Reason for end</th>
<th>Age at end</th>
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<td>Yes</td>
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### Spouse's marital history chart

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<th>Reason for end</th>
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<td>Yes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
10. How many years of schooling have you completed?
   Number of Years ________

11. How many years of schooling has (he/she) completed?
   Number of Years ________

**Marital Quality**

**Marital happiness**

12. I am going to mention some different aspects of married life. For each one, I would like you to tell me whether you are very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy with this aspect of your marriage (Read alternatives as needed).

A. How happy are you with the amount of understanding you receive from your (husband/wife)?
   1) Very happy, 2) Pretty happy, 3) Not too happy

B. With the amount of love and affection you receive?
   1) Very happy, 2) Pretty happy, 3) Not too happy

C. How happy are you with the extent to which you and your spouse agree about things very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?
   1) Very happy, 2) Pretty happy, 3) Not too happy

D. With your sexual relationship?
   1) Very happy, 2) Pretty happy, 3) Not too happy

E. With your spouse as someone who takes care of things around the house?
   1) Very happy, 2) Pretty happy, 3) Not too happy
F. With your spouse as someone to do things with?
   1) Very happy, 2) Pretty happy, 3) Not too happy

G. With your spouse’s faithfulness to you?
   1) Very happy, 2) Pretty happy, 3) Not too happy

H. Taking all things together, how would you describe your marriage? Would you say that your marriage is very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?
   1) Very happy, 2) Pretty happy, 3) Not too happy

I. Compared to other marriages you know about, do you think your marriage is better than most, about the same as most, or not as good as most?
   1) Very happy, 2) Pretty happy, 3) Not too happy

J. Comparing your marriage to three years ago, is your marriage getting better, staying the same, or getting worse?
   1) Very happy, 2) Pretty happy, 3) Not too happy

K. Would you say the feelings of love you have for your husband/wife are extremely strong, pretty strong, not too strong, or not strong at all?
   1) Extremely strong, 2) Very strong, 3) Pretty strong, 4) Not too strong,
   5) Not strong at all

   **Marital interaction**

13. I am going to mention some things couples sometimes do together. For each one, I would like you to tell me how often you and your spouse do this together.
A. How often do you eat main meal together—almost always, usually, occasionally, or never?
   1) Almost always, 2) Usually, 3) Occasionally, 4) Never
B. Go shopping together? (Repeat responses as necessary.)
   1) Almost always, 2) Usually, 3) Occasionally, 4) Never
C. How often do you visit friends together?
   1) Almost always, 2) Usually, 3) Occasionally, 4) Never
D. Work together on projects around the house?
   1) Almost always, 2) Usually, 3) Occasionally, 4) Never
E. When you go out—say, to play cards, bowling, or a movie how often do you do this, together?
   1) Almost always, 2) Usually, 3) Occasionally, 4) Never

Marital disagreement

14. A. Do you and your (husband/wife) have arguments or disagreements about whether one of you is doing their share of the housework?
   1) Yes, 2) No
B. How often do you disagree with your (husband/wife)? Would you say never, rarely, sometimes, often, or very often?
   1) Never, 2) Rarely, 3) Sometimes, 4) Often, 5) Very often.
C. How many serious quarrels have you had with your spouse in the past two months?

Number_____

D. In many households bad feelings and arguments occur from time to time. In many cases people get so angry they slap, hit, kick, throw things at one another. Has this ever happened between you and your (husband/wife)?

1) Yes, 2) No.

Marital problems

15. I would like to mention a number of problem areas. Have you had a problem in your marriage because one of you (If respondent says yes, ask: which one of you?)

