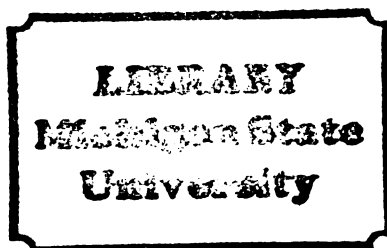


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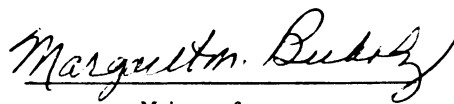
SPOUSAL CONSENSUS: ITS RELATIONSHIP TO
PERCEPTIONS AND DEFINITIONS OF SHARED ACTIVITIES
AND EXCHANGES AMONG HUSBAND-WIFE COUPLES

presented by

Michelle Joy Naughton

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

M.A. degree in Family Studies


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By

Michelle Joy Naughton

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ABSTRACT

SPOUSAL CONSENSUS: ITS RELATIONSHIP TO PERCEPTIONS AND DEFINITIONS OF SHARED ACTIVITIES AND EXCHANGES AMONG HUSBAND-WIFE COUPLES

By

Michelle Joy Naughton

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The purpose of this study was to re-test for measurement error the degree of consensus among a subsample of 237 husband-wife couples who participated in the 1977-1978 Quality of Life Research Project in Oakland County, Michigan. During the spring of 1981, forty-two of the original 237 couples were asked to respond to questions concerning their perceptions and definitions of specific tangible and intangible shared activities and exchanges. T-tests were completed to determine the relationships between the degree of spousal consensus and couples' satisfaction with the life domains of family communication, family life, marriage, and life as a whole.

Results of the study indicated that shared meaning between spouses was a better indicator of marital and life satisfaction than the amount of spousal consensus. The couples also displayed more consensus on the tangible shared activity items than on the intangible shared activity items.

DEDICATION

To my parents, who never
had the opportunity to go to college

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I would like to express my deep appreciation to Dr. Margaret Bubolz for all of her guidance throughout this research project and my master's program. Her insight, support and encouragement enabled me to pursue my interests and to benefit from many and various academic experiences. She was everything that I could have asked for in a major professor.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The study of communication as it relates to family processes and marital dyads has become increasingly more prominent in the family relations literature. Marital communication has been discussed in relation to marital adjustment (Satir, 1964; Bienvenu, 1970; Schumm, Race, Morris, Anderson, Griffin, McCutchen, and Benigas, 1981), marital satisfaction (Montgomery, 1980; Schumm, Race, Morris, Anderson, Griffin, McCutchen, and Benigas, 1981), and effective marital interaction (Miller, Corrales, and Wackman, 1975). Researchers have described isolated characteristics of good communication in marriage (Fisher and Sprenkle, 1978), and the form and function of quality communication in marriage has been examined (Montgomery, 1981).

Montgomery (1981) defines quality communication as "the interpersonal, transactional, symbolic process by which marriage partners achieve and maintain understanding of each other" (p.21). In this sense, the goal of quality communication is the achievement and maintenance of interpersonal understanding. Basic understanding, or shared meaning, is considered to be a prerequisite for any other type of communication. Mutual understanding, the awareness of self, the other, the relationship, and outside issues have all been related to marital satisfaction (Laing, Phillipson, and Lee, 1966; Miller, Corrales, and Wackman, 1975). Quality

relationships and the quality of communication are described as being interactional and reciprocal in nature. "As spouses apply more quality communication skills in their interactions, their relationship improves. As their relationship improves, they are motivated to apply more quality communication skills" (Montgomery, 1980, p. 28).

A high degree of mutual understanding and awareness of one's spouse, however, do not always lead to higher degrees of agreement or consensus. Bernard (1972) notes that when both husbands and wives are asked identical questions about their relationship, it is not at all unusual to receive different replies. Most often couples will agree on the number of children they have and a few other such variable items, although, not for example, on length of premarital acquaintance and of engagement, on age at marriage and birth of first child. With respect to even basic components of the marriage as frequency of sexual relations, social interactions, household tasks, and decision-making, most couples seem to be reporting on different marriages (Bernard, 1972, p. 5).

Discrepant responses between husband-wife couples have been the focus of many studies. Researchers have investigated consensus among spouses chiefly as it relates to marital power, marital roles, decision-making and the measurement competency of research instruments. Research of this nature is of primary concern, particularly as it relates to research methodology and survey research instruments. Knowledge that would increase the general understanding of spousal differences, and suggest possible reasons for these discrepant responses, could increase the accuracy of husband-wife and multi-family member research studies.

Research on spousal consensus would enhance the literature and knowledge base in relation to husband-wife and/or family communication.

Researchers increasingly are recognizing the need for studies which could aid families in increasing their communicatory skills, and the quality of their communication in general. Some research in this area has shown that wives generally are more dissatisfied with the quality of communication in their marriages than are husbands (Komarovsky, 1964; Hawkins, Weisburg, and Ray, 1980). Studies of husband-wife discrepancies could lead to increased satisfaction with marital communication by increasing couples' awareness of possible spousal differences in perception and behavior. This could increase the quality of marital interactions. Research of this type would also have potential for devising more effective conflict resolution techniques which could be adapted to meet the needs of specific couples/families according to differences in their communication styles.

The need for more research on husband-wife discrepancies is evident. The present research is mainly concerned with the measurement competency of research instruments, in particular, the questionnaire and survey methods. Husband-wife differences gathered from a research questionnaire are examined in relation to spousal perceptual differences, marital satisfaction, and the quality of life in general.

Purpose and Focus of the Study

The purpose of this research is to re-test for measurement error the degree of consensus among a subsample of 237 husband and wife couples who participated in the 1977-1978 Quality of Life Research Project in Oakland County, Michigan. * Forty-two couples were included in the

* This research was funded by the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station under Project Numbers 3151 and 1249. Additional support was received from the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station. Co-directors of the project was Dr. Margaret M. Bubolz, Dept. of Family and Child Ecology, and Dr. Ann C. Slocum, Dept. of Human Environment and Design, both of the College of Human Ecology, Michigan State University. An overview of this research can be found in research report no. 380 - Home and Family Living, Michigan

follow-up study. These couples were asked to respond to questions concerning their perceptions and definitions of specific shared activities and exchanges. Relationships between the degree of spousal consensus and couples' satisfaction with the life domains of family and marital communication, family life, marriage, and life as a whole, will be assessed.

The data collected in the follow-up study also will allow the opportunity to examine changes which have occurred in the couples' lives in the past few years which may be influencing their quality of life.

Objectives of the Follow-up Study

The major objectives of the follow-up study are:

1. To describe any changes in the couples' lives in the past three years (i.e. education, income, job, housing, clothing, household composition), which might influence their quality of life.
2. To explore the amount of shared communication existing between husbands and wives in relation to shared activities and exchanges.
3. To explore differences in the perceptions and meanings of shared activities and exchanges held by husbands and wives, and how these differences influence couples' marital and life satisfaction.
4. To determine if husbands as a group perceive and define some shared activities and exchanges differently than the wives as a group.
5. To further explore the relationship between spousal consensus and marital satisfaction.
6. To assess the couples' satisfaction with different domains influencing the quality of their lives (i.e. income, financial security, occupation, national government, marriage, family life, clothing, standard of living, spare time activities, housing, communication in the family).

Definitions

agreeing couples - couples in which spouses agree on 4 or more questionnaire items pertaining to the perceived frequency of couples' shared activities, and who have a couple difference score of 0 or 1 on these questionnaire items.

communication - the exchange of ideas, thoughts, information, and messages between persons; to impart or make known. *

couple's difference score - refers to the resulting score when one spouse's score on a questionnaire item is subtracted from the other spouse's score on the same questionnaire item.

define - to state the meaning and/or describe the basic qualities of a word or situation. *

disagreeing couples - couples in which spouses disagree on 2 or more questionnaire items relating to the perceived frequency of couples' shared activities, and who have a couple difference score of 2 - 8 on these questionnaire items.

dissatisfied persons - pertains to the portion of the questionnaire in which the husbands and wives were asked to indicate their feelings about certain domains influencing the quality of their lives. Persons who were regarded as being dissatisfied with any of these domains of life, were those who indicated that they felt "terrible," "unhappy," "mostly dissatisfied," or "mixed" (equally satisfied as dissatisfied), with that aspect of their lives.

intangible shared activities and exchanges' questionnaire items - those activities and exchanges between the husband-wife couples which are less easily understood, more elusive, and oftentimes more subjective or intrinsic in nature. * In the questionnaire, the more intangible shared

activities and exchanges are those specified in questions numbered: 2.1a, 2.1b, 2.2a, 2.2b, 2.3a, 2.3b, 3.1a, 3.1b, 3.2a, 3.2b, 3.4a, 3.4b.

non-shared meaning couples - couples who define and/or ascribe different meanings to 4 or more of the shared meaning questionnaire items, and who have a couple difference score of 1-8 on these questionnaire items.

original study - the 1977-1978 Quality of Life Study of 237 husband-wife couples from Oakland County, Michigan.

perception - awareness gained through the senses; discernment, understanding, point of view.

questionnaire items pertaining to how couples perform exchanges - refers to responses to questionnaire items: 3.1b, 3.2b, 3.3b, 3.4b, 3.5c, 3.6b, 3.7b.

questionnaire items pertaining to the perceived frequency of couples' shared activities - refers to couples' frequency scores on questionnaire items: 2.1a, 2.2a, 2.3a, 2.4a, 2.5a.

questionnaire items pertaining to the perceived frequency of receiving shared exchanges - refers to couples' frequency scores on questionnaire items: 3.1a, 3.2a, 3.3a, 3.4a, 3.5a, 3.6a, 3.7a.

satisfied persons - pertains to the portion of the questionnaire in which the husbands and wives were asked to indicate their feelings about certain domains influencing the quality of their lives. Persons who were regarded as being satisfied with any of these domains in life, were those who indicated that they were "mostly satisfied," "pleased," or "delighted" with that aspect of their lives.

shared activities - an activity in which the husband and wife participate together, without their children or any other persons.

shared exchange - refers to an exchange which the spouses

perform for each other. These exchanges are transactional, and generally but not always, reciprocal in nature. Exchanges of this type may include the affective as well as the practical.

shared meaning couples - couples who define and/or ascribe the same meaning to 4 or more of the shared meaning questionnaire items, and who have a couple difference score of 0 on all of these questionnaire items.

shared meaning questionnaire items - refers to questionnaire items: 2.1b, 2.2b, 2.3b, 2.4b, 2.5b, and 3.5b.

tangible shared activities and exchanges questionnaire items - those activities and exchanges between the husband-wife couples which are more real, concrete; can be understood through the senses. * In the questionnaire, the more tangible shared activities and exchanges are those specified in questions numbered: 2.4a, 2.4b, 2.5a, 2.5b, 3.3a, 3.3b, 3.5a, 3.5b, 3.5c, 3.6a, 3.6b, 3.7a, 3.7b.

quality of life - the combination of values, factors, or aspects a person's life which influence his/her general sense of well-being and satisfaction or dissatisfaction with life as a whole.

Quality of Life Follow-up Study - the restudy of 42 couples out of the 237 husband-wife couples who were participants in the 1977-1978 Quality of Life Research Project.

Quality of Life Research Project 1977-1978 - involved the study of 237 husband-wife couples who were residents of Oakland County, Michigan. The purpose of the study was to determine specific aspects of life that are important to persons' perceived quality of life. It is upon this research and sample that the quality of life follow-up study was based.

* Definition was taken in part from The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Dell Publishing Co, Inc., New York, 1970.

Hypotheses

- Hypothesis 1: The frequency rates reported by the husbands in relation to the occurrence of shared activities and exchanges will be higher than the frequency rates reported by the wives.
- Hypothesis 2: The scores of the husbands as a group and the wives as a group will show less variability on the tangible shared activity items than the intangible shared activity items.
- Hypothesis 3: The husbands as a group and the wives as a group will define and/or ascribe similar meanings to those shared activities which are more tangible in nature, than those which are more intangible in nature.
- Hypothesis 4: The shared meaning couples will agree more on the frequency of participating in shared activities with their spouses, than the non-shared meaning couples.
- Hypothesis 5: Satisfaction with family communication, family life, marriage, and life as a whole will be higher for the agreeing couples than the disagreeing couples.
- Hypothesis 6: Satisfaction with family communication, family life, marriage, and life as a whole will be higher for the shared meaning couples than the non-shared meaning couples.
- Hypothesis 7: The wives as a group will be less satisfied with family communication, family life, marriage, and life as a whole than the husbands as a group.

Research QuestionsResearch

Question 1: What changes have occurred in the couples' lives since 1977-1978 in terms of the job situations and educational attainment of both spouses, number of persons living in the household, family income, clothing, housing, or other changes?

Research

Question 2: Are there shared activities for which spouses' frequency scores are comparable, and for which spouses' frequency scores are different?

Research

Question 3: Are there shared activities which the husbands as a group and the wives as a group tend to define similarly and dissimilarly?

Research

Question 4: Do the husbands as a group, (based on the report of their spouses), tend to perform specific exchanges differently than the wives as a group?

Research

Question 5: How satisfied are the husbands as a group and the wives as a group in relation to: family income, standard of living, financial security, job, national government, clothing, housing, spare time activities, marriage, family life, communication in the family, and life as a whole?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Husband-wife consensus has been the focus of extensive research. Investigators have explored a wide range of topics about which couples could share an opinion or viewpoint. Research in this area can basically be attributed to the belief that spousal consensus can lead to increased understanding of marital relations. Research concerned with husband-wife agreement, however, seems to show that the amount of consensus among husbands and wives seems to "vary widely from study to study on the same topic, and from topic to topic in the same study" (Booth and Welch, 1978, p.23).

The Sufficiency of One Family-Member Respondents

Until recently, wives usually were the only informants in family research. A great number of researchers assumed the responses of both husbands and wives to be similar, and consequently their conclusions and generalizations were based solely on the responses of the wives. Blood and Wolfe's study (1960), Husbands and Wives, was based entirely on the responses of the women in the sample. The researchers justify this by noting that "many previous studies have shown a close correlation between what husbands and wives say about their marriages, making it possible to rely on one partner's responses" (p.6). Blood and Wolfe, however, fail to cite the previous studies on which they base their reliance on the wives' responses. It has been suggested that Blood and

Wolfe were referring to the work of Burgess, Cottrell, Terman and Wallin in connection with measures of marital adjustment and success (Scanzoni, 1965; Safilios-Rothschild, 1969). Burgess and Wallin (1953) concluded from their research that the correlations between the replies of both sexes were not significantly different by sex of the subject. Their findings produced no reason to seriously question the assumption that the wives' responses might be sufficient (Scanzoni, 1965).

