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MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE:
AN EXAMINATION OF WHETHER MARITAL
CONFLICT TRANSFORMS NEWLYWED
RELATIONSHIPS

by

DEBORAH J. BARR
M.A. University of Central Florida, 2002

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of Sociology
in the College of Sciences
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

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Major Professor: James Wright

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory research responds to two primary questions: 1) what is marital conflict and, 2) does it transform newlywed relationships? Using three-wave panel data collected with the purpose of studying the participants of the Covenant Marriage Act in Louisiana, it examines the nature and effects of conflict on newlywed couples over the first five years of marriage. While the analysis contained in this dissertation answers the research questions, it also presents more questions than it answers.

This research examines six major themes regarding 1) the nature of marital conflict among these couples, 2) what couples disagree about, 3) how do couples behave when conflict is present, including managing thoughts of divorce, 4) how does conflict change over time, 5) how does conflict experienced in the family of origin manifest in current marriages, and 6) what effect does religiosity have on conflict?

Findings support the conventional wisdom in marriage that conflict increases over time, and marital quality decreases over time. In addition, findings show that by wave three sex is the number one topic of disagreement, and that it had the largest increase over time.

To Brent Marshall who believed in me.

To James who made the end of this journey bearable.

To Kaia who inspires me.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACRONYM OR ABBREVIATION	DEFINITION
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
MSI	Marital Satisfaction Inventory
RDI	Relational Dimensions Instrument

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In spite of their legal standing, marriages are complex social arrangements governed primarily by human emotion influenced by social norms and pressures. Marriage has historically been part of a larger social system. Cherlin (2004) suggests that marriages have become more individualistic than Burgess or other researchers who have studied marital types envisioned. *Individualistic* marriages form based on love, but these marriages are only successful when spouses feel their “innermost psychological needs” are being met (Amato et al. 2007: 16). If their needs are not met, spouses can dissolve their marriages to find the happiness they require with a new companion.

Because marriage has been the principal instrument for raising and socializing children, any changes in this system can affect everyone in society. Amato, Booth, Johnson, and Rogers (2007) explain

Social scientists wish to understand, at a theoretical level, the adaptability of marriage as a social institution in a time of social change. Policy makers are concerned about the current state of marriage because they wish to fashion programs that promote the well-being of families and children. Counselors and therapists who work with married couples and their children need to base their interventions on knowledge of marital relationships as they exist today, not as they were a generation ago. And individual men and women want to know ‘what’s happening’ to marriage as they grapple with private decisions about cohabitation, marriage, parenthood, and divorce (234).

Changes in divorce laws have made divorces easier to obtain and far more common than in the past. Some researchers argue that this increase in divorce is detrimental to the institution of marriage and therefore a cause for social concern (Popenoe 1998; Waite and Gallagher 2000), while others believe that divorce provides other opportunities in a changing social climate (Stacey 1996; Hackstaff 1999; Coontz 2000).

These two primary perspectives, which Amato et al. (2007) call the marital decline and the marital resilience perspectives, respectively, provide the basic philosophies for why it is important to continue to study marriage and understand what social and personal influences there are on the quality of marriages. While allowing people to maintain their private arrangements is desirable, the outcomes of these arrangements affect everyone, and not just in one generation, but intergenerationally.

Conflict is a central concept in virtually every major theory of human development and social interaction (Shantz 1987). Noted sociologist George Simmel in his essay, *Conflict* (1955), is one of the first sociologists to depict conflict as an aspect of socialization. According to Simmel, without conflict groups cannot have cooperation, which is essential to process and structure.

Conflict also plays a crucial role in how people come to understand how social interaction functions to promote individual needs within relationships (Canary, Cupach, and Messman 1995). Bradbury, Fincham and Beach (2001) asked how important conflict and the management of conflict are in determining the course and outcome of marriage. Several studies suggest that the concept of marital conflict is very important in understanding the link between marital adjustment,

or success, and marital failure, or divorce (Burgess 1939; Gottman 1994, Caughlin and Scott 2010).

Conflict can affect many, if not all, aspects of marital quality and stability. Sprey (1969) argues that “the family is defined as an arena in which conflicting interests—and alliances of common purpose—contend. The family process is thus perceived as an ongoing peace-making effort which may result in a negotiated order, a state of affairs which remains, however, open to continuous re-negotiation” (p. 702). This implies that people learn how to negotiate, or manage conflict, in their families of origin, and that these lessons are influential throughout the life course and carried over into any new family relationships formed (provided there are no other opportunities to learn something different). This *intergenerational transmission perspective* is the primary theoretical base utilized in the current study.

Because there is no one answer to how conflict may transform marriages, conflict must be investigated at many stages and in many ways. Using a combination of theoretical perspectives, including the intergenerational transmission perspective just sketched, this dissertation is guided by the volumes of literature that has tried to answer the most basic and fundamental questions regarding marital conflict: Where does marital conflict come from and how does it transform marital relationships?

While there are many articles and books on the topic, researchers are still divided on what conflict is, how it should be measured, and whether and how conflict contributes to the failure of marriages. Thus, it is important to continue investigating the relationship between conflict and marital instability. Conflict, we know, can lead to divorce and other dysfunctional marital

outcomes. Divorce poses high social costs for everyone involved, but most of all for children caught up in conflict.

This dissertation examines six major themes related to conflict in marriage: (1) what is the nature of conflict and how is it defined and measured; (2) what do couples disagree about and how often do they disagree; (3) how do couples cope behaviorally with conflict, including managing thoughts of divorce; (4) how do these disagreements and behaviors change over time; (5) what, if any, impact does conflict experienced in the family of origin have on conflict in the current marriage; and (6) does religiosity have any contributory, or moderating, effects on conflict.

Using three-wave panel data collected with the purpose of studying the participants of the Covenant Marriage Act in Louisiana, this study examines the nature and effects of conflict on newlywed couples when they initially marry and over the first five years of marriage, as well as a retrospective look at the influence of conflict experienced in the family of origin and its impact on current marriages. This study contributes to the literature on marital conflict, its origins, sources in marriage, and how this conflict may transform new idealistic marriages into conflict-ridden ones that spiral downwards to dissolution. It will also help us understand those marriages that do not opt to divorce and how conflict is managed in these marriages.

This study begins by exploring the degree and types of conflict present in marriages and examining the effects of conflict experienced in the family of origin on levels of conflict in the current marriage. Next, I discuss differences in how conflict manifests and changes between covenant and standard marriages and how conflict changes over time for those couples who remain married over all three waves of data.

Finally, I discuss policy implications regarding how couples initially marry, how some marriages may benefit from conflict resolution skills to stay married and others to end their marriage, and suggestions for future research regarding the definition and understanding of marital conflict and its contribution to marital instability and dissolution.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study examines the origins of marital conflict and how it changes over time within a sample of marriages. Because the couple is the primary unit of analysis, this topic combines sociological and psychological principles to explain conflict in these marriages. This blending is necessary because, while marriage may be part of a larger social institution, a couple is made up of two individuals with unique social and personal characteristics that cannot be ignored. These individual characteristics blend together, according to a set of prescribed social norms, to form a couple capable of making or breaking the marriage.

Traditionally marriage has provided structure and meaning, a way for people to make sense of their social world, something for people to strive toward as children (Amato et al. 2007). Marriage is where people became parents and raised a family. While a very large percentage of people still marry at least one time in this country, it is no longer the case with certainty. Now people may and frequently do choose other family arrangements, such as cohabitation or remaining single. Couples may choose not to have children at all or to delay children until much later in the marriage. Where once marriage represented the fabric of our society, now it seems to be less of a requirement for young people to strive toward, and children are more of a luxury than a necessity (Amato et al. 2007).

According to Amato and colleagues, there are two primary lenses with which to view the changes in marriage and its overall effect on society. The *marital decline perspective* sees the reduction in marriages and the increases in single parent families as something we should be concerned about. They identify many researchers who fall into this category (Popenoe 1998; Waite

and Gallagher 2000), not all of them embracing the same ideals but generally sharing four major assumptions.

1. The institution of marriage is weaker now than in the past.
2. The most important cause of this change is the growing and excessive individualism of American culture.
3. The declining status of marriage has had negative consequences for adults, children, and society in general.
4. We should initiate steps to strengthen the institution of marriage. (p. 4)

Researchers who follow this viewpoint focus on the negative outcomes of recent changes in the family. They believe that the decline in the nuclear family has contributed to a variety of social problems such as, unwed mothers and teenage pregnancy. Some researchers cite the decline in marriage as the “cause” of these social problems (Whitehead 1993). According to those who embrace this view, the only way to recover from these problems is to provide a more supportive environment for marriage; i.e., to reinforce commitment and sacrifice. These advocates have called for public education programs to reinforce the values of marriage, for schools to teach courses on relationship skills and conflict resolution, and for the government to provide more funding for counseling and premarital education services (Amato et al. 2007). The covenant marriage acts passed in the late 1990s in three states closely follow this perspective.

The other viewpoint rejects the marital decline perspective and instead promotes a *marital resilience perspective*. While, again, the scholars in this area do not all share the exact same assumptions (Stacey 1996; Hackstaff 1999; Coontz 2000), this outlook too can be identified by four primary assumptions.

1. The institution of marriage is changing, but it is not necessarily in a state of decline.
2. Americans have not become excessively individualistic and selfish during the last few decades.

3. Recent changes in marriage and family life have had few negative consequences for adults, children, or the wider society.
4. We should support all types of families, not just married heterosexual couples with children. (p. 6)

According to this perspective, marriages are no more troubled today than they were in the past. Since previously, obtaining a divorce was difficult and costly, and divorced individuals were highly stigmatized, more marriages remained intact. Women were highly dependent on their husbands, making it more likely that the couple would remain together. Scholars in this group point out that historically children were raised in many different family forms, not exclusively in a nuclear family. Rather than viewing the increase in divorce as alarming, these scholars focus on the second chances given to children and adults by ending unhappy marriages. In particular, feminist scholars have argued that intimate relationships have been strengthened rather than undermined. For some of these researchers “an increased level of marital instability is a necessary consequence of the decline in patriarchal authority and the rising economic independence of women.” (Amato et al. 2007, p. 8).

This group sees poverty, unemployment, poorly funded schools, and lack of government services as more of a threat to children than the growth of individualism and the decline of two parent families. These scholars argue that social policies should provide greater support to all types of families and not single out one type for privileges (Amato et al. 2007).

When using these two perspectives to examine marital quality over a 20 year period, from 1980 to 2000, Amato and colleagues conclude that while both perspectives offer some truth, neither adequately describes the current state of marriage. In support of the marital decline perspective, they argue that the increase in cohabitation and marital heterogamy can be viewed as

“reflections of greater individualism and freedom from traditional constraints. These freedoms come at a cost, however, because heterogamous marriages and marriages preceded by cohabitation tend to be more conflicted and unstable than other marriages” (p. 235).

Further, they argue that the increase in spouses from divorced families encourages modeling behaviors for children that emphasize personal happiness over commitment and sacrifice. Their results show “that growing exposure to parental divorce in one generation was followed by an increase in marital conflict, marital problems, and divorce proneness in the next generation” (p. 236). While the mean level of divorce proneness did not change, the percentage of couples with highly unstable marriages increased. Amato and colleagues explain that “high expectations for personal fulfillment, combined with the relative ease of divorce these days, may mean that couples progress relatively quickly from thinking that their marriages might be in trouble to taking more active steps to end their marriages” (p. 236).

They also outline four changes that support the marital resilience perspective with positive consequences for multiple dimensions of marital quality: they found an overall improvement in the economic well-being of married couples, the adoption of less traditional views about gender arrangements in marriage, an increase in decision making equality, and greater support for the norm of lifelong marriage. According to them, over the twenty year period the level of marital conflict declined.

While illustrating an aggregate change in conflict over time, it is important to note that their study looked at different groups in the two time periods and did not examine both members of the dyad. The current study will show how conflict changes over time in a particular sample of couples

while using marital conflict as its own construct instead of just as an overall aspect of marital quality.

The Nature of Marital Conflict

Bradbury, Rogge, and Lawrence (2001) define marital conflicts as social interactions where spouses hold incompatible goals and suggest that conflict arises when one spouse pursues a goal or talks about pursuing a goal, and in so doing interferes with the goals of the partner. They further elaborate that the goals may not be conscious or even articulated by the partners, such as one partner's desire to go to school, or they may be very specific, such as where to go to dinner that evening.

Fink (1968) suggests that marital conflict is "any situation or process in which two or more social entities are linked by at least one form of antagonistic psychological relation or at least one form of antagonistic interaction" (p. 456). Raush et al. (1974) find this an appealing definition because it takes into account overt signs of conflict, such as shouting, arguing, and fighting, and silent, or covert, conflict that occurs when a partner does not react or respond, or completely withdraws from interaction. Often, a seemingly peaceful relationship erupts into a violent shouting match over what may be a minor infraction. Without the inclusion of covert conflict in one's definition, such behavior would be incomprehensible. This definition also includes ambivalence, or lack of interest in the relationship, which is important because no matter how loving a relationship may be, there will often be at least one underlying antagonistic or covert negative emotion that can sabotage the relationship (Raush et al. 1974).

Jeffries (2000) defines conflict as a process of interaction where both partners have some discomfort over their relationship and attempt to resolve it. These efforts involve the participants'

individual psychological abilities as well as their ability to communicate with their spouses. This broad range allows for an explanation of everything from small, seemingly inconsequential disagreements to overtly severe hostility.

No one can identify with certainty what will ultimately cause conflict, or disagreement, in a certain couple. Conflicts have the potential to occur any time one partner opposes the other partner in some way. However, if the opposition is unchallenged, usually because one partner doesn't react, then no overt conflict occurs (Canary et al. 1995). This does not mean that the quiet party agrees with the opposing view, just that they did not overtly challenge it. Canary et al. (1995) present eight definitions of interpersonal conflict that they identified in the empirical literature. These include: "interruptions, disagreements, tension, defensive versus supportive communication, anxiety tension and emotion, antagonism, negative interpersonal expressiveness, and contradictions between verbal and nonverbal messages" (Canary et al. 1995: 4).

Several researchers suggest that conflict can occur over several levels of experience (Braiker and Kelley 1979; Canary et al. 1995). Cahn (1990) presented three specific levels where conflict occurs: "specific disagreements" (argument over a particular issue), "problem-solving discussion" (bargaining), and "unhappy/distressed relationships" (interaction patterns that indicated distress). This division presents a conundrum in that "conflict at one level does not necessitate conflict at another level, but conflict at one level may become manifest at another level" (Canary et al. 1995: 4-5). This leads us to a distinction between disagreements and reactions to disagreements. Often the reactions or behaviors that stem from the conflict create more problems than the actual conflict (Gottman 1994).

Conflicts may be either physical or non-physical (Fitzpatrick 1988). Physical conflict may be defined as violence or aggression whereas non-physical conflict is generally expressed through verbal cues, body language and other aspects of communication (Repetti 2001).

Physical and non-physical conflicts within marriages are clearly different. Instead of hitting or other acts of violence, non-physical conflict uses words to hurt the partner or merely to get one's way. Non-physical conflict can be constructive, i.e., can move the relationship forward in a positive way; or destructive, moving the relationship in a negative direction (Canary et al. 1995). The current study is primarily interested in non-physical conflict and therefore will not discuss whether there are positive or negative aspects of physical conflict.

Ultimately, it is how conflict is managed that is likely to determine marital outcomes. If someone suppresses their feelings over time, as in silent disagreement, this can lead to an erosion of trust and thus to dysfunctional conflict. However, if the same feelings are discussed and resolved, the conflict could bring the couple closer together (Raush et al. 1974).

Through time and trials, well-balanced or functional couples learn that there are "cool" topics and "hot" topics, when each type of topic can be discussed with the least amount of conflict, and how to resolve conflict and move toward common or individual goals. In contrast, dysfunctional families are typified by their relatively rigid, or negative, patterns of conflict (Doane 1978). Couples, like families, experience conflict as a routine aspect of their relationships (Messman and Canary 1998). This routine nature of conflict does not mean, however, that fights, arguments and confrontations will not be hurtful. Again, if conflict is managed properly it can be a useful mechanism to promote growth in relationships. Canary et al. (1995) report that functional relationships are distinguished from dysfunctional relationships by the positive interaction that

takes place during conflict situations. Functional couples will employ constructive conflict management techniques, or collaborative behaviors, instead of destructive techniques (Canary et al. 1995).

Measurements of Conflict

There are three primary methods utilized in the research literature to study marital relations including conflict: laboratory observation, in-depth interviews and surveys. To achieve large numbers of participants it is often more cost efficient to use surveys that can be easily distributed. This also allows for more generalizability to the population. These surveys generally use proven scales such as the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus 1979) to measure aspects of marital quality, including conflict, and they depend on self report data from couples or individuals on their perceptions of the past (Amato and Booth 2000; Amato et al. 2007, Booth, Johnson, and Edwards 1981; Johnson, White, Edwards and Booth 1986). These large surveys are more often used by sociologists whereas the other two options are more often applied by other disciplines such as psychology or communication.

Some researchers believe that the other methods, particularly observational methods, used in conjunction with surveys may be the best way to acquire richer data on marital quality (Amato et al. 2007; Faulkner, Davey, and Davey 2005). In particular, Amato et al. (2007) recommend the work of John Gottman (1993, 1994) and his identification of four corrosive behaviors that can lead couples to divorce. They also point out that more work needs to be done on the effects of “reciprocal negativity” (p. 248) to try to find ways to help couples escape these patterns when they are stuck in them. Amato and colleagues also report on another interpersonal theoretical pattern, the *demand-withdrawal* or *pursuer-distancer* pattern, which is explained fully below.

Regarding the observational work of Gottman and others, Amato et al ask “whether interpersonal behaviors that erode marital happiness are reflections of stable personality traits that individuals bring to their marriage or specific relationship patterns that develop within marriage” (p. 249). Like the proverbial chicken and egg dilemma, this causality question is a theme of general interest to this dissertation.

Gottman’s Typology of Marital Conflict

In most studies that examine marital conflict, conflict is treated as an independent variable, or a source or cause for some aspect of marital quality, or merely as an aspect of marital quality (Johnson et al. 1986). The current study differs from these studies in that marital conflict is primarily used as the dependent variable. The only aspect of this study that focuses on marital conflict as an independent variable is the theme of how couples cope behaviorally with conflict. These behavioral aspects of conflict are primarily governed by John Gottman’s balance theory of marriage (1993, 1994).

Gottman (1993) developed his theory of marital conflict from observing and recording couples’ verbal and nonverbal conflict behaviors as well as measuring their physiological responses to conflict and conflict situations. These observations took place in his laboratory where “couples are videotaped talking about the events of the day, a major area of continuing disagreement in their marriage, or a pleasant topic or they spend 24 hours in an apartment laboratory as they normally would at home” (p.60).

After extensively watching couples and coding aspects of their interactions, Gottman developed a typology of married couples. He discovered that some couples could regulate their emotions and interaction so well that these regulated couples consistently demonstrated less

negative interactions during conflict, had more stable relationships, and a lower risk of divorce. In contrast, non-regulated couples were almost the opposite and were often headed toward divorce. Ultimately he divided these couples into five couple types within these two categories, three types of regulated couples and two types of non-regulated couples (Gottman 1993, 1994). While the current study is not interested in dividing the sample couples into these five groups, an understanding of the groups is necessary to fully understand the different ways in which couples can respond to conflict.

Gottman (1993, 1994) proposed that the five types of couples, while qualitatively different from each other, had similar underlying processes that determined their stability. His “theory of balance,” or the overall ratio of positive to negative interactions over time, accounts for the levels of stability in the couples. Couples in the regulated categories demonstrated about five positive interactions for every one negative interaction while non-regulated couples were closer to one-to-one. This “balance” is important for understanding any reciprocity in marital conflict that may be present in an effort to balance the relationship.

Because he has more than one type of behavior he watches, i.e. normal conversations, Gottman’s theoretical framework allows the observation of a couple’s typical patterns of interaction instead of just viewing conflict in isolation. Like Simmel (1955) and Coser (1956), Gottman showed that different ways of handling conflict can be functional, with each of his three regulated types illustrating both promise and possible disaster.

The three types of regulated marriages are:

- 1) *Conflict-avoiding*, or couples who intentionally avoid conflict situations. Gottman argued that conflict-avoidance can be functional instead of dysfunctional as previously believed.

Couples who practice this type of conflict management do not see themselves as avoiding conflict, but merely minimizing it. A risk that Gottman noted with this type of couple is loneliness, primarily because they express very little affect at all, whether positive or negative. Gottman also expressed the concerns that there may be conflicts that these couples could not avoid or minimize that they may not have the skills to resolve.

2) *Volatile* couples are quite different from conflict-avoiding couples in that they express a great deal of both positive and negative affect. These couples have high levels of emotion and expression and usually have explosive conflicts that are followed by passionate resolution. Throughout a conflict, these couples constantly try to persuade each other. The concern regarding volatile couples is, even though they can, and do, use their positive interactions to repair negative exchanges, some of the negative interactions may be too hurtful to repair.

3) *Validating* couples carefully validate each other's viewpoints both verbally and nonverbally during conflicts, even if they disagree with the viewpoint. The partners feel as though they are united even when they are in disagreement. The risks for validating couples is that they may grow to be more like friends than romantic partners and become distant.

The two types of non-regulated couples are hostile and hostile detached couples. Hostile couples exhibit high levels of conflict engagement and defensiveness, while hostile-detached couples are generally disengaged with episodes of highly negative interactions. Hostile-detached couples demonstrate more contempt and derisive behavior toward each other than hostile couples do. While organized as two separate types, Gottman and other researchers often group the two hostile types of couples together. One of the most interesting aspects of the two hostile types of

couples is that the partners are more dissimilar to each other than any of the regulated partners are. He believes these differences may contribute to their overall hostility.

From watching the various types of couples, Gottman (1993, 1994) was able to determine that there were four behaviors that when over represented seemed to lead couples to divorce more often than any other. “Anger was not predictive of separation or divorce, but the husband’s defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling (the listener’s withdrawal from interaction) were predictive of divorce...whereas the wife’s criticism was predictive of separation and her criticism, defensiveness, and contempt were predictive of divorce” (Gottman 1993: 62). Further, through structural modeling Gottman was able to illustrate a “process cascade,” more particularly defined as, “criticism leads to contempt, which leads to defensiveness, which leads to stonewalling” (1993: 62).

This process cascade is strongly affected by the couple’s perceptions of the situations they term conflictual. This is an important thing to remember when studying anything to do with marriage, but most particularly with conflict. Canary et al. (1995) also suggests that it is not just the conflict behaviors that influence marital outcomes, but the couple’s interpretations of the behaviors and the appropriateness or effectiveness of the partner.

Gottman’s overall view contributes to the current study by providing a strong theoretical basis for dividing the behavioral components of marital conflict into the particular aspects based on his process cascade.

Symbolic Interactionist View of Marital Conflict

According to Herbert Blumer, the three main premises of symbolic interaction are that “1) human beings act toward things on the basis of the meaning things have for them; 2) the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows; and 3) these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he (or she) encounters” (1969: 2).

These premises lend themselves very nicely to the study of marriage because each couple and each individual have different definitions for marriage and everything in it, including, and maybe especially, conflict. These couple and individual identities are different, but are comprised of everything each person is. Because marriage does not exist in a vacuum, definitions formed through individuals’ social interactions with others, which take place in their social environment and are applied through the lens of their socially understood symbolic meanings, influence and contribute to the creation of a couple’s identity. The successful blending of these individual identities often determines the success of the relationship. For example, if two people marry who have different definitions of what constitutes a conflict event, this could bring a certain amount of strife if neither of them has the skills to manage the conflict and their possible feelings of domination if the other person is always able to apply their definitions of conflict.

Another contributor to the couple’s identity comes from the influence of family and friends and other persons in an individual’s social environment (Chinitz and Brown 2001; Hatch and Bulcroft 2004). These researchers identify that the family, in particular in-laws, have significant influence over defining certain types of situations as conflict. Almost any innocent situation can become conflict after meaning is applied either by those involved, or outside observers. Because of

these differences, people act and react to conflict situations based on what things, or situations, mean to them, as well as others' interpretations of things.

Harris (2006) points out that “the meaning of things is not inherent” (p. 5). This applies to concepts as well as physical objects. This simple statement which Harris calls his “zero” concept (2006: 5) clarifies Blumer’s three statements into a realization that marriage, marital quality and marital conflict are all socially constructed concepts. Harris believes that this zero concept is implied in Blumer’s theory without actually being written. Taken by themselves, each of the above concepts have no meaning until someone applies it. Marriage in and of itself is not defined the same by everyone. Some people are married under different religious or cultural values that govern their definition of marriage. This applies to marital conflict as well. To some, any tiny disagreement is cause for alarm, whereas to others disagreements are a constructive method of communication.

“Objects arise and acquire meaning in relation to people’s diverse purposes and perspectives” (Harris 2000:129). When treating marital conflict as an object like any other, any given marriage is defined in different ways depending on who is doing the defining, with the main premise being that a relationship that is conflicted for one person may not be conflicted for another. This is important because people will act on the basis of their own perceptions of conflict. According to Gottman, a very high percentage of couples caught in his process cascade become so frustrated with their inability to escape that they believe the only way out is to separate from each other.

While it is very important to consider meaning when analyzing these issues, the current study does not have the ability to interpret the meanings that each respondent gave to the questions

as they answered them. Instead, it examines the marriage through the interpretive lens of what respondents believed their family and friends think of their marriage. As many popular culture television shows depict, disapproval over aspects of the marriage, especially by in-laws, can be a contributing factor to marital conflict (Curtis and Ellison 2002).

Gottman believes that the downward spiral toward divorce begins with a process called “flooding” (1993: 64). “The theoretical speculation is that this cascade begins with flooding. Flooding is measured with a questionnaire in which the subject endorses items that claim that the partner’s negative emotions are unexpected (seem to come out of nowhere), unprovoked, intense, overwhelming, and disorganizing and that the partner will do anything to terminate the interaction” (Gottman 1993: 64), including just giving in or withdrawing emotionally from the symbolically defined conflict event.

In order to understand where marital conflict falls in this downward spiral and how any positive interactions may prevent the total cascade; the current study divides marital conflict into two main categories: the first being the act of disagreeing about some topic and how frequently these disagreements happen; the second how the couple responds to the disagreements. Anytime there is a discussion between two people, especially if a disagreement ensues, there is the opportunity for conflict to escalate. How the escalation is managed will have a contribution to how the couple defines the overall conflict and allows it to lead to other more negative things such as thinking about divorce.

Frequency of Disagreements

Amato et al. (2007) and other researchers identify how often, or with what frequency, people disagree over certain items such as money, children, sex, friends, children, and in-laws

among other things. There are many scales to assess the levels of disagreement in a marriage such as the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier 1976). This scale, like most other treatments of disagreements, treats it as one aspect of overall marital adjustment (Locke and Wallace 1959; Orden and Bradburn 1968). While not a totally incorrect approach when studying overall marital quality, more recent studies have argued that the dimensions of marital quality (i.e. adjustment, satisfaction, happiness, interaction, disagreement and divorce proneness) should be examined separately (Johnson et al. 1986; Johnson, Amoloza, and Booth 1992) in order to determine the differences in positive and negative aspects of marital quality.

Large surveys such as the National Survey of Families and Households (Sweet, Bumpass, and Call 1988) collected data to show many aspects of marriage and family life over time. The survey includes a section on marital disagreements. Like most surveys that assess the frequency of disagreements, questions were asked about how often the couple “openly disagreed about the following areas: household tasks, money, spending time together, sex, having a(nother) baby, in-laws, and the children” (See, Hatch and Bulcroft 2004 for a review: 471). Most studies that examine disagreements show that high levels of disagreements can lead spouses to believe that their needs are not being met, thereby increasing unhappiness (Sanchez and Gager 2000; Heaton and Blake 1999) and opening the door for thoughts of divorce (Amato et al. 2007).

Some studies have found that the level of disagreements declines with increasing length of marriage, and that younger couples disagree more often than older couples (see Hatch and Bulcroft 2004, for a review). However, contrary to this overall consensus, Hatch and Bulcroft found that length of marriage increases levels of marital disagreement depending on the stage of life the

couples were in. Their primary confounding factors were children present in the marriage and spouses' ages and birth cohorts. But what are couples disagreeing about?

Money -- Andersen (2005) argues that while it seems to be common knowledge in the cultural media, citing experts, that fighting over money is the leading cause of marital conflict and divorce, in fact “scholarly—presumably from the experts—research indicating that financial problems ‘cause’ divorce is virtually nonexistent” (2005:150). In her review of the literature Andersen (2005) discovered only one study that identified “money-related problems” as the number one cause of divorce, and any other studies that mentioned it, money was fourth or lower on the list of reasons for divorce. However, since her review some studies have found that “individuals with a high level of financial satisfaction were significantly less likely to have thought about divorce during the past three years” (Grable, Britt, and Cantrell 2007). This does not mean that increased financial satisfaction is a buffer against disagreements over the issue of money. People with money may disagree with how it is spent, or saved, while those without it may argue about how to get it or why there is not enough of it. Nearly all, if not all, measures of conflict include a question about how frequently people disagree about money (Douglass and Douglass 1995; Spanier 1976).

Children -- The addition of children to the relationship generally means dramatic changes in the couples amount of leisure time and joint activities, a decline in sex, a change in how the couple communicates with each other (Huston and Vangelisti 1995) and often increased depression among wives (Simpson, Rholes, Campbell, Tran, and Wilson 2003). Studies have found that new parents report an increase in conflict and disagreements after the birth of their first child (Crohan 1996; MacDermid, Huston, and MacHale 1990).

Sex -- Like children and money are included in virtually all measures of couple disagreement (Douglass and Douglass 1995; Spanier 1976), but very few studies do more than ask how frequently couples disagree over sexual relations. The studies that do present other information about sex include sexual incompatibility or sexual infidelity as couple's reasons for divorcing (Amato and Prevetti 2001; Kitson 1992).

Household Division of Labor/Childcare -- Many sociologists studying conflict consider household division of labor and whether these tasks are fairly distributed and specifically, whether the wife views the distribution of tasks as fair (Amato et al. 2007; Faulkner et al. 2005; Hochschild 1989; Rogers and Amato 2000) as a major contributor to marital conflict. While household tasks are not the only sources of conflict in a relationship, it does seem to be the consensus among researchers that unhappiness with workloads leads wives to become less satisfied with their marriages so that marital conflict over these and other items increases (Amato et al. 2007). While many studies have examined these issues as a contributor to a couple's decision to divorce (Gager and Sanchez 2003) very few have examined the effects of the perceptions of fairness of the division of labor on the frequency of disagreements, or on the overall reaction to these disagreements.

Gager and Sanchez (2003) suggest that “[a]lthough no studies have considered the link between perceptions of fairness in the division of labor and divorce, a burgeoning body of research on equity addresses the relationship of perceptions of housework fairness to marital satisfaction, conflict, and thoughts of divorce and how it varies by gender” (p. 27). As discussed above many researchers found that the perceptions by couples, particularly the wife that household tasks are unfair to her leads to arguments and additional conflict. Further, Amato and Booth (1995) found

that wives who held more egalitarian views tended to become less satisfied with their marriages overall which lead to greater discord.

Social Networks (How Much Time the Couple Spends Together) -- Amato and colleagues define social networks as those people outside of the marriage that provide support. These groups are usually comprised of family, friends and other members of groups we interact with such co-workers. These people are often confidants that can provide a buffer from periods of stress in the marriage, or undermine the marriage by allowing partners to focus on negativity. While providing emotional, financial or some other type of support often parents (or in-laws) are the most influential of these groups. Negative relations, in particular with in-laws, can illicit tension between the couple (Amato et al. 2007). Many factors can contribute to why parents or in-laws may not approve of the marriage, such as, if the couple is too young when they marry, or they have not finished their college education (Amato et al. 2007), or if they do not hold similar religious beliefs (Curtis and Ellison 2002). However, Amato and colleagues argue that tension over parents, and in particular in-laws, tends to reduce over time.

With regard to friends, those couples who have shared friends have higher quality marriages (Amato et al. 2007). This finding held in spite of the number of shared friends. This is because the couple can do activities together with their friends instead of spending too much time individually. Amato and colleagues go on to explain that those couples who have fewer social ties may place unreasonable demands on their marriage which may cause strife because the demands cannot be met. While, sharing friends and activities appears to be a good thing, not approving of the spouses' friends is another area for possible tension, as friends that are not shared are more likely to take the side of their friend and could heighten conflicts (Amato et al. 2007).

Reactions to Conflict

Couples differ in the manner in which they react to conflict. Men and women also react differently to conflict, with women tending to be more assertive and men seeing themselves as more positive and passive (Hojjat 2000). Choices made during open disagreements vary (Burman, Margolin, and John 1993; Gottman and Krokoff 1989; Kilmann and Thomas 1977), with continued disagreement over the same issue serving to evoke hostility, avoiding or withdrawing, negative emotions and possibly extreme violence (Coyne and Downey 1991; O’Leary and Smith 1994). These continued disagreements can also lead to negative reciprocity, where upon couples exchange negative behaviors such as complaints, defensiveness, negative affect and hostility, with the “affective aspect of negative reciprocity [being] more important than the verbal exchanges (See, Coughlin and Vangelisti 2006, for a review: 133). These reciprocal engagements while most often negative can be positive as well, such as responding positively to humor when it is used as a deflection tool (Amato and DeBoer 2001). Because of the effects of reciprocity it is important to examine both the negative and the positive behaviors that may occur. Following Gottman (1994), the current study examines four different aspects of conflict behaviors, three negative and one positive, to see if reciprocity is present in this newlywed sample of couples.

Hostility -- According to Gottman (1994), negative or hostile behaviors in marital interactions are stronger predictors of relationship decline than the absence of positive behaviors. Whitton, Schulz, Crowell, Waldinger and Allen (2008) found that when looking at both positive and negative family of origin interactions, “only family hostility was predictive of marital hostility or positive engagement” (p. 282). Family of origin hostility was linked to poorer marital adjustment, even when controlling for the strong influence of adolescent psychopathology for men.

For men, experiences in family of origin conflicts are important to later marital adjustment because of the ways in which they shape patterns of interaction around conflict, consistent with evidence from studies based on retrospective data (Story, Karney, Lawrence, Bradbury, et al. 2004).

Demand/Withdrawal Pattern (Avoidance) -- The demand/withdraw pattern is most often associated with particular conflict episodes and almost always deemed to be negative (Caughlin and Scott 2010). The most common definition of this pattern of behavior is that one person generally “nags” or complains and the other avoids the person, the situation or the topic. It is more often the wife in the demander role and the husband in the avoider role (Christensen and Heavey 1993). This pattern has been related to a number of negative relationship associations, such as divorce (Gottman and Levenson 2000), physical abuse (Feldman and Ridley 2000), and depression proneness (Byrne, Carr, and Clark 2004), and is a reliable predictor of declines in marital satisfaction over time (Heavey, Christensen, and Malamuth 1995). During a conflict situation, husbands who withdrew more and demanded less experienced less emotional arousal. In contrast, their wives experienced more negative affect if they were less demanding and withdrew more (Verhofstadt, Buysse, DeClercq and Goodwin 2005).

When looking at just avoidance behaviors, Rands and colleagues (1981) found that marital satisfaction was negatively associated with the perception that a spouse engaged in attacking or avoiding styles of conflict management. In a review of engagement versus avoidant behaviors, Coughlin and Vangelisti (2006) summarized numerous articles to determine that there are different forms of avoidance, some hostile with others cooperative or neutral. Husband’s hostile behaviors i.e., yelling and slamming the door upon leaving the room, were more likely to lead to wives’ dissatisfaction than a more neutral exit.

Caughlin and Scott (2010) also summarize three perspectives explaining why the demand-withdraw pattern occurs in relationships. The first perspective is the *gender difference perspective* originally presented by Eldridge and Christensen (2002). This perspective merely states that women tend to be more likely to demand because of the “stable differences between men and women” (p. 182). These researchers argue that women are more often placed into the demanding role due to their inferior positions.

The second perspective is the *social structure perspective* originally presented by Vogel and Karney (2002), which describes the behavioral differences between men and women as differences in relative power in the relationship. “...this power discrepancy leads relationships to be arranged to comport more with men’s preferences than women’s” (p.182). This allows for wives demanding in order to seek changes, with husbands avoiding to maintain things as they are.

The third perspective is *conflict structure* as originally presented by Eldridge and Christensen (2002), which suggests that demanding or withdrawing depends on the person’s position during a conflict issue. “When spouses desire to change their partner, they are more likely to demand, and when spouses favor the status quo, they are more likely to withdraw” (Caughlin and Scott (2010: 183).

The current study is not able to specifically test the entire demand/withdraw pattern, but it will test the effects of avoidance as one of four measures of conflict behavior while examining the differences between men and women. Understanding the theoretical reasons behind avoidance as a product of demand will help theoretically frame the use of this measure.

Negative Affect -- Negative emotions can be described as hurt feelings, getting angry, becoming defensive or stubborn, whining, and showing less interest in their partners (Gottman

1993). Verhofstadt et al. (2005) define emotional arousal as a “continuous bipolar dimension extending from an unaroused state (e.g. calm, relaxed) to high arousal (e.g. excited stimulated)” (p. 452). They described negative affect as “a bipolar continuous dimension from positivity (pleasant states: e.g. happy, satisfied) to negativity (unpleasant states: e.g. unhappy, unsatisfied)” (p. 452). Negative affect has been associated with declines in marital satisfaction and is often listed as a reason for divorce (Amato and Prevetti 2003; Gottman 1993, 1994). It is believed that women cope with negative affect more competently than men (Hojjat 2000). This might be explained by men being more inclined to avoid negative affect and therefore have a harder time disengaging when they are forced to participate (Hojjat 2000). This construct closely relates to the avoiding/withdrawing construct since negative emotions often result from the demand withdrawal pattern (Verhofstadt et al. 2005; Christiansen and Heavey 1993) as well as other conflict behaviors such as hostility. The current study is interested in how marital conflict influences negative affect in couples.

Positive Behaviors (Collaboration) -- While many studies have examined negative conflict, behaviors such as hostility, disagreements and emotion (Gottman 1993; Amato et al. 2007), Gottman and others identify positive interactions that can minimize the negative behaviors discussed above (Gottman 1993; Jeffries 2000; Gottman and Levinson 2002). This includes such things as trying to understand your spouse’s view, defusing the situation with humor, or doing something nice to try to undo bad behavior or negative words (Gottman 1993). Also, couples can practice acts of “charity” which include “trying to fulfill needs, forgiving, tolerating faults and imperfections, and correcting if necessary” (Jeffries 2000: 241) that allow for making efforts to fulfill the other’s needs. Jeffries (2000) found that men more often practice collaborative behaviors,

while women are more likely to report that they practiced negative behaviors. The current study will examine the effects of collaborative behaviors as one of the individual measures of conflict behaviors to determine any differences between men and women.

Sources of Marital Conflict

We have determined there are many topics couples can define as conflict, that conflict does not mean the same to each couple, or to each person in a couple, and that there are different reactions to conflict based on the definitions people apply to a situation. These definitions are part of a person's socialization and personal identity and become part of a couple's identity upon marriage. All of this begs the question, where does conflict originate in newlywed couples? The current study examines three major areas as possible sources for the origination of conflict; family of origin dysfunction, religiosity, and thoughts of divorce.

Family of Origin Dysfunction

Socialization theory assumes that children learn social behaviors from their parents, other adults in their lives, or other socializing agents such as teachers, churches, and peers (Amato and DeBoer 2001). In particular, children will learn the "nature of marital relationships, as well as specific marital behaviors" (Amato and DeBoer 2001: 1039) from their parents. Children whose parents divorce are generally denied the positive aspects of marriage such as showing support, compromising and resolving conflicts amicably.

As stated earlier, this dissertation is primarily influenced by the intergenerational transmission perspective. Intergenerational transmission can be defined as the passing of ideas, attitudes and values from one generation to the next (Tabellini 2008). Recent theoretical models assume that parents prefer to present their children with their own attitudes and beliefs regarding

certain ideals and attitudes (Dohmen, Falk, Huffman, and Sunde 2008). This perspective is most closely related to social learning theory as established by Albert Bandura (1977). The primary difference between the two is that social learning theory originated from a behavioral perspective and is still utilized most to explain behaviors, particularly in the areas of crime, deviance and domestic violence (Akers, Krohn, Lanza-Kaduce, and Radosevich 1979 ; Hoffman and Edwards 2004), whereas intergenerational transmission perspective is used to explain the transfer of not just behaviors, but attitudes and ideals in many disciplines such as economics, education and family values (Lochner 2008). However, Bandura (1977) improved upon the theory of behavior modeling outlined by Miller and Dollard (1941) by applying a more cognitive aspect to the strictly behavioral interpretation and labeling this new theory social cognitive theory.

When used in family research, social learning theory is still primarily used in an effort to explain violence or abuse based on the modeling of negative behaviors (Hoffman and Edwards 2004). However, Segrin, Taylor, and Altman (2005) use Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory to support the intergenerational transmission perspective arguing that "people learn attitudes and behavior through both direct and vicarious experience" (p. 362). Which means that children learn by what they experience and also by what they witness others doing, or saying and paying attention to the results. While Segrin and colleagues are using the social cognitive theory to explain the transmission of divorce, its proponents can be used to explain the transmission of marital conflict as well.

Social cognitive theory describes several aspects of modeling that are necessary for the intergenerational transmission of divorce. They note that divorce does not occur in total isolation from other family processes (Segrin et al. 2005). Sometimes divorces occur in marriages where

there is no conflict at all, but often divorces occur after periods of high conflict. Segrin and colleagues argue that children then process this as the way relationships are supposed to proceed, including divorcing as the ultimate acceptable solution. They also argue that another aspect of the overall intergenerational transmission of divorce is that parents who divorce practice ineffective communication, so that children also learn these ineffective communication techniques unless they are provided other opportunities to learn more efficient ones.