A. Gets angry easily?

1) No, 2) Yes, spouse, 3) Yes, self, 4) Both

B. Has feelings that are easily hurt?

1) No, 2) Yes, spouse, 3) Yes, self, 4) Both

C. Is jealous?

1) No, 2) Yes, spouse, 3) Yes, self, 4) Both

D. Is domineering?

1) No, 2) Yes, spouse, 3) Yes, self, 4) Both

E. Have you had a problem in your marriage because one of you is critical?

1) No, 2) Yes, spouse, 3) Yes, self, 4) Both
F. Is moody?
   1) No, 2) Yes, spouse, 3) Yes, self, 4) Both

G. Won't talk to the other?
   1) No, 2) Yes, spouse, 3) Yes, self, 4) Both

H. Has had a sexual relationship with someone else?
   1) No, 2) Yes, spouse, 3) Yes, self, 4) Both

I. Has irritating habits?
   1) No, 2) Yes, spouse, 3) Yes, self, 4) Both

J. Have you had a problem in marriage because one of you is not at home enough?
   1) No, 2) Yes, spouse, 3) Yes, self, 4) Both

K. Spend money foolishly?
   1) No, 2) Yes, spouse, 3) Yes, self, 4) Both

L. Drinks or uses drugs?
   1) No, 2) Yes, spouse, 3) Yes, self, 4) Both

M. Has been in trouble with the law?
   1) No, 2) Yes, spouse, 3) Yes, self, 4) Both

Marital Commitment

16. Now I'm going to make some statements about marriage and I would like you to tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each statement.
A. Couples are able to get divorced too easily today.
   1) Strongly agree, 2) Agree, 3) Disagree, 4) Strongly disagree

B. It's okay for people to get married thinking that if it does not work out, they can always get a divorce.
   1) Strongly agree, 2) Agree, 3) Disagree, 4) Strongly disagree

C. The personal happiness of an individual is more important than putting up with a bad marriage.
   1) Strongly agree, 2) Agree, 3) Disagree, 4) Strongly disagree

D. Marriage is for life, even if the couple is unhappy.
   1) Strongly agree, 2) Agree, 3) Disagree, 4) Strongly disagree

**Marital Instability**

17. Sometimes married people think they would enjoy living apart from their spouse. How often do you feel this way? Would you say very often, often, occasionally, or never?
   1) Very often, 2) Often, 3) Occasionally, 4) Never

18. Many marriages go through some ups and downs from time to time. Even people who get along quite well with their spouse sometimes wonder whether their marriage is working out. Have you ever thought your marriage might be in trouble?
   1) Yes, 2) No
A. If married more than three years, ask: Have you thought this within the last three years?
   1) Yes, 2) No
B. Do you feel this way now?
   1) Yes, 2) No

19. Have you ever talked with family members, friends, clergy, counselors, or social workers about problems in your marriage?
   1) Yes, 2) No

A. If married more than 3 years, ask: Have you talked with them about your marital problems within the last three years?
   1) Yes, 2) No

B. Have you talked with them recently?
   1) Yes, 2) No

20. As far as you know has your (husband/wife) talked with relatives, friends, or a counselor about problems either of you were having with your marriage?
   1) Yes, 2) No

A. If married more than 3 years, ask: Has (he/she) talked with any of them within the last three years?
   1) Yes, 2) No

B. Has (he/she) done so recently?
21. As far as you know, has your spouse ever thought your marriage was in trouble?
1) Yes, 2) No
A. If married more than 3 years, ask: Has (he/she) thought this way in the last three years?
1) Yes, 2) No
B. Does (he/she) feel this way now?
1) Yes, 2) No

22. Has the thought of getting a divorce or separation crossed your mind (in the last three years)?
1) Yes, 2) No
A. Are you thinking about it now?
1) Yes, 2) No

23. As far as you know, has the thought of divorce or a separation crossed (husband's/wife's) mind (in the last three years?)
1) Yes, 2) No
A. Is (he/she) thinking about it now?
1) Yes, 2) No

24. Have you or your (husband/wife) ever seriously suggested the idea of divorce?
1) Yes, 2) No
A. Has this been within the last three years?
   1) Yes, 2) No

B. Recently?
   1) Yes, 2) No

25. Did you talk about consulting an attorney?
   1) Yes, 2) No

26. What about dividing up the property?
   1) Yes, 2) No

27. Have you talked about filing?
   1) Yes, 2) No

28. Have you or your (husband/wife) consulted an attorney about a divorce or separation?
   1) Yes, 2) No

29. Have you or your (husband/wife) filed a divorce or separation petition?
   1) Yes, 2) No

30. Because of problems people are having with their marriage they sometimes leave home either for a short time or as a trial separation. Has this ever happened in your marriage?
   1) Yes, 2) No