Scanzoni (1965) in research examining the sufficiency of wife responses in family research concluded that the amount of error that the researcher allows by testing only one spouse is not so great as to be outweighed by the advantages of testing both spouses. The differences in perception and reporting of husbands and wives were not perceived to be as great as to warrant halving the number of marital pairs sampled, and thereby reducing the generalizability of the results. Scanzoni, however, did stress the need for replicated studies dealing with the same issue.

Safilios-Rothschild's research (1969), on Detroit and Athenian couples' perceived decision-making patterns, revealed a considerable degree of divergence in the husband-wife responses. She concluded that family research could no longer rely on the wife's point of view if the family was to be studied as a dynamic interacting unit. Each family member has different viewpoints, opinions and perceptions which may coincide to varying degrees in some areas and diverge in others. This fact was thought to make it impossible to rely on the responses of only one family members. Turk and Bell (1972), in a measurement study of power in families, also concurred with Safilios-Rothschild's statement, noting that responses to the same questionnaire items tend to vary depending upon which family member is used as the informant. Niemi (1974) found

similar results in his study of social and political attitudes of two generations. The results indicated that in contrast to the aggregate similarities, comparisons of student-parent and husband-wife pairs revealed considerable disagreement among members of the same family on questions relating to family structure and family relationships.

The result of research in this area has led to an increased awareness among family researchers that agreement among family members and spouses in relation to shared events and attitudes should not be assumed. More research is now being directed toward designing instruments and statistical methods appropriate for use with multi-family member data.

Studies Related to Spousal Consensus

In their review of spousal consensus literature, Booth and Welch (1978) suggest that research on consensus can be categorized into one of two types: events or conditions shared by both spouses, and the similarity in attitudes of married partners. The former grouping includes the perceptions of husband-wife couples on such items as family roles or family income, as well as reports of events in which both partners participate (Booth and Welch, 1978). The majority of the studies of shared events have been related to the distribution of power in the family. Some of these studies have dealt with decision-making (Safilios-Rothschild, 1969), and others with problem solving and the division of labor (Larson, 1974). Larson (1974) in analyzing the responses of fathers, mothers, sons and daughters to questions concerning family power and problem-solving processes, and the responses of husbands and wives to questions relating to family division of labor, found that the

perceptions of family reality varied systematically by both age and sex. Larson emphasized the importance of family subsystem and system perception in family research and theory development.

Turk and Bell (1972) focused on power relationships in the family. Using a number of measures normally directed at the assessment of power, data were collected from 842 individuals in 211 families. The results indicated that the research findings tended to vary depending on which family member was used as the key informant. The patterns that appeared when different family members responded were not found to be identical, or even highly similar. It was concluded that respondents in different positions in the family group respond with their own particular perceptions.

Equivalence of family role measures was the focus of a study by Granbois and Willett (1970). Results of the responses of 167 husbands and wives to the Blood and Wolfe family decision and job performance instrument revealed that responses between husbands and wives in the aggregate were similar, while comparison of individual spouse's responses revealed discrepancies on about half of the items. These discrepancies appeared to be randomly distributed and offsetting, which suggested that these differences might have been caused by perceptual differences rather than systematic bias. The researchers recommendation for survey research on role structure was to concentrate on overcoming perceptual differences by developing more concrete questions, rather than focusing on methods to overcome systematic bias inherent in responses to role questions.

Similar conclusions were reached by Douglas and Wind (1978) in a study examining family role and authority patterns. These findings

suggested that question ambiguity was a major source of incongruity in husband-wife responses. Incongruence appeared frequently to be associated with questions which might have been open to differing interpretations, suggesting the need for greater attention directed towards developing less ambiguous measures of authority.

The second type of topic in consensus research is related to the similarity of attitudes of married partners. Research in this area has been concerned with such topics as political behavior (Niemi, 1974), and the preferred frequency of coitus (Wallin and Clark, 1958). Katz (1965) investigated the connotative or emotive meaning of words as a variable in interpersonal relations. The study involved a comparison of indices of discrepant affect states associated by happily and unhappily married couples with concepts considered to be important to marriage. The ten concepts relevant to marriage were listed as: compatibility, sex relations, understanding, love, companionship, loyalty, husband, adaptability, wife, and responsibility. The ten non-relevant concepts were: mosquito, zebra, sand, gun, harbor, elbow, ocean, tennis, denture, and window. The results of this study strongly confirmed the general hypothesis of greater semantic similarity between happily married couples as compared with unhappily married couples. Furthermore, the results demonstrated that it was on meanings of concepts relevant to marriage that the two groups of marital partners differed. Happily married couples, at times, were as discrepant as unhappily married spouses in relation to such concepts as "zebra" or "window", but the happily married couples showed consistently greater agreement in the meanings they attached to marriage related concepts such as "love" or "understanding." This greater semantic harmony between couples on

marriage-related issues was seen as being directly associated with marital happiness.

Sex knowledge and family planning attitudes as a function of demographic heterogeneity was the focus of a study by Jaco and Shephard (1975). Upon analysis of the data, the responses of the 233 white couples in the sample were found to be inconsistent and generally non-supportive of a relationship between demographic homogeneity and spousal response consensus either across or within the two areas of sex knowledge and family planning attitudes.

In a study by Kerckhoff (1972), recently married couples were asked to complete a questionnaire about themselves and their ideas about marriage. Two central elements in the questionnaire were measures of value orientations and socioeconomic status. The results indicated that the greatest value consensus was found among those in the professional socioeconomic status group. In general, there were no differences between the middle-class and working class couples on the value consensus items. The level of value consensus was found to be a reflection of the general accord between husbands and wives and the degree to which specific value areas were emphasized by particular sex-status groups. Working class couples were concluded as espousing relatively low consensus because of the poor pairing of spouses within the status group, while middle-class couples were viewed as exhibiting approximately the same level of consensus because of the tendency of the husbands and wives to emphasize somewhat different values.

Van Es and Shingi (1972) analyzed the responses of 324 urban Brazilian households to a set of twenty-five attitudinal items. The mean values for the husbands' and wives' were found to be statistically

different on one-third of the items. Levels of agreement between spouses was low and apparently unrelated to characteristics of the couple.

Husband-wife response consistency appeared only to be affected when the response to an item was, in part, culturally determined. Both the husbands and wives as separate groups, however, exemplified many similarities when viewed independently. It was concluded that for attitudinal items it is erroneous to conceptualize the existence of attitudes which represent the couple: attitudes are not shared more systematically by married couples than by the population at large.

Explanations for Spousal Response Discrepancies

Reasons for the presence or absence of spousal consistency have generated many explanations for this phenomenon. For the purposes of this review, these explanations have been categorized under the headings of: research methodology, perceptual differences, marital conventionality, demographic characteristics, and "hard" vs. "soft" data.

A. Research Methodology

The most prevalent explanation for spousal discrepancies is related to research methodology. In relation to studies of family roles and authority, incongruence between spouses is attributed by some to be the result of random measurement error associated with the responses of two observers to the same phenomenon (Granbois and Willett, 1970; Davis, 1970). This is attributed to the fact that discrepancies between all husbands as a group and all wives as a group are typically found to be slight, but that the discrepancies in the responses of husband and wife pairs are generally more significant (Granbois and Willett, 1970; Van Es and Shingi, 1972).

Douglas and Wind (1978) note that incongruence appears frequently to be associated with questions which may be open to differing interpretations. Oftentimes, measures in studies rely on recall concerning decisions or acts which took place sometime in the past, or which involve multiple decisions and acts. It would be expected that any data based on recall would be affected by forgetfulness and/or conscious or unconscious distortion of these past experiences (Olson and Rabunsky, 1972). Booth and Welch (1978) note that consensus seems very much tied to the specifics of the question being asked and the context in which it is asked. Depending on the specifics of the context, consensus might be found as being related to any number of independent variables. It has been suggested that the examination of husband-wife responses focus on first reducing errors arising from unreliable measurement instruments. In particular, research to develop less ambiguous questions and improving data collection techniques for self-report measures is needed (Douglas and Wind, 1978).

B. Perceptual Differences

Although ambiguity in the research instrument, and measurement error undoubtedly contribute to discrepancies in spouses' responses, many have suggested the possibility that differences in husbands' and wives' reports are due to real differences in men's and women's experiences and perceptions (Booth and Welch, 1978; Ahrons and Bowman, 1981). These differences stem in part from socially prescribed norms concerning sex roles (Heer, 1962; Larson, 1974; Olson and Rabunsky, 1972; Turk and Bell, 1972; Van Es and Shingi, 1972). A current issue in family research is whether spousal discrepancies are the result of random measurement error or valid and reliable perceptual differences between

partners. There is empirical support for both views; therefore, it has been suggested that researchers decide this question on theoretical grounds and be consistent about the choice (Thompson and Walker, 1981).

C. Marital Conventionality

Another explanation for the presence or absence of spousal consensus is the concept of marital conventionality, or the tendency to report impossibly perfect evaluations of one's marriage, spouse or relationship (Schumm, Bollman and Jurich, 1980). Booth and Welch (1978) found that social desirability was not a good predictor of consensus. Chesser, Parkhurt, and Schaffer (1979), however, have suggested that the results of studies using self-report instruments can only be considered valid when conventionalization is dealt with in the research design. Schumm, Bollman and Jurich (1980) reiterated this viewpoint, stating that marital conventionalization should be accounted for in research with families, or in marital or family therapy situations.

D. Demographic Characteristics

Demographic factors have also been suggested as possible explanations for spousal discrepancies. Scanzoni (1965) states that factors such as age of spouses, length of marriage, absence or presence of children and their ages, and communication between spouses may also play a role in increasing or decreasing the amount of spousal agreement. Factors such as these have been found to influence spousal consensus, but the influence of any one factor has been shown to vary from study to study. This fact can be illustrated by heterogeneity analysis of couple/family research.

Structural heterogeneity may be a source of low consensus because of the different perspectives people from different backgrounds bring

to a particular decision or situation (Booth and Welch, 1978). Conversely, people from similar backgrounds may show higher levels of consensus as a result of sharing similar perspectives. In regard to education, Haberman and Elinson (1967) found that couples with the same education reported income with significantly more consistency than pairs in which the husband and wife had achieved different levels of education. Jaco and Shephard (1975), however, did not find educational differences to have this effect on consensus in relation to knowledge of sex and family planning. Instead, agreement tended to be a function of increasing education rather than educational homogeneity. Consensus increased as the educational level of the couples increased. Similarly, Van Es and Shingi (1972) found that the educationally homogeneous couples did not give aggregate responses any more similarly than those of the heterogeneous couples.

In relation to socioeconomic status, some studies have shown that in couples in which the husbands had a high-status occupation, the husbands and wives were apt to show more consensus on decision-making and marital values than were the lower status couples (Heer, 1962; Kerckhoff, 1972). Van Es and Shingi (1972), however, did not find high status couples to be systematically different from lower-status couples on selected attitudinal items.

In a study by Jaco and Shephard (1975), religiously heterogeneous couples were found to have less consensus on family planning matters than homogeneous pairs. In this same study, in cases where the husband and wife had urban origins, the mean level of attitudinal and sex knowledge consensus was the highest. Consensus in both of these areas was the lowest among couples of rural origin.

Scanzoni (1965) and Van Es and Shingi (1972) found that length of marriage had no bearing on the level of consensus among spouses. Winter, Ferreira, and Bowers (1973), however, found that "spontaneous agreement" among spouses increased with the duration of the marriage.

Cultural factors were found to be significant in an attitudinal study by Van Es and Shingi (1972). The results of this research indicated that there were consistently higher levels of agreement between husbands and wives from those items that were strongly culturally determined.

As has been illustrated, demographic variables are not very consistent predictors of spousal consensus. The influence of demographic factors has been found to vary with each particular research study, suggesting that demographic characteristics alone cannot adequately explain discrepancies in husband and wife responses.

E. "Hard" vs. "Soft" Data

A final explanation for spousal discrepancies is the concept of "hard" vs. "soft" data. Ballweg (1969) proposed that responses elicited in survey research could be classified along two broadly defined lines of "hard" and "soft" data. "Hard" data consist of information that can be assigned an exact numerical value, while "soft" data lack this numerical precision and require interpretation on the part of the respondent. For example, the question, "How many television sets do you have in your home?" is aimed at gathering hard data, while the question, "Which family member gets the most enjoyment from watching television?" attempts to gather soft data (Ballweg, 1969).

In a study exploring family life areas, Ballweg (1969) found that a response from one member of the couple on "soft" data (i.e. child

discipline) was far less likely to reflect the view of the spouse than a response on "hard" data (i.e. family income). Both the husbands and wives had a relatively similar understanding of family income. This suggested that either the husbands or the wives could be called upon to give hard data such as family income, as the responses reported by the wives were the same or within one category of the responses given by the husbands. This opinion also was supported by Niemi (1974), in an attitudinal study involving spouses and their twelfth-grade children. The findings of this study indicated that both spouses' and children's reports of demographic or background information were highly accurate.

In relation to soft data, a different pattern emerges. Niemi (1974) found considerable disagreement among child-parent and husband-wife pairs concerning perceptions of family structure and relationships. Ballweg (1969) also found discrepancies of two or more response categories between couples in regard to child discipline. In a related study by Katz (1965), happily married couples were found to agree to a much greater extent than unhappily married couples on the meaning of "love" or "understanding", concepts considered to be important to marriage. Both happily married and unhappily married couples, however, were found to similarly define more objective concepts such as "mosquito" or "ocean."

The results of these studies suggest that spousal agreement is a function of the type of information being asked (i.e. "hard" or "soft" data). Husband-wife consensus in responses to survey questions would be expected to be greater when the data requested can be assigned a fixed numerical value than when evaluation by the respondent is required (Ballweg, 1969).

Summary of the Literature Review

Spousal consensus has been the focus of extensive research. Studies have been completed which have explored a wide range of topics about which couples could share an experience, opinion or viewpoint. The results of these studies, however, have indicated that the amount of consensus among husbands and wives seems to vary greatly across studies concerned with the same topic, and from topic to topic in the same study. At present, no reliable or invariable pattern of husband-wife responses has been uncovered for specific research topics from which predictions of spousal consensus could be made.

In the past twenty years, in particular, researchers have been questioning the sufficiency of using only one respondent in relation to data collection for couple or family research. Perceptions of different family members have been shown to diverge in many instances, most often by sex and age of the respondents. Family members tend to report family "reality" as they perceive it to be, and oftentimes these perceptions do not coincide with those of other family members. These findings have lead to increased awareness among researchers as to the sufficiency of basing research only on the responses of one respondent.

Research on spousal consensus has tended to be of two types: those studies involving events or conditions shared by both spouses, and those studies measuring attitudinal similarity between husbands and wives. Research in the former grouping has tended to focus on such topics as marital roles, family power and decision-making. Studies involving attitudinal similarity have been concerned with such topics as marital values, child discipline, and attitudes toward family planning.