Following Amato and DeBoer (2001), I argue that it is not just divorce, but also conflict, the ability to manage conflict, communication skills, and a general reaction to discord that is learned in the family of origin. What children observe in dysfunctional families are ineffective ways of dealing with conflict (unless the parents are able to resolve their conflicts in an amicable way). However, Amato and DeBoer (2001) found that it was only negative behaviors that transmitted significantly, not positive. This implies that even if someone learns positive skills in the family of origin, if partnered with someone who practices negative behaviors, they could fall victim to negative reciprocal behaviors. Amato and DeBoer also outline a marital commitment perspective that suggests that while children do learn about relationships from observing their parents, they don't just learn problem behaviors, but that marriage can be broken. Marital commitment is defined as the "tendency to remain in a marriage, even when it is troubled or when appealing alternatives to marriage exist" (Amato and DeBoer 2001:1040). To some researchers lack of commitment is identified as how often or even if individuals think about divorce (Johnson et al. 1986).

Because not all divorces are preceded by high levels of conflict or ineffective communication, the intergenerational transmission perspective can explain the presence in

newlywed marriages of many attitudes and behaviors, including religious beliefs and thoughts of divorce.

While many researchers discuss the intergenerational transmission of divorce and its effects on the marriages of offspring (Segrin et al. 2005; Amato and DeBoer 2001; Amato and Booth 2001), fewer examine the intergenerational transmission of marital conflict. According to Amato and Booth (2001), it is well established that children raised in families broken by divorce are more likely to divorce themselves, it makes sense that marital discord experienced as children would influence conflict levels in their current marriages. Further, while many times marital discord may lead to divorce, not all marriages where there is discord end in divorce, and not all divorces are preceded by marital discord (Amato and Booth 1997, 2001; Amato et al. 2007).

Amato and Booth (2001) report such an intergenerational transmission of marital conflict after collecting data from parents while the children were still at home, and from the same children after they left home and married. They also reported that their results were not spurious, but instead that they “provide reasonably strong evidence that parents’ marital quality has a causal impact on offspring’s marital quality” (p. 636). They further found support for an “observational-learning perspective” (p. 636) which assumes that “children are exposed to parent’s behavior, process and store this information, and replicate this behavior in their own marriages.” However, because this report used retrospective data to measure marital discord as children (roughly age 13 when living with parents), the support for this perspective is suggestive and in need of further support. The current study will also analyze self retrospective reports of marital discord in the family of origin when children were aged 16, in order to test the observational-learning perspective that marital

discord and conflict are transmitted from one generation to the next to influence how people behave in their own marriage.

Another question raised by Amato and Booth was whether the children's marital relations were more strongly influenced by witnessing the ways parents treated each other, or by parental interaction with children. These conflict interaction behaviors represent a majority of the social behavior that is learned in the individual's first interactions with parents and siblings, and is developed throughout childhood (Dunn 1983). Conflict experiences in childhood contribute to the individual's personal and social development (Shantz and Hobart 1989). However, the danger is when children learn "ineffective, inappropriate, dysfunctional, and even violent conflict interaction patterns and perpetuate such behaviors in later relationships" (Messman and Canary 1998:125).

Sabatelli and Bartle-Haring (2003) also found that family-of-origin experiences significantly influenced marital adjustment. This was especially true for women whose experiences were strongly related to their own perceptions of their marriages as well as their husband's perceptions, whereas the husband's family-of-origin experiences only related to his perceptions. This appears to be a strong predictor of marital conflict in that those individuals who "perceive they grew up in a less than optimal family, ...tend[ed] to experience more difficulties in their intimate partners" (p.167). Further, these individuals are "difficult to please, set standards for relationships that are difficult to meet or exceed, and thus may often be disappointed." They conclude that these people are "often unhappy and frustrated and have partners who are unhappy and frustrated as well" (Sabatelli and Bartle-Haring 2003: 167). The current study examines whether the overall view of the family status at age 16 influences the level of conflict in the next generation's marriage.

Religiosity and Covenant Marriage

The second primary area of interest in the current study is the effect of religiosity and the choice of a covenant marriage in either, contributing to, or buffering against, marital conflict again using the intergenerational transmission perspective. Historically research has found a link between religious homogamy (similarity between spouses in religious beliefs, participation, and practices) and marital quality (Myers 2006; Curtis and Ellison 2002; for a review, see Kalmijn 1998). Several researchers have found that it is not necessarily that couples share the same denomination, but that agreement between spouses on the importance of religion and joint church attendance are the best predictors of some aspects of marital quality (Myers 2006, Dudley, and Kosinski 1990), such as marital satisfaction or commitment.

Many other studies have examined the impact of increased levels of religiosity on marital stability, or the ability to avoid divorce (Nock, Sanchez, and Wright 2008; Amato and Booth 2001; Chinitz and Brown 2001). In a study designed to examine the impact of the covenant marriage laws in Louisiana, Nock et al. (2008) found that covenant marriages were more religious than standard marriages and divorced at a slower rate. Beginning in 1997 in Louisiana, and passed later in Arizona and Arkansas, couples in these states were asked to choose between the conventional, or standard, type of marriage or a covenant marriage which is a more demanding type of marriage that is harder to enter and exit.

Engaged persons interested in choosing a covenant marriage are asked to disclose to their intended spouses any information that may harm the marriage. Further, all couples wishing to have a covenant marriage must go through pre-marital counseling, sign a declaration of intent saying that they will take all steps to try to preserve their marriage before ending it, including marital

counseling. To divorce, these couples must comply with much stricter requirements such as proving fault grounds, or waiting two years before filing after the initial separation (Nock et al. 2008).

When looking specifically at religiosity as a buffer against divorce, Nock and colleagues, using qualitative interviews and open ended questions on surveys to explain the buffering effect, found that highly religious couples believe that God is their benefactor and the protector of marriage. They also strongly believe that they have a duty to God to develop or improve communication skills in order to manage their relationships. Thirdly, these religious couples “rely on their view of marriage as sacred to manage severe marital crisis” (p. 126).

Myers (2006) and others (Copen and Silverstein 2008) believe that these types of religious fundamentals are learned primarily as children and passed down through socialization; the suggestion is that children maintain the levels of religiosity learned from their parents and therefore repeat the positive aspects of marital quality gained from increased levels of religiosity. In particular, Bengsten, Copen, Putney, and Silverstein (2009) found that grandparents had influence over all three dimensions of religiosity (religious service attendance, religiousness and religious ideology). These influences were found both for the grandparental influences solely as well as in conjunction with the parental influences; which means that there can be an intergenerational effect for more than one generation.

With specific regard to marital conflict and religiosity, Curtis and Ellison (2002) examined intact first time married couples in the National Survey of Families and Households to determine whether religiously dissimilar couples argue more often than other couples, and whether the arguments concerned particular topics or issues. Defining marital conflict as the frequency of

disagreements (arguments), they found that regardless of the way it is conceptualized, denominational heterogamy has little bearing on the frequency of disputes between couples, except when discussing financial matters. In those cases, there are somewhat less frequent arguments between same faith conservative and moderate protestant couples and other couples who share identical denominational affiliation.

Disagreements are more likely if the wife attends religious services more than her husband, or if the husband attends more often than the wife. Couples who do not have the same “theological beliefs” in the “inerrancy and authority of scripture” (p. 566) consistently have more frequent arguments overall, and in particular about housework and money. These disputes are much more common if the wife is more theologically conservative than her husband. In this case, the disputes tend to be about how the couple spends time together and their in-laws, whereas, when the husband is more conservative the disagreements tend to be more often about child rearing.

In a study looking only at Jewish marriages from the perspective of their adult children, Chinitz and Brown (2001) tested the hypotheses that there would be a positive relationship between religious homogamy and marital stability which would be mediated by marital conflict; and religious homogamy would be predictive of marital conflict and stability regardless of parental religious denomination. Their definition of marital conflict included measures of the frequency of arguments as well as parental behaviors, e.g. that the child felt the parents were mean to each other. Marital stability was determined by parental divorce.

They found partial support for the hypothesis that as marital conflict increases, marital stability decreases, with agreement on Jewish religious issues predicting higher stability. They, as with Curtis and Ellison, did not find support for any differences between couples of the same faith

and mixed faith couples with regard to the frequency of arguments. They concluded that instead of knowing the faith of the respondents it is more important to know the level of their religiosity.

While many researchers have examined religiosity as a buffer against divorce (Nock et al. 2008; Copen 2008; Copen and Silverstein, 2008), few have examined its effects on marital conflict (Curtis and Ellison 2002; Chinitz and Brown 2001). Nock et al. (2008) with their specific focus on divorce did not offer a comparison of conflict in covenant marriages and standard marriages to see if there are any differences based on the increased religiosity of the couples they studied.

They did, however, find that many couples believe that the choice of a covenant marriage might provide them with more security either because of their own previous divorce or their parent's example. While covenant women are just as likely to be in the workforce as standard women, covenant couples tended to be more traditional regarding their belief systems about marriage and divorce. Covenant couples very strongly embrace the legal terms of their form of marriage: lifelong commitment, long waiting periods for divorce, and so on. But they also see marriage as more important in traditional ways. It is one of the most important things one does in life, they say. They do not regard divorce as a solution to a bad relationship, and surely not when there are children. Only a minority of covenant partners believe that a terrible marriage is worse than a divorce. Much more so than those in standard marriages, covenant partners strongly endorse the idea that society would be better off if it were harder to get a divorce (Nock et al. 2008:74).

Even though many of those in standard marriages also believe that divorce should be harder to obtain, covenant couples truly believe that their type of marriage is better for children. Their strong religious nature is exhibited by the fact that twice as many covenant couples believe

that it is very important that their spouse be of the same religion. This same proportion of covenant partners attends religious services weekly (Nock et al. 2008).

Other characteristics of covenant couples are that they saw virtually no chance of divorce at the beginning of their marriages whereas standard partners expressed a bit less optimism. Second, one in ten covenant partners are African American compared to 17 percent of standard partners. Third, standard wives reported more depressive symptoms at the beginning of the marriage than did covenant wives (Nock et al. 2008). Finally, covenant couples were much less likely to have lived together prior to marriage and are more likely to describe themselves as religious fundamentalists and political conservatives. The current study refers to this extreme religiosity as a “covenant identity” whereupon it is hypothesized that if that identity were threatened it could cause conflict between the couple.

By examining the same covenant marriage data used by Nock and colleagues the current study will provide further comparisons of covenant and standard marriages centered around marital conflict and the influence of religiosity, to determine if a covenant identity indeed is a source for conflict.

Thoughts of Divorce

The third primary consideration as a possible aspect of conflict is couples’ level of thoughts of divorce. Many researchers use thoughts of divorce as an indicator of marital distress or instability (Amato and Booth 2001; Amato and DeBoer 2001). In fact, it has been identified as one of the most reliable indicators of overall marital instability; although just thinking about divorce alone does not mean one will get divorced (Booth et al. 1981; Johnson et al. 1986) without being followed up by some action such as talking to the spouse or someone else about getting a divorce.

Booth et al. (1983) define marital instability as “(a) an affective state (how I feel about my marriage), (b) cognitions concerning the relationship (what I have thought about doing as a result of how I feel), and (c) certain actions (what I have actually done about how I feel and what I have thought). As such, instability is quite distinct from those concepts indicating an act of dissolution or disruption” (p. 388).

While some studies have found that wives are more likely to think about divorce and have indicated a difference in the way men and women view housework fairness and hours working at paid labor with thoughts of divorce (Huber and Spitze 1980), there has been very little examination about how men and women act on these thoughts and feelings (Gager and Sanchez 2003).

Couples with higher levels of religiosity are less likely to think of divorce as an option for a troubled marriage (Nock et al. 2008). Amato and Prevetti (2003) using open ended responses to the question, “What are the most important factors keeping your marriage together?” found that people who focused on and reported only barriers in their marriage were more like to be thinking about divorce, and were therefore more likely to be divorced fourteen years later. Orbach, House, Mero, and Webster (1996) found that length of marriage has an effect on thoughts of divorce with these thoughts increasing up through fifteen to nineteen years of marriage, then decreasing after nineteen years. This decline was attributed to work and economic factors.

While many studies implied a relationship between marital conflict and thoughts of divorce (Gottman 1993; Curtis and Ellison 2002; Chinitz and Brown 2001), no studies were found that specifically related these factors or that stated the exact causal direction between them. So how does the construct of thoughts of divorce affect marital conflict? Do individuals think about divorce for some other reason, which then contributes to marital conflict because of a change of

view about the marriage; or does marital conflict “cause” someone to begin to think about divorce as an option to alleviate the conflict? Looking specifically at thoughts of divorce and marital conflict, the current study will contribute to the discussion of the causal relationship between these two constructs and the impact on marital relationships.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the literature surrounding marital conflict pursuant to the six major themes identified and provides theoretical support for why specific variables and relationships are examined.

First, when talking about the nature of marital conflict, or more precisely what it is and how it is defined, there seems to be consensus that there are different types and levels of conflict, but there is little consensus on exactly how to define and differentiate these levels, or how to accurately measure conflict. While it seems to be generally agreed upon that couples tend to argue over the same things, not all studies include the same topics as measures. While most studies still include conflict as a measure, or aspect, of marital quality, there seems to be some general consensus that there is, or should be, a distinction between disagreements and the reactions to disagreements; and that the reactions are often more of a problem than the initial disagreement.

There also seems to be a consensus that there are functional couples, or those who can manage conflict well, and dysfunctional couples, or those who do not manage conflict well. However, there is little agreement on what differentiates these types of couples. There is some support for the intergenerational transmission perspective regarding the transmission of divorce and marital discord, even though few studies have looked specifically at the effects of the conflict experienced in the family of origin as a predictor of the level of conflict in the current marriage. It

seems to be generally agreed upon that one learns how to negotiate and manage conflict in their family of origin, but how much this influences conflict later in life and more particularly when one marries, is still up for debate.

The current study examines marital conflict under the lens of the intergenerational transmission perspective in order to shed some light on how much, if any, conflict is transmitted from one generation to the next; and if it is, how much of the conflict initially experienced in newlywed relationships can be attributed to this phenomenon and for how long into the marriage this factor remains an influence.

With regard to the levels and frequency of disagreement between couples, the current study examines both the levels and the frequency over three waves of analysis. In addition, the reactions to conflict are also examined in order to determine whether the reactions are indeed more of a problem in newlywed relationships. There seems to be some general consensus that hostility experienced in the family of origin is likely to influence this behavior in later marriage; and that hostility is likely to hurt a relationship more than positive behaviors learned can help the relationship. These reactions, or behaviors, associated with marital conflict are influenced by the work of John Gottman; in particular his process cascade, and the four horsemen theory. The current study divides measures of conflict reactions into four distinct categories (three negative, one positive) in order to test the validity of the claims that hostility and avoidance are more detrimental to relationships than positive or collaborative behaviors are helpful to relationships.

There is little consensus on what happens to conflict over time. Amato and colleagues (2007) indicate that overall couples seem to report less conflict in their relationships in 2000 than they did in 1980. While some researchers found that conflict may decrease over time, others found

increases over time. Further, little is known specifically about which individual conflict topics increase or decrease over time. The current study answers this question over five years including what, if any, differences there are between covenant and standard marriages and what, if any, impact religiosity, and the covenant identity, has on marital conflict.

How people define and manage conflict is a testament to their character, their ability to manage and absorb social pressures, and the character of their relationship. Learning to negotiate conflict, and particularly resolving conflicts constructively helps prevent situations, defined by the couple as conflict, from exploding into insurmountable problems that might cause people to be psychologically or physically hurt or may just lead a couple to divorce (Canary et al. 1995). Amato and DeBoer (2001), among others, acknowledge that unresolved marital conflict is often a cause for marital distress, including disruption. An understanding of how conflict manifests in marriage, how it changes over time and how people react to it are the cornerstones to finding ways to understand and manage marital conflict.

The next chapter will discuss the detailed methodology chosen to analyze marital conflict including a discussion of all of the variables and how they were constructed. Chapter four will detail for time one, what the nature of conflict is in these newlywed relationships, including what the couples disagree about the most, how the couples behave during conflict, what impact conflict experienced in the family of origin has on the levels of disagreements and reaction behaviors, and finally what impact thoughts of divorce have on these new marriages.

Chapter five details the findings for the impact of religiosity on the time one levels of conflict, including a comparison between covenant and standard marriages for levels of disagreements and behavior reactions.

Chapter six presents the results for how conflict changes over time. A comparison is made over all three waves of data for those couples who remained in the study to determine whether conflict increases, decreases or remains the same and which topics change. Further, there is an examination of how conflict changes over time in covenant as compared to standard marriages.

Chapter seven summarizes all findings and presents conclusions and limitations to this study; with the final chapter providing policy implications and suggested areas.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The previous chapters have identified six primary themes that I pursue in the data analysis.

To review these themes are:

- 1) What is the nature of marital conflict? How is it defined? How and why does it manifest? What are possible predictors of conflict?*
- 2) What are topics of disagreement between couples and how often do they disagree?*
- 3) How do couples cope behaviorally with conflict, including managing thoughts of divorce?*
- 4) Does dysfunction, including conflict, experienced in the family of origin impact the amount of conflict in a marriage? Do these experiences also influence how individuals react to conflict situations?*
- 5) What, if any, role does religiosity, including the choice of a covenant marriage have on the topics of disagreement and the frequency of disagreements.*
- 6) How does conflict change over time? In what causal direction does it grow? What factors, if any, contribute to conflict increasing or decreasing over time? Do the topics of disagreement change over time? Are their differences over time between those who chose a covenant marriage and those who did not?*

The analysis conducted in this research project addressed these themes. The first section of this chapter provides a description of the data set employed to study these themes, including a brief discussion of the sociodemographic characteristics of the sample. In the second part of the chapter,

the reliability and validity of all scales are examined. Detailed descriptions of all constructs are presented as well as, in the final section, the chosen analytic method of multiple analysis of variance.

Data Source

The data utilized in this study are from a 5-year panel study of newlywed couples who married in Louisiana in 17 out of 60 randomly selected parishes in 1999-2000 (Marriage Matters, University of Virginia, 2001). Data were collected over three waves with the intent to examine differences between covenant and standard marriages. The first wave was administered on average three to six months after the wedding. Within the 17 chosen parishes, all covenant marriages were selected for inclusion. A parallel sample of standard marriages was obtained by taking the standard marriage license filed in front of and behind each covenant marriage license. Thus, the initial sample contained twice as many standard marriages as covenant. Of the 1,714 licenses included in the original sampling frame, 1,310 couples were finally confirmed, for a confirmation rate of 76.4%. The response rate for the first wave mail survey was 60%, resulting in a total of 707 couples responding to the first wave. The second wave was administered to the same sample of couples approximately eighteen months to two years after the marriage with a response rate of 92%, and the third wave was administered approximately five years into the marriage with a response rate of 70% of the original sample. The Wave Three data contain 484 couples who were still married. The others had divorced, did not respond to the survey, or could not be located.

For the individuals who had divorced by the third wave of the study, divorce exit interviews were conducted by first sending a mail questionnaire, and then eventually soliciting a telephone interview for those who were unlikely to complete a questionnaire after a second

questionnaire mailing, postcard contact, and multiple telephone calls. In order to locate this subsample of individuals who were high candidates for attrition, telephone sweeps of the couples, and their listed family and friend contacts, were done, as well as internet and phone book searches when couples disappeared. Ultimately, 97 divorces were confirmed, 33 of which were covenant couples.

There are numerous longitudinal family studies that measure subjects over time (Amato, Loomis and Booth 1995; Amato et al., 2007; Bradbury et al. 2001, for a review; Glenn 1990; Rodgers and Amato 2000). Some measure the same subjects over time in panel data, while others use a random cross section of people at different intervals (Amato et al. 2007). However, most studies do not use data from both husbands and wives, but instead ask one of the individuals to report on the other's behavior and attitudes (Amato et al. 2007). Other studies that do use both husband and wife reports are often not longitudinal (Coleman and Straus 1986), or include both married and cohabiting couples (DeMaris 2000; Gager and Sanchez 2003) or have generally small sample sizes (Weger 2001; Weigel, Bennett, and Ballard-Reisch 2006). When using cross-sectional data researchers are forced to rely on retrospective histories provided by respondents instead of being able to ask what is happening at the moment (Amato and DeBoer 2001). These cross-sectional, and many of the longitudinal studies, include both newlyweds and long time married individuals. Even when able to identify the duration of the marriage, putting new and more established marriages in the same sample could confound the findings because those couples who have been married a long time have developed certain conflict resolution skills that newlyweds may not have developed and may divorce before they develop (Bradbury et al. 2001).

Why the Marriage Matters Data Set

This data set was chosen for several reasons: 1) the sample consists entirely of newlywed couples, 2) there are three waves of data over a five year time period, 3) there are many different aspects of marriage covered in the questionnaire, 4) the questionnaire allowed for a more detailed examination of marital conflict. Instead of just focusing on frequency of arguments, this questionnaire also asked questions about conflict behaviors during the marriage, while also providing measures of dysfunction in their families of origin, 5) the data set also encompasses marital disruption so we can at least look briefly at the effects of conflict and related variables on marital termination, and, most importantly, 6) because of its abilities to answer the questions regarding conflict in marriage from both the husband and the wife perspective. The items just mentioned help to account for the problems discussed in the previous section. Having all newlyweds, with both husband and wife and over time, will help contribute to the discussion surrounding marital conflict.

Sociodemographic Composition of the Sample

Table 1 shows the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants. We can see there is a heavily skewed race distribution, that the majority of the participants are young (below age 30), have at least a high school education, and relatively moderate incomes. Wives tend to work closer to part time in wave one, with the number of hours decreasing over time, while the husbands work full time with their hours increasing over time. Other characteristics of this table will be discussed later in this chapter.

Table 1 - Frequency Distribution of Sociodemographics

	Wives N=683	Husbands N=584
Total Complete Couples (N=707)		
Wave 1	543	
Wave 2	523	
Wave 3	406	
R Median Age (Wave 1)	28.5	27
Couples with 1 or more child(ren) present in the home (Wives report)		
Time 1	36%	
Time 2	45%	
Time 3	60%	
Hours Worked last week (M(SD))		
Time 1	28.2(19.2)	39.5(18.5)
Time 2	26.4(19.7)	41.2(18.8)
Time 3	25.2(20.2)	40(18.6)
Weeks Worked last year (M(SD))		
Time 1	32.4(22.1)	40.1(20.2)
Time 2	30.2(23)	42.4(17.2)
Time 3	29.5(23.2)	41.7(17.7)
Average income from all sources last year		
(thousands baseline)	\$19.7	\$30.8
Race (n(%))		
Black	15%	14%
White	78%	81%
Other	6%	4%
Years of schooling	14.2	13.8

Totals may not add to zero due to rounding and missing cases.

Scale Validity and Reliability

The models used for testing of the research themes utilize two conflict constructs as dependent variables, conflict frequency and conflict behavior, and several constructs as independent variables, or covariates, (family dysfunction, religiosity, thoughts of divorce, couple interaction, commitment, satisfaction and social network). To insure the correct operationalization of all the variables used in the models, the validity and reliability of the constructs was assessed prior to the estimation of the MANOVA models, although when the results of these assessments were inconsistent with how items have been scaled in the past, I have usually opted to follow past convention.

To estimate the validity of a theoretical construct it is important to consider discriminant and convergent validity (Schnell, Hill, and Esser 1999; Trochim 2002). A construct is discriminantly valid when it is empirically distinguishable from other constructs (Straub 1989) and it is convergent when all items in the construct measure only the aspects intended. In addition, constructs must be reliable, or internally consistent. This is achieved when all items in the construct are highly inter-correlated. To ensure validity and reliability in all constructs the scales were analyzed in an exploratory and confirmatory validation phase (Bachmann 2009). Further, all scales' internal consistency was measured by Cronbach Alpha which is reported for all scales. All items used in the scale construction were screened for outliers so as not to confound the scale construction and future MANOVA analysis. The results of the various MANOVA models are presented in later chapters.

The Confirmatory Factor Analysis

When the relationship between items and underlying factors is uncertain an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) should be run, and when the relationship has already been determined, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) should be run (Thompson 2004). Because I am using a survey instrument developed by other researchers and employing pre-existing scales that have often been used in numerous studies, CFAs were conducted to assess the convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs. As mentioned above, if the construct has convergent validity it will be similar to other constructs measuring the same concepts. Whereas, if the validity is discriminant it will differ, or distinguish itself from the other constructs measuring similar concepts. However, if questions were used in a different manner than the original researchers intent, EFAs were run to determine if the variables cohered sufficiently to use them in a single scale. Both types of factor analyses utilized principal component analysis with Varimax rotation and Kaiser normalization (calculated with SPSS 17).

Because the scales used in the original study were created and validated by other researchers, confirmatory factor analyses were performed to make sure that the items usually scaled together did indeed fit together factorially. Orthogonal rotation was utilized in all factor analyses. All of the covariate and independent variable constructs loaded as they should so the factor analyses for these items are not shown here. Only the Cronbach alphas are reported to denote the reliability of the scales.

Individual Constructs

The primary objective of this study is to explore the degree and types of conflict present in marriages, analyze how conflict changes over time, and make comparisons of levels of conflict for different groups pursuant to the themes discussed at the beginning of this chapter. In this next section, all of the individual constructs are examined first by looking at descriptive statistics of the individual questions to determine how individual wives and husbands answered, as well as comparisons within the married couples. The number of respondents will differ based on the group that is being examined. While there are 707 couples represented in the data (meaning at least one person of a couple answered), there are more individual wives than husbands, thus making for fewer intact couples. We can see in Table 1 that there are only 543 couples where both the husband and wife responded, with 523 couples responding in wave two and 406 by wave three.

Conflict

As discussed in the previous chapter, the majority of researchers use only one primary measure to represent conflict in the marriage, the frequency of disagreements or disputes. Instead of just using “disagreements” as a single measure of conflict in the relationship, the aspects of marital conflict are broken up as follows: Conflict Frequency, the frequency of marital disagreements, and Conflict Behavior, how respondents react, behave, or cope when conflict is present.

Conflict Frequency

This construct is defined by 14 statements asking the participants: “Please indicate the extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list, Handling family finances, How we spend our leisure time, Religious matters, Showing

physical affection, My friends, My partner's friends, Our sex life, Philosophy of life, Dealing with parents and in-laws, Our aims and goals and things believed important, The amount of time we spend together, Who does what around the house, How to raise children, Whether to have children or more, children, Career decisions, Your drinking or drug use, Your partner's drinking or drug use.”

The responses ranged from (0) always disagree, to (5) always agree. This section of the data was adapted from the Dyadic Adjustment statements 1-15 (Spanier 1976).

All 15 items were entered into a CFA revealing two distinct factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, which is the lowest level confirming the independence of the concepts. Table 2 shows the two factors produced. Because the items regarding friends loaded over .4 into both factors I decided to leave them in factor one because that made more theoretical sense than including them with the drinking and drug use variables that loaded into the second factor.

Because the literature supports that drinking and/or drug use may be a contributor to conflict, as discussed in chapter two, I wanted these two items in the study, but did not want them to confound the entire scale. These two items were separated out into their own construct instead of just being removed from the scale. All items correlated relatively highly within their respective scales, which shows that all items contribute to the scale in some meaningful way.

Table 2 - Conflict Frequency Scale, Item, and Factor Analysis for Wave One (reporting with wife variables)

Items	Item to Total Correlation	Factors ¹	
		1	2
Conflict Frequency Scale ($\alpha=.89$)			
Handling family finances	.38	.60	
How spend leisure time	.43	.63	
Religious matters	.26	.46	
Showing physical affection	.39	.62	
My friends	.47	.40	.56
My partner's friends	.50	.42	.57
Our sex life	.37	.61	
Philosophy of life	.47	.61	
Dealing with parents and in-laws	.31	.50	
Our aims and goals	.55	.71	
Amount of time spent together	.54	.73	
Who does what around house	.41	.64	
How to raise children	.38	.58	
Whether to have (or more) children	.13	.58	
Career decisions	.37	.58	
Your drinking or drug use	.77		.87
Your partner's drinking or drug use	.77		.88
Eigenvalue		5.61	1.87
Variance explained (%)		33.0	10.9
Cumulative variance (%)		33.0	44.0

¹ Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation Method and Kaiser Normalization. Loadings less than .4 not shown.

The internal consistency is further supported by the high Cronbach alpha. For the husbands' drinking scales, the alphas were as follows: wave one .89, wave two .88, and wave three .90. For wives the alphas were: wave one .91, wave two .79 and wave three .89. The twelve remaining questions were included in an overall conflict frequency variable with a Cronbach alpha for husbands of: wave one .89, wave two .88 and wave three .90; and for wives: wave one .88, wave two .88 and wave three .89. Both scales were between .70 and .90 the range that is typically considered suitable for internal consistency reliability (Hair et al. 1998).

Conflict Behavior

Twelve initial statements asking participants how they react when disagreements or conflicts come up (and how they perceive their partner's reactions) were identified as the best representation of the theoretical construct of conflict behavior as presented in chapter two. Respondents were asked: "Here are some statements about how people handle the disagreements and conflicts that come up in their marriage. For each of these statements, just indicate how true it is in your marriage right now. When disagreements and conflicts come up; I withdraw to avoid a big fight, I feel tense and anxious, I look at things from my partner's viewpoint, I just give in, I get physically violent, I feel unloved, I try to find the middle ground, I just want to kiss and make up, I get sarcastic (I say things intended to hurt my partner), My partner gets sarcastic, I get hostile (I act like we are enemies), My partner gets hostile." The response choices ranged from (1) not true at all, to (3) very true. These statements were adapted from John Gottman's conflict scales (Gottman 2004).

All 12 items were entered into an EFA, using Varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization as discussed above. EFA was used because even though the items were grouped together into one

section, my intent was to see if I could clearly identify four categories as outlined in chapter two. Table 3 shows that four factors were indeed produced, however, because this project does not specifically examine or discuss physical violence, and theoretically, violence is much different than hostility or sarcasm, the question regarding physical violence was removed from the scale construct of “hostility.”

For the univariate and descriptive statistics discussions the physical violence question is included, but is not included in the final MANOVA models. Two other items can be seen to have loaded into other factors, “I feel unloved” and “I just want to kiss and make up.” It was determined that I feel unloved fit better with factor four (negative emotion) than factor one (hostility) where it also loaded. The kiss and make up variable loaded negatively in factor three (avoidance), so it was included with the second factor (collaboration).

The 11 other statements were broken up into four categories; hostility, collaboration, avoidance, and negative emotion, based on the above factor analysis indicating which variables best supported the theoretical constructs from the previous chapter.

Table 3 - Conflict Behavior Scale, Item, and Factor Analysis for Wave One
(reporting with wife variables)

Items	Item to Total Correlation	Factors ¹			
		1	2	3	4
Hostility ($\alpha=.89$)					
I get sarcastic	.68	.80			
My partner gets sarcastic	.57	.72			
I get hostile	.70	.77			
My partner gets hostile	.64	.75			
I get physically violent	.28	.41			
Collaboration					
I look at things from partner viewpoint	.59		.72		
I try to find middle ground	.69		.81		
I just want to kiss and make up	.55		.53	-.45	
Avoidance					
I withdraw to avoid a fight	.69			.79	
I just give in	.68			.81	
Neg. Emotion					
I feel unloved	.63	.41			.68
I feel tense and anxious	.75				.82
<i>Eigenvalue</i>					
		2.83	1.63	1.60	1.39
<i>Variance explained (%)</i>		23.6	13.6	13.3	11.5
<i>Cumulative variance (%)</i>		23.6	37.2	50.5	62.0

¹ Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation Method and Kaiser Normalization. Loadings less than .4 not shown.

As previously discussed, John Gottman believes there are different components that represent both the manifestation of conflict and the resolution of conflict. Table 4 - indicates how the variables were divided to best measure the different components of conflict behavior based as closely as possible on the work of John Gottman (Gottman 2004) and provides the individual loadings for each item and Cronbach alphas for each scale.

Table 4 - Breakdown of Conflict Behavior Variables

Hostility	Collaboration	Avoidance	Neg. Emotion
I get sarcastic ~~~~~ my partner Gets sarcastic ~~~~~ I get hostile ~~~~~ My partner gets hostile	I look at things from my partner's viewpoint ~~~~~ I try to find middle ground ~~~~~ I just want to kiss and make up	I withdraw to avoid a fight ~~~~~ I just give in	I feel tense and anxious ~~~~~ I feel unloved
α h—w1 .78, w2 .77, w3 .75*	α h—w1 .44, w2 .41, w3 .41*	α h—w1 .60, w2 .60, w3 .56*	α h—w1 .48, w2 .33, w3 .31*
α w—w1 .81, w2 .82, w3 .76**	α w—w1 .50, w2 .45, w3 .49**	α w—w1 .61, w2 .58, w3 .61**	α w—w1 .56, w2 .55, w3 .46**

* indicates cronbach alpha scores for the scale for husband for all three waves (w1, w2, w3)

** indicates cronbach alpha scores for the scale for wives for all three waves (w1, w2, w3)

Family of Origin

In order to characterize families of origin, I used two questions from the survey: who the respondent lived with when they were 16, (both natural parents, mother only, father only, or some other living arrangement); and a question about how they viewed their family's income when they were 16 compared to other American families (far below to far above average). Both of these

questions were asked of wives and husbands separately and are treated as separate variables in the analysis.

To determine the level of overall dysfunction, or conflict, in the family of origin, I used a list of 14 items that measured several different aspects of the respondent's view of their family of origin functionality when they were growing up. Participants were specifically asked: "Were any of the following a problem or source of conflict in your family when you were growing up? Violence between your parents, Violence directed at you, Sexual abuse, Severe depression, Other mental illness, Alcoholism, Drug abuse, Foul and abusive language, Periods of unemployment, Not enough money to make ends meet, Serious physical illness, Not enough love in the home, High conflict between your parents, Name-calling and sarcasm," ranging on a scale from (0) don't know, to (3) a major problem. These 14 items, which were only asked in wave one, were combined into a family dysfunction scale. Because "don't know" is different than the absence of dysfunction, these answers were deleted from the analysis as missing data. As mentioned previously a factor analysis was run on these items, but the results are not reported here. The Cronbach alpha for husbands scale was .85 and for wives was .87.

Religiosity

Level of religiosity was determined by examining respondents' answers to several questions. The first question asked how often religious services were attended, coded from (0) never, to (7) several times per week; how often respondents pray, coded from (5) several times a day, to (0) never; how important religious faith is in their life, coded from (5) extremely important to (1) not important at all; and, how important religious faith is in their partner's life, coded from (5) extremely important, to (1) not important at all. These four items were chosen based on the

theoretical construct of religiosity outlined in the previous chapter. Because each item was measured with a different metric I converted them to z-scores (common metrics) and summed the z-scores. Cronbach alphas were conducted to test the internal consistency of the scale: for husbands, wave one .90, wave two .90 and wave three .90; and for wives wave one .86, wave two .86 and .85. Wave one frequency distributions show that 93% of covenant wives and 89% of husbands said that religious beliefs were either important or extremely important as compared to 75% of standard wives and 62% of standard husbands.

As discussed in the previous chapter, attendance at church services is a very strong indicator of possible conflict over religious issues. Based on that literature the question “Do you and your partner attend services together?” was examined individually. This question is coded (3) for Yes, always, (2) for Yes, usually, (1) for Yes, from time to time, and (0) for No, never.

Thoughts of Divorce

While most often conceived of as a possible result of conflict, in this study, I treat thoughts of divorce as a possible antecedent of conflict. Like the “chicken and the egg” adage, it is difficult to really determine which comes first, thoughts of divorce or conflict leading to these thoughts. In this study, thoughts of divorce are used as an independent variable to try to determine whether they could have an affect on levels of conflict. Thoughts of Divorce are determined by two questions that were asked in all three waves. What do you think the chances are that you and your partner will eventually separate or divorce, with answers ranging from (0) very low, to (10) very high, and the question, how often do you personally consider ending your marriage, based on a scale of (0) all the time to (5) never. The second question was recoded to the same direction as the first with higher numbers indicating a stronger chance for divorce. Because of the different metrics, both

questions were turned into standardized z-scores before being placed in a scale together. This scale's alpha scores are: for husbands, wave one .77, wave two .87, wave three .86, and for wives, wave one .82, wave two .86 and wave three .85.

Pursuant to the literature on newlyweds, most couples initially report low chances of divorce with 94% of wives and 93% of husbands reporting their chances for divorce as low (less than 5 on the ten point scale). However, this number does decrease to 88% for wives in wave 3, and 91% for husbands. While 6% of husbands have some thoughts of ending their marriage in the first wave, this percent remains the same over all three waves. However, 8% of wives have some thoughts of ending their marriage in wave one, which increases to 14% by wave 3.

Fairness of Household Division of Labor

As discussed in the previous chapter, often the wives' views of the fairness of household division of labor may lead to conflict in the relationship. Fairness is determined by two individual questions that ask whether the household division of labor is fair to respondent or to respondent's partner. These questions are included from both the wife and husband perspective and are scored on a Likert scale from (0) very unfair to (3) very fair. The data includes a separate measure for whether child care division is viewed as fair or not, but this question was not asked in wave one, so is not included in this analysis.

Marital Characteristics

In the previous chapter, we learned that marital characteristics such as interaction, cohesion, commitment and satisfaction are most often discussed in the literature as being affected, most often negatively, by conflict. No studies could be found that used these measures as independent variables to see if they have an affect on levels of conflict, instead of the other way

around. The current study uses the following constructs as covariates to determine their causal relationship to conflict.

Couple Interaction

Interaction is a variable comprised of 19 questions that ask respondents: “How often do you and your partner do each of the following things? (Kiss, Engage in outside interests together, Have a meal together at home, Have a stimulating exchange of ideas, Laugh together at something, Watch TV together, Calmly discuss an issue, Have an argument about something, Work together on a project, Have sexual relations, Visit your relatives, Visit your partner’s relatives, Spend an evening with friends, Go to a bar or tavern together, Go bowling, golfing, or other sports, Just spend time alone with each other, Go out to a restaurant together, Talk about our child(ren), Spend time with our child(ren))” with responses coded, (1) never, to (6) every day.

The internal consistency of the scales is reflected in the high Cronbach’s alphas. Husband’s interaction scale alpha scores reached .85 for wave one, .84 for wave two, and .86 for wave three. Alphas for wives overall interaction were: wave one .87, wave two .80 and wave three .78. The interaction subscale for the two questions regarding children had alphas for husbands of: wave one .79, wave two .78, and wave three .82. For wives they were: wave one .81, wave two .80, and wave three .85. All of these values are between .70 and .90 which is the typical range considered ideal for internal consistency measures (Hair et al., 1998).

Social Network Approval

Approval levels of members of the respondents’ and their partners’ social networks were determined by examining the question, “now that you are married, do these people generally approve or disapprove of your current marriage; your father, your mother, your partner’s father,

your partner's mother, your brothers and sisters, your partner's brothers and sisters, your friends and your partner's friends." This question is coded (4) strongly approve, to (0) don't know, with each used as a separate variable to be able to isolate whether disapproval came from parents, siblings or friends and which of these had the greatest effect on conflict. Those who answered "don't know" were removed from the analysis and treated as missing data.

Marital Cohesion

To establish the cohesiveness of the couple, respondents were asked, "Here is a list of statements that people sometimes make about their marriages. For each statement, please indicate if you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree. My partner and I get closer every day, My partner is my best friend, My partner likes to do things without me, I like to do things without my partner, My partner and I live pretty separate lives, My partner appreciates what I do, Our happiest times together will be in the future, Our happiest times together were in the past, Our happiest times together are right now, I understand my partner's feelings, I admire my partner, I love my partner" with each statement coded (5) strongly agree to (1) strongly disagree.

Four of the items were reverse coded to maintain the positive direction of the scale with higher scores indicating a more cohesive view of the marriage. The recoded items are: My partner likes to do things without me, I like to do things without my partner, my partner and I live pretty separate lives and our happiest times together were in the past. The Cronbach alphas for this scale are; for husbands, wave one .86, wave two .87, wave three .87; for wives, wave one .87, wave two .89, wave three .89.

Marital Satisfaction

To assess respondents' general satisfaction with their marriages, eight items were examined in response to the question; "In every marriage, there are some things that are very good and other things that could use some improvement. Right now, how satisfied would you say you are with each of the following aspects of your marriage? The physical intimacy you experience, The love you experience, How conflicts are resolved, The degree of fairness in the marriage, Quality of communication, Economic well-being, The emotional intimacy you experience, Your overall relationship with your partner" coded as (1) very dissatisfied, to (5) very satisfied. The Cronbach alphas for this scale are: for husbands, wave one .89, wave two .88, wave three .90; for wives, wave one .89, wave two .90, wave three .91.

Marital Commitment

To assess the respondent's overall commitment to their marriage, excluding thoughts of divorce which have been analyzed separately, six items were examined that asked: "how often do you personally; leave the house after a fight, think things are going well, confide in your partner, regret that you got married, quarrel, get on each other's nerves. These items were coded (0) all the time, to (5) never. Two items were reverse coded to maintain the general direction of the scale, i.e. the higher the number the more commitment the respondent felt for the marriage (think things are going well and confide in your partner). The Cronbach alphas were: for husbands, wave one .81, wave two .85, wave three .86; for wives wave one .85, wave two .86, wave three .88.

Sociodemographic Variables

Covenant Marriage

Covenant marriage is determined by a question asking whether respondents were in a covenant marriage, coded (1) yes, and (0) no. Because the information regarding entry into a covenant marriage did not change from the beginning of the marriage, and both the husband and wife would have the same answer to this question, only the variable for wives wave one was used. At wave one there are 299 intact standard couples, and 244 covenant couples out of the 707 overall couples. The remaining 164 couples are incomplete, having either wife or husband only responses, or are missing for some other reason. For wave two, there are 280 covenant, 243 standard, and 280 incomplete or missing couples. For wave three there are 213 covenant couples, 193 standard couples and 301 incomplete or missing couples. When reporting couple data, only complete, or intact, couples were examined.

Presence of Children

Pursuant to the literature, children can complicate a relationship and may lead to some level of conflict for couples. While it is acknowledged that other researchers have found different reactions to biological children vs. step-children, this study only examined the effect of any children on the marriage, so it will not be distinguishing between biological and step-children. If the presence of children is found to be a contributor to conflict for this sample of couples, future research on this topic will distinguish between biological and step children.

Because there was not one consistent measure in all three waves regarding the presence of children, for wave one the question; “ how many children of each age currently live in the home” was used to identify those homes with children. The numbers were added together and everything

above 0 was coded as (1) to represent the presence of children, and 0 was used to indicate the absence of children. In Wave 2 and 3 there was one question that asked; “Just to make sure we have this right, are there any children at all who are living here with you and your partner?” which was coded (1) for yes, and (0) for no. Using the wives’ reports, 36% of all the couples had children present in wave one, with 55% in wave two and 61% in wave three.

Age

Respondent’s age was asked in years, with the median age for all wives at 28.5 and husbands at 27. Covenant wives and husbands tended to be a bit younger at 24.2 and 26.2, respectively, with standard wives at 27.1 and husbands at 28.9.

Hours Worked

The respondents were asked how many hours they worked in the last week, with the mean hours for husbands in wave one at 39.6, wave two 40.5 and wave three 39.9. Wives hours for wave one were 28.3, wave two 26.7 and wave three 25.2.

Income

Respondents were asked for their individual income in thousands with husbands at \$30.8 for wave 1, \$29.6 for wave 2 and \$32.3 for wave 3, and wives at \$19.8, \$18.8 and \$19.5.

Education

Respondents were asked how many years of education they had at wave one: wives overall averaged 14.2 years of education and husbands at 13.8. Covenant wives and husbands reported slightly higher levels of education than their standard counterparts, at 14.2 years and 14.1 and standard wives at 13.8, with husbands at 13.5.

Race

Because of the overwhelming number of white respondents this variable was recoded with (1) representing white respondents, and (0) representing non-white respondents. Because race does not change over the course of the study, only the time one response for husbands and wives was used. Of the overall sample, 15% of wives and 14% of husbands are black, 78% of wives and 81% of husbands are white and 6% and 4%, respectively, are identified as other. Of the covenant couples, 80% of the women and 87% of the men are white, 13% of the women and 10% of the men are black, and 7% of the women and 2% of the men are other. Of the standard couples, 77% of both males and females are white, 17% are black and 6% of women and 2% of men are other. Table 1, above presents the sociodemographic variables of the sample.

Analytic Strategy

The first step in the analytic strategy was to look at frequency distributions for all socio-demographic variables, with these being reported in Table 1. In addition, I examined the frequencies for the main conflict variables by husbands and wives over all three waves to determine what men and women disagreed about and how often. These are reported in their entirety in Appendix A and are discussed in detail in Chapter Four. I then performed crosstab comparisons between all husbands and wives, between all covenant and standard couples, between covenant and standard husbands, and between covenant and standard wives over each wave. When including both husband and wife variables in an analysis only the couples where both parties answered are examined. Chi square was used to measure association between the variables, and McNemare's test was used to determine whether the difference in the percentages was significant

over time. These are reported in Chapter Four, with differences between covenant and standard detailed in Chapter Five, and changes over time detailed in Chapter Six.

In order to test the effects of the independent variables and covariates on the dependent variables I used regular MANOVAs (Multiple Analysis of Variance) and Full Factorial MANCOVAs (Multiple Analysis of Covariance). This method was chosen because of the multiple related dependent variables and the interdependence of these variables. MANOVAs and MANCOVAs were used to provide protection against inflated Type 1 error due to the multiple tests (Tabachnick and Fidell 1996). These analyses were done for husbands, wives, and couples over all three waves. In order to test the significance over time, Repeated Measures MANCOVAs were run on each of the variations of the dependent variable by husbands and wives.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE NATURE, MANAGEMENT, AND CORRELATES OF CONFLICT

Introduction

The previous chapters have presented six themes regarding marital conflict that define what this dissertation is about. This chapter addresses four of those themes: (1) What is the nature of conflict and how is it defined in this study (predictors of conflict are covered in the next chapter), (2) topics of disagreement (what couples disagree about or argue over), (3) how conflict is coped with behaviorally (thoughts of divorce are addressed in the next chapter), (4) what, if any, differences are there between covenant and standard couples, and individuals (the effect of covenant marriage and religiosity will be discussed in the next chapter).

First, to determine what couples disagree about and how couples cope behaviorally with conflict, frequency distributions are presented by topic for both intact couples (those where both husband and wife answered the question) and individual husbands and wives. As previously discussed, if only one member of the couple answered, the entire couple is deleted as missing data from the couples' analysis, but all respondents are included in the individual husbands' and wives' analyses regardless of whether their spouses also completed a questionnaire. Second, responses to the conflict questions were recoded into two categories, "we agree about this" and "we disagree about this," then crosstabulations with chi square association tests were conducted to determine the extent to which couples agreed about the sources of conflict in their marriages. All of the tables are found in Appendix B.

The second part of the chapter identifies how couples cope behaviorally with conflict, with the items again coded into two categories, "agree this is true" and "disagree." The third and final

section of this chapter outlines the differences between couples and individuals in covenant versus standard marriages for both conflict frequency and conflict behavior.

What Do Married Couples Disagree About? (Conflict Content and Frequency)

Data on the content and frequency of “conflict” in the early marriages of our sample come from a question sequence in the first wave questionnaire that asked respondents to “please indicate the extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.” The list contained things such as “handling family finances,” “dealing with parents and in-laws,” “career decisions” etc. (See Table 5 for the complete list.) Six degrees of “agreement” between the spouses were recorded: always agree (5), almost always agree (4), sometimes disagree (3), frequently disagree (2), almost always disagree (1), and always disagree (0). In many cases, of course (N = 543), we have these data separately for husbands and wives; in other cases, only for one or the other partner.

As an initial simplification to aid in presentation and discussion, I recoded the responses into two categories: “we agree about this” (including the responses always and almost always agree) and “we disagree about this” (all other responses). In analyzing the couple data, however, we then have the linguistically awkward situation that the husband and wife could agree between themselves that (1) this is something we agree about or (2) this is something we disagree about; or the husband and wife could disagree about whether they agree or disagree about the item in question (that is, one spouse could assert that this is “something we agree about” while the other spouse asserts that it is “something we disagree about.”)

Table 5 - Conflict Frequency: Distribution of Wave One Couples Reporting Disagreements within Couples

		Couples agree no conflict	couples agree is conflict	Couples disagree	at least one member disagree (tot. of prev. 2 cols.)
	n	%	%	%	%
Dealing with parents and in-laws	558	51	20	29	49
How we spend leisure time	561	54	13	33	46
Who does what around the house	556	55	17	28	45
Handling family finances	561	60	12	28	40
My friends	554	61	10	29	39
My partner's friends	557	62	12	26	38
Our sex life	562	63	17	20	37
Philosophy of life	424	66	8	26	34
How to raise children	513	67	11	22	33
Showing physical affection	558	70	10	20	30
The amount of time we spend together	561	71	10	19	29
Religious matters	552	75	10	15	25
Your partner's drinking and drug use	402	75	6	19	25
Your drinking and drug use	402	78	4	18	22
Whether to have more children	556	79	5	16	21
Our aims and goals	558	80	3	17	20
Career decisions	538	81	6	13	19

p<.05* p<.01** p<.001*** n=number of complete, intact, couples. May not add to 100% due to rounding or missing cases.

Question stem reads: Please indicate the extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list, 14 potential areas of disagreement were presented, with respondents able to reply (always agree, almost always agree, sometimes disagree, frequently disagree, almost always disagree, and always disagree). To denote levels of disagreement about conflict, responses were recoded into agreement on no conflict (both husband and wife say they agree), agreement on conflict (both husband and wife responded with one of the disagreement choices) and disagreement about conflict (either the husband or the wife indicates conflict and the other spouse indicates no conflict)

It proved utterly impossible to write coherent sentences using the “agree-disagree” terminology to refer both to the respondents’ answers and to the substance of the questions being answered. So while it is clearly true that “disagreements” and “areas of real conflict” are not necessarily the same thing, I use “agree” and “disagree” from this point forward to refer to respondents’ answers to these questions, and I use “source of conflict” or “area of conflict” to refer to the substance of the question being answered. To illustrate the linguistic convention I have adopted, the stem “handling family finances” found that in 60% of the couples where both spouses answered the question, both spouses said this is something we agree about; in 12% of the cases, both spouses said this is something we don’t agree about; and in the remaining 28% of the cases, one spouse said it was something they agreed about and the other said it was something they disagreed about. In all subsequent text, this finding is rendered as follows:

- 60% of our couples agreed that “handling family finances” was not a source of conflict in the relationship;
- 12% agreed that “handling family finances” was a source of conflict in the relationship;
- And the remaining 28% disagreed whether “handling family finances” was or was not an area of conflict for them

Because this dissertation is primarily interested in conflict between couples, and because some degree of conflict can clearly be said to exist when at least one spouse responds that they disagree about something, whether the other spouse reports that “something” as an area of conflict or not, the discussion in the following sections combines couples where either partner said that, for example, family finances were a source of conflict with couples where both partners said this was a

source of conflict. In the example above, then, 40% of the couples would be said to have conflict over “handling family finances” and 60% would not. The total percentage of couples “in conflict” by this definition is found in the last column of Table 5.

In this sample, the major areas of conflict (i.e., where at least one member of the dyad agreed this was an area of conflict) are parents and in-laws (49%), followed by how couples spend their leisure time (46%), household division of labor (45%), and money issues (40%). What follows is a more detailed discussion of what couples disagree about, grouped by topical categories. For example, the items “showing physical affection” and “our sex life” were grouped under the heading *Intimacy* to avoid redundancy. The topic headings are organized with the highest category item determining the order of the topics, with the 17 items being grouped into nine topics: social network, spending time together, household division of labor, money, intimacy, life goals, children, religion, and drinking and drug use. Each section includes the couple reports as well as a discussion of individual husbands and wives. (The data for individual husbands and wives corresponding to the couple data in Table 5 are reported in Table 6, although, obviously, when looking at husbands and wives separately, we lose information about whether the husbands and wives agree or disagree about the various areas of conflict.)

Table 6 - Frequency Distribution for Individual Husbands and Wives Reporting Agreement or Disagreement over Conflict Frequency Issues for Wave One Regardless of Couple Affiliation

Husbands Conflict Frequency (Individual Husbands)	Disagreement % (n)	Agreement % (n)
Handling Family Finances	26 (149)	75 (435)
How spend leisure time	31 (178)	70 (405)
Religious matters	16 (94)	84 (484)
Showing physical affection	23 (132)	77 (452)
My partner's friends	28 (165)	72 (419)
Our sex life	28 (164)	72 (420)
Philosophy of life	25 (1430)	75 (439)
My friends	30 (174)	70 (407)
Dealing with parents and in-laws	34 (200)	66 (382)
Our aims and goals	14 (80)	86 (500)
Amount of time we spend together	20 (118)	80 (467)
Who does what around the house	32 (184)	68 (397)
How to raise children	23 (128)	77 (429)
Whether to have children or more children	15 (87)	85 (481)
Career decisions	13 (77)	87 (504)
My drinking or drug use	17 (83)	83 (404)
My partner's drinking or drug use	14 (67)	86 (414)

Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding or missing cases

Wives Conflict Frequency (Individual Wives)	Disagreement % (n)	Agreement % (n)
Handling Family Finances	29 (195)	71 (486)
How spend leisure time	30 (202)	70 (480)
Religious matters	20 (134)	80 (543)
Showing physical affection	19 (130)	81 (544)
My partner's friends	23 (153)	77 (519)
Our sex life	26 (179)	74 (503)
Philosophy of life	20 (132)	81 (544)
My friends	22 (151)	78 (523)
Dealing with parents and in-laws	36 (240)	65 (436)
Our aims and goals	9 (63)	91 (617)
Amount of time we spend together	20 (136)	80 (543)
Who does what around the house	34 (228)	66 (449)
How to raise children	24 (152)	76 (490)
Whether to have children or more children	13 (85)	87 (578)
Career decisions	14 (96)	86 (579)
My drinking or drug use	12 (62)	88 (470)
My partner's drinking or drug use	20 (111)	80 (435)

Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding or missing cases

Social Network

Social networks are comprised of people we depend on for different types of support. These networks are usually comprised of family and friends but may also include co-workers, church members or other groups. While networks often provide support, they may also be a source of conflict in our lives that can carry into our marriages. This study asked how often couples disagree about their family and their friends, with nearly half (49%) of these newlywed couples reporting their parents or in-laws as a source of conflict in the marriage. However, there were no significant differences between husbands and wives in this respect.

Friends also appear to be an area of conflict for many couples with nearly 40% reporting conflict over their friends or their partners' friends. This makes friends the fifth highest area of conflict overall, with 28% of husbands reporting disagreements about their (the husband's) friends while only 23% of the wives agreed that the husband's friends were a source of conflicts. As for the wives' friends, 22% of wives note this as an area of conflict and 25% of husbands agree.

Spending Time Together

The amount of time a couple spends doing things together, whether chores or leisure activities, is often indicative of the level of happiness in the marriage. In this sample, 29% of couples reported how much time the couple spent together as a source of conflict. Husbands and wives report this conflict with equal frequency (20%). However, what to do with the time spent together, specifically "how we spend our leisure time," was a far greater source of conflict, with 46% of the couples reporting this issue as a source of conflict, making leisure times the second most frequent area of conflict. However, again, husbands and wives are nearly equal in their reporting of these disagreements.

Household Division of Labor

It seems to be almost common knowledge that husbands and wives disagree about who does what in the home and whether the division of labor is fair to each individual. If the literature is to be believed, marriages are in constant warfare over this topic. However, in this sample as shown in Table 7, this does not appear to be the case. Household division of labor is measured by the one statement that specifically asked how often conflict arises over who does what around the house. For intact couples, 45% reported this issue as an area of conflict, which means that more than half of the couples reported no conflicts at all. While not significantly different, wives (34%) were slightly more likely to report disagreements over this issue than husbands were (32%).

While this study does not identify which specific tasks the couples disagreed about, we can discuss how fair the respondents believe the division of labor is at the beginning of their marriage by examining the frequency distributions of responses to two questions asking whether the household division of labor is fair to the respondent and also to their partner.

Respondents could choose very fair, somewhat fair, somewhat unfair, or very unfair. In this first wave, more wives reported that the household division of labor was either very unfair or somewhat unfair to them (22%), with only 7% believing the division of labor was unfair to their husbands. However, only 7% of husbands believed the tasks were unfair to them, but surprisingly, 16% reported that the division was unfair to their wives. This implies that the majority of couples are still happy about this issue at the very beginning of their relationships. This finding is consistent with the initial “honeymoon” period often discussed in the literature.

Table 7 - Frequency Distributions of Fairness of Household Division of Labor

Division of Labor Fair to Respondent

	Very Fair		Somewhat Fair		Somewhat Unfair		Very Unfair	
	Wives %	Husbands %	Wives %	Husbands %	Wives %	Husbands %	Wives %	Husbands %
Wave 1	51	75	27	19	17	6	5	.4
Wave 2	50	68	24	25	22	6	4	1
Wave 3	46	69	27	23	21	7	6	1

Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding or missing cases

Division of Labor Fair to Partner

	Very Fair		Somewhat Fair		Somewhat Unfair		Very Unfair	
	Wives %	Husbands %	Wives %	Husbands %	Wives %	Husbands %	Wives %	Husbands %
Wave 1	68	53	25	31	6	15	1	1
Wave 2	67	52	26	33	5	14	1	2
Wave 3	65	43	28	34	5	22	2	2

Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding or missing cases

Money

Many people apparently believe that money issues are one of the most common things couples argue about and that money woes are frequently the primary reason couples divorce (Amato and DeBoer 2001), but very few studies substantiate this belief. In our data, 40% of the couples reported some degree of conflict over how finances are handled. This made it the fourth highest topic of the 17 items examined, which is where it most often falls as a reason for people divorcing (Amato and Booth 2000). Table 6 shows no significant differences between husbands and wives in this matter.

Intimacy

In this study, conflicts over intimacy are measured by two questions: “showing physical affection” and “our sex life.” In this sample, 30% of the couples had some degree of conflict over how often physical affection is displayed. Obviously, this could indicate a wide variety of conflicts about cuddling, holding hands, kissing, and other displays of affection. Table 6 shows that a higher percentage of individual husbands reported conflict over physical affection (23%) than wives (19%).

When specifically asked about their sex life, 37% of couples reported conflict in this area. Individual husbands (28%) were very slightly more likely to report conflict over their sex life but the difference between husband and wives reports was not significant.

Life Goals

Agreement over life goals – how careers should proceed, what direction life should take – would seem essential for a happy, stable marriage. Three items tap this dimension of conflict: “philosophy of life,” “our aims and goals,” and “career decisions.” The former, interestingly, is a larger source of conflict than either of the latter. Thirty four percent (34%) of the couples reported conflict over their philosophies of life, but only 20% reported conflict over specific aims and goals and 19% mentioned conflict over career issues.

When examining individual husbands and wives, the husbands were more likely to report disagreements over philosophy of life and aims and goals than were wives, with wives more likely to report disagreement over career decisions. However, these differences were not significant.

Children

Research shows that children often have a negative impact on marital happiness and it seems obvious that “the children” would be a source of conflict in many marriages. In this sample, 33% of the couples reported some degree of conflict over how to raise children and 21% reported conflict over whether to have (or have more) children. There were no significant differences between individual husbands and wives about these child related issues.

Religion

Often religion provides people with comfort and solace as well as something to help them through tough times. Table 15, below, shows that being of the same religion as one’s spouse was important to approximately half of the couples in this sample. This implies that if both parties do not have the same religious beliefs and practices, there could be problems in the relationship for at least half the sample. With only 25% of the couples reporting conflict over this issue, it is not high

on the list of conflict areas. However, consistent with previous findings, wives are more likely to identify conflict over religious matters (20%) than husbands (16%). Since the effect of religiosity is one of the six major themes of this dissertation, a more detailed analysis of religion and religiosity is provided below including a comparison of covenant and standard couples.

Drinking and Drug Use

Drinking or drug use can be destructive to individuals and their marriages. In these newlywed couples, 22% reported some level of conflict about their own drinking and drug use, with 25% of couples acknowledging conflicts over their partners' drinking and drug use. It appears that more individual husbands admitted to conflict over this issue (17%), as compared to 12% of the wives. Only 14% of the husbands reported disagreements about their wives behavior, whereas 18% of the wives agreed there was conflict over their husbands' behavior. These differences between husbands and wives are not significant.

In summary, the top five topics disagreed about at the beginning of these marriages within couples are; their parents and in-laws, how leisure time is spent, household division of labor, handling family finances, and both the respondents' friends and their partners' friends.

How Do Married Couples behave when Conflict is Present?

Data on how couples cope with conflict come from a sequence in Wave 1 that reads: "Here are some statements about how people handle the disagreements and conflicts that come up in their marriage. For each of these statements, just indicate how true it is in your marriage right now. When disagreements and conflicts come up..." Respondents were then given a series of potential behavioral responses to conflict, e.g., "I withdraw to avoid a big fight," "I feel unloved," "I get sarcastic," etc., then asked to indicate how true each response was of "your marriage right now" –

very true, somewhat true, or not true at all. Table 8 reports the entire list of behaviors in this question sequence.

This sequence appeared in the questionnaire just prior to the sequence on what couples disagree about that was discussed earlier in this chapter and was handled in a like manner. First, answers were recoded into “true of my marriage” (very and somewhat true) or “not true of my marriage” (not true at all). Then for intact husband-wife couples, I cross-tabulated husbands’ and wives’ answers to determine the extent of agreement about conflict behaviors. Also as before, both partners could *agree* that some behavioral response to conflict was true of their marriage; *agree* that some behavioral response to conflict was *not* true of their marriage; or the partners could *disagree* whether the response was true of their marriage or not. Table 8 shows the resulting patterns for the twelve behavioral responses included in the sequence.

It is more often negative behaviors that are reciprocated in a relationship than positive ones (Gottman 1994). Chi square association tests were used to determine whether husbands’ conflict behavior was associated with wives’ conflict behavior with the expectation that their answers would be dependent on each other. A significant chi square would be consistent with a prediction that husbands and wives reciprocate each other’s behavior. Specifically, behavior exhibited by one member of the couple is more likely to be reciprocated. The chi square tables and significances are shown in Appendix C and show that all but three of the behavior items illustrated a dependent relationship.

Table 8 - Conflict Behavior: Crosstab Comparison Between Wave One Husbands and Wives Reporting Amount of Agreement within Couples with Chi Square Test of Association

	n	<u>% Agree true</u>	<u>% Agree isn't true</u>	<u>% Disagree</u>	<u>Total</u>
<i><u>Avoidance</u></i>					
I withdraw to avoid a fight	561	41	14	45	86
I just give in	558	22	28	50	72
<i><u>Neg. Emotion</u></i>					
I feel tense and anxious	559	59	10	31	90
I feel unloved	558	11	55	34	45
<i><u>Hostility</u></i>					
I get sarcastic	562	35	29	36	71
My partner gets sarcastic	558	38	28	36	74
I get hostile	562	15	56	29	44
My partner gets hostile	563	16	55	29	45
<i><u>Collaboration</u></i>					
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint	558	63	9	8	91
I try to find the middle ground	558	55	10	35	90
I just want to kiss and make up	557	61	4	35	96
<i><u>Physical Violence</u></i>					
I get physically violent	562	2	89	9	11

n=number of complete couples. May not equal 100% due to rounding or missing cases.

Question stem reads: For each of these statements, just indicate how true it is in your marriage right now. When disagreements and conflicts come up with respondents able to reply (not true at all, somewhat true, very true)

The three items that were not dependent were “I withdraw to avoid a big fight,” “I just give in,” and “I just want to kiss and make up.” All three of these can be described as avoidance behaviors. This finding is consistent with the literature previously discussed, that avoidance does not “cause” more avoidance in a spouse, but instead influences some other negative behavior, usually negative emotions or hostility.

The top five items that couples agreed were true of their marriage when responding to conflicts were, “I look at things from my partner’s viewpoint” (63% of couples), “I just want to kiss and make up” (61%), “I get tense and anxious” (59%), “I try to find the middle ground” (55%), and “I withdraw to avoid a big fight” (41%). All three of the collaboration variables are contained in this list, so we would be correct to conclude that most couples try to defuse conflicts and disagreements through collaboration. The other two strategies, getting tense and anxious and withdrawing to avoid a fight, while generally considered “negative” or dysfunctional, are still acceptable behaviors to most people because they represent strategies of avoiding overt conflict or arguments.

What follows is a more specific discussion of conflict behaviors grouped by the four categories previously identified (Chapter 3): avoidance, hostility, collaboration and negative emotion.

Avoidance

Some individuals practice avoidance as a mechanism to deal with conflict, i.e., prefer to “give in” to their partner’s preferences or opinions rather than “dig in” and fight for their own point of view. While avoiding may be the path of least resistance for many people, many researchers believe that avoidance can ultimately lead to more conflict (Christensen and Heavey 1993).

Avoidance is measured by two statements that ask about withdrawing to avoid a big fight and just “giving in.” For the first statement, 41% of the couples agree that they withdraw to avoid a big fight, with another 45% of the couples disagreeing. This means that 86% of the couples had at least one member reporting that they withdraw to avoid a fight. And likewise, 80% of the couples have at least one member that does not give in. Consistent with the literature, Table 9 shows that individual husbands are more likely than wives to agree that they withdraw (68 to 60%) and that they just give in (59 to 42%). As Gottman (1994) and others predict, men are more likely to practice avoidance as a mechanism than their wives are. However, there are still high percentages of women who practice these behaviors.

Collaboration

According to Gottman (1994) and others, collaborative behaviors can sometimes alleviate conflict. In this study, statements that ask how true it is that respondents look at things from their partner’s viewpoint, try to find the middle ground, and just want to kiss and make up measure an overall level of collaboration. The majority of these couples agreed that they practiced collaboration in their marriages. However, a relatively high number of couples disagree on some of the collaborative behaviors (35%). It is these couples who are interesting because if one member practices collaborative behaviors and the other does not, this could cause or contribute to more conflict because one member could feel like they are trying to “be nice” all the time, and that the effort is not appreciated or reciprocated. Not surprisingly, it is more often the women who “look at things from their partner’s viewpoint” (81% of wives vs. 75% of husbands) and “try to find middle ground” (75% of wives vs. 70% of husbands).

Table 9 - Frequency Distribution for Individual Husbands and Wives
Showing Truth of Statement for Conflict Behavior Wave 1

Husbands Conflict Behavior (Individual Husbands)	Not True % (n)	True % (n)
I withdraw to avoid a fight	32 (185)	68 (400)
I feel tense and anxious	31 (181)	69 (401)
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint (recoded pos)	25 (146)	75 (435)
I just give in	48 (279)	52 (304)
I feel unloved	75 (437)	25 (146)
I try to find the middle ground (R pos)	30 (174)	70 (408)
I just want to kiss and make up (R pos)	17 (100)	83 (483)
I get physically violent	94 (552)	6 (33)
I get sarcastic	50 (294)	50 (290)
My partner gets sarcastic	43 (252)	57 (328)
I get hostile	75 (439)	25 (146)
My partner gets hostile	67 (390)	33 (194)

Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding or missing cases

Wives Conflict Behavior (Individual Wives)	Not True % (n)	True % (n)
I withdraw to avoid a fight	40 (272)	60 (411)
I feel tense and anxious	19 (129)	81 (552)
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint (recoded pos)	20 (133)	81 (550)
I just give in	58 (398)	42 (284)
I feel unloved	67 (456)	33 (222)
I try to find the middle ground (R pos)	25 (173)	75 (507)
I just want to kiss and make up (R pos)	27 (181)	73 (500)
I get physically violent	93 (636)	7 (48)
I get sarcastic	45 (309)	55 (375)
My partner gets sarcastic	46 (313)	54 (369)
I get hostile	66 (453)	34 (229)
My partner gets hostile	70 (480)	30 (205)

Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding or missing cases

However, husbands were more likely to “want to just kiss and make up” (83% vs. 73% of wives). This makes sense since the literature shows that it is more often the men who just want to leave things as they are. Kissing and making up would be a way of just maintaining the status quo and hoping the conflict goes away. It does not necessarily mean they were listening and that the conflict has been resolved.

Negative Emotion

Often in marriage, feelings get hurt and may cause negative emotions and repercussions. In this study, negative emotion is measured by the responses to two statements: how true it is that respondents feel tense and anxious, and how true it is that they feel unloved. Gottman (1994) and others have reported that these emotions are often reasons why couples divorce. Sixty percent of couples agree that they feel tense and anxious when disagreements or conflicts arise. In contrast, only 11% of couples agreed that they felt unloved. When including the couples who disagree, 90% of couples have at least one member agreeing that they feel tense and anxious, with 45% of couples agreeing they feel unloved. As expected, women were more significantly likely to report both types of negative emotion than men, 81% to 69% and 33% to 25% respectively.

Hostility

Sometimes when conflict is present and couples do not have the skills to manage it, they may resort to hostile or hurtful behaviors, such as sarcasm or hostility. Table 8 shows that 71% of the couples had at least one member agreeing that they get sarcastic, with 72% having at least one member agreeing that their partner gets sarcastic. Table 9 shows that wives are the ones more likely to be sarcastic as reported by both the wives (55%), about themselves, and the husbands (57%), about their wives.

Fewer couples overall admitted to hostility (I act like we are enemies), with 44% of the couples having at least one member agreeing there is hostility. Again, it is more likely wives who get hostile with 34% of them reporting this behavior compared to 25% of husbands. Further, their husbands are more likely to say that their wives get hostile (33%) compared to wives reporting on their husbands' hostility (30%). This supports Gottman's finding that wives were more likely to practice hostility and other negative behaviors such as criticism or sarcasm.

In summary, couples are more likely to practice collaborative behaviors since all three statements are in the top five conflict behaviors. "Feeling tense and anxious" was tied for third, "withdrawing to avoid a fight" in the fourth spot and "my partner gets sarcastic" rounding out the top five behaviors where at least one member of the couple reported that this was true of their marriage. In addition, avoidant strategies are more often used by men than women, with women reporting more negative emotion than men do.

Differences between Covenant and Standard Marriages

How do covenant and standard couples differ in the things they have disagreements about or in the strategies they use to manage conflicts? To avoid redundancy, only the areas where couples or individual wives or husbands differ by more than five percentage points will be discussed, except when pointing out topics where more covenant couples report disagreement than standard couples. However, all items are presented in Table 10 through Table 13 for couples and individuals. Because of the interest in differences between the two types of couples, the category where couples agree that there is conflict over an issue may be discussed separately from the category where they disagree, or the total where at least one member of the couple reports conflict, although all four categories are outlined in the table.

Conflict Frequency

Overall covenant couples have higher percentages of agreement (fewer areas of conflict) than standard couples, with a few notable exceptions. For instance, there is only one topic where a higher percentage of covenant couples *agree* that there is conflict (column one), and that is dealing with parents and in-laws. However, when adding those couples who *disagree* (column three) whether there is conflict or not there are five topics where covenants are higher. Those are: how leisure time is spent, religious matters, their sex life, who does what around the house, and their partners' drinking and drug use. Table 10 presents the conflict frequency topics in order from highest overall report of some level of disagreement for covenant couples to lowest (column four). The table shows that the topic "dealing with parents and in-laws," which we know is the most disagreed about topic when examining all the couples shows 50% of the covenant couples and 48% of standard couples reporting some level of disagreement between them. This is the number one most disagreed about topic for both groups. The groups also share the second and third spots with how they spend leisure time and who does what around the house (tied for second for standards). The fourth most disagreed upon topic for standard couples is "my partner's friends" at 42% with only 33% of covenant couples reporting this as an area of disagreement.

Table 10 - Conflict Frequency: Crosstab Comparison between Wave One Covenant and Standard Couples Reporting Disagreements between Couples

			Couples agree no conflict		couples agree is conflict		Couples disagree		at least one member disagree tot. of prev. 2 cols.	
	n cov	n std	Cov	Std	Cov	Std	Cov	Std	Cov	Std
			%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Dealing with parents and in-laws	247	307	50	52	24	16	26	32	50	48
How we spend leisure time	246	310	54	55	12	14	34	31	46	45
Who does what around the house	246	305	55	55	16	17	29	28	45	45
Religious matters	246	301	60	66	9	13	31	21	40	34
Handling family finances	246	310	62	55	9	14	29	31	38	45
Our sex life	246	311	64	62	15	18	21	20	36	38
My friends	245	304	66	56	8	12	26	32	34	44
My partner's friends	246	306	67	58	10	13	23	29	33	42
The amount of time we spend together	246	310	73	70	9	10	18	20	27	30
How to raise children	220	290	74	61	9	12	17	27	26	39
Philosophy of life	243	307	75	60	6	9	19	31	25	40
Showing physical affection	247	306	80	70	9	12	11	28	20	40
Your partner's drinking and drug use	152	248	81	85	6	6	13	9	19	15
Whether to have more children	240	295	83	79	4	6	13	15	17	21
Career decisions	246	306	83	76	2	7	15	17	17	24
Our aims and goals	244	309	84	77	2	3	14	20	16	23
Your drinking and drug use	153	247	84	81	3	5	13	14	16	19

n=number of complete, intact, couples. May not add to 100% due to rounding or missing cases.

Question stem reads: Please indicate the extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list, 14 potential areas of disagreement were presented, with respondents able to reply always agree, almost always agree, sometimes disagree, frequently disagree, almost always disagree, and always disagree . To denote levels of disagreement about conflict, responses were recoded into agreement on no conflict both husband and wife say they agree , agreement on conflict both husband and wife responded with one of the disagreement choices and disagreement about conflict either the husband or the wife indicates conflict and the other spouse indicates no conflict.

What we also see, however, is that standards report far more overall conflict with eight topics where there is larger than 5% difference between the two groups. Of these eight, four of the categories have more than a 10 percentage point disparity with, “showing physical affection” illustrating a 20% spread, with 40% of standards reporting some level of conflict compared to 20% of covenants. This is the fifth most disagreed upon topic for standard couples while sex life is in the fifth spot for covenant couples. “Our sex life” is not in the top five most disagreed about topics for standards even with two extra topics tied for second place making the list really the top eight.

Individual Husbands and Wives

Table 11 illustrates the breakdown of the conflict frequency variable by covenant husbands and wives. Wives share four of the five most disagreed upon topics but in a different order with “my friends” in the fourth spot for standards (“our sex life” for covenants) and “how to raise children” in the fifth spot for covenants (“our sex life” for standards). In contrast, both groups of men report “dealing with parents and in-laws” in the number one most disagreed upon topic. The other top five categories are shared but in a different order, except that again covenants report their sex life as an issue in the fourth spot while standard men report “philosophy of life” in the fifth spot with “our sex life” not even making the top five.

Table 11 - Conflict Frequency: Crosstab Comparison between Wave One Covenant and Standard Wives and Husbands Reporting Amount of Agreement and Disagreement

	% agree				% disagree			
	Cov		Std		Cov		Std	
	W %	H %	W %	H %	W %	H %	W %	H %
N= W(673) H(576)								
Handling family finances	74	78	71	72	26	22	29	28
How we spend leisure time	70	70	71	70	30	30	29	30
Religious matters	89	91	74	78	11	9	26	22
Showing physical affection	80	79	81	76	20	21	19	24
My friends	83	72	73	68	17	28	27	32
My partner's friends	81	75	75	69	19	25	25	31
Our sex life	74	72	74	72	26	28	26	28
Philosophy of life	84	81	80	71	16	19	21	29
Dealing with parents and in-laws	61	64	68	67	29	36	33	33
Our aims and goals	93	89	90	84	7	11	10	16
The amount of time we spend together	81	81	79	79	19	19	21	21
Who does what around the house	66	70	68	68	34	31	32	32
How to raise children	79	82	75	73	21	18	25	27
Whether to have more children	90	85	86	84	10	15	14	16
Career decisions	89	90	84	84	11	10	16	16
Your drinking and drug use	93	85	86	81	7	15	15	19
Your partner's drinking and drug use	85	87	77	85	15	13	23	15

n=number of individual wives and husbands in each group.

Question stem reads: Please indicate the extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list, 17 potential areas of disagreement were presented, with respondents able to reply always agree, almost always agree, sometimes disagree, frequently disagree, almost always disagree, and always disagree. To denote differences between covenant and standard regarding levels of conflict w responses ere recoded into agreement encompassing the choices, always agree and almost always agree and disagreement, encompassing sometimes disagree, frequently disagree, almost always disagree and always disagree.

There are four categories with more than a 5% difference between wives and husbands of the same group, with higher percentages of husbands more often reporting disagreements for both groups. There are six categories with more than 5% difference between covenant and standard men, and five categories between women. As with the couple discussion above, religious matters has the largest disparity amongst the women and the men with a 15 point spread between women and a 13 point spread between the men. “My friends” shows a 10 point spread between wives, but only 4 points between men. This category also shows a significant spread between husbands and wives of both groups. “My partner’s friends” is the only category highlighted in all the groups with a 6% spread between wives and husbands, with covenant wives showing the least amount of disagreement.

Conflict Behavior

Concerning conflict behaviors, Table 12 shows that when looking at the total of couples where at least one person reports the behavior is true and those that agree it is true (column four), the top five behaviors practiced by covenant and standard couples are the three collaboration statements in varying order for the top three categories, with “I feel tense and anxious” tied for the second for covenants. “I withdraw to avoid a fight” and “I just give in” round out the top five. Three of the categories show more covenants reporting these behaviors than standard couples, with only “I just give in” showing a more than 5 point difference. The other two categories are “I withdraw to avoid a fight” and “I feel tense and anxious.”

Table 12 - Conflict Behavior: Crosstab Comparison between Wave One Covenant and Standard Couples Reporting Amount of Agreement within Couples

	n Cov	n Std	% Agree true		% Agree isn't true		% Disagree		Total	
			Cov	Std	Cov	Std	Cov	Std	Cov	Std
<i>Avoidance</i>										
I withdraw to avoid a fight	246	310	43	40	12	15	45	45	88	95
I just give in	247	307	24	21	25	31	51	48	75	69
<i>Neg. Emotion</i>										
I feel tense and anxious	247	307	60	58	9	11	32	31	92	89
I feel unloved	246	307	10	11	60	55	30	24	40	35
<i>Hostility</i>										
I get sarcastic	247	310	32	37	29	28	39	35	71	72
My partner gets sarcastic	246	307	33	41	30	27	37	32	70	73
I get hostile	247	310	13	16	59	54	28	30	41	46
My partner gets hostile	247	311	13	18	57	54	30	28	43	46
<i>Collaboration</i>										
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint	246	307	65	61	8	10	27	31	92	92
I try to find the middle ground	246	307	54	57	10	10	36	33	90	90
I just want to kiss and make up	245	307	63	60	4	4	33	36	93	96
<i>Physical Violence</i>										
I get physically violent	247	310	0	3	93	87	7	10	7	13

n=number of intact couples in each group. Total=percentage of couples where at least one member reported that a behavior was true of their marriage. Question stem reads: For each of these statements, just indicate how true it is in your marriage right now. When disagreements and conflicts come up with respondents able to reply (not true at all, somewhat true, very true)

Individual Wives and Husbands

Looking at which statements husbands and wives separately report are true (Table 13), we see that the top five behaviors are different for women and men but more similar within their gender group. This means that being in a covenant marriage does not have as much influence on the differences than gender does. For women the top five behaviors are again the three collaboration categories with “I look at things from my partner’s viewpoint” in the top spot for covenant women and “I feel tense and anxious” for standard women. Only standard women report any of the avoidance behaviors in the top five with “I just give in” at the fourth spot, however both types of men report “I withdraw to avoid a fight” in the fourth spot. Both types of women report that they get sarcastic, whereas the men do not report this behavior in the top five at all.

For categories showing a five point spread, standard women are more likely to “get hostile” than covenant women (8 point spread), and covenant men are more likely than standard men to “just give in,” (9 point difference). For men “I feel tense and anxious” also reached the five point difference, and for women “I withdraw to avoid a fight” and “my partner gets sarcastic” reached the five point difference, but these are the only significant differences.

Table 13 - Conflict Behavior: Comparison between Individual Covenant and Standard Husbands and Wives Reporting Levels of Agreement and Disagreement

	% agree true				% agree isn't true			
	Cov		Std		Cov		Std	
	(n=296)		(n=378)		(n=261)		(n=315)	
	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>Avoidance</i>								
I withdraw to avoid a fight	42	70	37	68	58	30	63	33
I just give in	42	57	41	48	58	43	59	52
<i>Neg. Emotion</i>								
I feel tense and anxious	81	72	81	67	19	28	19	33
I feel unloved	30	26	34	25	70	74	66	75
<i>Hostility</i>								
I get sarcastic	53	48	56	52	48	52	44	48
My partner gets sarcastic	51	54	56	58	50	46	44	42
I get hostile*	29	25	37	25	71	75	63	75
My partner gets hostile	28	32	31	34	72	68	69	66
<i>Collaboration</i>								
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint	82	76	79	74	18	24	21	26
I try to find the middle ground	77	68	74	72	23	32	26	28
I just want to kiss and make up	74	85	74	82	26	15	25	19
<i>Physical Violence</i>								
I get physically violent	5	4	9	7	95	96	91	93

Chi square tables can be found in appendix C. n=number of individuals in each gender subgroup. Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding and missing cases. Question stem reads: For each of these statements, just indicate how true it is in your marriage right now. When disagreements and conflicts come up: with respondents able to reply (not true at all, somewhat true, very true). Very true and somewhat true were added together for percent reporting agree true

As mentioned above, the real differences in conflict behavior are between wives and husbands of the two groups, i.e. between covenant husbands and wives and standard husbands and wives. These comparisons of individual wives and husbands are dissimilar from the couple comparisons discussed previously because these individuals not necessarily married to each other, so instead are “pairs.” We can note in the table that the Ns reflect the difference between women and men for both groups whereas the Ns in the previous discussion reflected intact continuously married couples only. Table 13 shows that covenants have three categories reaching significance and the standards have five. The most notable of the differences are in the avoidance area (28 percentage point spread between covenant husbands and wives and 31 points between standards) for the statement “I withdraw to avoid a big fight,” with a higher percentage of men reporting that this is true. The covenants had a wider difference between them for “I just give in” (15 point difference) than did standard wives and husbands who differed by only seven points. This again illustrates that men are more likely to withdraw, or avoid, than women are. There is a 16 point difference between standard pairs for “I feel tense and anxious” with the women more likely to feel this emotion. Covenants showed a nine point spread for this statement, again, with more women stating this was true. Standard wives and husbands also are significantly different over feeling unloved (9% difference) with women again more likely to report this emotion, this is the same disparity for “I get hostile” as well.

In summary, it appears that gender plays a role in both types of conflict with conflict frequency illustrating more differences between the two types of women and men whereas conflict behavior seems to be more common within pairs (i.e. covenant men and women and standard men

and women). The choice of a covenant or standard marriage does seem to have some influence on levels of conflict for both conflict frequency and behavior.

Where Does Conflict come from?

Now that we have identified conflict in these newlywed marriages, we need to know where it originates. Since these couples have not been married very long, it stands to reason that conflict and styles of managing it might be learned in the family of origin. Table 14 shows the information available on the sample's origin families. As would be expected, most of the sample (over 60%) of both husbands and wives lived with both natural parents when they were 16. However, this still leaves more than 30% that lived in some other arrangement, such as a single parent home or with a step family, etc. Being raised in homes where the parents are divorce or separate is known to influence the amount and type of conflict present in children's subsequent marriages (Amato and DeBoer 2001).