Explanations for husband-wife discrepancies have been many and

varied. For the purposes of this review, these explanations were categorized under the headings of: research methodology, perceptual differences, marital conventionality, demographic characteristics, and "hard" vs. "soft" data. Explanations concerned with research methodology would currently appear to be the most prevalent. All of these explanations, however, are valid in part, and with particular types of data, and yet no one theory of the cause or causes of spousal discrepancies has been found to be accurate in all cases. For this reason, further research in this area is warranted.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Background Information

In reviewing the data from the 1977-1978 research study on the Perceived Quality of Life of Oakland County, Michigan Families, a puzzling discrepancy was found in relation to the frequency of shared activities and exchanges reported by the husband-wife couples. Many times the spouses could not agree on the frequency with which they engaged in such activities and exchanges as going to a movie, eating at a restaurant, helping their mate solve a problem, or telling or showing their mate their love. For example, a husband might report that he and his wife discuss personal feelings three or four times a week, while his wife might report that they only discuss personal feelings once a month. What was interesting about these discrepancies was the fact that although these couples disagreed on the frequency of occurrence of these shared activities and exchanges, the majority of these disagreeing couples reported being satisfied with their marriages and family lives. Couples did not seem to feel dissatisfied with the amount of sharing that was present in their relationships with their spouses.

Upon further examination of the data, it was noticed that the couples tended to disagree much more frequently on those shared activities and exchanges which were more intangible in nature (i.e. making you feel like an important person; showing you admiration and respect). Couples

showed more agreement on those shared activities and exchanges which were more tangible and concrete in nature (i.e. attending a party or going to a movie). The intangible items seem to imply more subjective or intrinsic components. The tangible items were more objective and seemed to be readily understood by the husbands and wives. These findings tended to suggest that the couples had a greater degree of shared meaning in relation to the tangible items than the intangible items. More specifically, it was projected that perhaps the husbands and wives in the sample tended to define and/or perceive situations differently than their spouses. If this were true, the scores reported by the husbands and wives in the 1977-1978 Quality of Life Research Survey may not have been an accurate assessment of the frequency with which these couples engaged in specific shared activities and exchanges. This raised questions as to whether the instrument employed in this portion of the questionnaire had given a valid measure of the participation rates of the couples, as these shared activities and exchanges were not specifically defined in the questionnaire. Couples were therefore able to interpret and define the activities and exchanges at their discretion.

In order to explore the possibility of differing perceptions and interpretations/definitions of words between the husbands and wives, as well as the other objectives previously stated, a follow-up study was conducted in the spring of 1981. This study employed a subsample of the 237 couples who participated in the 1977-1978 Quality of Life Study.

Participants in the 1977-1978 Study of the Perceived Quality
of Life of Oakland County, Michigan Families

The sample of the original quality of life study included 244 families. Seven of these were female single-parent families and the remaining 237 were husband-wife pairs. All respondents were randomly selected from rural, suburban and urban areas of Oakland County, Michigan. A market research firm located in Detroit was contracted to draw the sample, explain the study to the respondents, obtain the consent of both husbands and wives, and distribute and collect the questionnaires. The questionnaire items were aimed at determining those aspects of life (i.e. occupation, family, children, income, housing, clothing) which were perceived as being important to the families' quality of life. Data for this project were collected between November 1977 and March 1978.

All of the 237 husband-wife families had at least one school age child living at home, and were in the mid-stages of the family live cycle. The average age of the husbands was 40.2 years. The women were slightly younger with an average age of 37.5 years. The couples had an average of three children, and 7% of the families had other relatives living in their households. Most of the respondents were primarily of middle income (\$20,000-\$30,000), and had received a high school or college education. The couples had been married on the average of 15 years. Members of both the black (18%) and white (81%) ethnic groups were represented in the sample.

Ninety-two percent of the men worked outside of the home. Only 4% were unemployed, laid off or on strike. A large proportion of these men were employed as professional-technical workers, managers and administrators, and craftsmen. Forty percent of the women worked outside of the home and another 10% were actively seeking employment. An equal

proportion of women were employed as professional-technical workers as clerical workers. A smaller proportion of women were also employed as service workers or sales workers.

Results of the 1977-1978 Quality of Life Study

The results of this study indicated that a large majority of the persons who participated in the study felt satisfied with their lives. It was assumed, then, that they assessed their life in a positive manner. Twenty percent of the total group, however, expressed mixed and negative feelings about their lives, indicating that the quality of their lives was not up to expectations.

In this group of families, the types of concerns which were influences on their perceived quality of life were similar for the wives as well as the husbands. The order of the importance of these concerns, however, was not the same for each sex. The values which influenced the women's general life satisfaction were: 1) having love and affection in the family, 2) freedom from bother and annoyance, 3) beauty and attractiveness, 4) having fun, and 5) accomplishing something. For men, the best indicators of life satisfaction were: 1) accomplishing something, 2) having fun, 3) freedom from bother and annoyance, 4) having love and affection in the family, and 5) financial security. The order of the importance of these concerns for each sex, tended to reflect the different roles in which these men and women functioned (i.e. their responsibilities in the home, at their place of employment, and in their leisure time activities). These findings also suggested that differences might also be attributed to sociocultural factors which historically have taught each sex somewhat different values (Sontag, Bubolz, and Slocum, 1979).

Selection of the Sample in the
1981 Quality of Life Follow-up Study

In March of 1981, all of the 237 couples who had participated in the 1977-1978 Quality of Life Study were sent a letter asking them to participate in a less comprehensive follow-up study, (see Appendix A). The couples were also sent a self-addressed stamped postcard upon which the couples were asked to indicate their willingness or unwillingness to participate in the follow-up study, (see Appendix B). This post card was used as the consent form for the follow-up study and contained all the necessary requirements for human subject research studies. Upon completion of the postcard, the couples were requested to return the postcard to the Department of Family and Child Ecology at Michigan State University. It should be noted that in the original quality of life study, the couples were paid ten dollars for their participation in the research project. Due to economic constraints, the follow-up study participants were not offered any monetary remuneration for their willingness to participate in the follow-up research.

Of the 237 letters sent out to the original study participants, 38 letters were returned indicating "address unknown" or "no forwarding address available" for the couples. Of the remaining 199 letters assumed to have been received by the original study participants, 67 postcards were received by the Department of Family and Child Ecology. Eleven of these couples did not wish to participate in the follow-up study, and 56 postcards were returned indicating the couples' consent to participate in the follow-up study.

Development of the Instrument

The questionnaire employed in the Quality of Life Follow-up Study, (see Appendix C), was composed of five parts:

Part I - Demographic data;

Part II - Assessment of changes which have occurred in the couples' lives in the past three years;

Part III - a) Couples' frequencies of participating in shared activities, and b) Couples' definitions of these shared activities;

Part IV - a) Couples' perceptions of receiving specific exchanges from their spouses, and b) Couples' descriptions of how their partners perform these exchanges;

Part V - Couples' satisfaction with twelve domains influencing the quality of life. *

Part one included questions concerning family income, employment educational attainment, and household composition. It also should be noted that only the wives were asked to respond to the following demographic variables: age of respondent, age of respondent's spouse, ages and sexes of children living in the household, relatives or other persons living in the household, and total number of persons living in the household. This format was followed as it had been the decision in the original quality of life study to only ask the wives to respond to these questionnaire items. It was therefore not considered essential to obtain demographic data from both the husbands and wives in the follow-up study.

Part two asked couples to indicate any changes that had occurred in their lives in the past three years in relation to their job situations, educational level, number of persons living in their household, family income, housing, clothing or other family changes. At the time that the

* The order of the sections given here is not necessarily the order with which these sections appeared in the questionnaire.

questionnaires were sent out to the husbands and wives, the state of Michigan was experiencing a severe economic recession. The changes in relation to spouses' job situations, educational level, family income, and number of persons living in the household, therefore, were deemed to be of particular concern to these couples.

In the third and fourth parts of the follow-up questionnaire, a modification of sections 7.1 and 7.2 of the original Quality of Life Study questionnaire was employed. These were the sections with which the follow-up study primarily was concerned. Out of the twenty-seven questions contained in sections 7.1 and 7.2, twelve questions were arbitrarily selected for inclusion in the questionnaire for the follow-up study, (see Appendix D). As the intent was to determine if there were perceptual or semantic differences between the husband-wife pairs, six questions were selected which were more tangible in nature and six questions were selected which were more intangible in nature. As had occurred in the original study, respondents were asked to indicate the frequency of occurrence of specific shared activities and exchanges on a scale ranging from 1 (never) to 8 (about 2-3 times each day). In addition to this reporting, however, couples were asked to indicate how they defined the shared activity under question, and to describe how their mate performed specific exchanges for them. This was done by giving the respondents four alternative ways of perceiving or defining the item, and also by giving the couples the option of writing in another alternative if their perception or way of defining a term was not given in one of the four alternatives, (see Appendix C, questions 2.1a-3.7b).

The last portion of the questionnaire asked couples to indicate their feelings about their quality of life in terms of the following

variables: income, job, financial security, national government, standard of living, clothing, housing, spare time activities, marriage, family life, communication with mate and family, and life as a whole. Again, due to the economic situation in Michigan, the variables of income, job, financial security, national government, and standard of living were of primary interest to the researchers.

Pre-Testing of the Instrument

In early April of 1981, the questionnaire was pre-tested by five Michigan State University, College of Human Ecology clerical-secretarial workers and their husbands. The participants had few difficulties in completing the questionnaires, and as a result, only a few minor changes were necessary to make in the body of the questionnaire.

Administration of the Instrument

During the end of April and the beginning of May of 1981, two questionnaires, two self-addressed stamped envelopes, and directions for completing and returning the questionnaires to the Department of Family and Child Ecology, were mailed to each couple who had consented to participate in the follow-up study. Husbands and wives were asked to complete the questionnaires separately, (as they also had done in the original study), and then to return them in the envelopes provided for this purpose when they had finished. Couples were asked not to discuss the questionnaire items with their spouses until they each had completed their questionnaire.

Questionnaires were received by the researchers from the mid-part of May until the end of June. At the end of this time period, 42 couples out of the 56 couples who had consented to participate in the follow-up study, had returned completed questionnaires. Three questionnaires could

not be used as their spouses' questionnaires were never received by the researchers. No other questionnaires were received by the researchers after the end of June.

The 42 couples who completed follow-up questionnaires represented 21% of the 199 couples who are assumed to have received the letter of inquiry asking for participation in the follow-up quality of life research. This is a high rate of return given the four year time span since the occurrence of the original study, and the fact that the couples were not paid for their participation in the follow-up study as they had been paid in the original quality of life study. This would suggest that these 42 couples were genuinely interested in the research topic and how factors/ situations influence a person's quality of life. Examination of the follow-up study questionnaires completed by the 42 couples indicated a very low level of collusion between the husbands' and wives' responses. This proportionally high rate of participation in the follow-up study lends support to the feasibility and desirability of conducting longitudinal research studies.

The Follow-up Quality of Life Study Sample

The follow-up study sample consisted of 42 couples who were participants in the 1977-1978 Quality of Life Research Project. All of the husbands and wives were residents of Oakland County, Michigan, with the rural, suburban, and urban areas being represented in the sample. The overwhelming majority of the couples were white (97.5%); 2.5% of the couples were from the black ethnic group. The average ages of the spouses in the sample was 41.1 years for the wives, and 42.6 years for the husbands. On the average, these couples had been married for 19 years, with 97% indicating that this was their first marriage. The

majority of the couples had completed high school or college, and 25% of the husbands and 17% of the wives had completed some post-bachelor's degree study.

The couples had an average of 2.4 children still living at home, with sixty percent of these children between the ages of 10-19 years. Five percent of the couples had extended family members living in their households. The average of the total number of persons per household was 4.5 persons. Most of these families were Protestant (46.3%), and one-third were Catholic. Seven percent of the families were Jewish, and another 12% expressed no religious preference, or indicated that they were members of the Mormon or Greek Orthodox churches.

Ninety-five percent of the husbands were currently working. Only 5% were unemployed or retired. A third of the husbands occupied management or administrative positions, and another thirty-one percent were professional or technical workers, such as engineers or science technicians. Twenty-one percent of the husbands were craftsmen or foremen, five percent were machine and transport operators, and five percent were salesmen. On the average, the husbands worked between 40-50 hours per week. Seven percent of the husbands also were employed in a second job.

Among the wives, forty-seven percent were currently working and five percent indicated that they were currently looking for employment. Forty-three percent of the wives were full-time homemakers, with five percent of these women also attending college on a part-time basis. Of the women working outside the home, eleven percent of these women were professional or technical workers, such as school teachers or librarians, and twenty percent were clerical or kindred workers, such as secretaries or bookkeepers. Seven percent of the wives were sales workers, 2.5%

were public service workers, and 2.5% of these women were disabled. Out of the 20 working women in the sample, five percent held management or administrative positions, such as a sales representative for a manufacturing industry. The wives worked on the average of 20-40 hours per week at a paid job, and five percent also were employed in a second job.

The average yearly income for the 42 couples was between \$30,000-\$35,000. It should be noted, however, that 21% of the couples earned over \$50,000 per year. The average yearly income earned exclusively by the wives was between \$5,000-\$10,000. In many families, the wives' yearly earnings were shown to increase the total family income by 25%-50%, especially in those families with an income between \$20,000 - \$30,000 a year.

Comparison of the Follow-up Study Sample to the Original Study Sample

In many respects, the follow-up study sample is very similar to the sample of couples who participated in the 1977-1978 Quality of Life Project. The couples in the follow-up study, based on factors of residency in Oakland County, age of respondents, number of children and other persons living in the household, number of women working outside the home, and the occupations of the wives, were comparable to the sample studied in the original research project.

Differences between the two samples tend to be in relation to ethnicity, family income, spouses' educational levels, and the occupations of the husbands. In the follow-up study, 97.5% of the couples were white and 2.5% were black. This is in contrast to the 81% white couples and the 18% black couples who participated in the original study. In relation to the variables of family income, couples' educational attainment and husbands' occupations, it would appear that the couples in the follow-up

sample enjoy higher levels of income, have attained higher levels of education, and are more likely to have the husband employed in a white collar as opposed to a blue collar occupation. These factors tend to suggest that the couples in the follow-up sample are somewhat more indicative of the higher socioeconomic status couples represented in the original study.