Some researchers also argue that poverty in the family of origin may cause or contribute to conflict (Amato 2007). To test this theory, I utilize a question that asks respondents their view of their family's income when they were 16. While roughly half the sample (both wives and husbands) felt that their families of origin were of average incomes, 21% of both husbands and wives reported that their family incomes were below average, and roughly 30% of both reported that their incomes were either above, or far above, average. Below, I test whether coming from either high or low income families influences conflict in the current marriage. Many researchers believe that conflict, or dysfunction more generally, experienced in the family of origin influences conflict in the current marriage because it is within our families that we primarily learn how to manage conflict (Amato and DeBoer 2001). To measure levels of dysfunction in the family of

origin, 14 individual items (such as whether high conflict, name calling and sarcasm, alcoholism and 11 other items were a problem when they were growing up) were examined and combined into a family dysfunction scale (see Chapter 3). Table 14 details each item. While the majority of the sample reported that these dysfunctional behaviors were not a problem at all in their families of origin, wives were more likely than husbands to report problems for every item in the list. When combining respondents who answered either minor problem or major problem, 43% of wives and 36% of husbands' experienced what they described as "high conflict" between their parents. Forty percent of both husbands and wives reported some level of problem with sarcasm and name calling, while 39% of women and 34% of men reported not enough money in the household. Several other areas that ranked somewhat high were: alcoholism (29% wives, 23% husbands), foul language (34% wives, 31% husbands), and violence between their parents (24% wives, 20% husbands). Wives were also more likely than husbands to report sexual abuse (9% to 4%).

While the majority of couples did not experience dysfunction in their families of origin, a significant minority did, and these problems affected women more than men. This could suggest that women in this sample are more likely to be sarcastic or hostile because they experienced more of it in their family of origin. However, further analysis of this specific topic with women only is outside the scope of this dissertation and is suggested for future research.

Table 14 - Frequency Distributions of Family of Origin Variables

Who Respondent Lived with at Age 16

	Wives %	Husbands %
Both Natural Parents	64	69
Mother Only	17	13
Father Only	3	3
Other	16	15

Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding or missing cases

Family's Income When Respondent was age 16

	Wives %	Husbands %
Above/Far Above Average	28	32
Average	52	32
Below/Far Below Average	21	21

Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding or missing cases

	Not a Problem		Minor Problem		Major Problem		Total Problem	
	Wives %	Husbands %	Wives %	Husbands %	Wives %	Husbands %	Wives %	Husbands %
Violence between Parents	76	80	12	12	12	8	24	20
Violence directed at Respondent	83	84	12	13	6	4	18	17
Sexual Abuse	91	98	4	1	5	.3	9	1.3
Severe Depression	73	86	19	10	9	5	28	15
Other Mental Illness	91	94	5	4	4	2	9	6
Alcoholism	71	77	11	11	18	12	29	23
Drug Abuse	90	91	4	5	7	4	11	9
Foul/Abusive Language	66	69	18	19	16	12	34	31
Unemployment	78	82	15	14	7	4	22	18
Not enough Money	62	66	27	24	11	10	38	34
Serious Physical Illness	83	87	10	9	8	5	18	14
Not enough Love	72	77	17	17	11	6	28	23
High Conflict between Parents	57	64	20	21	23	15	43	36
Name calling/ Sarcasm	59	70	20	19	20	11	40	30

Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding or missing cases

Question stem: Were any of the following a problem or source of conflict in your family when you were growing up? (Not a problem, minor problem, major problem, don't know)

The Effect of Family of Origin Dysfunction on Marital Conflict

For the purposes of discussion, the family of origin measure is often referred to as “family dysfunction” for simplification purposes. This is not meant to represent any dysfunction in respondents’ current families, only the dysfunction present in their families of origin.

Conflict Behavior

As a reminder, the conflict behavior variable is broken up into four sub categories; avoidance, collaboration, hostility and negative emotion. Table 15 shows the parameter estimates for the effects of family of origin dysfunction on husbands. Model one shows a positive association between wives’ family dysfunction and husbands’ avoidance associations as well as between husbands’ family dysfunction, his negative emotion, and his hostility. In other words, wives that come from high-dysfunction families generate avoidance behaviors in their husbands, and husbands who come from high-dysfunction families become negative and hostile. Since it is unlikely that family of origin dysfunction for, say, wives itself directly affects the behaviors of their husbands, it is reasonable to assume that the cross-spouse effects reflect some influence of, say, the wives’ behaviors or attitudes on their husbands. Note, for example, that in Table 16 (which shows outcomes for wives), wives’ family dysfunction affects her negative emotion and hostility and husbands’ family dysfunction influences not only wives avoidance, but also her hostility. Taken together, Table 15 and Table 16 illustrate that the more dysfunction spouses experienced in their families of origin, the more they exhibit negative emotion and hostility, which then influences avoidance behavior in their spouse. The first models shown in Table 15 and Table 16 also establish a baseline for the reciprocal effects of one spouse’s conflict behavior on the behavior of the other spouse; effects predicted by Gottman and others. The most consistent effects

are for husbands' hostility, which generates negative emotion and hostility in wives, and wives' hostility which has identical effects on husbands. Despite the patterns just noted, however, none of the models explains more than 4% of the variance in conflict behavior.

As expected, the inclusion of the spouses' conflict behavior variables (model two) increases the R^2 for husband's hostility to 32% and that for husbands' negative emotion to roughly 13%. The models for husbands' collaboration and avoidance, while significant and higher than model one, do not explain a high proportion of the variance. The relationship between husbands' negative emotion and hostility and their levels of dysfunction experienced in their family of origin remain the same. However, now wives' family dysfunction influences husbands' levels of collaboration as well as avoidance. This means that husbands become less collaborative and more avoidant as wives exhibit negative behaviors they likely learned in their family of origin.

For wives, Table 16 shows that wives' family dysfunction still has the same effect on their negative emotion and hostility as before, but the husbands' family dysfunction now has only a small effect on wives' avoidance and no longer influences wives' hostility. This means that the addition of the spouses' reciprocal conflict behavior variable may better explain wives' perceptions of hostility in the marriage. Or possibly, family dysfunction operates through spouses' behaviors in a causal chain that influences one spouses' behavior which then influences the behaviors of the other spouse.

For both spouses there is a strong reciprocal effect for hostility, negative emotion, and collaboration. Specifically, wives' negative emotion and hostility strongly influence husbands' negative emotion and hostility and vice versa.

Table 15 - Effect of Family Dysfunction on Conflict Behavior for Husbands - Wave 1

<i>Factor</i>	Husbands' Collaboration <i>β</i>	Husbands' Emotion <i>β</i>	Husbands' Avoidance <i>β</i>	Husbands' Hostility <i>β</i>
<i>Model One (N=559)</i>				
Wives' Family Dysfunction	.081(.044)	.086(.053)	.061(.052)**	.061(.052)
Husbands' Fam Dysfunction	-.050(.053)	.217(.063)**	.025(.070)	.283(.062)***
Adjusted R Squared	.003	.026***	.015**	.040***
F-Statistic	1.856	8.444	5.400	12.585
<i>Model Two (N=559)</i>				
Wives' Fam. Dysfunction	.100(.045)*	.014(.051)	.159(.060)**	-.066(.044)
Husbands' Fam. Dysfunction	-.035(.053)	.183(.061)**	.017(.071)	.211(.052)***
Wives' Collaboration ³	.088(.041)*	-.072(.047)	.005(.055)	.006(.040)
Wives' Hostility ³	-.020(.037)	.197(.043)***	.065(.050)	.460(.037)***
Wives' Avoidance ³	-.058(.033)	.015(.038)	-.023(.044)	.027(.033)
Wives' Emotion ³	-.087(.036)*	.152(.042)***	.061(.049)	.082(.036)*
Adjusted R Squared	.028**	.129***	.019*	.324***
F-Statistic	3.708	14.803	2.819	45.681
<i>Model Three(N=409)</i>				
Wives' Fam. Dysfunction	.106(.052)	-.010(.061)	.185(.070)*	-.079(.049)
Husbands' Fam. Dysfunction	-.019(.061)	.072(.072)	-.002(.084)	.120(.059)*
Wives' Collaboration ³	.043(.048)	-.069(.056)	-.010(.065)	.038(.046)
Wives' Hostility ³	.004(.045)	.147(.053)**	.002(.062)	.417(.044)***
Wives' Avoidance ³	-.055(.038)	.016(.045)	-.054(.052)	-.017(.037)
Wives' Emotion ³	-.078(.042)	.193(.049)***	.056(.057)	.072(.040)
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	-.009(.057)	.063(.067)	-.019(.078)	.134(.055)*
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	.023(.022)	-.039(.025)	-.035(.030)	-.024(.021)
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²	.195(.049)***	-.156(.057)**	-.059(.066)	-.330(.047)***
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.018(.021)	.019(.024)	-.015(.028)	-.022(.020)
Adjusted R Squared	.075***	.136***	.019	.399***
F-Statistic	4.308	7.443	1.793	28.113

*p< .05, **p< .01, ***p< .001 Reporting unstandardized Beta, standard error term in parentheses.

2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

Husbands become more collaborative as the wife does. However, husbands' collaboration does not affect wives' collaboration, but instead affects her negative emotion. Showing that as husbands' collaboration increases, wives' negative emotions decrease allowing wives to feel less tense and anxious, and more loved.

The inclusion of the conflict frequency variables (model three) has a predictable effect on conflict behavior. When reviewing the relationships between conflict frequency and behavior, it is important to remember that conflict frequency measures the frequency of *agreements* between husbands and wives, with higher numbers meaning more agreement, and less conflict. The conflict behavior variable measures the truth that a particular behavior is present in this marriage with higher numbers meaning more of that behavior. Table 17 shows that the conflict frequency variables are highly significant on most aspects of behavior, with wives' perceptions of the amount of disagreement in their relationship influencing their own levels of collaboration, negative emotion and hostility. This means an increase in disagreements decreases collaboration and increases negative emotion and hostility. Wives' perception of disagreements over drugs influences wives' collaboration and avoidance in the same directions. These findings do not tell us who is using drugs and alcohol, but suggest that wives may try to avoid confrontation over the issue. This is consistent with the observation that wives were more often subjected to alcoholism issues in the family of origin.

Table 16 shows that husbands' conflict frequency influences his collaboration, emotion, and hostility and that wives' perceptions of disagreements influences husbands' hostility. So, as expected, when husbands perceive there is more disagreement with their wives, they are less collaborative, have increased negative emotion, and are more hostile.

Table 16 - Effect of Family Dysfunction on Conflict Behavior for Wives - Wave 1

<i>Factor</i>	Wives' Collaboration <i>β</i>	Wives' Emotion <i>β</i>	Wives' Avoidance <i>β</i>	Wives' Hostility <i>β</i>
<i>Model One (N=559)</i>				
Wives' Family Dysfunction	.053(.047)	.184(.058)**	.055(.058)	.238(.057)***
Husband's Fam Dysfunction	.049(.056)	.053 (.069)	.203(.070)**	.134(.067)*
Adjusted R Squared	.001	.018**	.015**	.041***
F-Statistic	1.233	6.051	5.354	12.834
<i>Model Two (N=559)</i>				
Wives' Fam. Dysfunction	.054(.048)	.162(.055)**	.061(.059)	.204(.048)***
Husband's Fam. Dysfunction	.080(.057)	-.066(.066)	.184(.071)*	-.043(.058)
Husbands' Collaboration ³	.083(.046)	-.135(.053)*	-.087(.057)	-.031(.046)
Husbands' Hostility ³	-.033(.043)	.268(.049)***	.042(.053)	.552(.043)***
Husbands' Avoidance ³	.003(.036)	.014(.041)	-.015(.044)	-.025(.036)
Husbands' Emotion ³	-.078(.042)	.166(.048)**	.013(.052)	.092(.042)*
Adjusted R Squared	.013*	.143***	.015*	.323***
F-Statistic	2.210	16.525	2.448	45.514
<i>Model Three (N=409)</i>				
Wives' Fam. Dysfunction	.143(.054)**	.091(.064)	.115(.068)	.177(.054)**
Husband's Fam. Dysfunction	-.012(.065)	.053(.077)	.149(.082)	-.017(.065)
Husbands' Collaboration ³	.038(.054)	-.144(.063)*	-.098(.067)	-.032(.053)
Husbands' Hostility ³	.035(.052)	.241(.061)***	-.034(.066)	.524(.052)***
Husbands' Avoidance ³	-.006(.041)	-.008(.048)	-.045(.051)	-.043(.040)
Husbands' Emotion ³	-.067(.048)	.213(.056)***	.059(.060)	.064(.048)
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.294(.056)***	-.266(.065)***	-.006(.070)	-.404(.056)***
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.054(.023)*	.004(.027)	-.064(.029)*	.023(.023)
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²	-.013(.055)	.139(.064)*	-.019(.069)	.199(.055)***
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²	.016(.022)	.023(.026)	.017(.028)	-.036(.022)
Adjusted R Squared	.085***	.180***	.024*	.394***
F-Statistic	4.797	9.970	1.982	27.582

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 Reporting unstandardized Beta, standard error term in parentheses.

2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

Table 15 shows that wives' family dysfunction is still significant for husbands' avoidance, but the effect is much smaller, and husbands' dysfunction is still significant only for their own hostility. However, Table 16 shows that the inclusion of the frequency of disagreements displays a significant positive association between wives' family dysfunction and collaboration. Specifically, the more dysfunction experienced in the family of origin, the more collaborative wives become, perhaps because they learned to try to keep the peace during disagreements between their parents.

The adjusted R²s increased in this model to 39% for wives' hostility and 40% for husbands' and also, 14% for husbands' negative emotion and 18% for wives' negative emotion. This model, however, is not significant for husbands' avoidance, and while significant for wives' avoidance at the .05 level, it only explains 2% of the variance. For collaboration, roughly 8% of the variance is explained for both husbands and wives.

Conflict Frequency

Table 17 shows the parameter estimates for the effects of family of origin dysfunction (family dysfunction) on conflict frequency for husbands and wives. Model one shows that the more dysfunction experienced in the family of origin by husbands, the less agreement husbands perceive, but wives are not significantly affected. This dysfunction, however, does significantly influence the level of disagreements over drugs and alcohol for both spouses. The amount of dysfunction experienced in the family of origin by wives significantly decreases the amount of agreements by both spouses. However, this dysfunction has no significant influence on either spouse's levels of agreement over drugs and alcohol. We are able to establish a baseline for family dysfunction's effects on conflict frequency, but as with the behavior models, this model explains very small amounts of the variance.

Table 17 - Effect of Family Dysfunction on Conflict Frequency - Wave 1

<i>Factor</i>	Husbands' Conflict Freq β	Husbands' Conflict Freq Drugs/alcohol β	Wives' Conflict Freq. β	Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs/Alcohol β
<i>Model One (N=409)</i>				
Wives' Family Dysfunction	-.143(.065)*	.128(.140)	-.166(.062)**	.139(.137)
Husband's Fam Dysfunction	-.162(.078)*	-.348(.169)*	.006 (.074)	-.373(.165)*
Adjusted R Squared	.022**	.006	.013*	.009
F-Statistic	5.550	2.296	3.689	2.755
<i>Model Two (N=448)</i>				
Wives' Fam. Dysfunction	-.038(.053)	.079(.126)	-.089(.050)	.107(.122)
Husband's Fam. Dysfunction	-.169(.064)**	-.179(.151)	.102(.061)	-.196(.148)
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.625(.045)***	.089(.107)		
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.007(.020)	.456(.048)***		
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²			.552(.040)***	.163(.097)
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²			.018(.018)	.431(.045)***
Adjusted R Squared	.359***	.215***	.355***	.221***
F-Statistic	58.366	28.973	57.276	29.957
<i>Model Three (N=409)</i>				
Wives' Fam. Dysfunction	-.074(.051)	.092(.129)	-.041(.048)	.172(.126)
Husband's Fam. Dysfunction	-.094(.060)	-.128(.152)	.102(.056)	-.137(.148)
Wives' Collaboration ³	.006(.047)	.056(.056)	.180(.043)***	-.065(.113)
Wives' Hostility ³	.131(.049)**	-.177(.123)	-.250(.045)***	-.126(.117)
Wives' Avoidance ³	-.010(.037)	.023(.095)	-.048(.035)	-.201(.092)*
Wives' Emotion ³	.056(.042)	.178(.106)	-.070(.039)	-.040(.104)
Husbands' Collaboration ³	.186(.049)***	-.009(.123)	.014(.047)	.161(.123)
Husbands' Hostility ³	-.344(.051)***	-.361(.129)**	.112(.050)*	.014(.133)
Husbands' Avoidance ³	-.018(.037)	-.057(.095)	-.033(.035)	-.113(.093)
Husbands' Emotion ³	-.018(.045)	.138(.113)	-.001(.042)	-.114(.111)
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.574(.048)***	-.024(.121)		
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.023(.019)	.446(.049)***		
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²			.488(.041)***	.066(.108)
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²			.009(.017)	.420(.045)***
Adjusted R Squared	.449***	.233***	.456***	.234***
F-Statistic	28.689	11.338	29.547	11.382

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 Reporting unstandardized Beta, standard error term in parentheses.

2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

Model two shows that husbands' family dysfunction is only a significant influence on husbands' own level of conflict frequency. However, wives' conflict frequency is a stronger influence. The wives' family of origin dysfunction is no longer at all significant on either spouse's conflict frequency. This model suggests that dysfunction in the family of origin has stronger effects on behavior than the frequency of disagreements since family of origin dysfunction was significant in more of the models for conflict behavior. In this model, the adjusted R²s increased significantly to 36% of the variance explained for husbands' and wives' frequency, and 22% for frequency over drugs and alcohol for both husbands and wives.

In model three, family dysfunction is no longer significant on conflict frequency with the inclusion of both the spouses' frequency variables and the conflict behavior variables. This more strongly illustrates that family dysfunction is a better predictor of conflict behavior than the frequency of disagreements. For both husbands and wives, decreased collaboration and increased hostility have a significant effect on the frequency of disagreements. The R²s for this model are significant with 45% of the variance explained for husbands and 46% for wives and approximately 23% for frequency over drugs and alcohol for both husbands and wives.

In summary, this analysis shows that family of origin dysfunction does indeed have a negative impact on both husbands' and wives' conflict behaviors. It also shows that conflict frequency has a negative impact on conflict behaviors, most notably negative emotion and hostility, in that as the frequency of disagreements increases, more negative conflict behaviors are exhibited.

Part of the theoretical basis for this study was to try to determine a causal direction for conflict. This analysis supports the theory that the frequency of disagreements may have more of

an effect on a couple's behavior than the other way around, with the exception of hostility and collaboration, both of which had a significant effect on conflict frequency. It also supports the theory that dysfunction experienced in the family of origin has a stronger effect on negative conflict behaviors than on the frequency of disagreements.

Effects of Thoughts of Divorce on marital conflict

As with family of origin dysfunction, thoughts of divorce is included by itself in three models to ascertain its overall influence on the conflict variables. As a reminder, part of the theoretical basis for including this measure in this way is to attempt to determine a causal relationship between conflict and thinking about divorce. The primary question is whether thoughts of divorce precede conflict thereby acting as a stimulant for conflict, or people think about ending their marriage a result of conflict. While hard to determine with cross sectional survey data, it is the theoretical hope that using thoughts of divorce as an independent variable may shed some light on this issue.

Table 18 through Table 19 show the parameter estimates for divorce thoughts on conflict for the first wave of data. Frequency distributions show that in this first wave of data the reports of thoughts of divorce are low, with over 90% of husbands and wives stating that their chances of divorce are very low, and less than 10% reporting that they have considered ending their marriage. Remember that these two questions were combined to create the "thoughts of divorce" measure (chapter three). For simplification, "thoughts of divorce" means the scaled measurement tool encompassing both of these statements.

Table 18 - Effect of Thoughts of Divorce on Conflict Behavior for Husbands - Wave 1

<i>Factor</i>	Husbands' Collaboration <i>β</i>	Husbands' Emotion <i>β</i>	Husbands' Avoidance <i>β</i>	Husbands' Hostility <i>β</i>
<i>Model One (N=555)</i>				
Wives' Divorce Thoughts	-.004(.014)	.043(.017)**	.021(.019)	.059(.016)***
Husbands' Divorce Thoughts	-.056(.014)***	.054(.017)**	.025(.019)	.075(.016)***
Adjusted R Squared	.047***	.071***	.010*	.146***
F-Statistic	14.624	22.316	3.766	48.439
<i>Model Two (N=555)</i>				
Wives' Divorce Thoughts	.005(.016)	-.007(.018)	.004(.021)	-.018(.015)
Husbands' Divorce Thoughts	-.054(.014)***	.054(.016)**	.025(.019)	.080(.014)***
Wives' Collaboration ³	.094(.040)*	-.049(.046)	.031(.055)	.019(.040)
Wives' Hostility ³	.008(.039)	.128(.042)**	.077(.053)	.448(.038)***
Wives' Avoidance ³	-.043(.033)	.027(.038)	-.016(.044)	.035(.032)
Wives' Emotion ³	-.061(.037)	.207(.044)***	.050(.050)	.042(.036)
Adjusted R Squared	.057***	.146***	.012	.350***
F-Statistic	16.848	6.559	2.106	50.701
<i>Model Three (N=408)</i>				
Wives' Divorce Thoughts	.014(.018)	.005(.021)	-.004(.025)	-.015(.017)
Husbands' Divorce Thoughts	-.038(.015)*	.043(.018)*	.022(.021)	.047(.015)**
Wives' Collaboration ³	.063(.047)	-.065(.055)	.025(.065)	.037(.045)
Wives' Hostility ³	.005(.046)	.142(.054)**	.025(.064)	.410(.044)***
Wives' Avoidance ³	-.047(.038)	.020(.045)	-.041(.053)	-.004(.037)
Wives' Emotion ³	-.065(.042)	.175(.049)***	.048(.058)	.063(.041)
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	-.031(.058)	.068(.068)	-.057(.080)	.135(.056)*
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	.032(.021)	-.029(.025)	-.018(.029)	-.018(.020)
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²	.165(.050)	-.080(.058)	-.011(.069)	-.028(.020)
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.019(.021)	.015(.024)	-.013(.029)	-.267(.048)***
Adjusted R Squared	.090***	.150***	.001	.404***
F-Statistic	5.045	8.172	1.031	28.599

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 Reporting unstandardized Beta, standard error term in parentheses.

2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

Conflict Behavior

Table 18 presents the parameter estimates for the effects of husbands' thoughts of divorce on conflict behavior. Model one illustrates that husbands' divorce thoughts influence husbands' collaboration, negative emotion, and hostility. While not specifically implying a causal relationship, it does seem to show that the more the husband thinks about ending the marriage the less collaborative he becomes, and the more negative emotion and hostility he experiences. In addition, wives' divorce thoughts have an impact on husbands' emotion and hostility. As with family dysfunction, it is unlikely that the wives' thoughts of divorce in and of itself are what influences husbands, it is more likely behavior the wife exhibits once she begins thinking about ending the marriage.

We can see in Table 19 that indeed wives' divorce thoughts are correlated with their own emotion, hostility and avoidance. Again, this could mean that if the wife is thinking about divorce, she exhibits more negative conflict behaviors, and since husbands' behavior is influenced by the wives' thoughts, it is possible she is sharing these thoughts with her husband. However, husbands' divorce thoughts have no significant influence on wives' conflict behaviors. One possible explanation for these observed patterns is, that husbands who think about divorce are not talking about it with their wives. Neither the wives nor the husbands' thoughts of divorce influence the husbands' avoidance behaviors. The R^2 s are significant with hostility at 14%, emotion at 7% and collaboration at 5%. The model for avoidance is significant but explains only 1% of the variance.

In model two (Table 19) it is evident that there is still a correlation between wives' thoughts of divorce and her own emotion, avoidance and hostility. Now, however, the husbands' divorce thoughts seem to contribute to wives' hostility. One possible explanation for this is that the

husband is now sharing his thoughts with his wife, or is behaving in such a way as to promote hostility. In this model, unlike the family of origin model, there is a true reciprocal relationship with collaboration in that husbands' collaboration now influences wives collaboration. Both hostility and negative emotion have the same reciprocal effect we saw in the family of origin analysis.

We can also see that in Table 18 that husbands' divorce thoughts are still highly correlated with husbands' collaboration, negative emotion and hostility. And, the same reciprocal effect for negative emotion and hostility is noted with wives. One possible explanation in reading this table is that as thoughts of divorce increase in one or the other of the spouses, collaborative behaviors decrease and negative behaviors increase, which are reciprocated by their spouse. This seems consistent with Gottman's cascade effect discussed in chapter two. The R²s increased for each model, for husbands' hostility to 35%, negative emotion to 15%, and collaboration to 6%; for wives, hostility to 38% and negative emotion to 19%.

Model three shows that husbands who may be thinking about divorce no longer significantly affects wives' conflict behaviors; however, there is still a significant correlation with his own collaboration, negative emotion and hostility. In contrast, husbands' divorce thoughts are still correlated with wives' hostility and wives' divorce thoughts with their own negative emotion, avoidance and hostility. The inclusion of the conflict frequency variables again illustrates a reciprocal effect for hostility. Specifically, husbands' hostility and negative emotions are significantly affected by both wives' and husbands' conflict frequency. Husbands' collaboration is only influenced by their own perception of the frequency of disagreements, while wives'

perception of more disagreements still decreases her collaboration, while increasing her negative emotions and hostility.

Table 19 - Effect of Thoughts of Divorce on Conflict Behavior for Wives - Wave 1

<i>Factor</i>	Wives' Collaboration β	Wives' Emotion β	Wives' Avoidance β	Wives' Hostility β
<i>Model One (N=555)</i>				
Wives' Divorce Thoughts	-.014(.016)	.116(.018)***	.062(.019)**	.157(.017)***
Husband's Divorce Thoughts	-.010(.015)	.017(.017)	-.010(.019)	-.011(.017)
Adjusted R Squared	.002*	.127	.021*	.182
F-Statistic	1.611	41.494	7.070	62.862
<i>Model Two (N=555)</i>				
Wives' Divorce Thoughts	-.010(.016)	.098(.018)***	.060(.020)**	.124(.015)***
Husband's Divorce Thoughts	.000(.016)	-.011(.017)	-.016(.019)	-.052(.015)**
Husbands' Collaboration ³	.094(.047)*	-.095(.052)	-.053(.058)	-.009(.045)
Husbands' Hostility ³	-.019(.045)	.183(.050)***	.025(.055)	.485(.043)***
Husbands' Avoidance ³	.012(.036)	.019(.040)	-.010(.044)	-.013(.034)
Husbands' Emotion ³	-.063(.043)	.154(.047)**	.022(.053)	.091(.041)*
Adjusted R Squared	.009	.188***	.017*	.379***
F-Statistic	1.829	22.411	2.608	57.454
<i>Model Three (N=408)</i>				
Wives' Divorce Thoughts	.038(.018)	.073(.021)**	.069(.023)**	.093(.018)***
Husband's Divorce Thoughts	.001(.017)	-.002(.019)	-.013(.021)	-.048(.016)**
Husbands' Collaboration ³	.063(.054)	-.128(.062)*	-.077(.067)	-.038(.053)
Husbands' Hostility ³	.026(.053)	.216(.061)***	-.030(.066)	.496(.052)***
Husbands' Avoidance ³	.013(.041)	.001(.047)	-.029(.051)	-.024(.040)
Husbands' Emotion ³	-.075(.049)	.194(.056)**	.048(.061)	.055(.047)
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.319(.059)	-.172(.068)*	.065(.074)	-.303(.058)***
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.041(.023)	.009(.026)	-.056(.028)	.026(.022)
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²	.023(.023)	.146(.064)*	-.002(.070)	.143(.055)**
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²	.012(.056)	.027(.026)	.028(.028)	-.037(.022)
Adjusted R Squared	.084***	.206***	.026*	.416***
F-Statistic	4.743	11.549	2.073	30.039

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 Reporting unstandardized Beta, standard error term in parentheses.

2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

This model shows that not only divorce thoughts, but increased levels of disagreements influence certain conflict behaviors, most notably, collaboration and hostility for husbands and wives, and negative emotion for wives. This makes sense in that *if* people are thinking of divorce

and disagreeing about things more often they may become frustrated, which could influence how they behave in these situations. We also see that the reciprocal relationship between husbands' and wives' hostility and negative emotion remains a significant influence. The R^2 s increase in this model to 40% for husbands' hostility and 42% for wives; 15% for husbands' emotion and 21% for wives. These patterns also seem consistent with Gottman's cascade effect.

Conflict Frequency

Model one in Table 20 illustrates that there is a correlation between wives' divorce thoughts and both husbands' and wives' perceptions of disagreements, but husbands' thoughts of divorce only influences their own perceptions of disagreement. Interestingly, both spouses divorce thoughts have an effect on their own perceptions of disagreements over drugs and alcohol, with the wives' divorce thoughts being highly significant. This illustrates that wives may perceive more disagreements about the issue of drinking and drugs.

Model two shows husbands' conflict frequency is influenced by their own divorce thoughts and wives' conflict frequency; and in a true reciprocal fashion, wives' conflict frequency is influenced by their own thoughts of divorce and husbands' conflict frequency. This same relationship is found when looking at frequency of conflict over drugs and alcohol; however, divorce thoughts are only significant for wives.

Table 20 - Effect of Thoughts of Divorce on Conflict Frequency - Wave 1

<i>Factor</i>	Husbands' Conflict Freq β	Husbands' Conflict Freq Drugs/alcohol β	Wives' Conflict Freq. β	Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs/Alcohol β
<i>Model One (N=408)</i>				
Wives' Divorce Thoughts	-.146(.016)***	-.148(.042)***	-.071(.018)***	-.054(.042)
Husband's Divorce Thoughts	-.028(.015)	-.048(.039)	-.110(.017)***	-.094(.040)*
Adjusted R Squared	.267***	.037***	.292***	.068***
F-Statistic	75.673	8.917	85.504	15.849
<i>Model Two (N=408)</i>				
Wives' Divorce Thoughts	.005(.017)	.045(.041)	-.116(.015)	-.121(.038)**
Husband's Divorce Thoughts	-.096(.015)***	-.072(.035)*	.020(.014)	-.001(.037)
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.517(.049)***	-.001(.119)		
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	.000(.019)	.463(.046)***		
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²			.432(.041)***	.047(.107)
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²			.005(.017)	.448(.045)***
Adjusted R Squared	.429***	.235***	.449***	.260***
F-Statistic	77.891	32.422	84.232	36.849
<i>Model Three (N=409)</i>				
Wives' Divorce Thoughts	-.003(.017)	.021(.043)	-.090(.015)***	-.103(.042)*
Husband's Divorce Thoughts	-.068(.015)***	-.063(.037)	.011(.014)	.010(.038)
Wives' Collaboration ³	.025(.046)	.091(.115)	.185(.041)***	-.024(.112)
Wives' Hostility ³	.082(.049)	-.202(.122)	-.172(.044)***	-.023(.121)
Wives' Avoidance ³	.000(.037)	.053(.093)	-.017(.034)	-.160(.093)
Wives' Emotion ³	.075(.042)	.192(.104)	-.040(.038)	-.004(.105)
Husbands' Collaboration ³	.153(.049)**	-.038(.122)	.000(.045)	-.196(.123)
Husbands' Hostility ³	-.292(.051)***	-.344(.128)**	.107(.048)*	.009(.133)
Husbands' Avoidance ³	-.005(.037)	-.033(.092)	-.040(.034)	-.079(.092)
Husbands' Emotion ³	.014(.045)	.138(.112)	.011(.041)	-.093(.112)
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.496(.051)***	-.098(.127)		
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.013(.018)	.456(.046)***		
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²			.408(.042)***	.011(.114)
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²			.001(.017)	.447(.046)
Adjusted R Squared	.481***	.256***	.501***	.259***
F-Statistic	32.419	12.695	35.005	12.870

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 Reporting unstandardized Beta, standard error term in parentheses.

2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

The inclusion of the behavior variables (model three) tells a similar story, but now we see that each spouses' perception of frequency of disagreements is also influenced by their own perceptions of collaboration and hostility. In addition, both husbands' and wives' divorce thoughts influence only their own perception of conflict frequency. This shows that increased collaboration decreases the amount of disagreements, but higher levels of negative behaviors and thoughts of divorce increase the amount of disagreements between the couple.

In summary, even though this study used thoughts of divorce as an independent variable to specifically test the effects on conflict, and while I did find a strong relationship between thoughts of divorce and both conflict behavior and frequency, I still am not able to say with any certainty what the causal direction is between thoughts of divorce and conflict. While I did see some evidence of collaboration reducing both types of conflict, once one spouse stops being collaborative, the other does as well. The relationship between thoughts of divorce and conflict and the reduction of collaboration is complicated and is consistent with Gottman's cascade effect.

Effect of Religiosity on Marital Conflict

It has been theorized in this dissertation that religiosity may act as a mediator, or buffer to conflict, or as a method for couples to resolve conflict. In this sample, Table 21 shows that, approximately 60% of the respondents are protestant, 20% catholic and 3% of wives compared to 7% of husbands say they have no religion. Of the 60% protestant, approximately 78% of those are covenant couples.

Table 21 - Frequency Distribution of Religiosity

	Wives N=683 %	Husbands N=584 %
Religious affiliation		
Protestant	62	61
Catholic	20	20
Jewish	.3	.5
Other	15	67
None	3	7
How often respondent attends religious services (% reporting every week and several times a week)		
Wave 1	38	35
Wave 2	42	37
Wave 3	44	40
Do you and your partner attend services together? (% reporting yes, always)		
Wave 1	48	55
Wave 2	48	56
Wave 3	46	56
About how often do you pray? (% reporting several times per day)		
Wave 1	43	35
Wave 2	46	38
Wave 3	48	38
How important is religious faith to respondent (% very or extremely)		
Wave 1	83	74
Wave 2	84	74
Wave 3	86	74
How important is religious faith to partner (% very or extremely)		
Wave 1	68	80
Wave 2	67	78
Wave 3	65	75
How important being same religion when considering marriage (% very or extremely)		
	69	62

	Covenant		Standard	
	Wives	Husbands	Wives	Husbands
Religious affiliation				
Protestant	78%	77%	49%	48%
Catholic	7%	9%	30%	30%
Other	15%	14%	21%	22%
Both spouses are of the same religion	83%		64%	
How important being same religion when considering marriage (% very or extremely)				
	87%	84%	55%	45%
How important is religious belief in your life?				
Time 1	93%	89%	75%	62%
Time 2	95%	89%	74%	60%
Time 3	95%	89%	78%	60%

In wave one, approximately 38% of wives and 35% of husbands attend religious services either every week or several times per week, and 48% of wives and 55% of husbands report that they attend services with their spouse. Women are more likely to pray several times per day (43%), compared to men (35%), and 83% of wives report that religious faith is very or extremely important to them, compared to 74% of men. Conversely, 60% of women and 80% of men state that religious faith is very or extremely important to their spouses. A majority of wives and husbands agreed that being of the same religion was either very or extremely important to them when considering marriage (69% and 62% respectively). Of the percentages just noted, roughly 85% are covenant wives and husbands who agreed this was true compared to 55% of standard wives and 45% of standard husbands. From these observations we can see that wives are often more religious than husbands.

Conflict Frequency

Table 22 illustrates the effects of religiosity on conflict frequency for both husbands and wives. We can see there is a negative relationship between husbands' conflict frequency and wives' religiosity. Namely, as wives' religiosity goes up, husbands perceive more disagreements. Conversely, as husbands' religiosity goes up, husbands' perceive more agreements with their wives. Wives' conflict frequency and frequency over drugs and alcohol is only significantly influenced by wives' view of the couple attending services together. Specifically, if husbands attend services more often with their wives, there is more agreement between the couple. This model, while significant, only explains about 2% of the variance for both husbands and wives. The models for conflict frequency over drugs and alcohol are not significant.

In model two we can see that husbands' perception of conflict frequency is influenced by all the religiosity variables except being in a covenant marriage. Specifically, as with model one, wives' religiosity has a negative association and husbands' religiosity has a positive one. Basically, if the husband is more religious he perceives fewer disagreements. However, now husbands' perception of conflict frequency is also positively influenced by husbands' view of attendance and negatively influenced by wives' view of attendance. This means that if the husband attends church with the wife more often, there are fewer disagreements between the couple. As expected, there is a reciprocal positive relationship between wives' and husbands' conflict frequency.

Table 22 - Effect of Religiosity on Conflict Frequency - Wave 1

<i>Factor</i>	Husbands' Conflict Freq β	Husbands' Conflict Freq Drugs/alcohol β	Wives' Conflict Freq β	Wives' Conf Freq Drugs/Alcohol β
<i>Model One (N=323)</i>				
Covenant Marriage	-.068(.061)	-.046(.140)	-.063(.058)	.009(.129)
Wives Religiosity	-.031(.015)*	-.036(.035)	-.005(.015)	-.027(.033)
Husbands religiosity	.031(.016)*	.023(.036)	.003(.015)	.010(.033)
Husbands view of attendance	.050(.041)	.133(.094)	-.039(.039)	-.028(.086)
Wives view of attendance	-.009(.042)	.006(.097)	.103(.040)*	.212(.089)*
Adjusted R Squared	.020*	.001	.025*	.014
F-Statistic	2.92	1.075	2.687	1.931
<i>Model Two (N=323)</i>				
Covenant Marriage	-.032(.050)	-.041(.129)	-.026(.048)	.047(.118)
Wives Religiosity	-.027(.013)*	-.025(.033)	.012(.012)	-.005(.030)
Husbands' religiosity	.029(.013)*	.019(.033)	-.014(.012)	-.008(.030)
Husbands' view of attendance	.074(.033)*	.149(.086)	-.066(.038)*	-.087(.079)
Wives' view of attendance	-.077(.035)*	-.093(.01)	.108(.033)**	.213(.081)**
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.574(.051)***	.128(.134)		
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	.039(.023)	.407(.060)***		
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²			.556(.047)***	.361(.115)**
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²			-.003(.020)	.310(.050)***
Adjusted R Squared	.350***	.154***	.348***	.188***
F-Statistic	25.824	9.377	25.628	11.653
<i>Model Three (N=323)</i>				
Covenant Marriage	-.033(.047)	-.059(.129)	-.025(.044)	.061(.119)
Wives' Religiosity	.026(.012)*	-.030(.033)	.015(.011)	.005(.031)
Husbands' religiosity	.020(.012)	.016(.034)	-.012(.012)	-.013(.031)
Husbands' view of attendance	.064(.031)*	.163(.086)	-.051(.030)	-.087(.080)
Wives view of attendance	-.055(.033)	-.092(.091)	.086(.031)**	.222(.083)**
Wives' Collaboration ³	-.004(.049)	.065(.134)	.221(.044)***	.054(.118)
Wives' Hostility ³	.115(.052)*	-.170(.143)	-.196(.048)***	-.028(.129)
Wives' Avoidance ³	-.023(.038)	.105(.104)	-.030(.036)	.017(.096)
Wives' Emotion ³	.050(.045)	.259(.123)*	-.044(.042)	-.086(.114)
Husbands' Collaboration ³	.171(.052)**	.044(.144)	-.007(.050)	.118(.134)
Husbands' Hostility ³	-.341(.054)***	-.329(.150)*	.117(.054)*	.114(.145)
Husbands' Avoidance ³	-.025(.039)	-.060(.106)	-.041(.037)	-.003(.098)
Husbands' Emotion ³	.093(.048)	.070(.131)	-.056(.045)	-.265(.120)*
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.533(.054)***	.013(.150)		
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	.030(.022)	.400(.060)***		
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²			.504(.048)***	.327(.128)*
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²			-.010(.019)	.309(.051)***
Adjusted R Squared	.434***	.172***	.447***	.189***
F-Statistic	17.442	5.474	18.364	5.999

*p< .05, **p < .01, ***p< .001 Reporting unstandardized Beta, standard error term in parentheses.

2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

For wives, their levels of conflict frequency are now influenced by husbands' view of attendance and by their own view of attendance, showing that if the husband attends services with his wife more often there are fewer disagreements between the couple. Wives' conflict frequency over drugs and alcohol is influenced by wives' view of attendance, husbands' overall levels of agreement and by her frequency over drugs and alcohol. The inclusion of the spouses' reciprocal variables raises the R^2 significantly to 35% for both husbands and wives conflict frequency, and to over 15% for frequency over drugs and alcohol.

Model three explains 43% of the variance in husbands' conflict frequency and 45% for wives. For husbands' conflict frequency, wives' religiosity is still significant, but in this model higher levels of religiosity for wives increases husbands' perceptions that there is more agreement between the couple instead of decreasing it. The husband's view of attending church with his spouse also increases his perception of agreement between them. As expected, Table 23 shows that the husbands' behavior variables (collaboration and hostility) and the wives' conflict frequency variables are far more significant in predicting conflict frequency for husbands.

For wives, the only religiosity variable that is significant is the wives' view that the husband attends church services with her. The more the husband attends services with the wife, the fewer disagreements between them. This is true for frequency over drugs and alcohol as well. This supports the finding that joint church attendance and agreement over religious ideology are important predictors of marital quality (Myers 2006). Wives' conflict frequency is also influenced by her collaboration and hostility, and also by the husbands' hostility.

Table 23 - Effect of Religiosity on Conflict Behavior for Husbands - Wave 1

<i>Factor</i>	Husbands' Collaboration <i>β</i>	Husbands' Emotion <i>β</i>	Husbands' Avoidance <i>β</i>	Husbands' Hostility <i>β</i>
<i>Model One (N=444)</i>				
Covenant Marriage	-.015(.044)	.036(.055)	-.058(.061)	.036(.052)
Wives' Religiosity	-.041(.012)**	.004(.015)	-.021(.016)	.005(.014)
Husbands' religiosity	.044(.012)***	.005(.014)	.027(.016)	-.016(.014)
Husbands' view of attendance	.015(.030)	.002(.037)	.043(.041)	-.031(.035)
Wives' view of attendance	-.018(.031)	.044(.012)	-.036(.042)	.026(.036)
Adjusted R Squared	.026**	-.007	.005	.002
F-Statistic	3.400	.353	1.406	1.206
<i>Model Two (N=444)</i>				
Covenant Marriage	-.012(.044)	.012(.053)	-.079(.060)	-.003(.044)
Wives' Religiosity	-.040(.012)**	.000(.014)	-.024(.016)	-.003(.012)
Husbands' religiosity	.044(.012)***	.010(.014)	.031(.016)	-.008(.012)
Husbands' view of attendance	.012(.030)	.001(.036)	.036(.041)	-.036(.030)
Wives' view of attendance	-.018(.030)	.011(.037)	-.032(.042)	.038(.030)
Wives' Collaboration ³	.081(.044)	-.055(.053)	.010(.060)	.003(.044)
Wives' Hostility ³	-.024(.043)	.145(.049)**	.140(.058)*	.485(.043)***
Wives' Avoidance ³	-.067(.035)	.043(.042)	-.055(.048)	.038(.035)
Wives' Emotion ³	-.050(.041)	.176(.051)**	.072(.056)	.045(.041)
Adjusted R Squared	.040**	.076***	.027*	.297***
F-Statistic	3.043	5.042	2.370	21.850
<i>Model Three (N=323)</i>				
Covenant Marriage	-.031(.051)	-.014(.061)	-.045(.071)	-.025(.050)
Wives' Religiosity	-.036(.013)**	.000(.015)	-.020(.018)	-.024(.013)
Husbands' religiosity	.045(.013)**	.010(.016)	.037(.018)*	.006(.013)
Husbands' view of attendance	.019(.034)	.000(.041)	.043(.048)	.012(.034)
Wives' view of attendance	-.049(.036)	.038(.043)	-.011(.050)	.027(.035)
Wives' Collaboration ³	.054(.052)	-.040(.063)	.041(.073)	.034(.051)
Wives' Hostility ³	-.009(.050)	.075(.061)	.065(.071)	.432(.050)***
Wives' Avoidance ³	-.066(.040)	.060(.049)	-.075(.057)	.016(.040)
Wives' Emotion ³	-.056(.047)	.207(.057)***	.045(.067)	.061(.047)
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	-.030(.067)	-.016(.081)	-.102(.094)	.113(.066)
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	.024(.025)	-.059(.030)	.000(.035)	-.011(.025)
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²	.192(.059)**	-.013(.071)	-.059(.083)	-.325(.058)***
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.014(.023)	-.008(.028)	-.019(.032)	-.016(.023)
Adjusted R Squared	.094***	.090***	.021	.363***
F-Statistic				

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 Reporting unstandardized Beta, standard error term in parentheses.

2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

Conflict Behavior

Model one of Table 23 shows that religiosity only reaches significance for husbands' collaboration, whereas both wives' and husbands' religiosity significantly influences husbands' collaboration. This means that as wives' religiosity goes up, husbands' levels of collaboration goes down and as husbands' levels of religiosity goes up, so does husbands' collaboration. Also, Table 24 shows that wives' avoidance is significantly influenced by husbands' view of attendance, with wives becoming more avoidant if her husband does not attend services with her regularly. However, only the model for husbands' collaboration reaches significance and explains only 2.6% of the variance.

For model two, we see that husbands' collaboration is once more the only behavior significantly affected by religiosity and in the same direction as model one. The inclusion of the spouses' conflict behavior variables shows that yet again, they are more significant than religiosity in explaining behavior, but only for hostility and negative emotion. The R²s for husbands' model two are all significant with hostility at 30% and emotion at 8%. For wives only negative emotion (11%) and hostility (29%) are significant.

However, the R²s increase again in model three to 36% for husbands' hostility and 35% for wives hostility and 14% for wives' negative emotion and 9% for husbands' negative emotion. The impact on husbands' collaboration remains just as strong in this model with wives' and husbands' religiosity continuing to influence it in the same way as in the previous two models. Husbands' avoidance is now impacted by husbands' religiosity, with husbands who are more religious becoming more avoidant and collaborative.

Table 24 - Effect of Religiosity on Conflict Behavior for Wives - Wave 1

<i>Factor</i>	Wives’ Collaboration β	Wives’ Emotion β	Wives’ Avoidance β	Wives’ Hostility β
<i>Model One (N=444)</i>				
Covenant Marriage	-.002(.049)	.096(.059)	-.061(.062)	.075(.056)
Wives’ Religiosity	.007(.013)	.017(.016)	.003(.016)	.015(.015)
Husbands’ religiosity	-.010(.013)	-.025(.015)	.005(.016)	-.013(.015)
Husbands’ view of attendance	-.025(.033)	.003(.039)	-.087(.041)*	.018(.038)
Wives’ view of attendance	.027(.034)	.022(.040)	.028(.043)	-.030(.039)
Adjusted R Squared	-.008	.005	.002	-.001
F-Statistic				
<i>Model Two(N=444)</i>				
Covenant Marriage	.002(.050)	.083(.056)	-.070(.062)	.054?(.048)
Wives’ Religiosity	.011(.013)	.013(.015)	-.003(.017)	.011(.013)
Husbands’ religiosity	-.013(.013)	-.019(.015)	.011(.016)	-.004(.013)
Husbands’ view of attendance	-.027(.033)	.010(.037)	-.081(.041)	.035(.032)
Wives’ view of attendance	.029(.034)	.014(.038)	.022(.043)	-.044(.033)
Husbands’ Collaboration ³	.077(.054)	-.087(.060)	-.095(.067)	-.040(.052)
Husbands’ Hostility ³	-.036(.051)	.252(.057)***	.058(.063)	.564(.048)***
Husbands’ Avoidance ³	-.008(.041)	.038(.046)	-.062(.051)	.023(.039)
Husbands’ Emotion ³	-.037(.048)	.143(.054)**	.054(.060)	.032(.046)
Adjusted R Squared	-.007	.107***	.007	.293***
F-Statistic				
<i>Model Three (N=323)</i>				
Covenant Marriage	.073(.056)	.105(.064)	-.034(.072)	.043(.055)
Wives’ Religiosity	.010(.014)	.023(.017)	.003(.019)	.027(.014)
Husbands’ religiosity	-.010(.015)	-.020(.017)	.020(.019)	-.014(.015)
Husbands’ view of attendance	-.019(.038)	-.035(.044)	-.059(.049)	.012(.037)
Wives’ view of attendance	.013(.040)	.046(.046)	-.044(.051)	-.031(.039)
Husbands’ Collaboration ³	.039(.063)	-.122(.073)	-.117(.081)	-.069(.062)
Husbands’ Hostility ³	.031(.061)	.270(.070)***	.017(.078)	.582(.059)***
Husbands’ Avoidance ³	.011(.046)	-.002(.053)	-.081(.059)	.001(.045)
Husbands’ Emotion ³	-.026(.056)	.189(.065)**	.114(.072)	-.033(.055)
Wives’ Conflict Frequency ²	.377(.069)***	-.209(.079)**	.005(.088)	-.371(.068)***
Wives’ Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.026(.028)	-.006(.032)	.007(.036)	.023(.028)
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²	-.037(.070)	.134(.080)	-.086(.089)	.214(.068)**
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²	.026(.025)	.043(.029)	.051(.033)	-.030(.025)
Adjusted R Squared	.093***	.144***	.010	.345***
F-Statistic	3.564	3.461	1.535	15.095

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 Reporting unstandardized Beta, standard error term in parentheses.

2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

As mentioned before, we see reciprocal relationships with negative emotion and hostility. Husbands' conflict frequency influences both husbands' and wives' hostility levels, but wives' conflict frequency only impacts their own hostility. However, wives' conflict frequency levels influence wives' collaboration and negative emotion as well.

In summary, religiosity does have an effect on the frequency of disagreements between couples. However, it appears that it may be more a source of disagreements, unless both parties share the same levels of religiosity, and in particular if both parties agree that they attend services together. It seems that as long as the husband attends services with the wife and views religiosity similarly to her, there are fewer disagreements. However, for the conflict variables we see that higher levels of religiosity often mean more collaboration and avoidance for both husbands and wives. This shows that people who are more religious may be less hostile, preferring to avoid conflicts, at least for husbands.

Effects of all Covariates on Marital Conflict

This fourth model includes all of the independent variables discussed in chapter three. The dichotomous variables of race, covenant marriage, and presence of children were included as independent variables with all other variables entered as covariates. Table 25 through Table 27 present the wave one parameter estimates.

Conflict Behavior

Table 25 presents the parameter estimates for the effects on husbands' conflict behavior, while Table 26 shows outcomes for wives. While the effects of both conflict behavior and conflict frequency are similar to the earlier models, only the wives negative emotions and hostility are still significantly affected by the husbands' perception of disagreements over drugs and alcohol. No

other relationships regarding conflict frequency and behavior reach significance for either husbands or wives.

Table 25 - Parameter Estimates for Effects on Husbands' Conflict Behavior - Wave 1

<i>Factor (N=155)</i>	Husbands' Collaboration β	Husbands' Emotion β	Husbands' Avoidance β	Husbands' Hostility β
<i>Conflict Behavior Variables</i>				
Wives' Collaboration ³	-.108(.126)	.068(.137)	.006(.158)	.042(.108)
Wives' Hostility ³	-.194(.169)	-.109(.184)	-.079(.211)	.218(.145)
Wives' Avoidance ³	.058(.116)	-.183(.127)	-.208(.146)	.024(.100)
Wives' Emotion ³	-.019(.126)	.064(.137)	.035(.157)	.043(.108)
<i>Conflict Freq. Variables</i>				
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.114(.190)	.069(.207)	-.199(.238)	-.070(.163)
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.045(.078)	-.089(.085)	-.093(.098)	.001(.067)
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²	.213(.189)	.205(.206)	.444(.237)	.028(.163)
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.078(.057)	.028(.062)	-.086(.071)	-.007(.049)
<i>Family of Origin Char.</i>				
Wives' Family Dysfunction	.248(.156)	.353(.170)*	.165(.196)	-.002(.134)
Husband's Fam Dysfunction	-.118(.227)	-.288(.246)	-.952(.284)**	.144(.195)
Wife Residence Age 16	.030(.059)	-.056(.64)	-.032(.074)	-.019(.051)
Husb. Residence Age 16	-.004(.057)	.011(.062)	-.001(.071)	.069(.049)
Wife FMO income Age 16	.022(.068)	.155(.074)*	.229(.085)*	.171(.058)**
Husb FMO income age 16	-.026(.065)	-.190(.070)*	-.098(.081)	-.018(.055)
<i>Religiosity</i>				
Wife	.063(.037)	.027(.041)	.012(.047)	.039(.032)
Husband	.058(.035)	-.027(.038)	-.022(.044)	-.030(.030)
Wife attend	.088(.077)	.116(.084)	.153(.097)	.049(.066)
Husband attend	-.101(.071)	-.067(.077)	.003(.088)	-.068(.061)
<i>View of HDL Fairness</i>				
Wife's view of fair to her	.155(.082)	.165(.089)	.083(.103)	.000(.070)
Wife's view of fair to Husb	-.156(.163)	.095(.178)	-.011(.205)	-.028(.140)
Husband view of fair to him	.158(.173)	-.227(.189)	-.272(.217)	-.175(.149)
Husband view of fair to Wife	-.219(.085)*	-.136(.092)	-.125(.106)	-.144(.073)
<i>Marital Characteristics</i>				
Covenant Marriage (Y=1)	.025(.153)	-.122(.167)	-.292(.192)	-.018(.131)
Child Pres (Y=1)	-.022(.185)	.018(.201)	.260(.231)	-.035(.159)
Wife Thoughts of divorce	-.040(.099)	-.193(.108)	-.079(.124)	-.019(.085)
Husb thoughts of divorce	.151(.082)	-.004(.089)	.097(.103)	-.071(.070)
Wife view of satisfaction	-.303(.185)	-.163(.201)	-.121(.231)	-.099(.159)
Husb view of satisfaction	.026(.188)	.197(.205)	.241(.236)	-.005(.162)
Wife view of cohesion	.023(.017)	.007(.018)	.028(.021)	.029(.014)
Husb view of cohesion	.005(.015)	.002(.016)	-.008(.019)	-.020(.013)
Wife view of interaction	-.276(.173)	-.193(.188)	-.353(.217)	.055(.149)
Husb view of interaction	.305(.168)	.253(.183)	.263(.211)	-.004(.144)
Wife view of inter w children	-.135(.068)	-.061(.074)	-.096(.085)	-.062(.059)
Husb view of inter w children	.049(.072)	.125(.078)	.067(.090)	.117(.062)
Wife view of commitment	.069(.299)	-.619(.326)	-.515(.375)	-.428(.257)
Husb view of commitment	.221(.221)	-.488(.240)*	-.223(.276)	-.341(.190)

<i>Factor (N=155)</i>	Husbands' Collaboration β	Husbands' Emotion β	Husbands' Avoidance β	Husbands' Hostility β
<i>Socio demographic Variables</i>				
Wife's hours worked	-.004(.008)	.007(.008)	.011(.010)	-.003(.007)
Husb hours worked	-.006(.006)	-.044(.006)	.004(.007)	-.010(.005)*
Wife's age	-.022(.013)	.008(.014)	.023(.016)	.000(.011)
Husband's age	.018(.012)	.005(.013)	-.012(.015)	.001(.010)
Wife's race	.038(.227)	.206(.247)	.525(.284)	.235(.195)
Husband's race	.042(.219)	-.245(.239)	-.615(.275)*	-.406(.188)
Husband's income	.074(.036)*	-.019(.039)	-.022(.045)	-9.144(.031)
Wife's income	.030(.034)	-.030(.037)	.019(.042)	.040(.029)
Wife's education	.092(.034)	.033(.037)	.014(.042)	.052(.029)
Husband's education	-.062(.030)	-.003(.033)	-.012(.038)	-.057(.026)*
<i>View of Family Approval</i>				
Wife's father	-.088(.058)	-.098(.063)	-.100(.072)	-.061(.049)
Wife's mother	-.069(.076)	-.017(.083)	.023(.095)	-.074(.065)
Wife's view of Husb father	.132(.073)	.050(.079)	-.018(.091)	.027(.062)
Wife's view of Husb mother	-.126(.079)	-.052(.086)	.027(.098)	-.040(.068)
Wife's siblings	-.047(.092)	.079(.100)	.055(.115)	.165(.079)*
Wife's view of Husb siblings	-.159(.140)	-.011(.152)	.053(.175)	-.165(.120)
Wife's friends	.260(.106)*	.211(.115)	.025(.132)	.026(.091)
Wife's view of husb friends	-.206(.156)	-.198(.169)	-.159(.195)	.040(.134)
Husb's father	-.142(.067)*	-.095(.073)	-.003(.084)	-.031(.057)
Husb's mother	.043(.080)	.047(.087)	.035(.100)	.040(.069)
Husb's view of Wife father	.089(.061)	.113(.067)	.189(.077)*	.063(.053)
Husb's view of Wife mother	.021(.084)	-.036(.091)	-.104(.105)	.016(.072)
Husb's siblings	.253(.139)	.067(.151)	.035(.174)	.177(.119)
Husb's view of Wife siblings	.107(.100)	-.111(.109)	.009(.126)	-.086(.086)
Husb's friends	-.090(.311)	-.346(.339)	-.618(.389)	-.315(.267)
Husb's view of Wife friends	.102(.313)	.357(.341)	.567(.392)	.292(.269)
Adjusted R Squared	.216	.223	.263	.490**
F-Statistic	1.17	2.33	1.31	3.61

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 Reporting unstandardized Beta, standard error term in parentheses.

2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

Instead, a few other variables reach significance for both husbands and wives.

Collaboration -- Husbands' level of collaboration decreases the more they view the household division of labor as fair to their wives. As husbands' income, and wives' friends' approval increases, husbands' collaboration also increases, implying that husbands who make more

money are more collaborative. Further, if the wives' friends are approving of the marriage husbands are more collaborative, probably to keep their favor. However, as husbands' fathers' approval of the marriage increases husbands' collaboration decreases.

Wives' collaboration increases as their own view of the fairness of household division of labor to their husbands increases. However, if husbands' view the household division of labor as fair to himself, wives' collaboration decreases.

Negative Emotion -- As we saw in the earlier models, husbands' negative emotion increases as wives' amount of dysfunction in her family of origin increases, this is also true of the wives' view of her family's income at age 16. As theorized, if the wife has an increased view of her family's income, husbands feel more negative emotions. In contrast, husbands' who have a higher view of their own family of origin income at age 16 are less likely to experience these negative emotions. Also, if husbands feel more committed to their marriages, their negative emotions decrease.

Wives' negative emotion is influenced by husbands' conflict frequency over drugs and alcohol, with more agreement over this issue decreasing wives' negative emotions. Husbands' view of how fair household division of labor is to him increases wives' negative emotion. This means that wives can view the household division of labor as fair to their husbands and react positively, but if the husband views it as fair to himself wives become less collaborative and experience more negative emotion. This is likely because she does not view the division of labor as fair to herself. Husbands' higher view of satisfaction with the marriage decreases negative emotions allowing wives to feel more loved, while husbands' increased income has the opposite effect.

Table 26 - Parameter Estimates for Effects on Wives' Conflict - Wave 1

<i>Factor (N=155)</i>	Wives' Collaboration B	Wives' Emotion β	Wives' Avoidance β	Wives' Hostility β
<i>Conflict Behavior Variables</i>				
Husbands' Collaboration ³	-.228(.182)	-.159(.183)	.102(.197)	-.232(.132)
Husbands' Hostility ³	.266(.200)	.129(.201)	.070(.217)	.231(.145)
Husbands' Avoidance ³	-.147(.146)	-.094(.147)	-.101(.158)	-.039(.106)
Husbands' Emotion ³	.201(.175)	.080(.176)	-.093(.189)	-.101(.127)
<i>Conflict Freq. Variables</i>				
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.420(.215)	.140(.216)	.123(.233)	-.087(.156)
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	.052(.076)	.058(.077)	-.098(.083)	.020(.055)
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²	-.110(.217)	.274(.218)	-.339(.235)	.014(.157)
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.046(.061)	-.125(.061)*	.076(.066)	-.097(.044)*
<i>Family of Origin Char.</i>				
Wives' Family Dysfunction	-.157(.189)	.055(.189)	.166(.204)	.140(.136)
Husband's Fam Dysfunction	-.018(.288)	-.064(.289)	-.003(.311)	-.114(.208)
Wife Residence Age 16	.057(.064)	.048(.064)	.060(.069)	-.043(.046)
Husb. Residence Age 16	-.061(.062)	.050(.062)	-.119(.067)	-.024(.045)
Wife FMO income Age 16	-.065(.078)	-.066(.078)	-.093(.084)	.001(.056)
Husb FMO income age 16	-.041(.078)	-.046(.078)	-.093(.085)	-.040(.057)
<i>Religiosity</i>				
Wife	.008(.040)	-.033(.041)	.0058(.044)	-.019(.029)
Husband	.006(.038)	.061(.038)	-.024(.041)	.017(.028)
Wife attend	-.034(.091)	-.053(.091)	.019(.098)	-.026(.066)
Husband attend	-.003(.081)	.059(.081)	.007(.087)	.044(.058)
<i>View of HDL Fairness</i>				
Wife's view of fair to her	-.071(.099)	.062(.099)	-.060(.107)	-.059(.071)
Wife's view of fair to Husb	-.383(.181)*	-.245(.182)	-.029(.196)	.071(.131)
Husband view of fair to him	.413(.187)*	.429(.187)*	-.096(.202)	.012(.135)
Husband view of fair to Wife	-.066(.106)	-.018(.107)	.001(.115)	-.002(.077)
<i>Marital Characteristics</i>				
Covenant Marriage (Y=1)	-.052(.173)	.002(.174)	-.423(.188)*	.047(.125)
Child Pres (Y=1)	.066(.213)	.022(.214)	.289(.230)	-.234(.154)
Wife Thoughts of divorce	.412(.105)	.128(.106)	.022(.114)	.009(.076)
Husb thoughts of divorce	.075(.098)	.027(.099)	.083(.106)	-.006(.071)
Wive view of satisfaction	-.141(.212)	-.121(.213)	-.208(.229)	-.018(.153)
Husb view of satisfaction	-.019(.178)	-.398(.179)*	.322(.193)	-.205(.129)
Wife view of cohesion	.003(.020)	-.012(.020)	.017(.022)	.005(.015)
Husb view of cohesion	.001(.015)	.018(.015)	.013(.016)	.018(.011)
Wife view of interaction	.096(.209)	.008(.210)	.272(.226)	-.039(.151)
Husb view of interaction	.048(.202)	-.021(.203)	.130(.219)	.083(.146)
Wife view of inter w children	-.027(.084)	-.062(.084)	-.037(.091)	-.007(.061)
Husb view of inter w children	.038(.083)	.008(.083)	.085(.090)	.044(.060)
Wife view of commitment	.397(.338)	-.306(.340)	-.229(.366)	-.357(.245)
Husb view of commitment	.447(.271)	.270(.272)	-.074(.293)	-.170(.196)

<i>Factor</i>	Wives' Collaboration β	Wives' Emotion β	Wives' Avoidance β	Wives' Hostility β
<i>Socio demographic Variables</i>				
Wife's hours worked	-.002(.004)	-.006(.004)	.006(.004)	-.001(.003)
Husb hours worked	-.007(.004)	-.006(.004)	.005(.005)	-.002(.003)
Wife's age	-.019(.016)	-.002(.016)	.010(.017)	.008(.011)
Husband's age	.011(.014)	.002(.014)	-.003(.015)	-.008(.010)
Wife's race	-.042(.262)	.150(.263)	-.295(.284)	.026(.190)
Husband's race	.280(.271)	-.064(.272)	-.151(.293)	.077(.196)
Husband's income	.066(.037)	.137(.037)*	-.058(.040)	.035(.027)
Wife's income	.000(.037)	-.039(.037)	-.033(.040)	-.049(.027)
Wife's education	.017(.038)	.006(.038)	-.119(.041)**	.025(.027)
Husband's education	-.040(.033)	.015(.033)	.085(.036)*	.020(.024)
<i>View of Family Approval</i>				
Wife's father	-.009(.066)	-.127(.066)	-.085(.072)	-.049(.048)
Wife's mother	-.091(.081)	-.017(.081)	.199(.087)*	-.061(.058)
Wife's view of Husb father	-.019(.081)	-.074(.081)	-.177(.088)*	.022(.059)
Wife's view of Husb mother	-.034(.083)	-.002(.083)	.165(.090)	.101(.060)
Wife's siblings	-.044(.109)	.041(.109)	-.135(.117)	.120(.079)
Wife's view of Husb siblings	-.030(.166)	.197(.166)	.156(.179)	-.031(.120)
Wife's friends	-.061(.127)	.022(.128)	-.029(.138)	.030(.092)
Wife's view of husb friends	.097(.176)	-.148(.177)	-.042(.191)	-.001(.128)
Husb's father	.000(.078)	.047(.078)	.151(.084)	-.023(.056)
Husb's mother	-.009(.088)	-.074(.088)	-.074(.095)	-.091(.064)
Husb's view of Wife father	-.015(.070)	.125(.070)	.127(.076)	.069(.051)
Husb's view of Wife mother	.104(.089)	.095(.089)	-.159(.096)	.037(.064)
Husb's siblings	.091(.169)	-.039(.169)	-.122(.182)	.087(.122)
Husb's view of Wife siblings	.152(.120)	-.028(.121)	-.029(.130)	-.115(.087)
Husb's friends	-.500(.363)	-.098(.364)	.099(.392)	.195(.262)
Husb's view of Wife friends	.377(.367)	.061(.368)	-.176(.397)	-.211(.265)
Adjusted R Squared	-.011	.173	.264*	.567***
F-Statistic	1.68	1.17	1.44	2.67

*p< .05, **p< .01, ***p< .001 Reporting unstandardized Beta, standard error term in parentheses.

2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

Avoidance -- Husbands' avoidance is negatively influenced by husbands' level of family dysfunction and husbands' race. Specifically, white husbands with higher levels of dysfunction in their family of origin exercise less avoidance. This could mean that, instead of avoiding situations, these husbands become hostile. In addition, husbands' levels of avoidance are positively influenced by wives' view of their family of origin income, showing that wives that have higher levels of income in their family of origin increase husbands' overall avoidant behavior. Again, this is likely because the wife may be pointing out the husbands' inability to provide for her in a manner she is accustomed. Conversely, as husbands' view of wives' fathers' approval of the marriage goes up so does husbands' avoidant behavior. More plainly if the husband thinks the father-in-law approves of the marriage he is more avoidant. This could mean that he does not want to become hostile and risk endangering an established relationship with his father-in-law.

Wives' level of avoidance is reduced by being in a covenant marriage, and by wives' increased education levels. However, increased education levels for husbands' increases wives' avoidance. Wives' mothers' approval of the marriage increases wives' level of avoidance, while wives' view of husbands' father's approval decreases avoidance. Again, decreased avoidance could mean increased hostility, or more collaborative behaviors.

Hostility -- Husbands who are more educated and who work more hours are less hostile. As discussed in the previous paragraph, wives with higher views of their family of origin income raise husbands' hostility, along with wives whose siblings strongly approve of the marriage. Wives' hostility levels are significantly influenced by husbands' conflict frequency over drugs and alcohol with more agreement over the issue lowering the levels of hostility. For husbands only the model

for hostility reaches significance by explaining 49% of the variance. For wives only hostility at 58% and avoidance at 26% reach significance.

Conflict Frequency

Table 27 shows the parameter estimates for conflict frequency. As with conflict behavior, the reciprocal relationship noted previously is still present, but it does not reach significance for any of the conflict variables on the frequency of disagreements. Instead, we can see that husbands' perceptions of conflict frequency is only significantly influenced by his wife's race, showing that husbands have more disagreements with white wives and, as husbands' view of wives' fathers' approval of the marriage increases, there is more disagreement between the couple. So it appears that fathers-in-law have a positive effect on husbands' conflict behavior but a negative effect on the level of disagreements.

Wives' conflict frequency is only significantly influenced by how much the wife believes the couple attends church together, with more attendance equaling more agreement between them. Wives' perception of more agreement over the issues of drugs and alcohol is increased significantly by wives' belief that she and her husband attend church together, husbands' level of interaction, the number of hours the husband works, and the wives' view that household division of labor is fair to husbands. However, for wives with increased levels of religiosity and as husbands' income increases, the level of agreement decreases.

Table 27 - Parameter Estimates for Effects of Conflict - Wave 1

<i>Factor (N=155)</i>	Husbands' Conflict Freq β	Husbands' Conflict Freq Drugs/alcohol β	Wives' Conflict Freq β	Wives' Conf Freq Drugs/Alcohol β
<i>Conflict Behavior Variables</i>				
Wives' Collaboration ³	-.046(.105)	-.240(.348)	.192(.100)	.242(.244)
Wives' Hostility ³	-.115(.141)	-.866(.467)	-.104(.146)	-.034(.355)
Wives' Avoidance ³	-.051(.098)	.124(.326)	-.001(.097)	-.292(.236)
Wives' Emotion ³	.054(.101)	-.352(.336)	.043(.103)	.118(.251)
Husbands' Collaboration ³	.097(.130)	-.577(.432)	.070(.134)	-.145(.326)
Husbands' Hostility ³	-.005(.157)	.239(.519)	-.077(.156)	.010(.381)
Husbands' Avoidance ³	.137(.109)	-.477(.361)	-.120(.113)	-.187(.275)
Husbands' Emotion ³	.043(.131)	.592(.436)	.074(.133)	-.161(.324)
<i>Conflict Freq. Variables</i>				
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.253(.154)	.076(.511)		
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	.065(.064)	.171(.214)		
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²			.282(.157)	.397(.381)
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²			-.012(.049)	.061(.120)
<i>Family of Origin Char.</i>				
Wives' Family Dysfunction	-.088(.135)	.372(.448)	-.006(.132)	.575(.322)
Husband's Fam Dysfunction	.350(.204)	-.149(.677)	-.085(.211)	-.441(.512)
Wife Residence Age 16	.001(.049)	-.020(.163)	.012(.049)	.033(.120)
Husb. Residence Age 16	-.014(.048)	-.034(.159)	-.034(.047)	-.097(.115)
Wife FMO income Age 16	-.050(.066)	.070(.220)	.015(.067)	.056(.162)
Husb FMO income age 16	.079(.056)	.015(.186)	.058(.057)	-.065(.138)
<i>Religiosity</i>				
Wife	.020(.033)	-.048(.110)	-.039(.031)	-.173(.075)*
Husband	-.017(.030)	.087(.100)	.008(.030)	.079(.074)
Wife attend	-.078(.066)	-.061(.218)	.130(.058)*	.417(.142)**
Husband attend	.011(.060)	.108(.199)	-.005(.060)	-.001(.146)
<i>Marital Characteristics</i>				
Covenant Marriage (Y=1)	-.142(.127)	-.290(.421)	-.029(.129)	.052(.313)
Child Pres (Y=1)	.038(.154)	-.117(.511)	.023(.148)	.665(.360)
Wife Thoughts of divorce	.000(.085)	-.036(.280)	.059(.084)	.032(.204)
Husb thoughts of divorce	.007(.073)	.157(.243)	-.029(.073)	.048(.178)
Wife view of satisfaction	.132(.156)	-.042(.517)	.177(.154)	-.155(.375)
Husb view of satisfaction	-.043(.156)	-.272(.519)	.056(.152)	.570(.371)
Wife view of cohesion	.001(.015)	.017(.049)	.014(.014)	-.036(.035)
Husb view of cohesion	.010(.013)	.014(.042)	.001(.013)	.006(.031)
Wife view of interaction	.187(.149)	.265(.495)	-.095(.150)	-.332(.365)
Husb view of interaction	-.032(.147)	-.249(.486)	.055(.140)	.690(.341)*
Wife view of inter w children	.059(.057)	-.241(.189)	.040(.059)	.026(.144)
Husb view of inter w children	-.011(.063)	.190(.209)	-.055(.063)	-.117(.153)
Wife view of commitment	-.068(.268)	-.568(.889)	.156(.259)	1.113(.629)
Husb view of commitment	.099(.205)	.343(.680)	-.233(.197)	-.808(.478)

<i>Factor</i>	Husbands' Conflict Freq β	Husbands' Conflict Freq Drugs/alcohol β	Wives' Conflict Freq β	Wives' Conf Freq Drugs/Alcohol β
<i>Socio demographic Variables</i>				
Wife's hours worked	.004(.006)	-.003(.021)	-.005(.006)	.005(.016)
Husb hours worked	.000(.005)	-.002(.017)	.009(.005)	.023(.011)*
Wife's age	.006(.011)	-.017(.037)	.012(.011)	.021(.027)
Husband's age	-.004(.010)	.023(.033)	-.009(.010)	-.001(.024)
Wife's race	-.404(.186)*	-.458(.617)	.088(.195)	-.257(.475)
Husband's race	.256(.197)	.118(.654)	-.181(.197)	-.483(.480)
Husband's income	-.017(.030)	.152(.099)	-.055(.029)	-.144(.070)*
Wife's income	-.022(.029)	.012(.095)	-.021(.029)	-.046(.070)
Wife's education	-.025(.030)	.035(.100)	.011(.030)	-.072(.073)
Husband's education	.031(.026)	-.011(.088)	-.013(.027)	.026(.065)
<i>View of HDL Fairness</i>				
Wife's view of fair to her	-.085(.071)	.013(.235)	.074(.069)	.311(.167)
Wife's view of fair to Husb	-.074(.134)	-.591(.443)	.220(.121)	.859(.295)*
Husband view of fair to him	.061(.150)	.458(.498)	-.067(.148)	-.541(.359)
Husband view of fair to Wife	.106(.074)	-.278(.245)	.004(.077)	-.222(.186)
<i>View of Family Approval</i>				
Wife's father	.095(.048)	-.073(.159)	.001(.050)	-.139(.121)
Wife's mother	-.005(.064)	-.025(.211)	.014(.061)	.260(.149)
Wife's view of Husb father	-.054(.061)	-.148(.204)	-.016(.062)	-.049(.151)
Wife's view of Husb mother	.044(.066)	.077(.220)	.093(.064)	.227(.155)
Wife's siblings	-.039(.081)	-.071(.270)	-.079(.081)	-.068(.196)
Wife's view of Husb siblings	-.028(.118)	-.158(.392)	-.076(.117)	.120(.285)
Wife's friends	-.051(.094)	.237(.312)	-.067(.093)	.305(.225)
Wife's view of husb friends	.210(.128)	-.014(.425)	.130(.130)	-.196(.317)
Husb's father	.064(.058)	.134(.191)	.043(.058)	-.012(.141)
Husb's mother	-.053(.065)	-.166(.217)	-.090(.064)	-.156(.156)
Husb's view of Wife father	-.113(.052)*	.105(.172)	.029(.054)	.225(.131)
Husb's view of Wife mother	.036(.069)	-.075(.229)	-.017(.068)	-.214(.165)
Husb's siblings	.032(.119)	.359(.394)	.046(.120)	-.061(.291)
Husb's view of Wife siblings	.041(.087)	.231(.288)	.038(.087)	-.160(.211)
Husb's friends	.025(.267)	-.346(.886)	.483(.252)	.863(.613)
Husb's view of Wife friends	-.037(.267)	.430(.885)	-.421(.255)	-.827(.620)
Adjusted R Squared	.479***	-.036	.523***	.339**
F-Statistic	4.55	1.15	3.85	2.06

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 Reporting unstandardized Beta, standard error term in parentheses.

2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

In summary, the addition of the socio-demographic and marital quality variables show that the reciprocity effect of the conflict variables appears to be no longer a significant influence. However, the family dysfunction variables remained significant at least for negative emotion and avoidance. This means that when there are more factors involved, there is more to consider than just the reciprocal behaviors of the spouse, at least at the beginning of the marriage. While this does not discount the findings earlier in this chapter with respect to the reciprocal effects of conflict, it does remind us that there is never one answer to a question, or one way to explain conflict between couples.

CHAPTER FIVE: HOW CONFLICT CHANGES OVER TIME

Introduction

This chapter explores how conflict changes from wave one, or the beginning of the marriage to wave three, approximately five years into the marriage. The chapter is broken into four parts: 1) how the topics couples' disagree about change over time, 2) how reactions to conflict change over time, 3) a comparison of wave one and wave three effects of sociological variables on conflict using multiple analysis of variance, and 4) the significance of time on newlywed marriages using repeated measures analysis to determine which measures of marriage change significantly over time.

How Do Topics of Disagreement Change over Time? (Conflict Frequency)

We saw in the previous chapter that the top five topics disagreed about at the beginning of the sample's marriages were: their parents and in-laws, how leisure time is spent, household division of labor, handling family finances, and both the respondents' friends and their partners' friends. We can see from Table 16 that in wave three the topics with the highest levels of disagreement changed, some of them by significant amounts. Five years into the marriage, the topics that are most disagreed about are: their sex life, their parents and in-laws, who does what around the house, how leisure time is spent, and showing physical affection.

Couples

Table 28 is organized with the largest areas of change over time listed first. This change is illustrated in the last column labeled "% point change." We can see that two of the top five items that couples' disagree about in wave three also showed the largest changes over time. Specifically,

the topic of their sex life changed 20 percentage points from 37% of couples reporting some level of disagreement in this area to 57%. Another intimacy category, showing physical affection, increased 17 percentage points from 30% to 47%. While not in the top five “the amount of time spent together” increased by 11 percentage points from 29% to 40%. The items in the second, third and fourth spots of the top five increased over time, but by only five points or less, indicating that these items began as sources of disagreements and continued to be instrumental areas of disagreement five years into the marriage.

Four categories decreased over time, my friends, my partner’s friends, your partner’s drinking and drug use, and your drinking and drug use. These are indicated at the bottom of Table 28. We can see that the two friend categories had fairly large percentages of change comparable with some of the increases noted above. However, these decreases over time were not significant in the repeated measures ANOVAs.

Table 28 - Conflict Frequency: Comparison of Wave 1 to Wave 3 Couples Reporting levels of Disagreement Changes over Time

	N	Wave 1			N	Wave 3			Change
		Agree conflict	Disagree	Total Disagree		Agree conflict	Disagree	Total Disagree	
Increases over time		%	%	%		%	%	%	
Our sex life	562	17	20	37	357	32	25	57 (1)	20
Showing physical affection	558	10	20	30	357	20	27	47 (5)	17
The amount of time we spend together	561	10	19	29	358	15	25	40	11
Handling family finances	561	12	28	40 (4)	359	14	28	42	8
Whether to have more children	556	5	16	21	316	12	17	29	8
Career decisions	558	6	13	19	353	6	21	27	8
Our aims and goals	558	3	17	20	355	5	22	27	7
How to raise children	513	11	22	33	291	18	22	40	7
Dealing with parents and in-laws	558	20	29	49(1)	354	23	31	54 (2)	5
Religious matters	552	10	15	25	359	13	17	30	5
Who does what around the house	556	17	28	45 (3)	358	23	27	50 (3)	5
Philosophy of life	424	8	26	34	355	9	29	38	4
How we spend leisure time	561	13	33	46 (2)	358	7	32	49 (4)	3
Decreases over time									
My friends	554	10	29	39 (5)	351	6	24	30	(9)
My partner's friends	557	12	26	38	354	6	24	30	(8)
Your partner's drinking and drug use	402	6	19	25	230	4	18	22	(3)
Your drinking and drug use	402	4	18	22	228	4	18	22	(0)

N=number of complete, intact, couples. May not add to 100% due to rounding or missing cases. Line designates division between items that increase and items that decrease. Question stem reads: Please indicate the extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list, 14 potential areas of disagreement were presented, with respondents able to reply (always agree, almost always agree, sometimes disagree, frequently disagree, almost always disagree, and always disagree). To denote levels of disagreement about conflict, responses were recoded into agreement on no conflict (both husband and wife say they agree), agreement on conflict (both husband and wife responded with one of the disagreement choices) and disagreement about conflict (either the husband or the wife indicates conflict and the other spouse indicates no conflict)

Covenant Couples

Table 29 shows the differences between covenant and standard couples over time. There are numerous ways to discuss the data contained in this table. One of the first things to note is that in wave three there are more intact covenant couples than standard couples. This is different from the previous two waves, and is due to attrition or divorce. Again, to be an intact couple in wave three both the husband and wife must answer the questions.

To simplify the presentation of the data the table has two extra sections; (1) the percentage point changes over time for both covenant and standard couples, and (2) the differences between the two types of couples for each wave. For example, for the “dealing with parents and in-laws” statement, which is the first in the list, the percentage point change from wave one to wave three for covenant couples is four points and the change for standards is six points. Also, in wave one there were two percentage points difference between covenant and standard couples for this topic, and in wave three this decreased to zero, meaning the same percentage of couples reported disagreement in this area. Clearly this particular example is not a significant change, but is presented merely as an illustration.

It bears noting briefly that in wave one there were only four categories where more covenants reported disagreements than standard couples (these are noted by yellow highlighting in the difference between columns of the table). And in wave three there are only three categories where more covenants reported disagreements. Only “religious matters” is above the five percentage point difference used to denote significance in wave one, and “how we spend our leisure time” in wave three where covenants are eleven percentage points higher.

From wave one to wave three there are nine significant changes over time for covenant couples. The most notable of these are “showing physical affection” which increased by 27 percentage points to 47% in wave three, with standards increasing only 6 points to 46%, and “religious matters” which decreased by 20 points while standard couples increased by 5 points. “The amount of time spent together” increased by 13 points to 40% while standard couples only increased by six percentage points to 36%.

There are fourteen categories that show significant changes over time for standard couples. Most notably, “our sex life” which increased by 21 percentage points to 59% while covenant couples only increased seven points to 43%, and “your partner’s drinking and drug use” which increased by 12 points to 27%, and decreased by three for covenant couples to 16%. Overall, the increases in disagreements over time are larger per category for covenant couples than for standard couples even though standards increased in more areas.

There are nine areas showing significant differences between the two groups in wave one, most notably “showing physical affection” (20 point spread), “philosophy of life” (15 points) and “how to raise children” (13 points). In wave three there are twelve significant differences between the two groups of couples with the largest being for “philosophy of life” where 26% of covenant couples reported disagreements compared to 47% of standard couples which is a 21 percentage point spread. In wave one the two groups were 15% points apart.

“Religious matters” shows a 19 point difference with 20% of covenants and 39% of standards reporting disagreements. This point spread is thirteen points higher than wave one. The point spread for “how to raise children” increased by five points to 18 points with 30% of covenants and 48% of standards reporting disagreements. “Our sex life” is the most disagreed

about category for all of our couples in wave three and shows a 16 point spread between the two types of couples, which is nine points higher than in wave one, with covenant couples at 43% and standards at 59%.

In the previous chapter we noted that the top five topics of disagreement in wave one for covenant couples were: parents and in-laws, showing physical affection, household division of labor, how leisure time is spent and their sex life, while for standard couples the top five categories were: their sex life, parents and in-laws, who does what around the house, handling family finances, and how to raise children. We can see in Table 29 that the top five categories in wave three for covenants are: dealing with parents and in-laws, how we spend our leisure time, showing physical affection and who does what around the house tied for third, with our sex life in fourth and the amount of time spent together in fifth. For standard couples the top category was their sex life with 59% of the couples reporting disagreement over this topic, in second place is dealing with parents and in-laws, followed by who does what around the house, handling family finances and how to raise children.