Categorization of the Couples

After preliminary analysis of the data was underway, four groups of couples were identified. These groups were the: 1) agreeing couples, 2) the disagreeing couples, 3) the shared meaning couples, and 4) the non-shared meaning couples. Membership in each group was based on two criteria: 1) the number of questions on which the response of one spouse exactly corresponded with the response of the other spouse, and 2) the difference scores of the couples' (the number of categories separating the husbands' responses from the wives' responses) on each questionnaire item pertinent to the group of couples being selected. The second criterion was included with the reasoning that, although the number of questions upon which the couples agree or disagree is important, for the couples who disagree, knowledge of the total number of questions upon which they disagree does not indicate the extent of the disagreement between the spouse' responses. Did these couples slightly disagree, or did they disagree to a large extent? In consideration of this fact, the second criterion was included in the requirements for group selection.

A. The Agreeing Couples

The agreeing and disagreeing couples were chosen from the couples' responses on the questionnaire items pertaining to the perceived frequency of the occurrence of shared activities (i.e. questionnaire items: 2.1a,

2.2a, 2.3a, 2.4a, 2.5a). For these questions, the couples were asked to estimate the frequency with which they engaged in specific shared activities with their spouses using a scale from 1 (never) to 9 (about 2-3 times each day).

The two requirements which all agreeing couples had to fulfill were: 1) the couples' difference scores could not exceed 0 or 1 categories of difference on four out of the five (80%) questionnaire items pertaining to the frequency of spousal shared activities, and 2) the couples' difference scores had to be 0 on at least two of the questionnaire items. For example, if a couple agreed on the frequency of engaging in five shared activities, with a couple difference score of 0 or 1 on all five of the questionnaire items, the difference between the two spouses' responses had to be 0 on at least two of the five questionnaire items pertaining to those shared activities.

The 80% demarkation point was arbitrarily chosen after reviewing the aggregate responses of the couples on these five questionnaire items. On the average, most couples with a difference score of 0 or 1, agreed on 3 out of the 5 questions. To discriminate those couples who tended to agree most frequently on these shared activity items, the demarkation point was set at four questions.

The 0-1 categories of difference allowed between the couples' responses was designated to identify those couples whose responses were most nearly the same, if not identical to their spouses' responses. A couple difference score of 1 (i.e. 1 category difference between the husbands' response and the wife's response) was not considered to be so great as to preclude its usefulness in determining those couples who most generally agreed on the frequency of participating in specific shared

activities. A difference score of 2 - 8, however, tended to show too much variability in the couples' responses, and therefore, couples with difference scores greater than 1 were not used in the selection of the agreeing couples.

Sixteen couples eventually were identified who met both of the requirements for the agreeing couples.

B. The Disagreeing Couples

The criteria used for the disagreeing couples were: 1) couples had to disagree on at least 2 out of the 5 questionnaire items relating to spousal shared activities, and 2) the couples' difference scores had to be between 2 - 8.

The critical element in this definition was the couple difference score. The couple difference score measures the variability of two spouses' responses to the same questionnaire item. For example, a husband responds that he and his wife eat out at a restaurant about once a month (a score of 4 on the 8 point scale), and his wife reports that they eat out at a restaurant about 3-4 times each week (a score of 6 on the 8 point scale). This couple's difference score is the absolute value of 2. * This score shows the range of the difference between the two scores, which in this case, shows a high degree of variability between the two spouses' responses.

The demarkation point for the couple difference scores was set at 2 - 8 categories of difference, as the couple difference scores of 1

* It should be noted that no negative scores were used in the computation of the couple difference scores. This primarily was done as the purpose was to determine the extent/range of the variability in the couples' responses and not the direction of the difference.

category of difference were not highly discriminative of the couples who most generally disagreed in relation to the frequency of engaging in spousal shared activities. The couple difference scores of 2 or more categories of difference were much more accurate in the assessment of the majority of these couples' responses (i.e. how frequently, or how closely the husbands and wives' responses corresponded with their spouses).

The criterion requiring the couples to disagree on at least 2 out of the 5 questionnaire items relating to spousal shared activities, was determined after studying the couples' aggregate responses to these questionnaire items. The majority of the husbands and wives disagreed with their spouses on one question relating to spousal shared activities, with a couple difference score of 2 or more categories. To identify those couples who disagreed more frequently on the shared activity items with a couple difference score of 2 or more categories, the demarkation point arbitrarily was set at two or more questions upon which the couples had to disagree with a difference score corresponding to 2 or more categories.

Twelve couples eventually were categorized into the disagreeing couples' group.

C. The Shared Meaning Couples

The shared meaning and the non-shared meaning couples were selected after examining the couples' aggregate responses to the shared meaning questionnaire items (i.e. 2.1b, 2.2b, 2.3b, 2.4b, 2.5b, and 3.5b). For these questions, couples were asked to state how they defined a specific shared activity using a list of four alternative definitions. The couples also had the option of writing in their own response if they did not find their own definition of the shared activity to be similar to any of the definitions given in the list of alternatives.

The criteria for the shared meaning couples were: 1) husbands and wives had to agree with their spouses' responses on 4 out of the 6 shared meaning questions, and 2) the couples' difference scores could not exceed 0 categories of difference.

The first requirement was determined after studying the couples' aggregate responses to the shared meaning questions. On the average, the husbands and wives agreed with their spouses' responses on 2.5 of the shared meaning questionnaire items. Taking the couples' average into consideration, the demarkation point for the number of questions upon which the couples should agree was set at 4 out of the 6 shared meaning questions or 66%.

One of the shared meaning questions, 2.5b, which asked the couples to state the meaning of "entertainment," was composed of seven parts. In order for couples to get credit for agreeing on this questionnaire item, they had to agree on four out of the seven definitions of the word "entertainment" included in question 2.5b.

Couples were required to have a couple difference score of 0 on each shared meaning questionnaire item. A couple difference score of 0 was chosen since each of the alternative ways of defining a shared activity given in the questionnaire was different and generally distinct from the other alternatives. Therefore, the extent of the disagreement between spouses' responses was not an issue in the selection of the shared meaning couples. The couples either defined the shared activity in the same way, or they ascribed a different meaning to the shared activity under question.

Eleven couples eventually were placed in the shared meaning couples' group.

D. The Non-Shared Meaning Couples

The requirements for the non-shared meaning couples were: 1) the husbands and wives had to disagree with their spouses' responses on 4 out of the 6 shared meaning questionnaire items, and 2) the couples' difference scores had to be greater than 0.

On the average, the 42 couples disagreed on 3 of the shared meaning questionnaire items. In order to discriminate those couples who generally disagree on the shared meaning questionnaire items, the demarkation point for the number of required discrepant responses on the shared meaning questions was set at 4 or more disagreeing responses for each couple.

The couples' difference scores had to be greater than 0 to be classified in the non-shared meaning group. A couple difference score of 0 would be indicative of a couple who did not disagree on the questionnaire item. A couple with a difference score of 0, therefore, would not meet the first requirement for classification in the non-shared meaning group.

Sixteen couples eventually were selected who were classified as non-shared meaning couples.

The 42 Couples' Distribution into Agree-Disagree, Shared and Non-Shared Meaning, and Neutral Categories

After the four groups of couples had been selected, it was noticed that some couples were distributed into as many as three different groups, while eight of the 42 couples were not included in any of the four groups of couples. Table 1 gives the distribution of the couples into the groups of: the agreeing couples, the disagreeing couples, the shared meaning couples, the non-shared meaning couples, and the

Table 1: The 42 Couples' Distribution into Agree-Disagree, Shared and Non-Shared Meaning, and Neutral Categories

	Agreeing Couples	Disagreeing Couples	Neutral	Total
Shared Meaning Couples	7	3	1	= 11
Non-Shared Meaning Couples	6	5	5	= 16
Neutral	3	4	8	= 15
Total	= 16	12	14	= 42

neutral couples. This table is cross-tabulated so that it is possible to determine the number of couples who were classified into one or more of these couples' groups. The table should be read from top to bottom or from left to right. For example, to study the distribution of the disagreeing couples, one would find the disagreeing couples' heading located on the top, center of Table 1. Reading down the column, the table indicates that three of the disagreeing couples were also shared meaning couples, and five of the disagreeing couples were also non-shared meaning couples. Four of the disagreeing couples are neither shared or non-shared meaning couples. The total number of disagreeing couples is twelve, which is given in the bottom line of the table.

As can be seen from Table 1, there were 16 agreeing couples, 12 disagreeing couples, 11 shared meaning couples, 16 non-shared meaning couples, and 8 totally neutral couples (i.e. couples who were not classified into any of the four groups of couples). There were 14 couples who were not members of either the shared meaning or the non-shared meaning couples' groups, and 15 of the couples in the sample were not members of either the agreeing or disagreeing couples' groups. The total number of couples in the sample, 42, is given in the bottom right-hand side of the table.

Description of the Agreeing and
the Disagreeing Couples

A. Description of the Agreeing Couples

The sixteen agreeing couples had an average of two children and no other relatives living in their households. The wives were an average age of 43 years, and the agreeing husbands were on the average of 44.7 years of age. These couples had been married approximately 22 years, with 91% of the husbands and wives indicating that this was their first marriage. All of the sixteen couples were white, with 56.3% of these couples listing their religion as Protestant, 34.3% as Catholic, and 9% of the couples indicating that they were members of another religious group or had no religious affiliation.

The average income of the agreeing couples was between \$35,000-\$39,999 a year. The average level of education that the couples had completed was between 1 - 3 years of college. Ninety-four percent of the husbands were currently working, and 6% were retired. Seventy-five percent of the husbands were employed in professional-technical, management, administrative or sales positions. Another 18% of the husbands were craftsmen. Of the wives, 50% were homemakers. Twenty-five percent of the wives who worked outside the home were employed in professional-technical, management, administrative or sales positions. Twelve percent were crafts or service workers.

B. Description of the Disagreeing Couples

The twelve disagreeing couples had an average of three children, and no other relatives living in their households. The average age of the wives was 37.7 years, and 40.6 years was the average age of the

disagreeing husbands. The couples had been married approximately 16.6 years, and 91% of the couples indicated that this was their first marriage. Ninety-one percent of the disagreeing couples were white, and 9% were black. Fifty-four percent of the couples were Protestant, 18% were Catholic, 9% were Jewish, and 18% expressed no religious affiliation or were members of another religious sect.

The average income of the disagreeing couples was between \$30,000-\$34,999 a year, and the majority of the husbands and wives in this group had received their college bachelor's degree. All of the disagreeing husbands were currently employed. Sixty-seven percent of these husbands held professional-technical, management, administrative, or sales positions. Thirty-three percent of the husbands were craftsmen, foreman, machinists, or truck drivers. Forty-five percent of the disagreeing wives were homemakers. Of these women working outside the home, 27% were professional-technical or sales workers, and another 27% were secretarial-clerical workers.

C. Comparison of the Agreeing and the Disagreeing Couples

In general, there were many differences between the agreeing and the disagreeing couples. These couples differed in relation to the age of the spouses, number of children present in the household, number of years married, family income, and the occupations of the husbands. The agreeing husbands and wives were on the average of from four to six years older than the disagreeing husbands and wives. The agreeing couples tended to have one less child than the disagreeing couples, and to have been married for approximately five and one half years longer than the disagreeing couples. The agreeing couples had slightly higher incomes

than the disagreeing couples, and the agreeing husbands were employed in more professional or white collar occupations (75%) than were the disagreeing husbands (68%). The disagreeing couples, however, had attained a slightly higher level of education than had the agreeing husbands and wives.

Description of the Shared Meaning
and the Non-Shared Meaning Couples

A. Description of the Shared Meaning Couples

The shared meaning couples had an average of 2.5 children, and no other relatives living in their households. The average age of the shared meaning wives was 40.5 years, and 40.6 years was the average age of the shared meaning husbands. All of the eleven shared meaning couples were white, and the majority of these couples had achieved an educational level of between 1 - 4 years of college study. The shared meaning couples had been married on the average of 19.5 years, with 91% of the couples indicating that this was their first marriage. Fifty percent of the couples were Protestant, 23% were Catholic, 18% were members of another religious sect, and 9% of the couples indicated no religious preference.

The average yearly income for these couples was between \$30,000-\$34,999. Ninety-one percent of the shared meaning husbands were presently working, and 9% were retired. The majority of the husbands were professional-technical workers (64%), 18% held management or administrative positions, and another 18% were mechanics or repairmen. Of the shared meaning wives, 27% were homemakers, and another 27% were professional-technical workers, managers, administrators, or sales clerks. Thirty-six percent of the wives were employed in clerical or secretarial positions, and 9% of the wives were crafts workers.

B. Description of the Non-Shared Meaning Couples

The non-shared meaning couples had an average of 2.5 children, and no other relatives living in their households. The average age of the wives was 42 years, and the average age of the non-shared meaning husbands was 44 years. All of the sixteen non-shared meaning couples were white, and had achieved an educational level of approximately 1 - 3 years of college. The couples had been married on the average of 19.7 years, and 91% of these couples indicated that this was their first marriage. Forty percent of these couples were Protestant, 34% were Catholic, 18% were Jewish, and 6% were members of another religious group or expressed no religious preference.

The average yearly income of the couples was between \$30,000-\$34,999. Ninety-four percent of the husbands were currently working, and 6% were unemployed. Sixty-seven percent of the working husbands were employed in professional-technical, management, administrative, or sales positions. Thirty-three percent of the non-shared meaning husbands were foremen, mechanics, or machinists. Of the non-shared meaning wives, one-third of these women were homemakers. Twenty-seven percent of the women who worked outside of the home held professional-technical positions. Thirteen percent were salesworkers, and another 13.4% of the non-shared meaning wives were secretarial or clerical workers.

C. Comparison of the Shared Meaning and the Non-Shared Meaning Couples

In general, the shared meaning and the non-shared meaning couples were very similar in relation to the number of children living in their households, family income, religion, race, number of years married, and the educational attainment of both of the spouses. The major differences

between the shared meaning and the non-shared meaning couples were in relation to the occupations of the husbands and wives in both of those groups. The shared meaning husbands were employed in more professional or white collar jobs (82%) than were the non-shared meaning husbands (67%), while one-third of the non-shared meaning husbands were employed in blue collar occupations as compared to less than one-fifth of the shared meaning husbands. Among the wives, more of the shared meaning wives (63%) were employed than the non-shared meaning wives (53%). However, more of the non-shared meaning wives held professional-technical, or management or administrative positions (27%) than did the shared meaning wives (18%). The majority of the shared meaning wives were clerical or secretarial workers (36.4%) as compared with 18.4% of the non-shared meaning wives.

Overall, there were few differences between the shared meaning and the non-shared meaning couples in relation to selected demographic variables.

Methods of Analysis

The analysis of the data basically was descriptive in nature. The data from the follow-up questionnaires were key punched onto cards, and were analyzed using the procedures of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequency scores for each of the questionnaire items were calculated for each of the individual husband-wife couples, and also for the husbands as a group and the wives as a group. A couple difference score (i.e. the resultant value when one spouse's score is subtracted from the other spouse's score) was calculated for each husband-wife couple, which was used to determine the amount of

variability and consensus between the pairs in the sample. Differences between the husbands' and wives' responses to the questionnaire items were then described.