Table 29 - Conflict Frequency: Comparison between Wave One and Wave Three Covenant and Standard Couples Reporting Amount of Disagreement within Couples

	Wave 1		Total Disagreement		Wave 3		Total Disagreement		Time % points difference	Difference between cov & std		
	n cov	n std	% cov	% std	n cov	n std	% cov	% std (rank)		W1	W3	
Dealing with parents and in-laws	247	307	50 (1)	48 (1)	184	166	54 (1)	54 (2)	4	6	2	0
How we spend leisure time	246	310	46 (2)	45 (2)	184	168	53 (2)	42	7	3↓	1	11
Showing physical affection	247	306	20	40 (5)	186	165	47 (3)	46	27	6	20	1
Who does what around the house	246	305	45 (3)	45 (2)	186	166	47 (3)	51 (3)	2	6	0	4
Our sex life	246	311	36 (5)	38	185	166	43 (4)	59 (1)	7	21	2	16
The amount of time we spend together	246	310	27	30	184	168	40 (5)	36	13	6	3	4
Handling family finances	246	310	38	45 (2)	186	167	34	50 (4)	4	5	7	16
How to raise children	220	290	26	39	148	138	30	48 (5)	4	9	13	18
Career decisions	246	306	17	24	184	165	27	28	10	4	7	1
Philosophy of life	243	307	25	40	183	166	26	47	1	7	15	21
Whether to have more children	240	295	17	21	168	143	26	31	9	10	4	5
My friends	245	304	34	44 (3)	182	164	25	36	9↓	8↓	10	11
My partner's friends	246	306	33	42 (4)	185	165	24	38	9↓	4↓	9	14
Your partner's drinking and drug use	152	248	19	15	106	120	16	27	3↓	12	4	11
Our aims and goals	244	309	16	23	184	165	23	31	7	8	7	8
Religious matters	246	304	40 (4)	34	181	171	20	39	20↓	5	6	19
Your drinking and drug use	153	247	16	19	107	117	17	25	1	6	3	8

n=number of intact couples in each group. Question stem reads: Please indicate the extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list, 14 potential areas of disagreement were presented, with respondents able to reply (always agree, almost always agree, sometimes disagree, frequently disagree, almost always disagree, and always disagree). To denote levels of disagreement about conflict, responses were recoded into agreement on no conflict (both husband and wife say they agree), agreement on conflict (both husband and wife responded with one of the disagreement choices) and disagreement about conflict (either the husband or the wife indicates conflict and the other spouse indicates no conflict)

Individual Men and Women

We remember from the previous chapter that individual men and women reported the same top three categories with the most disagreements (parents and in-laws, household division of labor, how leisure time is spent) with women reporting finances and sex life as the fourth and fifth topics and men stating that their friends were the fourth highest topic and their partner's friends and sex life were tied for the fifth slot. In wave three we see a similar trend in the top five categories with husbands and wives reporting primarily the same topics, but in slightly different order from each other. Table 30 shows the categories for both wave one and wave three with the rank orders listed in parentheses. We can see that wives have nine categories that significantly increase over time and husbands have seven.

By wave three, their sex life is the category that changed the most over time for both husbands and wives and is the most disagreed about topic for both. Consistent with what couples reported above, the 20 percentage point difference presented for couples is split nearly equally between the sexes with men increasing 18 percentage points from 28% to 46% and women increasing 17 points from 26% to 43%. The topic with the second largest increase for both men and women is "showing physical affection" which increased from 19% to 34% for wives for a 15 point difference and from 23% to 35% for husbands which is a 12 point difference. This makes the topic the third most disagreed upon topic for both men and women.

Table 30 - Conflict Frequency: Frequency Distributions for Individual Husbands and Wives Reporting Levels of Disagreement over Time

	Wave 1		Wave 3	
	Wives N=681 %(R)	Husbands N=584 %(R)	Wives N=484 %(R)	Husbands N=382 %(R)
Handling family finances	29 (4)	26 (5)	33 (4)	28
How we spend leisure time	30 (3)	31 (3)	34 (3)	36 (2)
Religious matters	20	16	23	21
Showing physical affection	19	23	34 (3)	35 (3)
My friends	22	30	17	24
My partner's friends	23	28 (4)	22	19
Our sex life	26 (5)	28 (4)	43 (1)	46 (1)
Philosophy of life	20	25	24	27
Dealing with parents and in-laws	36 (1)	34 (1)	43 (1)	35 (3)
Our aims and goals	9	14	18	17
The amount of time we spend together	20	20	29	30 (4)
Who does what around the house	34 (2)	32 (2)	40 (2)	36 (2)
How to raise children	24	23	30 (5)	29 (5)
Whether to have more children	13	15	19	22
Career decisions	14	13	21	16
Your drinking and drug use	12	17	8	17
Your partner's drinking and drug use	20	14	21	10

N=number of total men or women. %=percentage of total expressing disagreement within each group. Rank= the order of the top five topics by percentage of individuals answering the question

Question stem reads: Please indicate the extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list, 14 potential areas of disagreement were presented, with respondents able to reply (always agree, almost always agree, sometimes disagree, frequently disagree, almost always disagree, and always disagree). To denote levels of disagreement about conflict, responses were recoded into agreement on no conflict (both husband and wife say they agree), agreement on conflict (both husband and wife responded with one of the disagreement choices) and disagreement about conflict (either the husband or the wife indicates conflict and the other spouse indicates no conflict)

For wives the amount of disagreements over parents and in-laws is tied with “our sex life” for the number one most disagreed upon topic and increased by seven percentage points with 43% of women reporting disagreements (up from 36%) over this issue while this category stayed nearly the same for husbands (35% wave three, 34% wave one). Household division of labor issues held constant as the second most disagreed about topic for both husbands and wives with 40% of wives reporting disagreements about this issue (an increase of six points) compared to 36% of husbands (an increase of four points).

The amount of time the couple spent together became more of an issue in wave three for husbands with 30% of them reporting this as the fourth most disagreed upon topic. This topic increased 10 percentage points from wave one for husbands, and while increasing nine points for wives it is not in their top five most disagreed about topics. Handling family finances remained an issue (increasing only 1%) for wives with 33% of them reporting disagreements making it the fourth most disagreed about topic. Both sexes reported how to raise children in the fifth spot, with almost the same amount of men (29%) and women (30%) reporting disagreements in this area. Both husbands and wives increased six percentage points from wave one.

As noted for couples the categories that decreased over time for both husbands and wives were the two friend categories and the two drinking and drug use categories. Husbands showed a larger change for the two friend categories than wives, dropping from 30% to 24% for disagreements about their friends, and from 28% to 19% for disagreements about their wives friends. Almost the same number of wives reported issues over their husbands friends as in wave one.

Covenant and Standard Individuals

Because this section reports on four groups of individuals- covenant wives, covenant husbands, standard wives and standard husbands- it can become cumbersome and convoluted quickly when trying to present information about all of the relationships between these four groups, especially when adding the variable of changes over time. I try to simplify this presentation by putting all four groups in one table for easy comparison with the rank order of the topics again in parentheses under each sub group. Because there is not enough room to show the percentage point difference over time and the differences between each category in Table 31, I have listed these comparisons in Table 32 for all of the relationships examined.

First, I compare covenant wives and standard wives over time and to each other. Then I compare husbands over time and to each other. The final comparison is for covenant wives compared to covenant husbands and standard wives compared to standard husbands. This differs from the couple comparison above because the respondents are not necessarily married to each other. This would make them covenant and standard pairs instead of couples. This comparison is more of a general gender comparison rather than a specific within couple comparison.

Table 31 - Conflict Frequency: Crosstab Comparison between Covenant and Standard Husbands and Wives Reporting Levels of Disagreement over Time

	Wave 1				Wave 3			
	Wives (N=674)		Husbands (N=576)		Wives (N=474)		Husbands (N=379)	
	Cov (n=296)	std (n=378)	cov (n=261)	std (n=315)	cov (n=247)	std (n=227)	cov (n=197)	std (n=180)
	%(R)	%(R)	%(R)	%(R)	%(R)	%(R)	%(R)	%(R)
Handling family finances	26 (4)	29 (3)	22	28	28	38 (3)	22	35
How we spend leisure time	30 (2)	29 (3)	30(3)	30(4)	40 (3)	28	40 (2)	32
Religious matters	11	26	9	22	17	28	13	29
Showing physical affection	20	19	21	24	34 (4)	34 (5)	34 (4)	37 (4)
My friends	17	27 (4)	28(4)	32(2)	14	21	18	30
My partner's friends	19	25	25(5)	31(3)	20	24	13	37 (4)
Our sex life	26 (4)	26 (5)	28(4)	28	43 (1)	44 (1)	43 (1)	49 (1)
Philosophy of life	16	21	19	29(5)	20	28	18	36 (5)
Dealing with parents and in-laws	29 (3)	33 (1)	36(1)	33(1)	43 (1)	44 (1)	35 (3)	36 (5)
Our aims and goals	7	10	11	16	17	20	13	22
The amount of time we spend together	19	21	19	21	31 (5)	27	31 (5)	29
Who does what around the house	34 (1)	32 (2)	31(2)	32	41 (2)	40 (2)	30	43 (2)
How to raise children	21 (5)	25	18	27	25	35 (4)	22	38 (3)
Whether to have more children	10	14	15	16	18	22	20	25
Career decisions	11	16	10	16	21	21	14	18
Your drinking and drug use	7	15	15	19	5	12	14	21
Your partner's drinking and drug use	15	23	13	15	17	25	8	13

N=total number of wives. n=number of individuals in each sub group. Rank=the order of the top five topics by percentage of individuals answering the question
 Question stem reads: Please indicate the extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list, 14 potential areas of disagreement were presented, with respondents able to reply (always agree, almost always agree, sometimes disagree, frequently disagree, almost always disagree, and always disagree). To denote levels of disagreement about conflict, responses were recoded into agreement on no conflict (both husband and wife say they agree), agreement on conflict (both husband and wife responded with one of the disagreement choices) and disagreement about conflict (either the husband or the wife indicates conflict and the other spouse indicates no conflict)

Table 32 - Conflict Frequency: Individual Covenant and Standard Husbands and Wives Changes over Time

	Wives				Husbands				difference between couples			
	% difference over time		%difference between		% difference over time		%difference between		W1		W3	
	Cov	Std	W1	W3	Cov	Std	W1	W3	Cov	Std	Cov	Std
Handling family finances	2	9	3	10	0	7	6	13	4	1	6	3
How we spend leisure time	10	1	1	12	10	2	0	8	0	1	0	4
Religious matters	6	2	15	11	4	7	13	16	2	4	4	1
Showing physical affection	14	15	1	0	13	13	3	3	1	5	0	3
My friends	3	6	10	7	10	2	4	12	11	5	4	9
My partner's friends	1	1	6	4	12	6	6	24	6	6	7	13
Our sex life	17	18	0	1	15	21	0	6	2	2	0	5
Philosophy of life	4	7	5	8	1	7	10	18	3	8	2	8
Dealing with parents and in-laws	14	11	4	1	1	3	3	1	7	0	8	8
Our aims and goals	10	10	3	3	2	6	5	9	4	6	4	2
The amount of time we spend together	12	6	2	4	12	8	3	2	0	0	0	2
Who does what around the house	7	8	2	1	1	11	1	13	3	0	11	3
How to raise children	4	10	4	10	4	11	9	16	3	2	3	3
Whether to have more children	8	8	4	4	5	9	1	5	5	2	2	3
Career decisions	10	5	5	0	4	2	6	4	1	0	7	3
Your drinking and drug use	2	3	8	7	1	2	4	7	8	4	9	9
Your partner's drinking and drug use	2	2	8	8	5	2	2	5	2	8	9	2

%=Percentage point differences between categories. Over time=difference of each group from wave 1 to wave 3. Between=Difference between cov and std group in each wave.

Question stem reads: Please indicate the extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list, 14 potential areas of disagreement were presented, with respondents able to reply (always agree, almost always agree, sometimes disagree, frequently disagree, almost always disagree, and always disagree). To denote levels of disagreement about conflict, responses were recoded into agreement on no conflict (both husband and wife say they agree), agreement on conflict (both husband and wife responded with one of the disagreement choices) and disagreement about conflict (either the husband or the wife indicates conflict and the other spouse indicates no conflict)

In Table 32 the “% difference over time column” outlines the percentage point difference for a particular group. For example, using the first item in the list, “handling family finances,” we see that covenant wives increased by two percentage points from wave one to wave three and standard wives increased nine percentage points. Using the five percentage point difference as our standard for significance only the standard wives increase would be considered significant. The “% difference between” column shows the difference between covenants and standards. Using the same example, “handling family finances,” we see that there is a three percentage point difference between covenant and standard wives in wave one and a ten percentage point difference in wave three. Categories where the covenants have higher percentages than standards are highlighted in yellow.

Wives

There are 10 significant changes over time for covenant wives and 12 for standard wives. The changes discussed below are changes from wave one to wave three “within” each type. The most notable increase is for “our sex life” which raised 17 percentage points to 43% for covenants and to 44% for standard wives which is an 18 point increase. This topic is the most disagreed upon topic for both covenant and standard wives.

The second largest increase over time for covenants is “dealing with parents and in-laws” which increased 14 points to 43% and standards increased 11 points to 44%. This makes this topic tied for the most disagreed upon category for both groups of women. With another large increase over time “showing physical affection” also increased 14 points for covenant women to 34%, but it increased 15 points for standard women also to 34%. This makes this issue the fourth highest for

covenant women and the fifth highest for standard women. The category “who does what around the house” is the second most disagreed upon topic for both groups of women increasing seven points to 41% for covenant women and eight points to 40% for standard women. In the third spot for covenant women is how leisure time is spent which increased 10 points to 40% whereas standard women actually decreased by one point in this category. Instead the third spot for standard women is “handling family finances” which as noted above in the illustration increased nine points for standard women to 38%.

There were three categories where more covenant women reported disagreement over an issue than standard women. The first is “the amount of time spent together” which increased 12 points from 19% to 31% for covenants with standard women increasing only 6% from 21% to 27%. The other two categories where a higher percentage of covenant women reported disagreements are “who does what around the house” (7 point increase) and “how we spend leisure time” (10 point increase).

When comparing covenant wives to their standard counterparts (the difference between column) there are seven categories with significant differences between standard and covenant women in wave one and eight in wave three. The largest difference in wave one is for “religious matters” with 11% of covenant wives reporting disagreements over this topic compared to 26% of standard wives, which is a 15 percentage point spread. In wave three the difference is only by 11 percentage points with covenants at 17% and standards at 28%. In wave three the largest difference between covenant and standard women is for “how we spend our leisure time” with 40% of covenant wives reporting disagreements compared to 28% of standard wives, a 12 percentage point difference. In wave one there was only one percentage point difference between the groups of

women for this topic. In wave three there are two other categories with ten points between the groups of wives, these are “handling family finances” and “how to raise children.”

Husbands

There are eight significant changes over time for covenant husbands, three of them decreases, and eleven significant changes for standard husbands. As with their wives, “our sex life” showed the largest increase for both covenant and standard husbands. Covenants increased to 43% for a 15 point increase while standards increased to 49% for a 21 point increase. This issue is also the number one most disagreed about topic for both types of husbands and is the only category in the same place in the top five list for all four groups.

The second most notable increase for both types of husbands is “showing physical affection” which increased by 13 points to 34% for covenants and to 37% for standards. This is the fourth most disagreed about topic for both groups. Covenant husbands decreased from 25% to 13% for “my partner’s friends” showing a 12 point reduction, while standard men increased in this category from 31% to 37%, making this topic the largest significant difference between the two groups in wave three with a 24 point spread.

Covenant husbands increased by 12 percentage points for “the amount of time spent together” to 31%. This is one of two categories where more covenant men reported disagreements than standard men, although the difference between the two groups is not significant as standard men are at 29% in wave three up eight points from wave one. The other category where more covenant men reported disagreements is “how we spend leisure time” where they increased ten points to 40% and standard husbands increased from 30% to 32%. This makes the difference between the two groups eight percentage points.

Overall there are 13 significant differences between covenant and standard men in wave three. The second largest difference between the two groups is “philosophy of life” where they differ by an 18 point spread with only 18% of covenant men reporting disagreements over this issue compared to 36% of standard men. Two topics have 16 point spreads “how to raise children” with covenants at 22% and standards at 38% up from 27% in wave one. This makes this issue the third most disagreed about topic for standard men. The other 16 point spread topic is “religious matters” where only 13% of covenants reported disagreements about this topic compared to 29% of standards.

Husband and Wife Pairs

First, to clarify, these pairs are husbands and wives in the same group but not necessarily married to each other. It is also important to remember that the data for this section comes from frequency reports so, unlike the couple data, it is not necessarily the same individuals providing responses in both waves. This comparison is more to show gender differences between the subgroups.

There are seven significant differences between covenant pairs in wave three which is up from five in wave one. For standard pairs there are five significant differences in wave three which is down from six in wave one. The largest difference between covenant pairs in wave one is for “showing physical affection” which had an 11 point spread, but only a five point spread for standard pairs. For both pairs it is the husbands reporting more disagreements over this topic than the wives. In fact, for wave one all five of the significant categories show covenant husbands reporting more disagreements, and for the six topics significant for standards, all of them except one show husbands reporting more disagreements. In wave three, covenant pairs were more similar

regarding the topic of physical affection with only a four point spread compared to a nine point spread for standards.

Overall, in wave three, of the seven significant spreads between covenant and standard pairs, five of them are now categories where more wives report disagreements than their husbands. This could be because fewer men responded to the questionnaires in wave three. These five categories are: handling family finances, my partner's friends, dealing with parents and in-laws, who does what around the house, and your partner's drinking and drug use. The two husband high topics are "your drinking and drug use" and "career decisions." In wave three the largest spread between individual covenant husbands and wives is eleven points for "who does what around the house." The two drinking and drug categories had the next highest spread at nine percentage points.

For standard pairs the largest spread between them, in wave one, is eight points for "your partner's drinking and drug use" (which is also the only significant category where more wives reported disagreements) and "philosophy of life." Wave three shows higher spreads between standard wives and husbands with 13 points for "my partner's friends" and 12 points for "your partner's drinking and drug use." The latter category is one of only two where more wives reported disagreements than husbands, the other being "dealing with parents and in-laws" which showed an eight point spread.

In summary, the topics these married couples disagree about most changed significantly within the first five years of their marriage with disagreements over sex and how physical affection is shown increasing the most to the most. Other top areas were those often discussed in the literature, parents and in-laws, household division of labor and how leisure time is spent. A

difference between covenant and standard couples was found over sex issues, with standard couples reporting it as the number one most disagreed upon topic, but covenant couples reported it in the fourth spot. More covenant couples reported disagreements over leisure time than either sex or physical affection. However, for individuals sex is the topic in the number one spot for both men and women, and covenant and standard.

How Do Reactions to Conflict Change over Time? (Conflict Behavior)

We saw in the previous chapter that couples were more likely to practice collaborative behaviors than negative behaviors since all three collaborative statements were in the top five conflict behaviors reported. “Feeling tense and anxious” was tied for third, withdrawing to avoid a fight was in the fourth spot and “my partner gets sarcastic” rounded out the top five behaviors where at least one member of the couple reported that this was true of their marriage. Table 33 shows the comparisons between covenant and standard couples.

In wave three, two of the collaborative behaviors are in the first and second spot with feeling tense and anxious in the third, finding middle ground in the fourth and withdrawing to avoid a fight in the fifth. Overall, when adding those who agree the statement is true of their marriage with the couples who disagree, the only category that reached the five percentage point change over time was “I look at things from my partners’ viewpoint,” which increased by exactly five points.

Table 33 - Conflict Behavior: Comparison between Wave One and Wave Three Couples Reporting Amount of Disagreement within Couples

	n(w1)	n(w3)	Wave One		Total Disagree true	Wave three		Total Disagree
			Agree True	Disagree		Agree	Disagree	
			%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>Avoidance</i>								
I withdraw to avoid a fight	561	427	41	45	86 (4)	36	51	87 (5)
I just give in	558	356	22	50	72	22	53	75
<i>Neg. Emotion</i>								
I feel tense and anxious	559	356	59	31	90 (3)	61	32	93 (3)
I feel unloved	558	397	11	34	45	15	31	46
<i>Hostility</i>								
I get sarcastic	562	429	35	36	71	36	38	74
My partner gets sarcastic	558	428	38	36	74 (5)	40	35	75
I get hostile	562	427	15	29	44	12	35	47
My partner gets hostile	563	427	16	29	45	16	31	47
<i>Collaboration</i>								
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint	558	358	63	28	91 (2)	74	22	96 (2)
I try to find the middle ground	558	356	55	35	90 (3)	56	34	90 (4)
I just want to kiss and make up	557	402	61	35	96 (1)	67	30	97 (1)
<i>Physical Violence</i>								
I get physically violent	562	360	2	9	11	2	7	9

n=number of complete, intact, couples. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding or missing cases.

Question stem reads: For each of these statements, just indicate how true it is in your marriage right now. When disagreements and conflicts come up with respondents able to reply (not true at all, somewhat true, very true). Recoded to "agree true" those husbands and wives who agree that the statement is true, and "disagree" those couples who do not agree on whether something is true or not. Total disagree represents the percentage of couples where at least one member reports that the statement is true.

All Couples

When looking specifically at what couples do not agree on with respect to the behaviors being true or not true in their marriage, the overall picture of conflict behavior is a bit different than looking just at the total as we did with conflict frequency. While the areas couples agree on are the more positive ones, the areas where they do not agree are the more negative ones. For example, higher numbers of couples *disagree* about avoidance and negative emotion, whereas higher numbers of couples *agree* on collaboration. Higher numbers of couples also *agree* that the hostility and violence categories are *not true* of their marriages. This shows that couples in wave three still primarily have a positive view of their marriages overall.

To further explain this observation we will briefly examine the changes in the couples who do not agree instead of just looking at the total as we did with conflict frequency. In wave one, we see that the top five areas of disagreement (really eight because of “ties” in the rank order) are now the two avoidant statements (just give in and withdraw to avoid a fight), all four of the hostility statements and two of the collaboration variables (middle ground and kiss and make up). Because many of the categories had exactly the same percentage of responses they were included in the top “five” because there was no logical way to exclude them when I was looking at the top five highest percentages. It did not seem prudent to change the examination of the data because of the similar numbers. Table 33 shows the breakdown of all the statements, their rank and how they changed over time. Clearly, this tells a different story than looking at the total of those who agree that the behavior is true and those who disagree. As discussed above the differences between total columns

from wave one to wave three are very small with only the one area previously noted reaching the five point difference.

In wave three, the two avoidant statements were again in the top spots with three of the four hostility variables in third and fourth place and only one collaboration variable (I try to find the middle ground) rounding out the top five. Specifically, when looking at those who disagree with each other, there are four significant changes over the five year period, with “I withdraw to avoid a fight” increasing six percentage points from 45% of couples disagreeing in wave one, to 51% in wave three. Other topics that had six point changes were “I get hostile” which increased from 29% to 35% and “looking at things from my partner’s viewpoint” which decreased from 28% to 22%. “Wanting to kiss and make up” also decreased from 35% to 30%. It seems that conflict behavior is present in the marriages at the beginning, and it is not so much that new behavior manifests, it is that agreement between the couples changed. Instead of *agreeing* that a particular behavior is true, or not true, of the marriage as they did in wave one, the couple now *disagrees*, with one person still believing the behavior is present and the other saying it is not. For the statements that decreased it seems that the couples now are more likely to agree with each other that either the statement is true or not true since both of these numbers increased for these statements (not shown).

Covenant couples

When looking at the total of couples who agree something is true and those that disagree whether it is true or not, the types of couples are similar with only slight differences in the order of the top five behaviors in both waves. Table 34 shows the rank orders in the “Total” column for both waves, with the rank numbers in parentheses. However, again, when examining the percent of couples who disagree, there are some significant differences between covenant and standard

couples. For instance, the five highest percentage categories are the same for covenants in wave one and wave three, with increases in all five statements over time, but only one of the increases higher than the five point difference.

The five categories are: I just give in, I withdraw to avoid a big fight, I get sarcastic, my partner gets sarcastic, and in the fifth spot “I try to find the middle ground.” This implies a sort of stability in the covenant marriages over time, whereas the standard marriages are more chaotic even though some items are the same as the covenants (the first two), they are not in the same order over time and the rest are somewhat different from the covenants, particularly in wave three.

For standard couples the top five behaviors in wave one were: I just give in, I withdraw to avoid a fight, I just want to kiss and make up, I try to find the middle ground, and tied for fifth are the two sarcasm statements. In wave three, “I withdraw to avoid a fight” moves to number one, and “I just give in” drops to number two, with “I get hostile” and “I feel unloved” in third and fourth place, and a tie for fifth between “I get sarcastic” and “I try to find the middle ground.”

For covenant couples there are five categories that changed five or more points from wave one to wave three. The most notable of these is for “I feel unloved” which increased 13 points from 15% to 33%, but for standards it increased 24 points from 13% to 35%. The second largest increase over time for covenant couples is for “I withdraw to avoid a fight” which increased seven points from 45% to 52%, and for “I get hostile” which also increased seven points from 28% to 35%. Both of these categories increased six points for standard couples.

Table 34 - Conflict Behavior: Comparison between Wave One and Wave Three Covenant and Standard Couples Reporting Total Amount of Disagreement within Couples

	% Total Disagreement Within Couples											
	Wave One		% Total				Wave Three		% Total			
	n	n	% Disagree		%Total		n	n	% Disagree		%Total	
	cov	std	cov	std	cov	std	cov	std	cov	std	cov	std
<u>Avoidance</u>												
I withdraw to avoid a fight	246	310	45	45	88 (4)	85 (5)	218	203	52	51	85 (4)	89 (4)
I just give in	247	307	51	48	75 (5)	69	185	166	55	50	76 (5)	74
<u>Neg. Emotion</u>												
I feel tense and anxious	247	307	32	31	92 (2)	89 (4)	185	165	36	28	93 (3)	93 (2)
I feel unloved	246	307	10	11	43	46	185	168	33	35	48	50
<u>Hostility</u>												
I get sarcastic	247	310	39	32	71	72	218	204	43	34	75	73
My partner gets sarcastic	246	307	37	32	70	73	218	203	40	29	73	77 (5)
I get hostile	247	310	28	30	41	46	216	204	35	36	49	46
My partner gets hostile	247	311	30	28	43	46	217	203	34	27	48	44
<u>Collaboration</u>												
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint	246	307	27	31	92 (2)	92 (2)	186	167	21	26	94 (2)	96 (1)
I try to find the middle ground	246	307	36	33	90 (3)	90 (3)	184	167	39	34	93 (3)	92 (3)
I just want to kiss and make up	245	307	33	36	96 (1)	96 (1)	185	168	28	32	98 (1)	96 (1)
<u>Physical Violence</u>												
I get physically violent	247	310	7	10	7	13	186	168	9	6	10	8

n=number of intact couples in each group. Total = sum of those who agree behavior is true and those who disagree.

Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding or missing cases.

Question stem reads: For each of these statements, just indicate how true it is in your marriage right now. When disagreements and conflicts come up with respondents able to reply (not true at all, somewhat true, very true)

If we only look at the totals we would see small insignificant differences between the two types of couples and assume they were similar to each other and move on. However, by looking at the disagreement columns we see that there are seven categories with at least five points difference between covenant and standards in wave three, with higher percentages of covenant couples reporting disagreement between them in six of the seven categories. The largest spread between the two types of couples is for “my partner gets sarcastic” with 40% of covenant couples reporting this disagreement compared to only 29% of standard couples. Next, with a nine point spread is “I get sarcastic” with 43% of covenants compared to 34% of standards, and with an eight point spread, 36% of covenants report that they disagree whether they feel tense and anxious compared to 28% of standard couples. The other four categories are: my partner gets hostile, I just give in, I look at things from my partner’s viewpoint and, the only significant category where more standards report disagreements, I try to find the middle ground.

What is interesting to note about these differences is that while the covenants report more disagreements between them as a couple, as to whether the behavior in question is true or not, the standards report more *agreement* between them that these behaviors are present in their marriage. This is how the totals become more similar. In essence, the covenant couples are generally higher in reporting agreement in the positive categories of behavior, i.e. collaboration, whereas the standards are generally higher in reporting agreement in the more negative categories, avoidance, negative emotion and hostility. Overall, with respect to conflict behavior, this means that covenants appear to have a more positive view of their marriages than standard couples do.

Individual Husbands and Wives

We remember from the previous chapter that in wave one the top five behaviors that wives reported were true of their marriage were: I look at things from my partner's viewpoint and I feel tense and anxious tied for first, I try to find the middle ground, I just want to kiss and make up, I withdraw to avoid a fight, and I get sarcastic. For husbands they were: I just want to kiss and make up, I look at things from my partner's viewpoint, I try to find the middle ground, I feel tense and anxious, and I withdraw to avoid a fight. Table 35 shows the comparisons for wave one and wave three for individual wives and husbands.

In wave three, wives and husbands are more similar to each other with four of the top five categories being exactly the same: I look at things from my partner's viewpoint, I just want to kiss and make up, I feel tense and anxious, and in the fourth spot for wives "I try to find the middle ground" (tied for third for husbands) and for husbands "I withdraw to avoid a fight, with "my partner gets sarcastic" in the fifth spot for both.

There are four categories where wives changed at least five percentage points from wave one to wave three, whereas husbands only had one category that significantly changed. The most notable of the changes for wives is a 10 point change for "I just want to kiss and make up." The other three categories are: "I feel unloved," which increased six points, "my partner gets sarcastic" and "I look at things from my partner's viewpoint" which both increased five points, and this last category is the only significant increase for husbands (nine points).

Table 35 - Conflict Behavior: Comparisons over Time for Individual Wives and Husbands Reporting % Statement is True

	Wave 1		Wave 3	
	Wives N=681 True % (rank)	Husbands N=584 True % (rank)	Wives N=484 True % (rank)	Husbands N=382 True % (rank)
<u>Avoidance</u>				
I withdraw to avoid a fight	60 (4)	68 (5)	58	68 (4)
I just give in	42	52	45	53
<u>Neg. Emotion</u>				
I feel tense and anxious	81 (1)	69 (4)	84 (3)	72 (3)
I feel unloved	33	25	39	28
<u>Hostility</u>				
I get sarcastic	55 (5)	50	58	51
My partner gets sarcastic	54	57	59 (5)	57 (5)
I get hostile	34	25	34	25
My partner gets hostile	30	33	31	31
<u>Collaboration</u>				
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint	81 (1)	75 (2)	86 (1)	84 (1)
I try to find the middle ground	75 (2)	70 (3)	73 (4)	72 (3)
I just want to kiss and make up	73 (3)	83 (1)	83 (2)	80 (2)
<u>Physical Violence</u>				
I get physically violent	7	6	7	5

N=number subjects in each group type. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding or missing cases. True=percentage of individuals who agree statement is true.

Question stem reads: For each of these statements, just indicate how true it is in your marriage right now. When disagreements and conflicts come up with respondents able to reply (not true at all, somewhat true, very true)

For differences between husbands and wives we see that in wave one there were nine categories where there were at least five points or more divergence between the two genders, and in wave three there are only six. The largest disparity in wave one was 12 points for “I feel tense and anxious” with 81% of wives reporting this to be true compared to 69% of husbands. In wave three, this is still the largest difference, again with 12 points, with 84% of wives reporting it to be true compared to 72% of husbands. “I feel unloved” showed an 11 point difference with 39% of wives reporting this emotion compared to 28% of husbands, and “I withdraw to avoid a fight” showed a 10 point difference with 58% of wives and 68% of husbands reporting this statement to be true. Of the six categories that changed significantly over time only two of them were top five categories “I withdraw to avoid a fight” and “I feel tense and anxious.” The remaining top five categories did not change significantly from the beginning of the marriage clearly implying that these behaviors were issues when the marriage began and remain issues five years later.

Covenant and Standard Individuals

The categories of individuals are organized the same as discussed above for conflict frequency with Table 36 outlining the comparisons of the groups. Because there are fewer significant comparisons for conflict behavior a separate table outlining the “% difference” or the “% between” was not created but will be discussed here.

Table 36 - Conflict Behavior: Comparisons over Time for Individual Covenant and Standard Wives and Husbands Reporting % Statement is True

	Wave 1				Wave 3			
	Wives (N=674)		Husbands (N=576)		Wives (N=474)		Husbands (N=379)	
	Cov	std	cov	std	cov	std	cov	std
	(n=296)	(n=378)	(n=261)	(n=315)	(n=247)	(n=227)	(n=197)	(n=180)
	% (R)	% (R)	% (R)	% (R)	% (R)	% (R)	% (R)	% (R)
<u>Avoidance</u>								
I withdraw to avoid a fight	42	37	70 (4)	68 (4)	56	58	64 (4)	71 (5)
I just give in	42	41 (5)	57	48	44	46	56 (5)	50
<u>Neg. Emotion</u>								
I feel tense and anxious	81 (2)	81 (1)	72 (3)	67 (5)	80 (3)	87 (1)	70 (2)	76 (4)
I feel unloved	30	34	26	25	38	38	26	27
<u>Hostility</u>								
I get sarcastic	53 (5)	56 (4)	48	52	58 (5)	59	48	55
My partner gets sarcastic	51	56 (4)	54	58	56	62 (5)	50	63
I get hostile	29	37	25	25	34	33	26	25
My partner gets hostile	28	31	32	34	30	31	31	31
<u>Collaboration</u>								
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint	82 (1)	79 (2)	76 (2)	74 (2)	87 (1)	86 (2)	81 (1)	86 (1)
I try to find the middle ground	77 (3)	74 (3)	68 (5)	72 (3)	74 (4)	72 (4)	68 (3)	77 (3)
I just want to kiss and make up	74 (4)	74 (3)	85 (1)	82 (1)	83 (2)	83 (3)	81 (1)	79 (2)
<u>Physical Violence</u>								
I get physically violent	5	9	4	7	8	5	6	4

N=total of all subjects in group. n=total in each sub group. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding or missing cases.

True=percentage of individuals who agree statement is true.

Question stem reads: For each of these statements, just indicate how true it is in your marriage right now. When disagreements and conflicts come up with respondents able to reply (not true at all, somewhat true, very true)

Wives

There are seven significant changes over time for covenant wives and six for standards. The most notable increase for both groups of women is “I withdraw to avoid a fight” which increased 14 points for covenant women from 42% to 56% and 21 points for standard women from 37% to 58%. Even with these large increases this topic is not in the top five for either group of women in wave three, and is still far below the percentages of husbands who report this behavior. The second largest increase for both groups of women is for “I just want to kiss and make up” which increased nine points, from 74% to 83% for both groups. This statement is the second most reported behavior for covenant wives and third for standard women.

The most reported behavior for covenant women is “I look at things from my partner's viewpoint” which increased five points for covenant women and seven points for standard women and is the second most reported behavior for standards. “I feel tense and anxious” is the behavior most frequently reported for standard women and increased six points from wave one to wave three with 87% of standard women reporting that this is true in their marriage. This statement is third for covenant women and only increased one point over time to 80%. In fourth for both groups of women is “I try to find the middle ground” which did not significantly increase for either group. In fifth for covenant women is “I get sarcastic” which increased five points to 58%, but is not in the top five for standard women. Instead, “my partner gets sarcastic” rounds out the top five for standard women, increasing six points from 56% to 62% of women reporting this true of their marriages, whereas 56% of covenant women report this behavior increasing five points from 51%.

There are three categories where higher percentages of covenant women reported the behavior true of their marriages, two of which are significant. “I get hostile” increased five points

from 29% to 34% with 33% of standard women reporting this behavior. With another five point increase, 87% of covenant women reported “I look at things from my partner's viewpoint” compared to 86% of standard women and “I try to find the middle ground” which 74% of covenant women reported as true of their marriages compared to 72% of standard women. However, this last topic was not a significant increase for either group of women.

When comparing standard women to covenant women there were only two categories in wave three that were significant between the two groups, “I feel tense and anxious” where they differed by seven points, and “my partner gets sarcastic” where they differed by six. Clearly, the two groups of women are more similar to each other than different with regard to conflict behavior.

Husbands

There are only two significant changes over time for covenant husbands with one of them a decrease and four changes for standard husbands. The most notable change for covenant men is the six point decrease for “I withdraw to avoid a fight” from 70% to 64%, while standard men increased three percent to 71% of men reporting this behavior. This statement is the fourth most reported behavior for covenant men and the fifth for standard men. The other significant change over time for covenant men is the five point increase for “I look at things from my partner's viewpoint,” which increased a dramatic 12 points for standard men, and is the number reported behavior for both groups of men.

In the number two spot for covenant men is “I feel tense and anxious” which barely increased from wave one, but increased nine points for standard men to 76% and is in the fourth spot for standards. In third place for both groups of men, but only a five point increase for standard men, is “I try to find the middle ground” and in the fifth spot for covenant men is “I just give in”

whereas “I withdraw to avoid a fight” is in the fifth spot for standard men. The only other significant increase for standard men is for “my partner gets sarcastic” which increased five points and had 63% of standards reporting it compared to 50% of covenant men. This 13 point spread is the largest difference between the two groups of men in wave three.

While the two groups of women were more similar to each other than different in their reports of conflict behavior, the two groups of men had seven categories showing a significant difference between them in wave three. The second largest difference between the two groups of men is nine points for “I try to find the middle ground.” Other notable differences are the seven point disparity for both “I withdraw to avoid a fight” and “I get sarcastic.” The other three categories are: “I just give in,” “I feel tense and anxious,” and “I look at things from my partner’s viewpoint.”

Husband and Wife Pairs

First as a reminder, these pairs are husbands and wives in the same groups, but not necessarily married to each other, and because they are individuals reporting it not be the same individuals in wave one as in wave three. The largest difference between both covenant and standard pairs in wave one is for “I withdraw to avoid a fight” with a 28 point difference between covenant husbands and wives and a 31 point difference between standards. For wave three this disparity decreased to 8 points for covenants and 13 points for standards. For covenant pairs there is a 12 point spread for “I just give in,” but only four points between standards with another 12 point spread for “I feel unloved” which differs by 11 points for standards. “I feel tense and anxious” differs by 10 points for covenants and 11 points for standards.

Analysis of Time Effects on Marital Conflict

Time has an effect on all things, including marital conflict. The effects of time on marriage are often studied, but not specific to marital conflict. This section presents the analysis of the for the time three multiple analysis of covariance and compares it to wave one.

Family Dysfunction

Table 37 shows the parameter estimates for the effects of dysfunction experienced in the family of origin on husbands' conflict behavior for wave three. We remember that in wave one, dysfunction experienced in the family of origin did have a negative impact on conflict behaviors for both husbands and wives, and that it did not have a significantly consistent impact on conflict frequency. We also discovered a reciprocal relationship between certain aspects of husbands' and wives' conflict frequency and behavior.

In wave three, wives family dysfunction reaches significance for husbands' negative emotion and avoidance in the first two models, but in model three is only significant for negative emotion. This relationship was not present in wave one. Husbands' family dysfunction is positively correlated with their own negative emotion and hostility in models one and two, but by the third model, when the conflict frequency variables are included, it is no longer significant, leaving the effect on husbands' emotion the only significant effect in wave three. For wives there are no significant effects in the third model.

Table 37 - Effect of Family Dysfunction on Conflict Behavior for Husbands - Wave 3

<i>Factor</i>	Husbands' Collaboration <i>β</i>	Husbands' Emotion <i>β</i>	Husbands' Avoidance <i>β</i>	Husbands' Hostility <i>β</i>
<i>Model One</i>				
Wives' Family Dysfunction	.096(.055)	.175(.064)**	.149(.072)*	.075(.064)
Husbands' Fam Dysfunction	-.008(.066)	.226(.076)**	-.029(.086)	.231(.077)**
Adjusted R Squared	.003	.045***	.006	.026**
F-Statistic	1.530	9.334	2.142	5.778
<i>Model Two</i>				
Wives' Fam. Dysfunction	.106(.055)	.158(.063)*	.141(.071)*	.031(.059)
Husbands' Fam. Dysfunction	.013(.066)	.191(.075)*	-.033(.086)	.190(.071)*
Wives' Collaboration ³	.011(.054)	.003(.061)	-.076(.070)	-.017(.058)
Wives' Hostility ³	-.069(.048)	.117(.055)*	.108(.063)	.394(.052)***
Wives' Avoidance ³	-.025(.040)	-.024(.045)	-.126(.052)*	.003(.043)
Wives' Emotion ³	-.060(.044)	.149(.050)**	.038(.057)	-.052(.047)
Adjusted R Squared	.015	.096***	.034*	.173***
F-Statistic	1.876	7.327	3.094	13.465
<i>Model Three</i>				
Wives' Fam. Dysfunction	.131(.067)	.214(.080)**	.121(.092)	.076(.070)
Husbands' Fam. Dysfunction	.025(.080)	.074(.095)	.004(.110)	.114(.083)
Wives' Collaboration ³	-.012(.068)	-.029(.081)	.000(.094)	-.036(.071)
Wives' Hostility ³	-.018(.059)	.086(.071)	.092(.081)	.410(.061)***
Wives' Avoidance ³	-.045(.048)	.032(.057)	-.149(.066*)	.040(.050)
Wives' Emotion ³	-.047(.053)	.177(.064)**	.077(.073)	-.051(.055)
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.039(.066)	.038(.079)	.056(.091)	.110(.069)
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	.047(.034)	.017(.041)	.038(.047)	-.047(.036)
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²	.145(.063)*	-.126(.075)	-.113(.086)	-.279(.065)***
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.022(.034)	-.068(.041)	-.027(.047)	-.061(.035)
Adjusted R Squared	.058**	.112***	.020	.307***
F-Statistic	2.432	3.964	1.483	11.368

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 Reporting unstandardized Beta, standard error term in parentheses.

2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

When comparing the relationship between the conflict variables, wives' hostility still affects husbands' hostility and negative emotion in the second model, but no longer affects their negative emotions in the third, but still shows a significant reciprocal relationship. This means that in the wives table (Table 38) we again see that husbands' hostility is significant on wives' hostility. Wives' avoidance is now negatively correlated with husbands' avoidance in a reciprocal relationship that was not present in wave one. Husbands' conflict frequency still affects husbands' collaboration and hostility, but no longer has a significant effect on husbands' negative emotion. The R^2 for the third model is significant for collaboration explaining 6% of the variance, negative emotion explaining 11% and for hostility explaining 31% of the variance.

Table 38 shows the parameter estimates for wives' conflict behavior where we can see the reciprocal relationships for negative emotion, hostility and avoidance are significant, the same goes for husbands. While wives' conflict frequency has no effect on husbands' conflict behavior, there is a significant correlation with their own collaboration, negative emotion, and hostility in the expected directions, exactly the same as in wave one, and the same as husbands. All of the R^2 s for wives' model three are significant (with the exception of avoidance) with collaboration explaining 9% of the variance, negative emotion 12% and 29% for hostility. Since there were more significant relationships between family dysfunction and conflict behavior in wave one, it seems that dysfunction experienced in the family of origin has more influence on behavior of both husbands and wives in the beginning of these marriage as found by Amato and DeBoer (2004).

Table 38 - Effect of Family Dysfunction on Conflict Behavior for Wives - Wave 3

<i>Factor</i>	Wives' Collaboration β	Wives' Emotion β	Wives' Avoidance β	Wives' Hostility β
<i>Model One</i>				
Wives' Family Dysfunction	.030(.055)	.027(.075)	.026(.075)	.115(.068)
Husband's Fam Dysfunction	.010(.066)	.157 (.090)	.112(.089)	.124(.082)
Adjusted R Squared	-.005	.004	.000	.011
F-Statistic	.169	1.697	.922	2.947
<i>Model Two</i>				
Wives' Fam. Dysfunction	.039(.056)	-.007(.074)	.043(.076)	.077(.064)
Husband's Fam. Dysfunction	.021(.067)	.098(.089)	.103(.076)	.029(.076)
Husbands' Collaboration ³	.040(.055)	-.163(.074)*	-.021(.075)	-.117(.063)
Husbands' Hostility ³	-.073(.050)	.029(.066)	-.015(.068)	.379(.057)***
Husbands' Avoidance ³	-.074(.043)	.048(.057)	-.137(.058)*	.091(.049)
Husbands' Emotion ³	.019(.050)	.233(.067)**	.039(.068)	.040(.057)
Adjusted R Squared	.002	.059***	.007	.173***
F-Statistic	1.100	4.699	1.404	13.426
<i>Model Three</i>				
Wives' Fam. Dysfunction	.115(.068)	-.077(.091)	.014(.096)	-.008(.075)
Husband's Fam. Dysfunction	-.031(.079)	.099(.105)	.186(.112)	.058(.087)
Husbands' Collaboration ³	-.023(.069)	-.127(.093)	-.037(.098)	-.069(.077)
Husbands' Hostility ³	-.057(.061)	.028(.081)	.001(.086)	.423(.067)***
Husbands' Avoidance ³	.000(.051)	.051(.068)	-.160(.073)*	.063(.057)
Husbands' Emotion ³	.010(.057)	.232(.077)**	.115(.081)	.018(.064)
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.193(.060)**	-.337(.081)***	-.099(.086)	-.331(.067)***
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.012(.034)	.065(.045)	.073(.048)	.086(.037)*
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²	.068(.065)	.139(.087)	.073(.093)	.110(.072)
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.032(.034)	.006(.045)	-.053(.048)	.038(.038)
Adjusted R Squared	.087**	.122***	.016	.290***
F-Statistic	3.237	4.260	1.384	10.537

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 Reporting unstandardized Beta, standard error term in parentheses.

2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

Table 39 shows the parameter estimates for conflict frequency for both husbands and wives. We see that family dysfunction has no significant effects on conflict frequency for wives or husbands, except between disagreements over drugs and alcohol and hostility, which are only significant in the first two models. The effects are no longer significant in the third model when the behavior variables are included. The major differences from wave one for the effects of the behavior variables are that wives' hostility no longer has a significant positive effect on husbands' conflict frequency, but still negatively affects their own. Wives' negative emotion now has an effect on their own conflict frequency. Husbands' collaboration still influences his conflict frequency, but has less of an impact. Husbands' hostility is still negatively correlated with his own conflict frequency but no longer on wives. As with conflict behavior, husbands' and wives' conflict frequency has a significant reciprocal relationship.

Table 39 - Effect of Family Dysfunction on Conflict Frequency - Wave 3

<i>Factor</i>	Husbands' Conflict Freq β	Husbands' Conflict Freq Drugs/alcohol β	Wives' Conflict Freq. β	Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs/Alcohol β
<i>Model One</i>				
Wives' Family Dysfunction	-.027(.094)	.099(.161)	-.046(.095)	.279(.159)
Husband's Fam Dysfunction	-.026(.110)	-.436(.188)*	-.034(.111)	-.502(.185)**
Adjusted R Squared	-.008	.015	-.007	.030*
F-Statistic	.078	2.748	.186	4.661
<i>Model Two</i>				
Wives' Fam. Dysfunction	.011(.075)	-.051(.137)	-.026(.075)	.222(.134)
Husband's Fam. Dysfunction	-.020(.088)	-.165(.162)	-.030(.088)	-.266(.158)
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.624(.052)***	.026(.096)		
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.031(.031)	.539(.057)***		
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²			.639(.054)***	-.132(.097)
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²			-.030(.032)	.550(.057)***
Adjusted R Squared	.376***	.292***	.376***	.308***
F-Statistic	36.241	25.083	36.290	27.064
<i>Model Three</i>				
Wives' Fam. Dysfunction	.023(.073)	.022(.140)	-.060(.072)	.160(.139)
Husband's Fam. Dysfunction	.017(.084)	-.093(.163)	.012(.084)	-.281(.162)
Wives' Collaboration ³	.051(.072)	-.077(.138)	.225(.070)**	.073(.135)
Wives' Hostility ³	.102(.068)	.158(.131)	-.193(.067)**	.146(.128)
Wives' Avoidance ³	.017(.051)	-.079(.099)	-.032(.051)	.129(.099)
Wives' Emotion ³	.102(.068)	.042(.111)	-.149(.057)*	-.041(.110)
Husbands' Collaboration ³	.183(.073)*	.017(.141)	.064(.074)	.199(.142)
Husbands' Hostility ³	-.299(.067)***	-.335(.130)**	.077(.070)	-.151(.135)
Husbands' Avoidance ³	-.082(.055)	-.040(.106)	.023(.055)	.056(.106)
Husbands' Emotion ³	-.038(.062)	-.164(.120)	.015(.062)	.090(.120)
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.565(.058)***	.011(.112)		
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.054(.030)	.513(.059)***		
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²			.535(.058)***	-.175(.111)
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²			.003(.031)	.541(.059)***
Adjusted R Squared	.447***	.310***	.454***	.304***
F-Statistic	16.746	9.741	17.230	9.523

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 Reporting unstandardized Beta, standard error term in parentheses.

2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

In summary, family dysfunction has a significant effect on conflict behavior but this effect diminishes over time. The reciprocal relationships between certain aspects of behavior and frequency remain over time and avoidance, which was not a significant reciprocal relationship in wave one, becomes significant in wave three.

Thoughts of Divorce

Table 40 shows us the wave three parameter estimates for the effects of thinking about ending ones' marriage on conflict behavior for husbands. In wave one we saw that divorce thoughts were moderately correlated with husbands' collaboration, negative emotion and hostility and wives' negative emotion, avoidance and hostility, and that divorce thoughts were strongly correlated with conflict frequency for both husbands and wives.

In wave three, husbands' divorce thoughts are still correlated with their own negative emotion, collaboration, and hostility in model two and wives' divorce thoughts are still correlated with husbands' negative emotion and hostility. However, the inclusion of the conflict frequency variables (model three) leaves only husbands' divorce thoughts reaching significance on their own negative emotion and hostility. As in the first wave analysis, we are uncertain in which causal direction these positive relationships go, but it is possible that an increase in thinking about ending their marriage leads husbands to feel more unloved, tense, anxious and hostile, not just the other way around.

Table 40 - Effect of Thoughts of Divorce on Conflict Behavior for Husbands - Wave 3

<i>Factor</i>	Husbands' Collaboration <i>β</i>	Husbands' Emotion <i>β</i>	Husbands' Avoidance <i>β</i>	Husbands' Hostility <i>β</i>
<i>Model One (N=350)</i>				
Wives' Divorce Thoughts	-.015(.015)	-.010(.018)	.031(.021)	-.013(.018)
Husbands' Divorce Thoughts	-.044(.015)**	.087(.017)	.009(.020)	.105(.017)***
Adjusted R Squared	.056***	.091***	.134***	.010
F-Statistic	11.560	18.750	2.772	28.574
<i>Model Two (N=350)</i>				
Wives' Divorce Thoughts	-.009(.017)	-.038(.019)*	.015(.022)	-.051(.018)**
Husbands' Divorce Thoughts	-.044(.015)*	.087(.017)***	.011(.020)	.104(.016)***
Wives' Collaboration ³	-.001(.054)	.002(.062)	-.038(.072)	-.042(.058)
Wives' Hostility ³	.007(.048)	.110(.055)*	.120(.064)	.355(.052)***
Wives' Avoidance ³	.001(.039)	-.023(.045)	-.118(.052)*	-.010(.042)
Wives' Emotion ³	-.068(.044)	.154(.050)**	.003(.058)	-.022(.047)
Adjusted R Squared	.053***	.133***	.028*	.243***
F-Statistic	4.297	10.106	2.712	20.007
<i>Model Three (N=232)</i>				
Wives' Divorce Thoughts	.001(.022)	-.022(.027)	.028(.031)	-.051(.023)*
Husbands' Divorce Thoughts	-.018(.020)	.071(.023)**	.017(.027)	.055(.020)**
Wives' Collaboration ³	-.002(.068)	-.037(.081)	.003(.093)	-.052(.070)
Wives' Hostility ³	.020(.060)	.091(.072)	.094(.082)	.417(.062)***
Wives' Avoidance ³	-.018(.048)	.034(.058)	-.136(.067)*	.033(.050)
Wives' Emotion ³	-.067(.054)	.168(.065)	.055(.074)	-.037(.056)
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.028(.071)	.049(.085)	.114(.098)	.072(.074)
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	.054(.034)	.010(.041)	.039(.047)	-.059(.035)
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²	.120(.066)	-.047(.079)	-.079(.091)	-.234(.068)**
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.032(.035)	-.033(.042)	-.014(.049)	-.037(.037)
Adjusted R Squared	.047*	.118***	.023	.320***
F-Statistic	2.135	11.916	1.556	4.112

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 Reporting unstandardized Beta, standard error term in parentheses.

2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

A new addition to wave three is that wives' divorce thoughts are negatively correlated with husbands' hostility. This negative relationship means that as one goes up the other goes down, but again we are not clear in which direction the causality goes. But either way is an interesting difference in wave three. When comparing the wives' table (Table 41) we see this exact same relationship reversed. In this table the wives' divorce thoughts are positively correlated with their own hostility and the husbands' negatively correlated with wives' hostility. This suggests that there is a relationship between divorce thoughts and hostility and that it is reciprocal between husbands and wives. The R²s for the third model for husbands' conflict behavior again shows that only the models for collaboration (5%), negative emotion (12%), and hostility (32%) reach significance. For wives, collaboration (9%), negative emotion (14%) and hostility (32%).

Wives divorce thoughts are also positively correlated with their own negative emotion. Again we see that divorce thoughts are more highly correlated with conflict frequency (Table 41). Each spouse's conflict frequency is correlated with their own divorce thoughts. Remembering that higher numbers of conflict frequency mean more agreement we see that this negative relationship suggests that as thoughts of ending their marriage increase, the frequency of disagreements also increase, or the opposite, as agreements increase thoughts of divorce decrease.

Table 41 - Effect of Thoughts of Divorce on Conflict Behavior for Wives - Wave 3

<i>Factor</i>	Wives' Collaboration β	Wives' Emotion β	Wives' Avoidance β	Wives' Hostility β
<i>Model One (N=350)</i>				
Wives' Divorce Thoughts	-.077(.015)***	.108(.021)***	-.006(.022)	.104(.018)***
Husband's Divorce Thoughts	.014(.015)	-.006(.020)	.021(.020)	.005(.018)
Adjusted R Squared	.080***	.102***	-.002	.135***
F-Statistic	16.481	21.111	.676	28.883
<i>Model Two (N=350)</i>				
Wives' Divorce Thoughts	-.076(.016)***	.109(.020)***	-.001(.022)	.107(.017)***
Husband's Divorce Thoughts	.019(.016)	-.034(.021)	.023(.022)	-.038(.018)*
Husbands' Collaboration ³	.004(.055)	-.115(.073)	.023(.022)	-.028(.062)
Husbands' Hostility ³	-.067(.050)	.033(.065)	-.034(.069)	.353(.055)***
Husbands' Avoidance ³	-.038(.042)	.000(.055)	-.142(.058)*	.064(.047)
Husbands' Emotion ³	.027(.049)	.232(.064)***	.046(.068)	.047(.055)
Adjusted R Squared	.077***	.140***	.005	.248***
F-Statistic	5.949	10.640	1.315	20.593
<i>Model Three (N=232)</i>				
Wives' Divorce Thoughts	-.031(.022)	.071(.029)*	-.032(.031)	.071(.024)**
Husband's Divorce Thoughts	.035(.020)	-.027(.026)	.040(.028)	-.014(.022)
Husbands' Collaboration ³	-.015(.070)	-.135(.093)	.000(.100)	-.038(.076)
Husbands' Hostility ³	-.066(.061)	.049(.081)	-.006(.087)	.431(.067)***
Husbands' Avoidance ³	.004(.052)	.030(.069)	-.159(.073)*	.043(.056)
Husbands' Emotion ³	.007(.058)	.222(.076)**	.123(.082)	.020(.063)
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.165(.069)*	-.241(.091)**	-.118(.097)	-.225(.074)**
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.013(.034)	.066(.045)	.053(.048)	.085(.037)*
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²	.091(.068)	.149(.089)	.102(.096)	.130(.073)
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.014(.036)	-.006(.047)	-.038(.050)	.033(.039)
Adjusted R Squared	.089**	.143***	.012	.316***
F-Statistic	3.262	4.863	1.282	11.743

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 Reporting unstandardized Beta, standard error term in parentheses.

2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

We still see that wives' hostility is reciprocally related to husbands' hostility as outlined in both Table 40 and Table 41. But, we no longer see this relationship for negative emotion; instead, husbands' negative emotion influences wives' but the reverse is no longer true. Also, as noted in the family dysfunction analyses, wives' avoidance is now significantly correlated with husbands' avoidance and the reverse is also significant. Husbands' conflict frequency still influences his own hostility, but no longer influences wives, but when comparing it to Table 40 we see that this relationship between hostility and conflict frequency remains regardless of which variable is the dependent variable. Wives conflict frequency no longer influences husbands' hostility, but it still significantly impacts their own collaboration, negative emotion and hostility. However, when comparing it to the conflict frequency table (Table 42) we see that the only relationship that shows an influence on wives' conflict frequency, of the three just mentioned, is collaboration. This suggests that for wives conflict frequency is more of an influence on behavior than the reverse, except for the positive relationship with collaboration. However, for husbands we see that their own hostility negatively influences his conflict frequency as well as collaboration positively influencing it. The third model shows that the conflict frequency models are highly significant with the R²s for husbands' conflict frequency at 51% and wives at 54%. The drugs and alcohol models were also highly significant with 39% and 32% respectively.

Table 42 - Effect of Thoughts of Divorce on Conflict Frequency - Wave 3

<i>Factor</i>	Husbands' Conflict Freq β	Husbands' Conflict Freq Drugs/alcohol β	Wives' Conflict Freq. β	Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs/Alcohol β
<i>Model One (N=232)</i>				
Wives' Divorce Thoughts	-.075(.021)**	.077(.043)	-.178(.021)***	-.046(.046)
Husband's Divorce Thoughts	-.118(.020)***	-.218(.039)***	-.030(.019)	-.030(.042)
Adjusted R Squared	.354***	.129***	.409***	.0098
F-Statistic	64.576	18.156	81.425	2.103
<i>Model Two (N=232)</i>				
Wives' Divorce Thoughts	.007(.022)	.073(.041)	-.145(.019)	-.104(.039)**
Husband's Divorce Thoughts	-.104(.018)***	-.206(.033)***	-.015(.019)	.081(.039)*
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.469(.062)***	-.159(.115)		
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.036(.028)	.534(.052)***		
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²			.429(.058)***	-.162(.117)
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²			-.022(.029)	.600(.059)***
Adjusted R Squared	.478***	.398***	.521***	.316***
F-Statistic	54.192	39.350	64.080	27.734
<i>Model Three (N=232)</i>				
Wives' Divorce Thoughts	-.003(.022)	.056(.043)	-.119(.020)***	-.123(.042)**
Husband's Divorce Thoughts	-.084(.019)***	-.185(.036)***	.010(.019)	.082(.041)*
Wives' Collaboration ³	.079(.068)	-.006(.131)	.163(.065)*	.027(.136)
Wives' Hostility ³	.111(.065)	.144(.126)	-.109(.063)	.199(.131)
Wives' Avoidance ³	.036(.049)	-.042(.095)	-.040(.048)	.084(.099)
Wives' Emotion ³	.041(.055)	-.006(.107)	-.088(.053)	.013(.112)
Husbands' Collaboration ³	.141(.070)*	-.063(.135)	.030(.069)	.214(.143)
Husbands' Hostility ³	-.233(.065)***	-.194(.126)	.019(.065)	-.234(.136)
Husbands' Avoidance ³	-.057(.052)	-.002(.101)	.055(.051)	.076(.106)
Husbands' Emotion ³	.022(.059)	-.053(.114)	.019(.057)	.078(.120)
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.447(.064)***	-.150(.124)		
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.057(.028)*	.519(.054)***		
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²			.396(.060)***	-.227(.124)
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²			-.008(.029)	.576(.060)***
Adjusted R Squared	.510***	.388***	.318***	.543***
F-Statistic	21.127	13.233	23.974	10.005

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 Reporting unstandardized Beta, standard error term in parentheses.

2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

In summary, divorce thoughts remains significant for certain aspects of conflict behavior and frequency for both husbands and wives in wave three, most notably negative emotion and hostility. But we do see a positive relationship for both husbands and wives for collaboration reducing the frequency of disagreements between them. However, the significant relationships while still significant from wave one are “less” significant which suggest that over more time they may not remain significant, except for hostility and wives and husbands conflict frequency, these relationships continue to be as strong as they were in wave one.

Religiosity

We remember in wave one that there were minimal effects for religiosity on conflict behaviors with a couple of exceptions. Wives’ and husbands’ religiosity influences husbands’ collaboration in opposite ways with increases in religiosity for wives lowering husbands’ collaboration, while increases in husbands’ religiosity raises it. Husbands’ religiosity showed a positive relationship with his own avoidance, meaning that as religiosity increases so do husbands’ levels of avoidance. There were no significant effects for religiosity on wives’ conflict behaviors. There were also no significant effects for religiosity on conflict frequency except for wives’ view of attendance which showed a significant positive correlation with wives’ levels of conflict frequency and husbands’ levels of conflict frequency over drugs and alcohol. If wives believe their husbands attend church services with them, then there is more agreement between the couple. We also saw a reciprocal relationship between some of the conflict behaviors, most notably, negative emotion and hostility. This relationship exists between husbands’ and wives’ conflict frequency which is correlated with both husbands’ and wives’ hostility.

Table 43 - Effect of Religiosity on Conflict Behavior for Husbands - Wave 3

<i>Factor</i>	Husbands' Collaboration β	Husbands' Emotion β	Husbands' Avoidance β	Husbands' Hostility β
<i>Model One (N=351)</i>				
Covenant Marriage	-.077(.049)	.044(.059)	.000(.065)	.062(.059)
Wives' Religiosity	.004(.012)	-.016(.014)	-.024(.016)	.012(.014)
Husbands' religiosity	-.004(.012)	.025(.014)	.014(.016)	-.012(.014)
Husbands' view of attendance	-.018(.031)	-.030(.038)	.057(.042)	-.002(.038)
Wives' view of attendance	.077(.031)*	-.004(.037)	-.036(.041)	-.019(.037)
Adjusted R Squared	.032**	-.002	.003	.002
F-Statistic	3.315	.827	.783	.839
<i>Model Two (N=351)</i>				
Covenant Marriage	-.074(.049)	.034(.057)	.009(.064)	.061(.055)
Wives' Religiosity	.004(.012)	-.016(.014)	-.017(.016)	.020(.013)
Husbands' religiosity	-.004(.012)	.025(.014)	.009(.016)	-.022(.013)
Husbands' view of attendance	-.013(.031)	-.036(.037)	.051(.041)	-.010(.035)
Wives' view of attendance	.069(.031)*	.012(.036)	-.031(.041)	.007(.035)
Wives' Collaboration ³	.029(.055)	.017(.064)	-.061(.072)	-.047(.061)
Wives' Hostility ³	-.045(.048)	.131(.056)*	.116(.063)	.383(.054)***
Wives' Avoidance ³	.004(.041)	-.007(.048)	-.107(.054)*	-.003(.046)
Wives' Emotion ³	-.072(.044)	.158(.052)**	.030(.058)	-.029(.050)
Adjusted R Squared	.039**	.058***	.018	.144***
F-Statistic	2.598	3.420	1.712	7.587
<i>Model Three (N=229)</i>				
Covenant Marriage	-.071(.059)	.070(.071)	.010(.083)	.00(.063)
Wives' Religiosity	.005(.014)	-.032(.017)	-.013(.019)	.017(.015)
Husbands' religiosity	-.017(.014)	.053(.017)**	-.005(.020)	-.016(.015)
Husbands' view of attendance	-.051(.038)	-.070(.046)	.012(.054)	-.002(.041)
Wives' view of attendance	.113(.038)	.053(.046)	.031(.053)	.015(.040)
Wives' Collaboration ³	.004(.071)**	.038(.086)	-.010(.100)	-.021(.076)
Wives' Hostility ³	-.029(.059)	.087(.064)	.087(.083)	.414(.063)***
Wives' Avoidance ³	-.026(.048)	.047(.058)	-.136(.068)*	.046(.052)
Wives' Emotion ³	-.049(.053)	.157(.064)*	.079(.075)	-.060(.057)
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	-.005(.068)	-.017(.082)	.045(.096)	.105(.073)
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	.060(.034)	.048(.041)	.048(.048)	-.049(.036)
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²	.141(.064)*	-.131(.077)	-.113(.090)	-.281(.068)***
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.043(.034)	-.091(.041)	-.032(.048)	-.066(.037)
Adjusted R Squared	.075**	.116***	.006	.285***
F-Statistic	2.422	3.303	1.101	8.031

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 Reporting unstandardized Beta, standard error term in parentheses.

2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

In wave three Table 43 through Table 45 show the parameter estimates for the effects of religiosity on conflict. In Table 43 we see that there are again minimal effects for religiosity on conflict behavior for husbands. Wives' view of attendance is now positively correlated with husbands' collaboration in the first two models, but not the third. Husbands' religiosity is correlated with their own negative emotions in the third model. Since this is a positive association this means increases in religiosity increase husbands' negative emotion. The R²s for husbands' conflict behavior show us that while significant this analysis is not as strong at explaining the variance as the divorce thoughts model. For husbands' collaboration 7%, negative emotion, 12% and hostility 29% and for wives' collaboration 13%, negative emotion 9% and hostility 28%.

Table 44 shows us that wives' religiosity is positively correlated with wives' collaboration, and husbands' religiosity is negatively correlated with wives collaboration. This means that as husbands' become more religious wives become less collaborative, and as wives become more religious they become more collaborative. This is the only significant relationship for religiosity and wives' conflict behavior.

For conflict frequency (Table 45), wives' religiosity is negatively associated with both husbands' frequency of disagreements; whereas, husbands' religiosity is positively associated with both their own frequency, and wives. This means that as wives religiosity increases, husbands' perceive more disagreements, but as husbands' religiosity increases both husbands and wives perceive more agreements. Also, again, wives whose husbands attend church services with them perceive more agreement between the couple. This view is consistent over the elapsed time and supports the findings of Curtis and Ellison (2002) who concluded that if the wife attends services more often than her husband, there will be more disagreements between the couple.

Table 44 - Effect of Religiosity on Conflict Behavior for Wives - Wave 3

<i>Factor</i>	Wives' Collaboration β	Wives' Emotion β	Wives' Avoidance β	Wives' Hostility β
<i>Model One (N=351)</i>				
Covenant Marriage	.041(.049)	.055(.066)	.095(.065)	.012(.061)
Wives' Religiosity	.024(.012)*	.014(.016)	.032(.016)*	-.018(.015)
Husbands' religiosity	-.021(.012)	-.016(.016)	-.016(.016)	.021(.015)
Husbands' view of attendance	-.049(.031)	.032(.043)	-.002(.042)	.016(.040)
Wives' view of attendance	.055(.031)	-.055(.042)	-.067(.041)	-.068(.039)
Adjusted R Squared	.008	.001	.017*	.001
F-Statistic	1.588	1.101	2.247	1.054
<i>Model Two (N=351)</i>				
Covenant Marriage	.049(.049)	.030(.065)	.096(.065)	-.019(.057)
Wives' Religiosity	.024(.012)*	.019(.016)	.031(.016)	-.019(.014)
Husbands' religiosity	-.022(.012)	-.023(.016)	-.016(.016)	.023(.014)
Husbands' view of attendance	-.043(.031)	.034(.042)	.008(.042)	.011(.037)
Wives' view of attendance	.047(.031)	-.039(.041)	-.075(.042)	-.050(.036)
Husbands' Collaboration ³	.051(.056)	-.161(.075)*	.033(.076)	-.094(.065)
Husbands' Hostility ³	-.092(.050)	.033(.066)	-.029(.067)	.368(.058)***
Husbands' Avoidance ³	-.066(.043)	.046(.057)	-.127(.057)*	.093(.050)
Husbands' Emotion ³	.044(.050)	.238(.066)***	.063(.067)	.040(.058)
Adjusted R Squared	.017	.062***	.021	.158***
F-Statistic	1.674	3.564	1.854	8.325
<i>Model Three (N=229)</i>				
Covenant Marriage	.023(.057)	.035(.080)	.104(.084)	.011(.06)
Wives' Religiosity	.033(.013)*	.015(.019)	.025(.020)	-.014(.015)
Husbands' religiosity	-.032(.014)*	-.012(.020)	-.017(.020)	.021(.016)
Husbands' view of attendance	-.071(.03)	-.002(.052)	-.014(.054)	-.032(.043)
Wives' view of attendance	-.002(.037)	.000(.053)	-.051(.055)	.013(.043)
Husbands' Collaboration ³	-.001(.069)	-.144(.097)	-.004(.101)	-.086(.080)
Husbands' Hostility ³	-.054(.059)	.012(.083)	.008(.087)	.417(.069)***
Husbands' Avoidance ³	-.013(.050)	.057(.070)	-.157(.073)*	.062(.058)
Husbands' Emotion ³	.059(.057)	.228(.080)**	.138(.084)	.001(.066)
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.210(.060)**	-.310(.085)***	-.043(.089)	-.352(.070)***
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.009(.033)	.055(.046)	.055(.048)	.093(.038)*
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²	.115(.064)	.001(.047)	.116(.094)	.102(.074)
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.009(.033)	.144(.090)	-.047(.049)	.029(.039)
Adjusted R Squared	.126***	.089**	.015	.282***
F-Statistic	3.548	2.711	1.269	7.924

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 Reporting unstandardized Beta, standard error term in parentheses.

2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

We see the same reciprocal relationship between wives' and husbands' hostility and negative emotion levels. Again as mentioned in the two previous analyses, there is now a significant negative correlation between husbands' and wives' avoidance levels. Conflict frequency is correlated with hostility levels as well with more agreement meaning less hostility for both husbands' and wives'. The R²s for this conflict frequency models show that husbands' conflict frequency model explains 24% of the variance while wives explains 35%. The two drug and alcohol models are also significant explaining 7% and 4% respectively.

Table 45 - Effect of Religiosity on Conflict Frequency - Wave 3

<i>Factor</i>	Husbands' Conflict Freq β	Husbands' Conflict Freq Drugs/alcohol β	Wives' Conflict Freq β	Wives' Conf Freq Drugs/Alcohol β
<i>Model One (N=230)</i>				
Covenant Marriage	-.044(.079)	-.100(.143)	.051(.078)	-.097(.145)
Wives' Religiosity	-.022(.018)	-.018(.033)	-.016(.018)	.013(.034)
Husbands' religiosity	.023(.019)	.021(.034)	.016(.019)	-.019(.035)
Husbands' view of attendance	.087(.050)	-.005(.092)	.046(.050)	.105(.093)
Wives' view of attendance	.084(.050)	.164(.090)	.148(.049)**	.009(.091)
Adjusted R Squared	.093***	.025	.095***	-.004
F-Statistic	5.691	2.189	5.828	.801
<i>Model Two (N=230)</i>				
Covenant Marriage	-.076(.066)	-.045(.121)	.073(.065)	-.047(.122)
Wives' Religiosity	-.013(.015)	-.026(.028)	-.004(.015)	.020(.028)
Husbands' religiosity	.014(.016)	.032(.029)	.003(.016)	-.027(.029)
Husbands' view of attendance	.064(.042)	-.060(.077)	-.004(.042)	.122(.078)
Wives' view of attendance	.000(.042)	.167(.078)*	.106(.041)*	-.072(.077)
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.576(.057)***	-.048(.105)		
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.033(.031)	.542(.057)***		
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²			.570(.057)***	-.159(.106)
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²			-.032(.031)	.571(.058)***
Adjusted R Squared	.375***	.308***	.377***	.294***
F-Statistic	20.655	15.577	20.777	14.602
<i>Model Three (N=230)</i>				
Covenant Marriage	-.058(.063)	-.015(.121)	.068(.062)	-.054(.123)
Wives' Religiosity	-.014(.015)	-.023(.029)	-.013(.015)	.022(.029)
Husbands' religiosity	.016(.015)	.034(.030)	.016(.015)	-.031(.030)
Husbands' view of attendance	.071(.040)	-.087(.078)	.010(.040)	.154(.080)
Wives' view of attendance	-.010(.041)	.181(.078)*	.085(.040)*	-.095(.079)
Wives' Collaboration ³	.117(.075)	-.007(.145)	.252(.073)**	.117(.145)
Wives' Hostility ³	.094(.069)	.131(.132)	-.196(.066)**	.3167(.131)
Wives' Avoidance ³	.041(.052)	-.060(.100)	-.003(.051)	.115(.102)
Wives' Emotion ³	.044(.058)	.025(.111)	-.129(.057)*	-.060(.113)
Husbands' Collaboration ³	.164(.075)*	-.084(.144)	.021(.075)	.229(.149)
Husbands' Hostility ³	-.283(.068)***	-.312(.131)*	.073(.297)	-.188(.138)
Husbands' Avoidance ³	-.074(.055)	-.011(.106)	.034(.055)	.055(.109)
Husbands' Emotion ³	-.046(.064)	-.226(.122)	-.019(.063)	.164(.125)
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.504(.063)***	-.077(.121)		
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.054(.030)	.525(.058)***		
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²			.463(.060)***	-.214(.120)
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²			-.003(.030)	.566(.060)***
Adjusted R Squared	.448***	.330***	.453***	.297***
F-Statistic	13.410	8.528	13.657	7.461

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

Effects of all Covariates

In wave one there were no significant effects for conflict behavior or frequency on conflict when used as independent variables. There were minimal effects for the other three main variables examined, dysfunction in the family of origin, thoughts of divorce and religiosity. Wave three tells a different story Table 46 shows the parameter estimates for the multiple analysis of covariance for wave three for husbands' conflict behavior while Table 47 shows them for wives. Table 48 shows the parameter estimates for both husbands' and wives' conflict frequency.

In wave three wives' hostility is significantly positively correlated with husbands' hostility even when all the other variables are held constant. Table 46 also shows that wives' avoidance is also correlated with husbands' avoidance in the same negative relationship noted in the above analyses. Husbands' conflict frequency is negatively correlated with husbands' hostility meaning that as levels of agreement between the couples increase, husbands' levels of hostility decrease.

These are the only significant relationships for conflict behavior and frequency on husbands' conflict behavior. Other items that reached significance are: Wives' view of their family of origin income levels, with a higher view reducing husbands' hostility. Both wives' and husbands' religiosity influences husbands' negative emotions, but in opposite ways with increased levels of wives' religiosity reducing husbands' negative emotion and increased levels of husbands' religiosity increasing the levels of negative emotion. This relationship is not significant in the wives table (Table 47); instead, wives' religiosity is positively related to wives' avoidance, while husbands' religiosity is negatively related to wives' avoidance.

Table 46 - Parameter Estimates for Effects on Husbands' Conflict Behavior - Wave 3

(Page 1 of 2)

<i>Factor (N=119)</i>	Husbands' Collaboration β	Husbands' Emotion β	Husbands' Avoidance β	Husbands' Hostility β
<i>Conflict Behavior Variables</i>				
Wives' Collaboration ³	-.108(.126)	.068(.137)	.006(.158)	.042(.108)
Wives' Hostility ³	-.194(.169)	-.109(.184)	-.079(.211)	.218(.145)
Wives' Avoidance ³	.058(.116)	-.183(.127)	-.208(.146)	.024(.100)
Wives' Emotion ³	-.019(.126)	.064(.137)	.035(.157)	.043(.108)
<i>Conflict Freq. Variables</i>				
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.114(.190)	.069(.207)	-.199(.238)	-.070(.163)
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.045(.078)	-.089(.085)	-.093(.098)	.001(.067)
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²	.213(.189)	.205(.206)	.444(.237)	.028(.163)
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.078(.057)	.028(.062)	-.086(.071)	-.007(.049)
<i>Family of Origin Char.</i>				
Wives' Family Dysfunction	.026(.149)	.163(.137)	-.077(.166)	.080(.159)
Husband's Fam Dysfunction	-.163(.201)	.016(.185)	.050(.224)	-.041(.215)
Wife Residence Age 16	-.079(.062)	.037(.057)	.085(.069)	.041(.067)
Husb. Residence Age 16	.107(.063)	.044(.058)	.048(.071)	.087(.068)
Wife FMO income Age 16	-.008(.060)	-.052(.055)	-.057(.067)	-.326(.137)*
Husb FMO income age 16	-.005(.075)	-.018(.069)	.104(.083)	.016(.080)
<i>Religiosity</i>				
Wife	-.035(.031)	-.062(.029)*	-.013(.035)	-.016(.033)
Husband	.005(.029)	.089(.026)**	-.029(.032)	.002(.031)
Wife attend	.087(.083)	-.137(.077)	.195(.093)*	-.144(.089)
Husband attend	.054(.075)	.026(.069)	-.102(.084)	.119(.081)
<i>View of HDL Fairness</i>				
Wife's view of fair to her	.129(.079)	.044(.073)	-.054(.088)	-.009(.085)
Wife's view of fair to Husb	.131(.100)	-.021(.092)	.029(.111)	.068(.107)
Husband view of fair to him	-.131(.081)	.050(.075)	-.095(.091)	.029(.087)
Husband view of fair to Wife	-.110(.075)	-.034(.069)	-.198(.083)	.051(.080)
<i>Marital Characteristics</i>				
Covenant Marriage (Y=1)	-.086(.118)	.024(.109)	-.175(.132)	-.011(.127)
Child Pres (Y=1)	.262(.329)	-.329(.304)	.661(.367)	.002(.353)
Wife Thoughts of divorce	.098(.107)	.013(.098)	.138(.119)	.012(.114)
Husb thoughts of divorce	-.013(.060)	.109(.055)	-.016(.066)	-.224(.064)
Wive view of satisfaction	.293(.267)	-.325(.419)	.282(.779)	.985(.401)*
Husb view of satisfaction	.191(.225)	.271 (.285)	-.046(.571)	-.192(.273)
Wife view of cohesion	.003(.017)	-.006(.015)	.019(.019)	.008(.018)
Husb view of cohesion	-.001(.015)	.021(.014)	-.025(.017)	-.154(.043)**
Wife view of interaction	.104(.141)	.160(.130)	.387(.158)*	.171(.151)
Husb view of interaction	-.038(.177)	-.200(.163)	-.241(.197)	-.391(.190)*
Wife view of inter w children	-.112(.148)	.069(.136)	-.091(.165)	.170(.158)
Husb view of inter w children	.210(.132)	-.012(.121)	.133(.147)	.891(.310)*
Wife view of commitment	.052(.291)	.207(.268)	.112(.324)	.018(.311)
Husb view of commitment	.084(.211)	-.116(.194)	.322(.235)	-.377(.226)*

<i>Socio demographic Variables</i>				
Wife's hours worked	.005(.004)	.000(.004)	.003(.004)	.000(.004)
Husb hours worked	-.004(.004)	-.002(.003)	-.003(.004)	.000(.004)
Wife's age	.003(.012)	-.006(.011)	.017(.014)	-.004(.013)
Husband's age	-.006(.011)	.000(.010)	-.008(.013)	-.007(.012)
Wife's race	-.077(.199)	.258(.183)	-.397(.221)	.333(.212)
Husband's race	.540(.275)	-.369(.253)	.420(.307)	-.050(.294)
Husband's income	.046(.033)	.011(.030)	.044(.036)	.039(.035)
Wife's income	-.041(.032)	.048(.030)	-.046(.036)	.014(.034)
Wife's education	.020(.010)*	.007(.009)	.016(.011)	.011(.011)
Husband's education	-.002(.009)	-.005(.008)	-.012(.010)	.008(.010)
<i>View of Family Approval</i>				
Wife's father	-.040(.033)	.037(.030)	-.034(.037)	-.077(.035)*
Wife's mother	-.004(.057)	.074(.052)	-.067(.063)	.183(.061)**
Wife's view of Husb father	-.013(.035)	-.007(.033)	-.025(.039)	-.027(.038)
Wife's view of Husb mother	.075(.078)	.110(.071)	-.092(.086)	.110(.083)
Wife's siblings	-.010(.049)	.009(.045)	.017(.055)	.043(.052)
Wife's view of Husb siblings	-.021(.046)	-.064(.042)	.013(.051)	-.008(.049)
Wife's friends	.002(.114)	-.145(.105)	.248(.127)	-.058(.122)
Wife's view of husb friends	.028(.068)	.029(.063)	-.028(.076)	.074(.073)
Husb's father	.022(.042)	-.032(.039)	-.009(.047)	-.015(.045)
Husb's mother	-.079(.087)	-.087(.080)	.104(.097)	-.099(.093)
Husb's view of Wife father	-.006(.036)	.023(.033)	.021(.040)	.024(.039)
Husb's view of Wife mother	-.033(.051)	-.065(.047)	.039(.057)	-.205(.055)**
Husb's siblings	-.029(.054)	.053(.050)	.013(.061)	.046(.058)
Husb's view of Wife siblings	.068(.064)	-.073(.059)	.039(.072)	-.008(.069)
Husb's friends	-.135(.086)	.045(.079)	-.052(.095)	-.015(.092)
Husb's view of Wife friends	.117(.063)	.006(.058)	.069(.070)	.077(.067)
Adjusted R Squared	.174	.588***	.545***	.269*
F-Statistic	1.76	3.39	3.13	2.53

*p< .05, **p< .01, ***p< .001 Reporting unstandardized Beta, standard error term in parentheses.

2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

Other items with significant correlations on husbands' hostility are: wives' view of her family of origin income which is negatively correlated, husbands' view of cohesion and interaction are negatively associated, while husbands' view of interaction with children is positively associated. This means that as husbands' perceive that they have more interaction with their children, their hostility levels increase. This could be because of the wife feeling threatened by husband interacting with children.

Another anomaly is that wives' view of satisfaction is positively correlated, which means that as wives are more satisfied with the marriage husbands' hostility levels increase. This could suggest that wives have more expectations of their husbands as they are more satisfied with marriage. Wives' view of their father's approval of the marriage has a negative correlation on husbands' hostility, while wives' view of their mother's approval has the opposite affect. Also, husbands' view of their mother's approval decreases husbands' hostility. Wives' education is the only item reaching significance on husbands' collaboration levels and is positively associated, meaning that husbands are more collaborative with wives who have higher education levels. The R²s for husbands are significant for negative emotion (59%), avoidance (54%), and hostility (27%).

For wives (Table 47), collaboration is the only behavior where there are no significant factors. The reciprocal relationship for negative emotion, avoidance and hostility noted in the previous three models for family dysfunction, thoughts of divorce and religiosity is again present in wave three. Husbands' collaboration is also positively associated with wives' levels of avoidance. Wives' conflict frequency is negatively associated with their negative emotion and hostility, while husbands' conflict frequency is negatively associated with negative emotion, hostility and wives' avoidance.