Based on the amount of agreement between the responses of the individual couples, four groups of husband-wife couples were determined: the agreeing couples, the disagreeing couples, the shared meaning couples, and the non-shared meaning couples. Differences between: 1) the agreeing couples and the disagreeing couples, and 2) the shared meaning and the non-shared meaning couples in relation to satisfaction with communication in the family, family life, marriage, and life as a whole were determined with statistical T-tests with a significance level of .05. This significance level was chosen since it provided the best possibility of guarding against a type I error: rejecting a true hypothesis, given the testing situations.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: The frequency rates reported by the husbands in relation to the occurrence of shared activities and exchanges will be higher than the frequency rates reported by the wives.

This hypothesis was not supported upon examination of the couple data. There were twelve questionnaire items to which hypothesis one referred. Five of these questions (i.e. 2.1a, 2.2a, 2.3a, 2.4a, 2.5a) asked the husbands and wives to estimate the frequency with which they engaged in specific shared activities with their spouses. The other seven questions asked the couples to estimate, based on their own perceptions, the frequency with which their spouse performed some type of shared exchange for them (i.e. questionnaire items: 3.1a, 3.2a, 3.3a, 3.4a, 3.5a, 3.6a, 3.7a).

As can be seen from Table 2, the husbands' frequency scores were greater than the wives' frequency scores on only seven out of the twelve questionnaire items. The frequency scores of the wives were found to be higher than the husbands' frequency scores on five of the twelve questions. What is interesting about the responses of the couples is the fact that the husbands' frequency scores were higher on the tangible questionnaire items (T), while the wives' frequency scores were higher on all but one of the intangible questionnaire items (I). In other words, the wives

Table 2. Couples' Frequency Rates of Shared Activities and Exchanges

	Husbands' \bar{X} Score	Wives' \bar{X} Score
<u>How often do you and your mate:</u>		
2.1a. spend time together - just (I)* the two of you?	6.14	6.02
2.2a. spend an hour or more just (I) talking?	5.35	5.80
2.3a. discuss personal feelings? (I)	4.70	4.97
2.4a. eat at a restaurant without (T)** your children?	3.80	3.56
2.5a. go to a movie or other (T) entertainment?	4.07	4.07
<u>How often does your mate:</u>		
3.1a. make you feel like an (I) important person?	5.07	5.41
3.2a. tell or show you that he/ (I) she admires and respects you?	5.30	5.55
3.3a. make you feel comfortable (T) in your home?	6.77	6.14 ^a
3.4a. tell or show you his/her love? (I)	6.17	6.90 ^a
3.5a. give you some new information? (T)	6.53	6.24
3.6a. give you his/her opinion? (T)	6.58	5.78
3.7a. help you solve a problem or (T) make a decision?	5.36	4.95

* I = intangible questionnaire item

** T = tangible questionnaire item

a - significant at .05

(Scores were determined using the following rating scale: 1 = never, 2 = about once a year, 3 = about 6 times a year, 4 = about once each month, 5 = about once each week, 6 = about 3-4 times each week, 7 = about once each day, 8 = about 2-3 times each day).

tended to report higher frequency scores in relation to those activities and exchanges which were much more subjective or intrinsic in nature, while the husbands' frequency scores were higher on the more tangible or concrete shared activities and exchanges. The only intangible item on which the husbands scored higher than the wives was the question which asked the couples to estimate how much time they spent alone together with their mate.

One possible explanation for the husbands and wives' scores on the shared activity items is that women, oftentimes, are socialized to be more evaluative, introspective or aware of personal relationships than, traditionally, are men. Perhaps the wives in the sample tended to be more contemplative of their relationship with their spouses than the husbands. The wives, therefore, may have been able to recall the frequency with which they engaged in the shared activities with their spouses at a greater rate than the husbands in the sample. This could have accounted for the higher frequency scores of the wives on the intangible shared activity items.

In relation to the shared exchange items, if the frequency scores of the husbands and wives are an accurate assessment of the relationships between the couples in the sample, it would appear that the husbands tend to show more affection or respect to their wives than the wives show to their husbands. These scores could reflect the couples' actual relationships, and/or perceptual differences between the husbands and wives in relation to these shared exchange items. In other words, the couples actually may exchange items with the frequency which was reported here, or alternatively, the husbands and wives actually may be exchanging these items on a more equal basis, but the wives are perceiving

that they are receiving more sharing from their husbands, than the husbands in return, perceive that they are receiving from their wives. Thus, perceptual differences between the husbands and wives also could account for the higher frequency scores reported by the wives.

Hypothesis 2: The scores of the husbands as a group and the wives as a group will show less variability on the tangible shared activity items than on the intangible shared activity items.

This hypothesis was not supported. This hypothesis referred to the five shared activity items on the questionnaire (i.e. 2.1a, 2.2a, 2.3a, 2.4a, 2.5a). The tangible shared activities were eating at a restaurant without the children, and attending a movie or participating in another form of entertainment. The intangible shared activities concerned spending time alone together with your mate, spending time just talking, and discussing personal feelings.

The variability in the shared activity scores of the husbands and wives as separate groups was determined by taking the absolute value of the average of the wives' frequency scores minus the average of the husbands' frequency scores on each of the shared activity items. Table 3 gives the mean for the groups of husbands and wives on each shared activity item, and the resultant numerical difference between the husbands and wives' mean scores.

In general, the tangible shared activity items showed less variability between the husbands and wives' scores than the intangible questionnaire items. One tangible shared activity item, going to a movie or other entertainment, had a difference score of 0 between the husbands and wives' scores. The other tangible item had a difference score of .24. However, the intangible questionnaire item, spending time alone together, had a lower difference score than the tangible shared activity item

Table 3. Variability in the Husbands' and Wives' Responses to Shared Activity Items

	Husbands' \bar{X} Score	Wives' \bar{X} Score	Difference Score
<u>How often do you and your mate:</u>			
2.1a. - spend time together - (I)a just the two of you?	6.14	6.02	.12
2.2a. - spend an hour or (I) more just talking?	5.35	5.80	.45
2.3a. - discuss personal (I) feelings?	4.70	4.97	.27
2.4a. - eat at a restaurant (T)b without the children?	3.80	3.56	.24
2.5a. - go to a movie or (T) other entertainment?	4.07	4.07	0

a I = intangible questionnaire items

b T = tangible questionnaire items

(Scores were determined using the following rating scale: 1 = never, 2 = about once a year, 3 = about 6 times a year, 4 = about once each month, 5 = about once each week, 6 = about 3-4 times each week, 7 = about once each day, 8 = about 2-3 times each day).

concerning eating at a restaurant without the children. The other difference scores for the intangible items, although larger than the two tangible shared activity items, were not large enough to conclude that there necessarily was a greater degree of variability between the couples' responses to the intangible shared activities than the couples' responses to the tangible shared activity items. The variability in the husbands' and wives' responses did not seem to depend on the tangible or intangible nature of the question per se, but rather on the content of the specific question being asked. For this reason, the hypothesis was judged to be false. In general, the tangible shared activity items showed less variability than the intangible shared activity items, but not in every instance. The content of the question being asked, whether tangible or intangible in nature, appeared to be more indicative of how variable the husbands' and wives' responses to a question would be, and not the tangibility or intangibility of the shared activity itself.

Hypothesis 3: The husbands as a group and the wives as a group will define and/or ascribe similar meanings to those shared activities which are more tangible in nature than those which are more intangible in nature.

This hypothesis was not supported. The husbands and wives as separate groups did not define and/or ascribe any more similarly those shared activities which were tangible in nature than those shared activities which were more intangible in nature. This hypothesis referred to the shared activity questions: 2.1b, 2.2b, 2.3b, 2.4b, 2.5b, and 3.5b. On these questionnaire items, the couples were asked to choose one of the four alternative ways of defining the shared activity under question. The couples also had the option of writing in their own definition for the item if their way of defining the shared activity was not given in

Table 4. Husbands' and Wives' Responses to the Shared Meaning Questions

Husbands' Responses (N=42)	Wives' Responses (N=42)	
		2.1b. <u>Spending time together generally means:</u>
5 (11.9%)	4 (9.5%)	- watching television, playing cards
8 (19.0%)	5 (11.9%)	- talking about our lives or each other
8 (19.0%)	7 (16.7%)	- going to dinner or a movie to be by ourselves
16 (38.1%)	22 (52.4%)	- any activity or time when we are alone together during the day
1 (2.4%)	3 (7.1%)	- other
		2.2b. <u>"Just talking" generally means:</u>
14 (33.3%)	12 (28.6%)	- talking about our interests, hobbies, or daily events.
15 (35.7%)	21 (50.0%)	- talking about our lives, family or each other
6 (14.3%)	3 (7.1%)	- making plans or a decision
3 (7.1%)	0 (00.0%)	- talking about a serious problem or situation
1 (2.4%)	3 (7.1%)	- other
		2.3b. <u>Personal feeling usually are:</u>
7 (16.7%)	12 (28.6%)	- feelings about things that are important to me
4 (9.5%)	0 (00.0%)	- strong emotions such as "love" or "hate"
19 (45.2%)	16 (38.1%)	- feelings which are private and are shared only with those persons very close to me
9 (21.4%)	13 (31.0%)	- anything that I feel is a personal feeling
0 (00.0%)	1 (2.4%)	- other

Table 4 (cont'd).

Husbands' Responses (N=42)	Wives' Responses (N=42)	
		2.4b. <u>To me, a restaurant is:</u>
12 (28.6%)	10 (23.8%)	- any restaurant, cafe, or fast-food place located outside the home
5 (11.9%)	11 (26.2%)	- any eating place except a fast-food restaurant
19 (45.2%)	15 (35.7%)	- a place where you are served by a waiter or a waitress
4 (9.5%)	6 (14.3%)	- are served by a waiter/waitress, are not casually dressed, and it is more of a special occasion
0 (00.0%)	0 (00.0%)	- other
		2.5b. <u>The word "entertainment" means:</u>
9 (21.4%)	9 (21.4%)	- playing a sport together
16 (38.1%)	12 (28.6%)	- playing cards or going shopping
23 (54.8%)	20 (47.6%)	- visiting friends/relatives
9 (21.4%)	7 (16.7%)	- going to a bar or a pub for a drink or to dance
14 (33.3%)	9 (21.4%)	- going to a sports event
32 (76.2%)	33 (78.6%)	- going to a dinner, a concert or a play
5 (11.9%)	6 (14.3%)	- other
		3.5b. <u>"Giving information" usually means:</u>
13 (31.0%)	18 (42.9%)	- talking about the day's events or the news
19 (45.2%)	16 (38.1%)	- telling me something that happened at work, at home, or with the children

Table 4 (cont'd)

Husbands' Responses (N=42)	Wives' Responses (N=42)	
		3.5b (cont'd)
3 (7.1%)	1 (2.4%)	- telling me of his/her plans for the day or week, etc.
3 (7.1%)	3 (7.1%)	- telling me about his/her feelings about a situation
1 (2.4%)	1 (2.4%)	- other

one of the four alternatives. The only exception to this format was question 2.5b, in which couples were asked to answer "yes" or "no" to seven questions stating alternative meanings for the word "entertainment" (see Table 4 and Appendix C).

In examining the responses of the husbands and wives to these questionnaire items, it was found that the husbands and wives were quite similarly divided in the responses that they chose for each of the six questions. The husbands and wives in the sample chose the alternative that best described the meaning which they themselves gave to the activity under question. The responses given by the husbands and wives were just as variable on the tangible shared activity items as they were on the intangible shared activity items. The only tangible shared activity item on which the husbands' and wives' responses showed a high degree of agreement, was question 2.5b and its seven alternative meanings for the word "entertainment" (refer to Table 4).

Hypothesis 4: The shared meaning couples will agree more on the frequency of participating in shared activities with their spouses than the non-shared meaning couples.

This hypothesis was supported. In general, the shared meaning couples showed higher levels of agreement in relation to the frequency with which they engaged in shared activities with their spouses than did the non-shared meaning couples. Table 5 shows the percentage of the couples in each group whose responses exactly agreed with their spouses responses, or whose responses differed from their spouses' by one or two categories of difference, on each of the five shared activity items. As the table indicates, the shared meaning couples agreed with a couple difference score of 0 on three out of the five shared activity items. Only on the shared activity item in relation to discussing personal feelings, did the non-shared meaning couples tend to agree to a more noticeable extent than the shared meaning couples. The non-shared meaning couples tended to have a couple difference score of 1 on most of the shared activity items, indicating that the non-shared meaning couples generally disagreed with their spouses' responses by 1 category of difference.

An interesting fact is that the shared meaning couples showed more agreement on the tangible shared activity items than did the non-shared meaning couples. This particularly was true in relation to the question concerning the frequency of eating at a restaurant without the children. Over 70% of the shared meaning couples, as compared to 26% of the non-shared meaning couples, agreed with their spouses' response to this item. This high level of agreement between the shared meaning couples was directly indicative of the high degree of shared meaning among the husband-wife pairs in relation to the tangible questionnaire items.

Table 5. Shared Meaning and Non-Shared Meaning Couples' Agreement On the Frequency of Spousal Shared Activities

	Couple Difference Score = 0		Couple Difference Score = 1		Couple Difference Score = 2	
	S	N-S	S	N-S	S	N-S
2.1a - Spend time alone together	36.3%	26.6%	45.4%	36.3%	9.0%	26.6%
2.2a - Spend an hour or more just talking	36.3%	46.6%	36.3%	13.3%	27.2%	0%
2.3a - Discuss personal feelings	18.1%	20%	36.3%	53.3%	18.1%	13.3%
2.4a - Eat at a restaurant without the children	72.7%	26.6%	18.1%	66.6%	9.0%	0%
2.5a - Go to a movie or other entertainment	45.4%	33.3%	45.4%	60.0%	9.0%	6.6%
Shared Meaning Couples N = 11			Non-Shared Meaning Couples N = 16			

Hypothesis 5: Satisfaction with family communication, family life, marriage, and life as a whole will be higher for the agreeing couples than the disagreeing couples.

This hypothesis was not supported. Table 6 gives the mean satisfaction scores for the husbands and wives in the agreeing and the disagreeing couples' groups. The average of the husbands' and wives' mean scores on these four life domain variables were determined for the husbands and wives in both the agreeing couple's group and the disagreeing couple's group. T-tests were then completed comparing the agreeing couples and the disagreeing couples on all four of these satisfaction variables. No significant differences were found between

Table 6. Agreeing and Disagreeing Husbands' and Wives' Satisfaction With Four Life Domains

	Agreeing Couples (N=16)		Disagreeing Couples (N=12)	
	<u>H</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>W</u>
Satisfaction with family communication *	5.87	5.62	5.33	5.58
Satisfaction with family life	5.93	5.75	6.08	5.66
Satisfaction with marriage	6.37	6.18	6.08	5.83
Satisfaction with life as a whole	5.81	5.75	5.58	5.58

* Respondents used the following rating scale: 1 = terrible, 2 = unhappy, 3 = mostly dissatisfied, 4 = mixed (equally satisfied as dissatisfied), 5 = mostly satisfied, 6 = pleased, 7 = delighted.

the mean scores of husbands and wives in either of these two groups at either the .10 or the .05 levels. As these differences in satisfaction were not statistically significant, this hypothesis was not supported.

In general, the agreeing couples were more satisfied with these four life domains than were the disagreeing couples. Satisfaction with family life, however, was highest for the disagreeing husbands than for either the disagreeing wives or the agreeing husbands and wives. The disagreeing husbands and wives were less satisfied with the communication in their families than the agreeing husbands and wives, which lends supported to the premise that these couples possibly are not communicating as optimally as they could be.

The mean scores of all the agreeing and disagreeing husbands and wives were in the mostly satisfied to pleased range. This would tend to indicate that all of the husbands and wives, regardless of their classification as either agreeing or disagreeing, view these four life domains in a positive manner and generally are satisfied with their lives as a whole.

Hypothesis 6: Satisfaction with family communication, family life, marriage, and life as a whole will be higher for the shared meaning couples than the non-shared meaning couples.

This hypothesis was supported. Table 7 gives the mean satisfaction scores for the agreeing and the disagreeing husbands and wives on all four satisfaction variables. In general, the shared meaning couples were more satisfied with family communication, family life, marriage, and life as a whole than the non-shared meaning couples. The shared meaning husbands tended to rate their satisfaction with these four domains quite

Table 7. Shared Meaning and Non-Shared Meaning Husbands' and Wives' Satisfaction With Four Life Domains

	Shared Meaning Couples (N=11)		Non-Shared Meaning Couples (N=16)	
	<u>H</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>W</u>
Satisfaction with family communication *	5.90	5.63	5.18	4.87
Satisfaction with family life	5.90	5.81	5.87	5.25
Satisfaction with marriage	6.36	6.09	5.75	5.25
Satisfaction with life as a whole	5.90	6.09	4.81	5.25
* Respondents used the following rating scale: 1 = terrible, 2 = unhappy, 3 = mostly dissatisfied, 4 = mixed (equally satisfied as dissatisfied), 5 = mostly satisfied, 6 = pleased, 7 = delighted.				

highly, particularly their marital satisfaction. Satisfaction with life as a whole, however, was higher for the shared meaning wives than for either the shared meaning husbands or the non-shared meaning husbands and wives. The non-shared meaning wives' satisfaction with these four variables was low in relation to the other three groups of husbands and wives. This particularly was true of the non-shared meaning wives' satisfaction with family communication. The non-shared meaning husbands, however, rated their satisfaction with life lower than either the non-shared meaning wives or the shared meaning husbands and wives.

To further examine these differences between the shared meaning and the non-shared meaning husbands and wives, the averages of the husbands' and wives' mean scores on these four satisfaction variables were determined for the couples in both of these groups. T-tests were completed between the shared meaning couples and the non-shared meaning couples on the satisfaction variables of family communication, family life, marriage, and life as a whole. As can be seen in Table 8, there were no statistical differences between the shared meaning and the non-shared meaning couples in relation to their satisfaction with their family lives. However, there were differences between these two groups of couples at the significance level of .05 regarding the life domain

Table 8. Results of the T-Tests Comparing the Shared Meaning and the Non-Shared Meaning Couples' Satisfaction With Four Life Domains

	Shared Meaning Couples (N=11)	Non-Shared Meaning Couples (N=16)	P
Satisfaction with family communication	5.77	5.03	.016*
Satisfaction with family life	5.86	5.56	.223
Satisfaction with marriage	6.22	5.50	.030*
Satisfaction with life as a whole	6.00	5.03	.001**
* significant at .05			
** significant at .001			

variables of marital satisfaction and satisfaction with family communication. There was a highly significant difference between the shared meaning couples and the non-shared meaning couples on the satisfaction variable of life as a whole. In relation to this variable, the shared meaning couples tended to assess their overall quality of life much more positively than the non-shared meaning couples.

In general, the results of these T-tests indicated that the shared meaning couples tended to be more satisfied with their marriages, family communication, and lives as a whole than the non-shared meaning couples.

Hypothesis 7: The wives as a group will be less satisfied with family communication, family life, marriage, and life as a whole than the husbands as a group.

This hypothesis was supported. Table 9 gives the husbands' and

Table 9. Husbands' and Wives' Overall Satisfaction With Four Life Domains

	Husbands (N=42)	Wives (N=42)	P
Satisfaction with family communication	5.35	5.21	.000
Satisfaction with family life	5.88	5.52	.018*
Satisfaction with marriage	5.90	5.66	.002**
Satisfaction with life as a whole	5.42	5.38	.000
* significant at .05			
** significant at .01			

the wives' mean satisfaction scores for the four life domains. The wives as a group were less satisfied than the husbands as a group on all four of the satisfaction variables. A significant difference at the .05 level was found between the husbands and wives in relation to their satisfaction with their family lives. A highly significant difference, however, was found between the marital satisfaction of the husbands and wives as separate groups. The wives expressed greater dissatisfaction with their marriages than did the husbands. The results of the T-test on all four of the life domain variables indicate that the husbands as a group perceive family communication, family life, marriage and life as a whole much more positively than the wives as a group.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What changes have occurred in the couples' lives since 1977-1978 in terms of the job situations of both spouses, number of persons living in the household, family income, clothing, housing, or other changes?

Some of the more notable changes in the couples' lives since 1977-1978 were:

- 1) 45% of the husbands and 45% of the wives experienced a change in their job situations. For many of these persons, these changes were promotions to a higher level job or to a higher level position with a new employer. Other persons had been laid off at some point during their four year period, which made it necessary for them to change jobs. Some women in the sample indicated that they had started back to work after voluntarily being unemployed for an extended period of time due to family obligations and responsibilities.

2) 14% of the husbands and 19% of the wives increased the amount and/or type of their education. Many of these persons had gone back to school to receive more training that would benefit them in their job situations. Others were going back to school to receive an advanced degree, or a second bachelor's degree which would enable them to switch to a different occupation.

3) 26% of the couples experienced a change in the number of persons living in their households. These changes generally reflected the number of young adults who left the households to attend college, begin a new job, or to get married.

4) 81% of the couples experienced changes in their family income. Although most families' incomes had increased since 1977-1978, few felt that their incomes had increased beyond what was necessary to keep up with the rising cost of living, or with the expenses of sending a son or daughter to college.

5) 14% of the couples experienced a change in their housing.

6) 19% of the husbands and 38% of the wives experienced a change in their clothing. These changes generally reflected the rising costs of clothing over the four year period, and the need by some of the newly employed wives for a wardrobe to wear to work.

7) Other family changes were mentioned by 8% of the couples. These changes included, for example, the serious illnesses of two of the wives in the past four years, a husbands' frustrations with a dissatisfying marriage, and a wife's increase in self-esteem since she started back to work.

Research Question 2: Are there shared activities for which spouses' frequency scores are comparable, and for which spouses' frequency scores are different?

In analyzing the individual couples' scores in relation to the shared activity items, it was found that the husband-wife pairs showed higher levels of agreement on the tangible shared activity items than on the intangible shared activity items. Table 10 shows the number and percentage of couples who had a couple difference score of 0 or 1 on the five shared activity items. Couples with a difference score of 0 agreed on the frequency of the occurrence of the specific shared activity. The couples with a difference score of 1, were those spouses whose responses differed from each others' by 1 category of difference. The third column in Table 10 gives the combined number and percentage of couples with a couple difference score of 0 or 1 on each of the five specific shared activity items.

As is indicated in Table 10, the 42 couples showed higher levels of agreement on the tangible shared activity items. In general, approximately two-thirds of the couples agreed on the intangible shared activity items, while 85% - 95% of the 42 couples in the sample agreed on the frequency with which they engaged in the tangible shared activity items.

Research Question 3: Are there shared activities which the husbands as a group and the wives as a group tend to define similarly and dissimilarly?

In general, there were no consistent differences between the ways in which the groups of husbands and wives perceived these five shared activities. Responses to all of the alternative ways of defining these shared activities were chosen with almost equal frequency by the

Table 10. Couples' Responses to the Questions Concerning the Frequency of Engaging in Shared Activities

	Couple Difference Score = 0	Couple Difference Score = 1	Combined Couple Difference Scores of 0 or 1
<u>How often do you and your mate:</u>			
2.1a. spend time together - just the (I)* two of you?	11 (26.2%)	17 (40.4%)	28 (66.6%)
2.2a. spend an hour or more just (I) talking?	15 (35.7%)	11 (26.2%)	26 (61.9%)
2.3a. discuss personal feelings (I)	10 (23.8%)	17 (40.4%)	27 (64.3%)
2.4a. eat at a restaurant without your (T)** children?	22 (52.4%)	18 (42.9%)	40 (95.2%)
2.5a. go to a movie or other (T) entertainment?	16 (38.1%)	20 (47.6%)	36 (85.7%)

* intangible questionnaire items

** tangible questionnaire items

husbands and wives in the sample (see Table 4).

In studying the ways which most couples define these five shared activities some interesting results were found:

1) To 52.4% of the wives, and 38.1% of the husbands, "spending time alone together" meant any activity or time when the couples were along together during the day.

2) 50% of the wives and 35.7% of the husbands defined "just talking" as talking with their spouse in relation to their lives, family or each other. Another 33.3% of the husbands, as compared to 28.6% of the wives, defined "just talking" as talking about interests, hobbies or daily events.

3) 45.2% of the husbands and 38.1% of the wives defined "personal feelings" as "feelings which are private and are kept to myself or shared only with those persons who are very close to me." The wives, however, were more divided in their definitions for this shared activity than the husbands, as another 28.6% of the wives defined "personal feelings" as feelings about things that were important to them, and yet another 31% of the wives defined "personal feelings" as meaning anything that they personally felt.

4) Both husbands and wives' responses to a definition for a restaurant were divided among a few of the alternatives given for that question. However, 45.2% of the husbands and 35.7% of the wives defined a restaurant as a place where persons are served by a waiter or a waitress.

5) To the husbands and wives in the sample, the word "entertainment" generally meant going to dinner, a concert or a play (i.e. husbands, 76.2%; wives, 78.6%), or visiting friends and relatives

(i.e. husbands 54.8%; wives 76.6%).

Research Question 4: Do the husbands as a group, (based on the report of their spouses), tend to perform specific exchanges differently than the wives as a group?

In general, the husbands as a group were not perceived to perform these seven specific shared exchanges any differently than the wives as a group (see Table 11). The husbands and wives tended to perform these shared exchanges quite similarly, except for points 2 and 3 given below. In these instances, the wives tended to provide more intrinsic forms of support than did the husbands as a group. Some of the ways in which these husbands and wives exchanges items were:

- 1) 54.8% * of the husbands and 50% of the wives were perceived as making their mates feel important by showing their spouses with their actions their love or need for them.
- 2) 42.9% of the husbands and 64.3% of the wives were perceived as showing their spouses admiration or respect by trusting and supporting them in their day to day lives.
- 3) 45.2% of the husbands and 64.3% of the wives were perceived as making their mates feel comfortable in their homes by trying to provide a relaxing and pleasant family atmosphere.
- 4) The spouses' exchange of love was perceived as being performed by most of the husbands and wives in the following three ways:
 - a) giving their mate a hug or a kiss, (husbands, 31%; wives, 33.3%),
 - b) telling their mate their love for them (husbands, 16.7%; wives 21.4%), and
 - c) 19% of the wives and 26.2% of the husbands reported

* Percentages are based on the perceptions of the husbands and wives in relation to each shared exchange. The percentages reported here, then, are the assessments given by the wives (i.e. the wives' frequency scores) of the husbands' performance of these shared activities, and vice versa.

Table 11. The Ways the Husbands and Wives Performed Specific Shared Exchanges

Husbands' Responses (N=42)	Wives' Responses (N=42)	
<u>How does your mate:</u>		
<u>3.1b. Make you feel like an important person?</u>		
8 (19.0%)	5 (11.9%)	- by telling me that he/she loves and needs me
21 (50.0%)	23 (54.8%)	- by showing me in his/her actions that he/she loves and needs me
6 (14.3%)	5 (11.9%)	- by giving me a compliment
3 (7.1%)	2 (4.8%)	- by telling me that he/she is proud of me
0 (00.0%)	3 (7.1%)	- other
<u>3.2b. Tell or show you that he/she admires and respects you?</u>		
4 (9.5%)	8 (19.0%)	- by listening to me when I express an opinion
2 (4.8%)	3 (7.1%)	- by accepting my beliefs and values
2 (4.8%)	6 (14.3%)	- by letting me have my own interests and goals
27 (64.3%)	18 (42.9%)	- by trusting and supporting me in our day to day lives
0 (00.0%)	6 (14.3%)	- other
<u>3.3b. Make you feel comfortable in your home?</u>		
27 (64.3%)	19 (45.2%)	- by providing a relaxing and pleasant family atmosphere
4 (9.5%)	5 (11.9%)	- by providing a clean, safe house or apartment
8 (19.0%)	13 (31.0%)	- by being sensitive to my emotional needs
0 (00.0%)	0 (00.0%)	- by keeping our house at a comfortable temperature
0 (00.0%)	2 (4.8%)	- other

Table 11 (cont'd).

Husbands' Responses (N=42)	Wives' Responses (N=42)	
		<u>How does your mate:</u>
		<u>3.4b. Tell or show you his/her love</u> <u>love?</u>
9 (21.4%)	7 (16.7%)	- by telling me with words that he/she loves me or needs me
14 (33.3%)	13 (31.0%)	- by giving me a hug or a kiss
4 (9.5%)	3 (7.1%)	- by making love to me
11 (26.2%)	8 (19.0%)	- my mate does not need to tell or show me his/her love. I just know that he/she loves me.
0 (00.0%)	6 (14.3%)	- other
		<u>3.5c. Give you new information?</u>
39 (92.9%)	36 (85.7%)	- by talking to me in person
0 (00.0%)	0 (00.0%)	- by writing me a note
1 (2.4%)	3 (7.1%)	- by telephoning me
0 (00.0%)	0 (00.0%)	- through such ways as gestures or facial expressions, without using words
0 (00.0%)	0 (00.0%)	- other
		<u>3.6b. Give you his/her opinion?</u>
31 (73.8%)	28 (66.7%)	- by discussing with me a part- icular situation or idea
0 (00.0%)	2 (4.8%)	- by telling or showing me that he/she approves of what I am going
4 (9.5%)	5 (11.9%)	- by criticizing me
5 (11.9%)	2 (4.8%)	- by telling or showing me that he/she disapproves of what I am doing
0 (00.0%)	3 (7.1%)	- other

Table 11. (cont'd).

Husbands' Responses (N=42)	Wives' Responses (N=42)	
		<u>How does your mate:</u>
		<u>3.7b. Help you solve a problem or</u> <u>make a decision?</u>
25 (59.5%)	27 (64.3%)	- by sitting down with me and discussing the problem and possible ways of solving it
9 (21.4%)	5 (11.9%)	- by offering his/her help and ideas whether or not I ask for them
3 (7.1%)	8 (19.0%)	- by offering his/her help and ideas only when I ask for them
1 (2.4%)	0 (00.0%)	- by referring me to some person or place who could help me if he/she is not able to
1 (2.4%)	0 (00.0%)	- other

that they intrinsically knew of their mates' love for them, and that they did not need to have their spouses verbally or physically express their love for them.

5) 85.7% of the husbands and 92.7% of the wives were perceived as giving their spouses some new information by talking to them in person.

6) 66.7% of the husbands and 73.8% of the wives were perceived as giving their mates their opinion by discussing with them a particular situation or idea.

7) 64.3% of the husbands and 59.5% of the wives were perceived as helping their mates solve a problem or make a decision by sitting down with them and discussing the problem and possible ways of solving it.

Research Question 5: How satisfied are the husbands as a group and the wives as a group in relation to: family income, standard of living, financial security, job, national government, clothing, housing, spare time activities, marriage, family life, communication in the family, and life as a whole?

Table 12 gives the husbands' and wives' mean scores for the twelve life domains. These scores are listed in rank order from the lowest to the highest for the husbands as a group and the wives as a group. Although there was little variability in the rank ordering of the twelve items, the mean scores of the groups of husbands and wives on each life domain did tend to vary between the two groups.

Table 12. Husbands' and Wives' Satisfaction With Twelve Life Domains

Husbands' \bar{X} Scores	Wives' \bar{X} Scores
3.69 - national government	3.71 - national government
4.47 - financial security	4.59 - financial security
4.83 - income	4.69 - income
4.88 - clothing	4.69 - clothing
4.94 - job	4.97 - job
5.00 - standard of living	5.00 - spare time activities
5.07 - spare time activities	5.21 - standard of living
5.35 - family communication	5.21 - family communication
5.42 - housing	5.38 - life as a whole
5.42 - life as a whole	5.47 - housing
5.88 - family life	5.52 - family life
5.90 - marriage	5.66 - marriage

* Respondents used the following rating scale: 1 = terrible, 2 = unhappy, 3 = mostly dissatisfied, 4 = mixed (equally satisfied as dissatisfied), 5 = mostly satisfied, 6 = pleased, 7 = delighted.

Both the wives as a group and the husbands as a group were most dissatisfied with the national government, their financial security, income, clothing, and their jobs. The husbands were somewhat more dissatisfied with their financial security than the wives, and the wives were more dissatisfied with their family incomes than the husbands. In general, the husbands and wives' dissatisfaction with these five variables tended to reflect the economic uncertainty felt by many Michigan residents during the spring of 1981. At that time, the state had the highest unemployment rate in the nation, and many workers were confronting lay-offs due to the slow-down of Michigan's industries, (the auto industry in particular). For this reason, both the husbands and wives in the sample seemed to be most concerned with the basics of life (i.e. income, financial security, employment, and clothing).

The husbands and wives appeared to be mostly satisfied with their standard of living, spare time activities, communication in the family, housing, lives as a whole, family lives, and their marriages. The only significant differences between the group of husbands' mean scores and the group of wives' mean scores in relation to the twelve life domains, concerned the variables of satisfaction with family life and marital satisfaction (see Table 9). On these two variable items, the husbands' satisfaction with these two life domains was found to be significantly higher than the satisfaction expressed by the wives. These differences are indicative of the fact that the husbands as a group tended to rate their satisfaction with their housing, family communication, lives as a whole, family lives and marriages more positively than did the wives as a group. Both the husbands and wives, however, did agree that the life domains of marriage, family life, life as a whole, housing, and

communication in the family were the most important variables influencing their life satisfaction.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

Spousal consensus has been the focus of extensive research. Study in this area can basically be attributed to the belief that spousal consensus can lead to increased understanding between marital partners, and of marital relations in general. Couples have been studied on a wide range of topics in relation to shared experiences, opinions, and viewpoints. The results of these studies generally have indicated that consensus among husbands and wives varies widely across studies concerned with the same topic, and from topic to topic in the same study. Currently, no reliable or invariable pattern of husband-wife responses has been found for specific research topics. Research in this area continues, however. A large portion of this research is concerned with the methodological issues surrounding survey data, and the development of reliable survey instruments. The present study also was concerned with these issues.

This research comprised a follow-up study to the 1977-1978 research project on the Perceived Quality of Life of Oakland County, Michigan Families. The follow-up study was instigated upon examination of the 237 husband-wife couples' responses to questions concerning the frequency of engaging in spousal shared activities and exchanges. It was noted that although many of these 237 husband-wife pairs disagreed

about such seemingly concrete shared activities as going to a movie, eating at a restaurant, or discussing personal feelings, the majority of these disagreeing couples were satisfied with their marriages and their lives as a whole. The couples did not appear to be dissatisfied with the amount of sharing that was present in their relationships with their spouses.

Upon further examination of the data, it was observed that the couples tended to agree more frequently on those shared activities which were more tangible in nature, as compared to those which were more intangible in nature. These findings suggested that the couples had a greater degree of shared meaning in relation to the tangible shared activity items than the intangible shared activity items. More specifically, it was projected that possibly the husbands and wives in the sample tended to define and/or perceive some situations differently than their spouses. This possibility raised questions as to whether the instrument employed in this portion of the questionnaire had given a valid measure of the participation rates of the couples in relation to these shared activities and exchanges, since these items were not specifically defined in the questionnaire. The couples, therefore, were able to interpret and define these shared activities and exchanges at their discretion.

In order to explore the possibility of differing perceptions and interpretations/definitions of words between the husbands and wives, the instrument used in the 1977-1978 quality of life research project was re-tested for measurement error in the spring of 1981. The sample that was surveyed in this follow-up study was composed of 42 of the 237 couples who had participated in the 1977-1978 research project. Two sections of

the original research questionnaire were modified so that in addition to stating the frequency with which they participated in twelve shared activities or exchanges, the couples were asked to indicate how they defined the shared activity or exchange under question. Couples were also asked to respond to demographic questions, and to rate their satisfaction with the following twelve domains: family income, standard of living, financial security, job, national government, clothing, housing, spare time activities, marriage, family life, communication in the family, and life as a whole. T-tests were used to investigate any significant differences between the husbands' and wives responses to the questionnaire items.

The major findings of the study were:

- 1) There were few differences in the aggregate responses of the groups of husbands and the groups of wives in relation to the shared activity and exchange questionnaire items.
- 2) The individual couples in the sample displayed higher levels of agreement on the tangible shared activity items than on the intangible shared activity items.
- 3) In general, satisfaction with family communication, family life, marriage, and life as a whole was higher for the agreeing couples than the disagreeing couples, even though these differences were not statistically different.
- 4) Satisfaction with family communication, family life, marriage, and life as a whole was higher for the shared meaning couples as compared to the non-shared meaning couples.
- 5) For this group of 42 couples, spousal consensus did not appear to be strongly related to marital satisfaction. The more

critical determinant of the couples' satisfaction with marriage appeared to be the amount of shared meaning between the spouses. The greater the degree of shared meaning, the more the couples tended to be satisfied with their marriages.

6) The wives as a group were less satisfied with family communication, family life, marriage, and life as a whole than the husbands as a group.

7) The husbands as a group did not tend to define shared activities any differently than the wives as a group.

8) The husbands as a group did not tend to perform shared exchanges (e.g. showing affection, giving new information) in a different manner than the wives as a group.

9) The husbands and wives expressed the most dissatisfaction and concern with the life domains of national government, financial security, income, employment, and clothing. In general, the husbands' and wives' responses reflected the economic uncertainty experienced by most Michigan residents during the spring of 1981, at which time the state of Michigan was in the midst of a severe recession.

10) The husbands and wives were most satisfied with the life domains of marriage, family life, life as a whole, and housing.

The results of the follow-up study concurred with those of Granbois and Willett (1974) and Van Es and Shingi (1972) in that the aggregate responses of the husbands as a group and the wives as a group were more similar than the responses of the individual husband-wife pairs. In general, the husbands and wives tended to respond with their own particular perceptions of the specific shared activities and

exchanges. This would tend to lend support to the idea that the discrepant responses between the husband-wife couples in the 1977-1978 quality of life study were partially due to perceptual differences between the spouses. The development of a more concrete instrument which was used in the follow-up study, tended to reduce and/or explain in more detail the responses, whether discrepant or consensual, given by the husband-wife couples on these questionnaire items. This only is one possible explanation for the couples' discrepant responses to the original quality of life questionnaire, however. There would be many other methodological or related issues which could have accounted for the husbands' and wives' responses to these shared activity and exchange questionnaire items. This directly emphasizes the need for more focused research in relation to the methodological issues of husband-wife or multi-family member survey techniques, including research which involves the re-testing of existing instruments and/or populations, as was done in this study.

Limitations

The generalizability of the results of this study are limited due to the characteristics of the sample involved in the research. The sample was small (N=42), and was mainly composed of couples from a high socioeconomic bracket. In general, the couples were well educated, had high incomes, and were employed in many professional or white collar occupations. Few of these couples indicated great dissatisfaction with any of the twelve life domains included in the questionnaire. All of these factors tend to indicate the skewedness of the population in relation to socioeconomic status and life satisfaction variables. The follow-up study sample is, however, somewhat similar to the 237 couples

who participated in the 1977-1978 Quality of Life Research Project. It can only be projected, though, as to what extent these results can be generalized to that population of couples.

Another limitation of this study is the small number of shared activity and exchange questions given in the research instrument. Also, the non-reciprocal nature of the exchange items tends to lessen their usefulness in drawing conclusions as to how frequently and in what ways the husband-wife pairs exchange intrinsic and extrinsic items. Only the spouses' perceptions of how their mates performed specific exchanges were gathered from the questionnaires. It would have been interesting to examine how closely, for example, a husband's perception of the way his wife performs a specific exchange coincided with the way his wife perceives that she performs the specific exchange.

A final limitation of the study is its broad focus. Although the questionnaire was not lengthy, the types of information included in the instrument were many and diversified. The study could have been more focused, including only shared activities or shared exchanges, for example, instead of both types of shared experiences between couples.

Regardless of these limitation, the follow-up study did meet its objective in testing hypotheses in relation to the reasons for the discrepant responses to the shared activity and exchange items given by the husband-wife couples in the original study. Possible explanations for the lack of spousal consensus on these questionnaire items, as well as implications for further research, resulted from the follow-up study, and consequently, the contributions made in these areas should not be overlooked.

Implications

The major implication of this study is the need for more research in relation to spousal consensus. Much research already has been completed in this area, but with inconclusive results. What is needed is more focused research on single topics, such as shared activities, tangible vs. intangible items, or spouses' response consistency to demographic questions. There also is a great need for the development of more refined instruments and survey research techniques to test couples on measures of consensus. Questionnaire items need to be specific and well-defined, so that there is some assurance of a degree of shared meaning between the husband-wife pairs in relation to these items.

The use of larger samples would be beneficial to research in this area. It would also be useful to develop more refined questionnaires, and then to use them to test many diverse samples of husbands and wives. Research of this type might lead to more conclusive reasons or determinants of spousal consensus and discrepant responses.

A second implication of this research is for education in relation to spousal discrepancies or possible male-female perceptual differences. If differences in perception do exist between persons of different sexes and/or ethnic backgrounds, persons should be made aware of this fact. Effective communication in male-female relationships, as in relationships of any type, is essential. Being aware of the fact that some people may define terms differently or ascribe different meanings to situations and activities, may enable persons to anticipate and/or better understand conflicts or behavior differences which may enter into a relationship. Couples would be better able to develop

shared meaning and conflict resolution strategies, which could enable persons to have more satisfying relationships. Instruction of this type would be suitable in marriage and family living classes, communication courses, and adult education classes.

A third implication of this research is in relation to marital counseling. The need for persons to be educated and made aware of possible perceptual differences is primary in relation to marital counseling. In addition to this fact, however, there is another aspect of which counselors should be aware. Oftentimes in counseling a couple, a therapist may employ such tools as marital rating scales, marital satisfaction tests, or interest tests. This is particularly true of premarital counseling, or marital enrichment weekend's materials. For therapists who utilize such instruments, it would be important for them to understand that males and females may not always interpret or define words or situations in the same manner. Consequently, the use of such tools for some couples could be less accurate and perhaps counter-productive. In these situations it would be necessary for therapists to either change the tools that they employ, or to point out to couples undergoing counseling the possibility of perceptual differences in their responses. The latter may be a good way to facilitate conflict-resolution, and increase the awareness and understanding of couples in relation to their mates. If couples understood the perceptions of their mates, they may be in a better position to enjoy more effective ways of dealing with conflicts that might arise in a relationship, as well as a more fulfilling marital relationship in general.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INQUIRY

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INQUIRY

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF HUMAN ECOLOGY
DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND CHILD ECOLOGY

EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824

19 March 1981

Dear Friend:

In the fall of 1977 and winter 1978 you participated in a Quality of Life study conducted by the College of Human Ecology at Michigan State University. You completed a questionnaire concerning various aspects of your life such as your spare time activities, your neighborhood, your marriage and family lives, your job and clothing. Your participation in this survey was very beneficial in helping to make that study a success and in giving us information on how people judge their Quality of Life.

We are now planning a follow-up study on couples who participated in the 1977-78 Quality of Life study. Many changes have occurred in Michigan's economy, and we are interested in seeing if economic and other conditions have affected persons' outlooks on their family life, and other aspects of their Quality of Life.

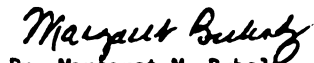
We would like both of you to participate in this follow-up survey. The follow-up questionnaire will be only 3-4 pages long and will take approximately twenty minutes to complete. The questionnaires will be mailed, to your home. After you have completed separate questionnaires they are to be returned to us in prepaid envelopes which we will provide. No interviewer will be delivering or picking up the questionnaires, as was the case in the original study.

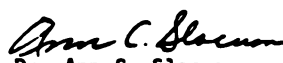
Enclosed with this letter is a postcard. Please complete this postcard and indicate whether or not you wish to participate in the follow-up survey. Please return the postcard even if you choose not to participate in the follow-up study. Mail the postcard by April 10.


If you do decide to participate you will receive the questionnaires before the end of April. As before, we will guarantee you complete anonymity, and your names will in no way be linked to your answers.

Because of budget restrictions we regret that we are unable to offer any payment for your participation. We hope, however, that you will participate in this follow-up study. A summary of the research findings will be sent to you when the study has been completed. If you have any questions about the study, please call either of the numbers listed below. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,


Dr. Margaret M. Bubolz
Professor
Family and Child Ecology
(517) 355-1895, or
353-5389


Dr. Ann C. Slocum
Associate Professor
Human Environment and
Design
(517) 353-5232, or
353-5389


Michelle Naughton
Graduate Assistant
Family and Child Ecology

MB:jus
enclosures

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

Quality of Life Follow-up Survey

_____ We agree to participate in the Quality of Life follow-up survey. We understand the purpose of the study and that our names will in no way be linked to our answers on the questionnaires. We have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

_____ We do not choose to participate in the Quality of Life follow-up survey.

Please sign your first and last names.

_____ husband's signature

_____ wife's signature

Address: _____

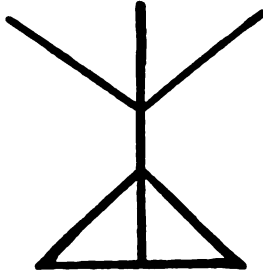
Please mail by April 10.

APPENDIX C

THE FOLLOW-UP STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX C

THE 1981 FOLLOW-UP STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE



Ancient Symbol
for the Family

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF HUMAN ECOLOGY
DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND CHILD ECOLOGY
EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824

Quality of Life

Dear

We are pleased that you have agreed to take part in our follow-up study on the Quality of Life. The study covers just some areas, which the first study found were important to peoples' Quality of Life. Your cooperation is very important because it will help us to know if there have been any changes since the winter of 1977-1978 when the first study was done.

Again, we are asking the husbands and wives to complete their questionnaires separately. When you have finished yours, please return the questionnaire in one of the enclosed envelopes. After you and your spouse have both mailed in the questionnaires, you may want to talk about them.

About a year after the first study, we mailed everyone who took part a bulletin summarizing the results. If you did not receive yours or would like another copy, please check the blank below. We will also send you a summary of the results of the re-study.

Thank you again for your assistance and cooperation.

Margaret Bubolz

Dr. Margaret M. Bubolz
Professor
Family and Child Ecology
(517) 355-1895, 04
353-5389

Ann C. Slocum

Dr. Ann C. Slocum
Associate Professor
Human Environment and
Design
(517) 353-5232, or
353-5389

Michelle Naughton

Michelle Naughton
Graduate Assistant
Family and Child Ecology

Please return by _____

Please check if you would like a copy of the summary of the first study []

YOUR FAMILY SITUATION

This is a follow-up study about the quality of life of family members. Therefore, we are interested in knowing if there have been any changes in your family situation since the original study in 1977-78. Please answer the following questions.

FOR EACH QUESTION, PLACE A CHECK MARK IN THE BRACKETS []. WRITE THE ANSWER ON THE LINES PROVIDED.

- 1.1 Have there been any changes since the winter of 1977-1978 in any of the following? Check all which apply and briefly describe the change. Use the inside of the front cover if you need more space.
- [] Changes in my job situation _____
- [] Changes in my spouse's job situation _____
- [] Changes related to the amount and type of my education _____
- _____
- [] Changes in the number of persons living in your household _____
- _____
- [] Changes in family income _____
- [] Changes in housing _____
- [] Changes in clothing such as amount, type, cost _____
- _____
- [] Other family changes _____
- 1.2 Are you presently employed, unemployed, retired, or what? CHECK AS MANY AS APPLY TO YOU.
- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| [] Housewife or househusband | [] Unemployed (that is, previously employed for pay and/or presently looking for a job) |
| [] Student | [] Temporarily laid off, OR on strike, OR on sick leave |
| [] Permanently disabled | [] Working now |
| [] Retired | |
- 1.3 If you are working now OR are temporarily laid off OR on strike OR on sick leave, what kind of work do you do? What is your main occupation called? (If you have two jobs, your main occupation is the job on which you spend the most time. If you spend an equal amount of time on two jobs, it is the one which provides the most income.)
- Main occupation _____
- 1.4 About how many hours a week do you do this work? CHECK ONE.
- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| [] Less than 20 hours per week | [] 41-50 hours per week |
| [] 20 hours per week | [] 51-60 hours per week |
| [] 21-39 hours per week | [] More than 60 hours per week |
| [] 40 hours per week | |
- 1.5 Are you currently employed in a second job?
- [] YES [] NO

Please answer the following questions.

For part "a" of the following questions, CIRCLE THE NUMBER corresponding to the category which most accurately estimates how often the following events occur. For example, circle "4" if it happens about once each month, and circle "8" if it happens about two or three times each day.

Use this scale for part a of the questions.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 = Never | 5 = About once each week |
| 2 = About once a year | 6 = About 3-4 times each week |
| 3 = About 6 times each year | 7 = About once each day |
| 4 = About once each month | 8 = About 2-3 times each day |

For part "b" of the following questions, check the best possible answer of the choices given which most accurately describes the way you define certain words and your relationship with your spouse. Several answers might apply but, MARK ONLY ONE (except question 2.5b).

2.1a How often do you and your mate spend time together - just the two of you?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

b To me, spending time together generally means:

- ☐ watching television, playing cards or other similar activities.
- ☐ talking together about our lives and each other.
- ☐ getting out of the house and going to dinner or to a movie to be by ourselves.
- ☐ any activity or time when we are alone together during the day.
- ☐ other (specify) _____

2.2a How often do you and your mate spend an hour or more just talking?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

b To me, "just talking" generally means:

- ☐ talking about our interests, hobbies or daily events.
- ☐ talking together about our lives, family or each other.
- ☐ making plans or a decision about something.
- ☐ talking about a serious problem or situation.
- ☐ other (specify) _____

2.3a How often do you and your mate discuss personal feelings?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

b To me, personal feelings usually are:

- ☐ feelings about things that are important to me.
- ☐ strong emotions such as "love" or "hate."
- ☐ feelings which are private and are kept to myself or shared with only those persons who are very close to me.
- ☐ anything that I feel is a personal feeling.
- ☐ other (specify) _____

2.4a How often do you and your mate (without your children) eat at a restaurant?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

b To me, a restaurant is:

- ☐ any restaurant, cafe, or fast-food place located outside the home.
- ☐ any eating place except a fast-food restaurant.
- ☐ a place where you are served by a waiter or a waitress.
- ☐ a place where you are served by a waiter or a waitress, are not casually dressed, and it is more of a special occasion for you and your mate.
- ☐ other (specify) _____

2.5a How often do you and your mate go to a movie or other entertainment?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

b To me, the word "entertainment" used in this sentence generally means (CHECK AS MANY AS APPLY):

- ☐ playing tennis, golf, or some other sport together.
- ☐ playing cards or going shopping.
- ☐ visiting friends or relatives.
- ☐ going to a bar or pub for a drink or to dance.
- ☐ going to a sports event.
- ☐ going to dinner, a concert or a play.
- ☐ other (specify) _____

3.1a How often does your mate make you feel like an important person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

b How does your mate usually make you feel like an important person?

- ☐ by telling me that he/she loves me and needs me.
- ☐ by showing me in his/her actions that he/she loves me and needs me.
- ☐ by giving me a compliment.
- ☐ by telling me that he/she is proud of me.
- ☐ other (specify) _____

3.2a How often does your mate tell or show you that he/she admires and respects you?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

b How does your mate generally do this?

- ☐ by listening to me when I express an opinion.
- ☐ by accepting my beliefs and values.
- ☐ by letting me have my own interests and goals.
- ☐ by trusting and supporting me in our day to day lives.
- ☐ other (specify) _____

Use this scale for part a of the questions.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 = Never | 5 = About once each week |
| 2 = About once a year | 6 = About 3-4 times each week |
| 3 = About 6 times each year | 7 = About once each day |
| 4 = About once each month | 8 = About 2-3 times each day |

3.3a How often does your mate make you feel comfortable in your home?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

b How does your mate usually do this?

- ☐ by providing a relaxing and pleasant family atmosphere.
- ☐ by providing a clean, safe house or apartment.
- ☐ by being sensitive to my emotional needs.
- ☐ by keeping our home at a comfortable temperature - not too hot or too cold.
- ☐ other (specify) _____

3.4a How often does your mate tell or show you his/her love?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

b How does your mate usually do this?

- ☐ by telling me with words that he/she loves me or needs me.
- ☐ by giving me a hug or a kiss.
- ☐ by making love to me.
- ☐ my mate does not need to tell or show me his/her love. I just know that he/she loves me.
- ☐ other (specify) _____

3.5a How often does your mate give you some new information?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

b To me, "giving information" usually means:

- ☐ simply talking about the day's events or what was on the news.
- ☐ telling me something important that happened at work, at home, or with the children, etc.
- ☐ telling me of his/her plans for the day or the week, etc.
- ☐ telling me about his/her feelings about a situation.
- ☐ other (specify) _____

3.5c How does your mate usually give you new information?

- ☐ by talking to me in person.
- ☐ by writing me a note.
- ☐ by telephoning me.
- ☐ through such ways as gestures or facial expressions, without using words.
- ☐ other (specify) _____

3.6a How often does your mate give you his/her opinion?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

b How does your mate usually do this?

- ☐ by discussing with me a particular situation or idea.
☐ by telling or showing me that he/she approves of what I am doing.
☐ by criticizing me.
☐ by telling or showing me that he/she disapproves of what I am doing.
☐ other (specify) _____

3.7a How often does your mate help you solve a problem or make a decision?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

b How does your mate usually help you do this?

- ☐ by sitting down and discussing with me the problem and possible ways of solving it.
☐ by offering his/her help and ideas whether or not I ask for them.
☐ by offering his/her help and ideas only when I ask for them.
☐ by referring me to some person or place who could help me if he/she is not able to.
☐ other (specify) _____

* * * * *

4.1a What do you estimate will be your total family income before taxes in 1981? Please include income from all sources before taxes, including income from wages, property, stocks, interest, welfare, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, child support from a previous marriage, and any other money income received by you and all family members who live with you.

ESTIMATED TOTAL FAMILY YEARLY INCOME, 1981

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under \$5,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$30,000 - \$34,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$5,000 - \$9,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$35,000 - \$39,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10,000 - \$14,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$40,000 - \$44,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15,000 - \$19,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$45,000 - \$49,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000 - \$24,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> Over \$50,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25,000 - \$29,999 | |

4.1b About how much of this total family yearly income do you estimate that YOU will earn in 1981?

ESTIMATED PORTION OF TOTAL FAMILY INCOME, 1981, EARNED BY YOURSELF

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Does not apply, not employed in 1981 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$25,000 - \$29,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under \$5,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$30,000 - \$34,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$5,000 - \$9,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$35,000 - \$39,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10,000 - \$14,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$40,000 - \$44,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15,000 - \$19,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$45,000 - \$49,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000 - \$24,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> Over \$50,000 |

4.2 In the coming year, would you say your financial situation will get worse, stay about the same, or get better? CHECK ONE.

☐ Get worse ☐ Stay about the same ☐ Get better

FEELINGS ABOUT THE QUALITY OF YOUR LIFE

CIRCLE THE NUMBER which best describes your feelings about aspects of your life. For example, circle "1" if you feel terrible about something, circle "4" if you have mixed feelings (that is, you are equally satisfied and dissatisfied), and circle "7" if you feel delighted about it.

6.0 Have there been changes in the past three years which you feel have affected your Quality of Life?

☐ YES ☐ NO

Please explain the change, and how it has affected your Quality of Life. Has the change made it better or worse? _____

- * 7.1 Please list all persons who are now living in your household, by ages at their last birthdays. Indicate their sex.

	Age at last birthday	Sex
Yourself		
Your spouse		
Children	1.	M F
(Include	2.	M F
all child-	3.	M F
ren, that	4.	M F
is, own,	5.	M F
adopted,	6.	M F
step, etc.)	7.	M F
	8.	M F

Use space below if you need more room.

Others (relatives, friends). Indicate relationship, if any, such as grandparents, etc.

Relation to you

1.	M F
2.	M F
3.	M F
4.	M F

- * This section was only included in the wives' questionnaires.

APPENDIX D

SECTIONS 7.1 AND 7.2 OF THE 1977-1978 QUALITY OF LIFE RESEARCH PROJECT QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX D

SECTIONS 7.1 AND 7.2 OF THE 1977-1978 QUALITY OF
LIFE RESEARCH PROJECT QUESTIONNAIRE

CIRCLE THE NUMBER corresponding to the category which most accurately estimates how often the following events occur. For example, circle "1" if something never happens, circle "4" if it happens about once each month, and circle "8" if it happens about two to three times each day.

	Never	About once a year	About 6 times each year	About once each month	About 3-4 times each week	About once a week	About 2-3 times each day	About 6 times each day
7.1 How often do you and your mate:								
* (I) 7.1a Spend time together--just the two of you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
* (I) 7.1b Spend an hour or more just talking?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
* (I) 7.1c Discuss personal feelings?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
7.1d Work together on a project?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
7.1e Take a drive or a walk?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
* (T) 7.1f Eat at a restaurant?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
7.1g Entertain friends at home?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
7.1h Visit friends?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
* (T) 7.1i Go to a movie or other entertainment?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
7.1j Attend a sports event?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
7.1k Attend a party?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
7.2 How often does your mate:								
* (I) 7.2a Make you feel like an important person?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
* (I) 7.2b Tell or show you that he/she admires and respects you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
7.2c Let you know he/she has confidence in your abilities?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
* (I) 7.2d Tell or show you his/her love?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

	Never	About once a year	About 6 times each year	About once each year	About once each month	About 3-4 times each week	About once a week	About 2-3 times each day	About once each day
7.2 How often does your mate:									
7.2e Let you know he/she enjoys your company?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
7.2f Enjoy a laugh or joke with you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
7.2g Give you a hug or kiss?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
7.2h Do an errand for you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
7.2i Make himself/herself available to do some work for you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
** (T) 7.2j Do something to save you energy or make you comfortable?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
* (T) 7.2k Give you some new information?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
* (T) 7.2l Give you his/her opinion?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
7.2m Give you some thing that you need or want?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
7.2n Give you money for personal use?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
* (T) 7.2o Help you solve a problem or make a decision?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
7.2p Support you with discipline and guidance of children?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	

* Questions included in the follow-up study questionnaire.

T = tangible questionnaire items

I = intangible questionnaire items

** Question 7.2j was modified to read, "Make you feel comfortable in your home?"

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