Table 47 - Parameter Estimates for Effects on Wives' Conflict Behavior - Wave 3
(Page 1 of 2)

<i>Factor (N=119)</i>	Wives' Collaboration B	Wives' Emotion β	Wives' Avoidance β	Wives' Hostility β
<i>Conflict Behavior Variables</i>				
Husbands' Collaboration ³	-.007(.132)	-.328(.193)	.301(.137)*	-.059(.180)
Husbands' Hostility ³	-.017(.116)	-.052(.169)	-.050(.119)	.390(.091)***
Husbands' Avoidance ³	-.052(.128)	.095(.187)	-.320(.096)**	-.193(.174)
Husbands' Emotion ³	.155(.140)	.264(.027)	.343(.144)*	-.255(.190)
<i>Conflict Freq. Variables</i>				
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	-.020(.150)	-.181(.219)**	.195(.154)	-.177(.204)**
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.003(.046)	.023(.068)	-.064(.048)	.117(.063)
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²	-.016(.162)	-.392(.236)*	-.457(.166)**	-.606(.220)**
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²	.016(.071)	.077(.104)	-.008(.074)	.010(.097)
<i>Family of Origin Char.</i>				
Wives' Family Dysfunction	.083(.126)	.039(.184)	.039(.130)	.007(.171)
Husband's Fam Dysfunction	-.128(.164)	-.374(.239)	.042(.169)	.094(.223)
Wife Residence Age 16	.035(.053)	.024(.077)	-.013(.054)	-.006(.072)
Husb. Residence Age 16	.013(.054)	.099(.079)	-.081(.056)	.033(.074)
Wife FMO income Age 16	.002(.052)	.296(.110)*	.045(.053)	-.014(.070)
Husb FMO income age 16	-.031(.064)	-.077(.093)	.010(.066)	.011(.087)
<i>Religiosity</i>				
Wife	.016(.025)	-.053(.036)	.083(.026)**	-.061(.034)
Husband	-.035(.026)	.002(.037)	-.066(.026)*	.023(.035)
Wife attend	.053(.071)	-.002(.104)	.065(.074)	.166(.097)
Husband attend	.006(.064)	.078(.094)	-.067(.066)	-.113(.088)
<i>View of HDL Fairness</i>				
Wife's view of fair to her	-.057(.062)	.146(.091)	-.190(.064)**	.071(.085)
Wife's view of fair to Husb	-.001(.083)	.050(.121)	-.047(.086)	-.177(.113)
Husband view of fair to him	-.060(.069)	.452(.159)*	.014(.071)	.038(.094)
Husband view of fair to Wife	-.053(.063)	-.088(.092)	.052(.065)	-.157(.086)
<i>Marital Characteristics</i>				
Covenant Marriage (Y=1)	.086(.100)	.033(.146)	.064(.103)	-.031(.136)
Child Pres (Y=1)	.375(.280)	.141(.409)	.389(.289)	.011(.381)
Wife Thoughts of divorce	.111(.089)	.091(.129)	.042(.091)	-.106(.121)
Husb thoughts of divorce	-.077(.051)	-.124(.074)	-.016(.053)	-.002(.069)
Wive view of satisfaction	-.022(.267)	-.449(.115)***	-.301(.126)	-.016(.102)**
Husb view of satisfaction	-.280(.382)	-.121(.558)	-.510(.394)	.651(.520)
Wife view of cohesion	.008(.014)	.003(.021)	.014(.015)	.001(.019)
Husb view of cohesion	.005(.013)	.017(.019)	-.012(.014)	-.023(.018)
Wife view of interaction	-.080(.132)	-.015(.193)	-.123(.136)	.069(.180)
Husb view of interaction	.183(.158)	.129(.230)	.101(.163)	.024(.215)
Wife view of inter w children	.142(.123)	.265(.180)	-.063(.127)	.015(.167)
Husb view of inter w children	-.052(.114)	.071(.167)	-.006(.118)	-.038(.156)
Wife view of commitment	.355(.232)	-.379(.132)**	.321(.239)	-.410(.117)**
Husb view of commitment	-.199(.176)	-.569(.257)*	.151(.181)	-.007(.239)

<i>Socio demographic Variables</i>				
Wife's hours worked	-.004(.003)	-.005(.005)	-.002(.003)	.001(.005)
Husb hours worked	.001(.003)	.001(.005)	.003(.003)	.000(.004)
Wife's age	.000(.010)	-.010(.015)	.006(.011)	-.007(.014)
Husband's age	.000(.009)	.002(.014)	.002(.010)	.007(.013)
Wife's race	-.335(.161)	-.117(.235)	-.432(.166)	-.173(.219)
Husband's race	.345(.237)	.619(.346)	-.041(.244)	.108(.323)
Husband's income	-.013(.028)	-.001(.041)	-.020(.029)	-.034(.038)
Wife's income	.018(.028)	.050(.040)	-.024(.029)	.020(.038)
Wife's education	-.011(.008)	.003(.012)	-.023(.009)*	.017(.011)
Husband's education	-.004(.008)	-.018(.011)	.011(.008)	-.021(.010)*
<i>View of Family Approval</i>				
Wife's father	.014(.030)	.008(.044)	.002(.031)	.037(.041)
Wife's mother	.027(.050)	.136(.073)	-.091(.052)	.037(.068)
Wife's view of Husb father	-.033(.029)	-.059(.042)	-.013(.030)	-.013(.039)
Wife's view of Husb mother	-.014(.064)	.151(.03)	-.168(.066)	.009(.087)
Wife's siblings	.044(.041)	.045(.060)	.030(.042)	.014(.056)
Wife's view of Husb siblings	.028(.036)	-.046(.053)	.088(.038)	.047(.050)
Wife's friends	.000(.101)	-.047(.147)	.076(.104)	-.017(.137)
Wife's view of husb friends	-.047(.057)	-.012(.084)	-.040(.059)	-.045(.078)
Husb's father	.010(.034)	-.022(.050)	.054(.035)	-.086(.046)
Husb's mother	.062(.072)	-.078(.106)	.165(.075)	.016(.098)
Husb's view of Wife father	.001(.031)	.002(.045)	.004(.032)	-.028(.042)
Husb's view of Wife mother	-.017(.045)	-.141(.066)	.081(.047)	.041(.062)
Husb's siblings	-.009(.046)	.062(.067)	-.064(.047)	.027(.062)
Husb's view of Wife siblings	-.049(.055)	-.054(.081)	-.029(.057)	.022(.075)
Husb's friends	-.068(.073)	-.029(.107)	-.063(.076)	.051(.100)
Husb's view of Wife friends	.045(.054)	.031(.079)	.022(.056)	-.094(.074)
Adjusted R Squared	.374**	.416**	.547**	.334**
F-Statistic	2.84	2.56	3.01	2.33

*p< .05, **p< .01, ***p< .001 Reporting unstandardized Beta, standard error term in parentheses.

2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

Wives' negative emotion is also significantly positive correlation with their view of their families' income at age 16; their view of satisfaction with the marriage and commitment to the marriage, which are all negatively correlated not just with negative emotion, but wives' hostility as well. The husbands' view of commitment to the marriage is also negatively correlated to negative emotion. The husbands' view of household division of labor as fair to him increases wives' negative emotions, while the wives' view of household division of labor as fair to her decreases their own avoidance. Increases in wives' education also decrease wives' avoidance, whereas increases in husbands' education decrease wives' hostility. The R²s for wives are significant for collaboration (37%), negative emotion (42%), avoidance (55%), and hostility (33%).

When looking at conflict frequency (Table 48) we see that both wives' and husbands' hostility is significantly correlated with husbands' conflict frequency, but in opposite directions. While wives' hostility is positively associated, meaning higher levels of hostility increase agreement, husbands' hostility is negatively associated, meaning higher levels of hostility decrease agreement.

Table 48 - Parameter Estimates for Effects on Conflict Frequency - Wave 3

(Page 1 of 2)

<i>Factor (N=119)</i>	Husbands' Conflict Freq β	Husbands' Conflict Freq Drugs/alcohol β	Wives' Conflict Freq β	Wives' Conf Freq Drugs/Alcohol β
<i>Conflict Behavior Variables</i>				
Wives' Collaboration ³	.235(.472)	-1.287(1.197)	-.263(.560)	2.675(1.727)
Wives' Hostility ³	.173(.095)*	.105(.240)	-.019(.116)	.472(.357)
Wives' Avoidance ³	-.353(.310)	.679(.787)	.279(.368)	-1.880(1.133)
Wives' Emotion ³	-.027(.282)	.942(.716)*	.086(.338)	-1.539(1.041)
Husbands' Collaboration ³	.139(.119)	-.085(.301)	.024(.145)	.307(.447)
Husbands' Hostility ³	-.143(.103)*	-.215(.261)	-.047(.126)	-.138(.387)
Husbands' Avoidance ³	.076(.112)	.312(.283)	-.020(.137)	-.091(.422)
Husbands' Emotion ³	.249(.123)	-.064(.312)	-.137(.152)	.499(.467)
<i>Conflict Freq. Variables</i>				
Wives' Conflict Frequency ²	.103(.127)	.550(.322)		
Wives' Conflict Freq Drugs ²	-.089(.036)*	.258(.091)*		
Husb. Conflict Frequency ²			-.028(.174)	-.902(.402)**
Husb. Conflict Freq Drugs ²			.168(.062)*	.514(.163)***
<i>Family of Origin Char.</i>				
Wives' Family Dysfunction	-.039(.104)	.478(.263)	.110(.130)	.098(.400)
Husband's Fam Dysfunction	.188(.143)±	.101(.363)	-.065(.176)	-.162(.542)
Wife Residence Age 16	-.061(.042)	.214(.107)	.057(.053)	-.238(.163)
Husb. Residence Age 16	-.048(.046)	-.172(.117)	.148(.053)**	.028(.163)
Wife FMO income Age 16	.063(.042)	.240(.106)*	-.078(.052)	-.148(.162)
Husb FMO income age 16	-.050(.054)	-.098(.137)	-.113(.064)	.016(.196)
<i>Religiosity</i>				
Wife	.048(.023)*	.051(.058)	-.043(.028)	.071(.085)
Husband	-.026(.023)	.013(.058)	.042(.027)	-.084(.082)
Wife attend	-.045(.063)	-.166(.161)	-.050(.077)	-.012(.238)
Husband attend	.029(.057)	-.016(.145)	.043(.068)	.184(.211)
<i>Marital Characteristics</i>				
Covenant Marriage (Y=1)	-.037(.085)	.202(.216)	.024(.103)	-.364(.316)
Child Pres (Y=1)	-.114(.245)	-.020(.621)	.070(.296)	-.154(.912)
Wife Thoughts of divorce	.053(.076)	-.263(.192)	-.189(.090)*	.159(.276)
Husb thoughts of divorce	-.046(.044)	.077(.111)	-.001(.054)	-.075(.166)
Wive view of satisfaction	.082(.099)	.287(.245)	.324(.112)	.316(.331)
Husb view of satisfaction	.217(.105)	.042(.259)	.016(.128)	-.060(.378)
Wife view of cohesion	.007(.012)	-.019(.031)	.017(.015)	.005(.045)
Husb view of cohesion	.013(.012)	-.002(.029)	.039(.013)**	.021(.040)
Wife view of interaction	-.110(.109)	-.458(.277)	.217(.132)	.367(.408)
Husb view of interaction	.184(.131)±	-.374(.333)	.120(.165)	.189(.507)
Wife view of inter w children	-.175(.103)	.236(.260)	.075(.128)	-.385(.394)
Husb view of inter w children	.158(.094)	-.005(.239)	-.012(.117)	.161(.361)
Wife view of commitment	.153(.209)	-.159(.530)	.379(.247)	.488(.762)
Husb view of commitment	.053(.159)	.122(.402)	-.251(.188)	-.191(.579)

<i>Factor</i>	Husbands' Conflict Freq β	Husbands' Conflict Freq Drugs/alcohol β	Wives' Conflict Freq β	Wives' Conf Freq Drugs/Alcohol β
<i>Socio demographic Variables</i>				
Wife's hours worked	6.724(.003)	.000(.007)	.000(.003)	-.007(.011)
Husb hours worked	.001(.003)	.007(.007)	-.003(.003)	-.005(.010)
Wife's age	.010(.009)	-.023(.022)	.020(.010)	.018(.032)
Husband's age	.005(.008)	.024(.020)	-.019(.009)	.008(.029)
Wife's race	-.140(.142)	.700(.360)	-.163(.176)	-.902(.544)
Husband's race	-.140(.186)	-.564(.471)**	.406(.243)	.796(.748)
Husband's income	-.010(.024)	-.008(.062)	.014(.029)	.049(.090)
Wife's income	-.029(.024)	.022(.060)	-.007(.029)	-.098(.088)
Wife's education	-.006(.008)	-.003(.019)	.008(.009)	.007(.028)
Husband's education	.013(.006)*	.053(.015)**	-.013(.008)	-.005(.025)
<i>View of HDL Fairness</i>				
Wife's view of fair to her	-.043(.059)	.073(.151)	-.031(.071)	-.271(.219)
Wife's view of fair to Husb	-.003(.072)	.204(.183)	-.036(.087)	-.314(.269)
Husband view of fair to him	.006(.060)	.099(.152)	-.044(.072)	-.097(.222)
Husband view of fair to Wife	.131(.055)*	-.025(.138)	.047(.069)	.217(.214)
<i>View of Family Approval</i>				
Wife's father	-.024(.025)	-.063(.065)	.048(.030)	-.064(.092)
Wife's mother	-.050(.045)	-.038(.113)	.086(.052)	-.089(.161)
Wife's view of Husb father	.017(.025)	.060(.064)	.000(.031)	-.001(.095)
Wife's view of Husb mother	-.074(.058)	-.131(.147)	.032(.071)	-.094(.219)
Wife's siblings	-.061(.034)	-.087(.086)	.003(.043)	.023(.132)
Wife's view of Husb siblings	.011(.034)	-.004(.086)	.028(.041)	-.017(.125)
Wife's friends	.130(.080)	-.340(.203)	.035(.103)	.366(.316)
Wife's view of husb friends	.064(.049)	.062(.124)	.041(.059)	.270(.180)
Husb's father	.037(.030)	-.037(.076)	-.029(.037)	.050(.113)
Husb's mother	.046(.064)	.185(.163)	-.038(.078)	-.166(.242)
Husb's view of Wife father	.037(.025)	.083(.064)	-.013(.032)	.009(.097)
Husb's view of Wife mother	.013(.042)	.036(.108)	-.063(.050)	-.093(.155)
Husb's siblings	-.038(.039)	-.059(.100)	-.019(.048)	.047(.148)
Husb's view of Wife siblings	-.003(.047)	-.097(.119)	.007(.056)	.213(.173)
Husb's friends	-.029(.059)	-.379(.149)*	.099(.075)	.172(.230)
Husb's view of Wife friends	-.006(.047)	.312(.119)	.039(.057)	-.065(.175)
Adjusted R Squared	.810***	.427**	.734***	.188
F-Statistic	7.19	1.61	5.871	1.07

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 Reporting unstandardized Beta, standard error term in parentheses.

2=higher numbers in conflict frequency mean more agreement between the couple, so increases mean less conflict, decreases mean more conflict.

3=higher numbers in conflict behavior categories means more of that particular behavior with increases meaning more conflict (except for collaboration where increases mean less conflict). Increases mean more conflict, decreases less conflict.

Other significant factors for husbands' conflict frequency are wives' religiosity and husbands' education with higher levels increasing agreement between the couple. Also, the husbands' view of household division of labor being fair to the wife increases agreement between the couple. Husbands' race is negatively associated with his levels of conflict frequency over drugs and alcohol, with non-white husbands having more agreement. Husbands' education is also a positive influence on levels of agreement over drugs and alcohol, whereas husbands' friends' approval is negatively associated. This means that higher levels of friends' approval means more disagreements between the couple over drugs and alcohol. This makes sense if we view higher approval ratings as more involvement, meaning husbands may go out for a drink with his buddies a little too often.

Significant factors for wives' conflict frequency are, whether the husband lived with both parents, which is positively associated. Wives perceive more agreements with husbands' who lived with both parents. Husbands' view of cohesion is also positively associated with wives' conflict frequency, while wives' thoughts of divorce is negatively associated. This means that the more wives think about ending their marriage the more disagreements there are between the couple. The R²s for husbands are: husbands' conflict frequency (81%), drugs and alcohol (43%), wives' conflict frequency (73%) and wives' frequency over drugs and alcohol 19%.

The Significance of Elapsed Time on Newlywed Marriages

To assess the significance of elapsed time on the individual variables and the constructs created for this dissertation I used repeated measures ANOVA. This examined the means of the variables at each wave of the study to determine what if any differences there were over time for individual wives and husbands who answered the statements at all three waves. It compares wave

one to wave two, wave two to wave three, and wave one to wave three. The constructs are described in detail in chapter three. Table 49 shows the changes over time for all of the scaled constructs. Individual analyses were performed for the two conflict constructs to determine how many of the individual statements changed significantly over time. The individual analyses are not shown in the table.

Conflict Frequency

This construct decreases significantly over all three waves. Since higher numbers of this scale mean more agreement a decrease over time means more disagreement, or more conflict. Thus, conflict in marriages increases with time. We see that wives decreased from a mean of $M=4.09$ to 3.89 and husbands decreased from $M=4.04$ to 3.85 . The majority of the individual categories changed significantly over time. The only categories that did not see significant changes were: “my friends,” “my partner’s friends,” both drinking and drug use statements, and (for husbands only) career decisions and dealing with parents and in-laws. All other categories were significant over time for both husbands and wives.

Conflict Behavior

This construct was examined over time in its four subgroups: avoidance, collaboration, hostility and negative emotion. Avoidance is significant for husbands, but we can see from Table 49 that the significance is for an increase from wave one to wave two and then a decrease from wave two to wave three. The changes from wave one to wave three are not significant. While wives showed the same pattern their changes over time were much smaller and not at all significant. We can see, however, that as all the previous analysis pointed out, husbands have a higher mean at each wave.

Table 49 - Mean Comparison for Significance of Elapsed Time for Individual Husbands and Wives over All Three Waves

Variable	N		Wave One		Wave Two		Wave Three		Model p value	
	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H
<i>Conflict Frequency</i>										
Conflict Frequency	467	348	4.09	4.04	3.99***	3.94***	3.89**	3.85**	.000	.000
Conflict Frequency Over Drugs/Alcohol	253	229	4.41	4.35	4.37	4.42	4.35	4.29	.65	.11
<i>Conflict Behavior</i>										
Avoidance	466	379	1.62	1.72	1.63	1.81**	1.61	1.73*	.79	.004
Collaboration	486	348	1.98	2.18	2.05**	2.16	2.03	2.10*	.002	.002
Negative Emotion	433	348	1.77	1.53	1.79	1.55	1.85	1.62	.026	.010
Hostility	467	380	1.5	1.47	1.54	1.50	1.55	1.49	.014	.392
<i>Marital Characteristics</i>										
Divorce Thoughts	432	343	-.236	-.26	-.108	-.19	-.026	.02	.031	.011
Commitment	436	348	4.22	4.24	4.07***	4.16**	3.99**	4.07**	.000	.000
Cohesion	376	307	1.24	.60	.72	.53	.24*	-.24	.045	.112
Satisfaction	432	348	4.21	4.20	4.00***	4.07	3.83***	3.96**	.000	.000
Interaction	519	348	4.42	4.49	4.22***	4.31***	3.96***	4.15***	.000	.000
Interaction w/child	185	132	4.87	4.97	5.48***	5.49***	5.42	5.40	.000	.000

*p< .05, **p < .01, ***p< .001 N=number of participants in each group who responded to all three statements. W=wives, H=husbands

For collaboration, wives have the same avoidance pattern as husbands; an increase in collaboration to wave two, then a decrease from wave two to wave three, for an overall significant change from wave one to wave three. However, the table shows that while wives show an overall *increase* in collaboration over time, husbands *decrease* over time with a significant decline from wave two to wave three and an overall significant reduction from wave one to wave three.

Negative emotion shows a significant change over time for both husbands and wives, but this significance is only for changes from wave one to wave three. We can see that with a mean of 1.77 wives in wave one show higher levels of negative emotion compared to husbands ($M=1.53$). Wives increased to a mean of 1.85 in wave three compared to husbands mean of 1.62.

Changes in hostility are significant for wives, but only from wave one to wave three. However, we must note that while significant the changes in wives means are very small. Hostility for husbands while increasing in wave two, decrease again in wave three, so it is not significant over time at all. For all of the conflict behavior statements, only five of them showed significant changes over time (not shown): “I withdraw to avoid a big fight” (husbands only), “I feel unloved,” “I look at things from my partner’s viewpoint,” “I want to kiss and make up,” and “my partner gets sarcastic” (wives only).

Other constructs that showed significant change over time and help to illustrate how marriages change over time are discussed below.

Divorce thoughts—significantly increases for both husbands and wives from wave one to three, and husbands’ divorce thoughts were significant from wave two to wave three.

Commitment—shows highly significant decreases over time for both husbands and wives. Where husbands and wives start out with similar views of their commitment levels in wave one

(M=4.24, 4.22 respectively), by wave three they are not as similar with wives showing a larger decrease (M=3.99) than husbands (M=4.07).

Cohesion—or respondents' view of their marriage, decreases significantly for wives from wave one (M=1.24) to wave three (M=.24).

Marital satisfaction—is also highly significant but for both husbands and wives, with significant decreases in satisfaction for wives over each wave. However, the difference between wave one and wave two for husbands is not significant.

Interaction—while couple interaction decreases significantly over each wave for both husbands and wives, wives show a larger decline. Interaction with children changes significantly over time as well, but it increases for both husbands and wives from wave one to wave two and then decreases for both leaving an overall significant increase from wave one to wave three. The overall increase may be because there are more people with children in the later waves.

In summary, time appears to have a primarily negative effect on marriages. All of the conflict variables increase over time showing higher levels of conflict and collaboration levels decrease. In addition, most of the marital characteristics examined decrease over time as well. This suggests that the overall quality of these marriages appears to be lower than when they initially married.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Numerous studies examine marital conflict in different capacities resulting in a voluminous literature on the topic. In spite of this, there is little consensus on how to define marital conflict, how important it is in marriage, and what effects there are on marital outcomes, including differences between men and women and how conflict changes over time. There is, however, a conventional wisdom (or perhaps a stereotype) about how marriages begin and progress and where conflict fits into the picture. Two people meet and fall in love or lust. After a period of time they begin shopping for rings, caterers and a venue. They have a wedding, a great party, an amazing trip, and then one day after the honeymoon they wake up and say, “Oh my God what have we done?” Life continues in a linear downward progression from this point with the arrival of children, arguments over in-laws and other things, until one day they say, “there has to be something more than this” and they divorce.

The analyses in this dissertation and the six themes identified in chapter three support this conventional wisdom to a degree, but also expand on this wisdom and what is already known about marital conflict. In particular, it confirms that there is conflict in marriage from the very beginning, and it shows what that conflict looks like and how it changes over time within newly married couples.

In this conclusion, I review the six themes presented and suggest areas of further refinement based on this exploratory examination. To refresh, the six themes outlined in chapter three are:

- 1) *What is the nature of marital conflict? How is it defined? How and why does it manifest? What are possible predictors of conflict?*
- 2) *What are topics of disagreement between couples and how often do they disagree?*
- 3) *How do couples cope behaviorally with conflict, including managing thoughts of divorce?*
- 4) *Does dysfunction, including conflict, experienced in the family of origin impact the amount of conflict in a marriage? Do these experiences also influence how individuals react to conflict situations?*
- 5) *What, if any, role does religiosity, including the choice of a covenant marriage have on the topics of disagreement and the frequency of disagreements.*
- 6) *How does conflict change over time? In what causal direction does it grow? What factors, if any, contribute to conflict increasing or decreasing over time? Do the topics of disagreement change over time? Are their differences over time between those who chose a covenant marriage and those who did not?*

While it can be said that this work places more emphasis on the analysis and less on the theoretical interpretations of the analysis, I have attempted to utilize the theories outlined in chapter two as a guide to how the analysis was conducted and how the results are portrayed. For the major analyses, I have paid attention to the influences on and origins of conflict discussed in the literature. Efforts were made to control for many of these influences in the most methodologically sound way possible (Kenny et al. 2006).

Main Findings

The focus of this work is on two broad research questions—where does conflict come from and does conflict transform newlywed relationships? Under these two main research areas six themes were developed and explored. To answer these questions three theoretical viewpoints -- intergenerational transmission perspective, balance theory, and symbolic interactionism -- have been employed to develop the themes and analyses and to organize the findings.

This dissertation is interested in how marital conflict changes over time; and what these changes look like for men and women. One important aspect of this work is that it specifically offers a broader definition of marital conflict, assesses what conflict looks like at the beginning of marriage, how it changes over time, and how it transforms marriage while keeping in mind that conflict, and its management, is constantly evolving. A new year, day, or moment can bring more or less conflict to a couple's life, where something that was not a disagreement the previous day is one today. This study also offers a comparison of differences between covenant and standard couples and individuals, and contributes to the debate summarized by Amato et al. (2007) regarding whether changes in marriage are more likely to fall under the marital decline or the marital resilience perspective (chapter two). While this dissertation is primarily an exploratory analysis of marital conflict, it does contribute to the over arching discussion of effects of conflict on marriage and marital outcomes.

To that end I merge the theory, findings, and relevant literature into a conclusion that highlights the contributions of this work to the expansive discussion of marriage in the disciplines of sociology and psychology and the more narrow focus of marital conflict. Below I discuss the findings as they contribute to the six major themes presented in chapter one and expanded upon in

chapter two. Based on the analyses conducted in chapters four and five, each theme is discussed separately below. Because the themes of changes over time (theme six) and differences between covenants and standards (theme five) overlap all thematic areas, these two themes are interspersed with the four remaining themes and are not set apart.

Theme 1) *What is the nature of marital conflict? How is it defined?* The second main part of this theme is p Following observations by Gottman (1994) and others and using items from the Marriage Matters survey, conflict was first broken into two separate categories, conflict frequency and conflict behavior. The frequency of disagreements is measured by fourteen items (chapter three), such as disagreements about parents and in-laws, handling family finances, sex life and others. Conflict behavior is measured by eleven attitudinal and behavioral reactions to conflictual situations, such as withdrawing to avoid a fight, getting sarcastic or hostile, or trying to find the middle ground. This division is supported by showing that conflict behavior and frequency are not the same thing and that each is a contributor to the other in some way. While this initial paragraph identifies how conflict is defined in this project, the next few paragraphs summarize the nature of the conflict found in these couples without taking away from the other themes and the more specific discussion of the finding.

Overall, this project shows that there are indeed two distinct types of conflict. While each are often associated with the other, one can be present without the other. More often this is the case with conflict frequencies. While conflict frequency most often seems to be instigated by situations within the marriage, or external contributors, conflict behavior seems more often to be a reaction or response to some disagreement. However, the data do show that conflict behavior can be an

influence on frequency. This could happen if some external factor affects someone's mood or behavior and the outlet for the negative behavior is the spouse.

While there is a clear designation of topics that couples disagree about and these do change over time, they do not all change over time. Some topics are issues at the beginning of the marriage and remain so. There are differences in the two types of conflict with regard to what predicts conflict. Some sources examined in this dissertation seem more likely to predict conflict frequency while others predict conflict behavior. However, both types of conflict are significantly related to other changes in the marriage such as decreases in marital quality, especially in the third wave. The decreases in marital quality are noted in chapter five, and are significant over all three waves.

There are definitive gender differences in the types of things couples argue about and the strategies utilized to deal with conflict situations. Positive conflict management tools decrease over time unless they are reciprocated. While there are some interesting differences between covenant and standard couples and individuals, the choice of a covenant marriage is not significant when all other variables are factored in. The changes in both conflict and marital quality suggest that conflict is indeed a contributor to transformations in marriages over time.

Theme 2) *What do married couples disagree about?* This topic is often discussed among marriage researchers, with little consensus on the exact issues that couples disagree about the most. Based on the frequency and crosstab analysis discussed in chapters four and five, I identified the top five most disagreed upon topics in each wave and present them in order from the highest percentage of couples where at least one member reported that there were disagreements over the issue. Only the top five topics are offered in this discussion for simplification and if there is a tie in the percentage of couples' responses both topics are listed.

In wave one the top five areas of disagreement were 1) their parents and in-laws, 2) how leisure time is spent, 3) household division of labor, 4) handling family finances, and 5) friends (chapter four). By wave three, five years into the marriage, the top five topics are, 1) their sex life, 2) parents and in-laws, 3) household division of labor, 4) how leisure time is spent, and 5) showing physical affection (chapter five). While three of these categories are repeated, the two new additions, sex life and showing physical affection, are also the two categories with the largest change over time for all couples. The percentage of couples reporting disagreements over these two factors alone increased by 20 percentage points and 17 percentage points respectively.

The very sizable increase in conflict over sex and physical intimacy is astonishing and indicative of how dramatically marriages transform even in the span of five years. Given the arguments in the literature that marriages have become more individualistic, unhappiness in this area could be a large contributor to a couple's decision to end their marriage.

When separating the couples by covenant and standard marriages, the most disagreed upon topics in wave three differ somewhat between the two groups. While both still disagree about sex, their parents and in-laws, and how household chores are divided, these items are not in the same order of importance. To make a top five topics of disagreement we need to add that covenant couples disagree about how they spend their leisure time and how physical affection is shown and standard couples disagree over money and child rearing. Both groups of couples increased significantly in the frequency of disagreements over sex and how physical affection is shown, but even with the large increase in disagreements over these issues, neither of these issues are in the number one spot for covenant couples. Instead, covenant couples list sex as their fourth most disagreed upon topic, with only the amount of time they spend together having a lower percentage.

To further breakdown the issues, I examined individual responses for men and women to see who is disagreeing more (chapter five). For all individual categories, sex is the most disagreed-about topic, with standard men the most likely to report this as an area of conflict. Standard women report this as an issue more than both covenant men and women. Interestingly, exactly the same percentages of women also reported disagreements over parents and in-laws, making these topics tied as the most disagreed upon topics for women in both covenant and standard marriages.

Repeated measures ANOVAs were run on the individual statements and the frequency scale, and showed that the increases over time were indeed significant for individual husbands and wives, for most of the individual topic statements and that the construct as a whole increased significantly over time (chapter five). From the top five categories in wave one the only topic not significant over time were disagreements over “my friends” and “my partner’s friends.”

Theme 3) *How do couples cope behaviorally with conflict?* In wave one, all couples were more likely to agree that they practiced collaborative behaviors with all three statements in the top five most agreed upon behaviors. The statements “I feel tense and anxious” and “I withdraw to avoid a fight” complete the top five behavior strategies in wave one. By wave three. “I withdraw to avoid a fight” is replaced by “I get sarcastic.” This suggests that conflict behavior changed over time. As a reminder, couples can *agree* that a behavior is true of their marriage, agree it is not true of their marriage or *disagree* between them whether it is true or not. For analyzing conflict frequency it made sense to add the couples who agreed that something was a source of conflict with those who disagreed to get a total with at least one member reporting disagreement.

While this methodology could be utilized with conflict behavior as well, it became clear that it made more sense to examine couples who *agree* that the behavior is true and those who

disagree instead of adding them together. This is because the total number of couples with at least one member reporting the behavior as true of the marriage (agree and disagree added together) was almost the same from wave one to wave three. If we stopped there we would assume that conflict behavior did not change over time. However, a closer examination showed that the number of couples who agreed a behavior was true or not true and the number of couples who disagreed changed significantly. For example, if couple “A” agreed that there was no hostility in their marriage in wave one, yet disagreed about this in wave three, this would indicate an increase in conflict for at least one member of this couple. Something changed in this marriage so that the couples no longer agreed on the statement.

Focusing only on the total number of couples responding to the “agree this behavior is true” and the “disagree” categories causes the changes to be lost because a similar number of couples responded. However, shifting attention to those who agree with each other *and* those who disagree separately shows us that many couples changed their position.

Specifically, in wave three, more couples agree that they practice collaborative behaviors and fewer couples disagree. When breaking these numbers down between covenant and standard marriages we see that it is covenant couples who are more likely to agree that the collaborative behaviors are true, while higher percentages of standard couples disagree. While fewer of both groups of couples reported disagreements over collaborative behaviors from wave one to wave three, covenant couples showed the largest decrease in disagreement. This could suggest that covenant couples have a higher view of their marriage from a collaboration perspective.

However, when analyzing the negative conflict behavior statements, covenant couples are more likely to report a change from wave one to wave three in the agreement that a behavior is not

true. This means that more couples reported that the sarcasm and hostility statements were not true of their marriage in wave one than in wave three. This indicates an *increase* in negative conflict behaviors. Further, more covenant couples reported this change than standards, which could mean they had a more optimistic view when they first married. When looking at the number of couples who disagree, more covenant couples report higher numbers in three of the four areas of the hostility construct. Higher percentages of covenant couples also report more disagreement in both of the two avoidance statements and one of the negative emotion statements.

These differences over time show that covenant couples changed their view of the behavior from wave one to wave three from agreeing the statement is not true, to disagreeing between them. In contrast, more standard couples changed from agreeing it is not true to agreeing it is *now* true of their marriage. This still indicates some optimism in the covenant couples, because one party still believes the behavior is not true. However, the disagreement category may contribute to more conflict because the parties have a difference of opinion.

The largest change over time for the covenant couples are the eight points for the “I get hostile” statement and the “I feel unloved” statement. However, even with these two significant reductions over time, more standard couples *agree* that the behavior is true of their marriage in three out of the four hostility variables, the “I feel tense and anxious” statement in the negative emotion construct, and both of the avoidance statements. Interestingly, more covenant couples report disagreement about whether physical violence is true of their marriage than standard couples.

Even though by wave three there were several categories where more covenant couples reported disagreement over certain frequency topics, overall, depending on the weight each conflict

behavior has within the marriage, covenant couples do still appear to have a higher view of their marriages. One important consideration in interpreting these findings is there are more covenant couples by wave three. This could indicate more of a commitment, or that the two-year waiting period for divorce gives the illusion that these couples are more committed. This might suggest that the standard couples with the more serious issues already divorced, separated, or left the study for some other reason, or merely that covenant couples were more likely to have both husbands and wives respond.

When breaking these findings down to the individual level we must remember that we lose the “couple” aspect of the data. There is no longer any “agreement” or “disagreement.” The individual reports are merely suggestive of what may be going on in the marriages. In wave three, higher percentages of women report that all four of the hostility statements, both of the negative emotion statements and all three of the collaboration statements are true of their marriages. Higher percentages of men report that the two avoidance statements are true of their marriages. All of these reports either increased from wave one to wave three or stayed the same. Women are also more likely to report violence in the marriage. With a few exceptions noted in chapter five, there are higher numbers for standard individuals than covenant individuals for the negative conflict behaviors.

Repeated measures ANOVAs (chapter five) showed mixed results on the conflict behavior construct as a whole. Because this construct was broken into four subcategories for all statistical analyses, each subcategory is discussed separately. Avoidance increased significantly from wave one to wave two for men, and then decreased significantly from wave two to wave three. This put the wave three means almost identical to the wave one means. In fact, the results of this analysis

showed a triangle effect for avoidance among the men. This triangular pattern is noted for women also, but is not significant. As expected, the means for women were much lower which supports the previous finding that more men report this behavior.

Men decrease in collaborative behaviors over each wave for an overall significant linear decrease, while women increase significantly from wave one to wave two and then decrease from wave two to wave three which becomes an overall significant decrease from wave one to wave three. This shows that women try to be more collaborative initially, but when their husbands do not respond with the same they stop trying.

Negative emotion increased significantly over all three waves for both men and women, with women having a higher mean level. This indicates that women experienced negative emotion more than men did. Women showed a significant increase in hostility from wave one to wave three, but it is not significant from wave one to two, or two to three. Men showed this same pattern, but their changes over time were not significant.

Sources/Predictors of Conflict

Thoughts of Divorce

Frequencies show that thoughts of divorce increase over time in both men and women, and repeated measures analysis show that these increases are significant. In addition, we saw a negative correlation between divorce thoughts and hostility, negative emotion, and conflict frequency that virtually disappears when all of the covariates are included in the model with the one exception of wives' conflict frequency.

This suggests that other variables have a stronger effect on conflict frequency and behavior and supports the premise that thinking about ending a marriage is more likely the result of conflict

than a contributor to it. However, this finding is limited by the way the questions were worded and constructed. Future research should consider the possibility that someone could start thinking about divorce for any number of reasons, i.e., met someone else, and that these thoughts influence the way they now interact with their spouse.

Conflict Frequency

To summarize, the first three models of the four-model analysis discussed in chapter four were designed to test the primary variables of interest (i.e. family dysfunction, thoughts of divorce and religiosity) and to test the relationship between to the two conflict constructs. These models showed a strong reciprocal relationship between husbands and wives' conflict frequency. This effect remained strong even with the inclusion of the conflict behavior variables, but disappeared with the inclusion of the other covariates included in the analysis. There were also significant relationships between conflict frequency and some of the conflict behavior variables, most notably hostility and collaboration. However, again, these relationships are no longer significant in the full model.

The only correlates to reach significance in the full model (chapter four) for wives is the wives' view that she and her husband attend religious services together. For husbands' conflict frequency, only two variables reached significance. Husbands seem to have more disagreements with white wives, and as wives' father's approval of the marriage increases there are more disagreements between the couple. For conflict frequency over drugs and alcohol there were no significant findings for husbands, but for wives both the husbands' and the wives' levels of religiosity reached significance. In addition, if the husband reports higher levels of interaction, is more educated, and the wife views the division of household labor as fair to her husband, then

wives perceive more agreements between them. However, as husbands' income increases wives report more disagreements.

The reciprocal relationship between husbands and wives' conflict frequency remains in wave three for the initial three models. Husbands' conflict frequency is influenced by their own collaboration with more collaboration increasing his view of agreements between them. Whereas, his own perception of hostility decreases agreement. Wives' conflict frequency is positively influenced by her own collaboration, and negatively influenced by her own hostility and negative emotion. However, in this wave there are many more significant findings for conflict related variables in the full model, most likely because of the increased levels of conflict noted in the previous section.

Husbands' conflict frequency five years into the marriage is influenced by hostility, both wives and their own. In an interesting anomaly, the wives' hostility increases husbands' perceptions of agreement, whereas the husbands' hostility increases husbands' perceptions of disagreement. Wives' religiosity was again found to be a significant influence on husbands' conflict frequency. Taken together these findings could suggest that husbands are giving in to their wives more. This is supported by the significant avoidance findings discussed below, since the variable "just give in" is one of the two avoidance statements.

Conflict Behavior

The three initial models showed a strong reciprocal relationship between husbands' and wives' negative emotion, avoidance, and hostility in wave one. However, this relationship did not remain when the other variables, most notably, the marital characteristic variables were included in the full model. In the full model, husbands' negative emotion is influenced by wives' family

dysfunction and the wives and husbands' view of family of origin income at age 16. The other contributor to husbands' negative emotion is the husbands' view of commitment, which has a negative relationship indicating that as commitment goes up husbands feel more loved and less tense and anxious. Husbands who view household tasks as fair to their wife are likely to be less collaborative. Other predictors of collaboration are husband's income with increases in income raising collaboration levels. If the wife's friends approve of the marriage, the husband is more collaborative, but if the husband's father approves he becomes less collaborative.

By wave three, the changes in behavior allowed some of the reciprocal relationships noted in wave one to remain significant when all other variables were controlled for, most notably for hostility and avoidance. The negative reciprocal relationship for avoidance is the only significant influence on husbands' avoidance in wave three. However, for wives' avoidance husbands' collaboration is also a factor as well as his conflict frequency over drugs and alcohol, wives' and husbands' religiosity, wives' view of the fairness of household division of labor to her and her education. Most of these are negative relationships except husbands' collaboration and wives' religiosity.

Wives' have no significant factors affecting their collaboration, but several factors in wave three influence their negative emotion, most notably the positive association with husbands' negative emotion. More agreement between the husband and wife lowers wives' negative emotion. In addition, the more satisfied and committed to the marriage the wife is the less negative emotion she experiences. If the husband is committed to the marriage, the wife experiences less negative emotion, but if the husband views the household division of labor as fair to himself, the wife experiences more negative emotions.

In addition, conflict frequency remained a significant influence on both husbands' and wives' hostility. Other significant factors positively related to husbands' hostility were the wives' view of her family income at age 16, wives' view of marital satisfaction, husband's view of interaction with children, and if the wife's mother approves of the marriage. These findings could indicate that wives, and their mothers, may have more expectations for the husband to live up to based on the way she was raised. Wives who are satisfied with their marriage may have more expectations of their husband to keep them satisfied. If the husband interacts with the children more the wife may feel threatened as found by Ellestad and Stets (1998). The wife's mother approving in the marriage could mean that she is more involved in their relationship and thereby could be a contributor to hostility between the husband and wife.

Theme 4) *What are the effects of dysfunction experienced in the family of origin on conflict in marriage?* Dysfunction experienced in the family of origin has an effect on conflict behavior in the beginning of the marriage, but its effect is reduced to non-significance by wave three. In wave one, the family dysfunction construct remains significant with the inclusion of the other variables on husbands' negative emotion and avoidance. This suggests that wives who experienced high levels of dysfunction in their family of origin may behave in negative ways such as hostile or sarcastic, which influences the husbands' levels of negative emotion. In addition, wives' view of their family income at age 16 remains significant on husbands' negative emotion, avoidance and hostility, possibly indicating that wives are not happy with their current situations.

By wave three, the wives' view of her income at age 16 is the only family history variable to reach significance with the inclusion of the other variables, but only on husbands' hostility and wives' negative emotion. Clearly, some wives are still unhappy with their current situation.

Conflict frequency was not significantly affected by dysfunction experienced in the family of origin.

Theme 5) *What are the effects of religiosity on marital conflict?* This dissertation, primarily following Nock et al. (2006), and Curtis and Ellison (2002), tested the effects of religiosity on conflict frequency and behavior. Curtis and Ellison's finding that couples without the same theological beliefs have more arguments especially if the wife is more religious than her husband was partially supported since wives' religiosity remained significant on husbands' conflict frequency with all of the other variables controlled for. However, in this sample religiosity appeared to have more of an effect on some of the conflict behavior since both husbands' and wives' religiosity remained significant on husbands' negative emotion and wives' avoidance in wave three.

While this study did not specifically compare the effects on religiosity on exact topics of disagreement it did confirm that wives' view of attendance reached significance in wave one when all the other covariates were included. However, it no longer reached significance by wave three.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Symbolic Interactionism

The symbolic meanings applied to certain things, words, behaviors or other actions could influence how conflict is perceived by a married couple. As Harris (2006) stresses, meaning is extremely important. However, this data set contained no information on how the couples in this sample defined conflict. Because conflict has shown to be an important factor in these marriages, it would have been quite useful to know the meanings the couples could supply about what is conflict to them, including what weight or level of importance these areas have in their marriage.

John Gottman's Balance Theory

Gottman's theories of conflict, developed primarily using observational methods with small sample sizes, clearly shows up in this highly quantitative analysis, most notably the reciprocity of the negative behaviors that were constructed as closely as possible to his theoretical concepts of defensiveness, contempt, criticism and stonewalling. While this study is not a complete replication of Gottman's process cascade or "four horsemen of the apocalypse" work, it does support these theories with a larger sample and quantitative analysis.

It is evident that negative conflict behaviors have a reciprocal effect, meaning that if one spouse behaves negatively the other responds the same way. The negative conflict behaviors also have an effect on conflict frequency reciprocally, meaning that high levels of disagreements leads to high negative emotion and hostility, and these behaviors lead to more disagreements. While this study might not be able to answer a "which came first" scenario between disagreements and negative behaviors conclusively, it is apparent there is a strong relationship, with an implication that more often it is likely to be a disagreement over some issue that leads someone to respond negatively. This dissertation did not analyze the effects of these conflict behaviors on divorce as Gottman strongly implies in his own work.

Intergenerational Transmission Perspective

Historical reports of conflict experienced in the family of origin were used to support the intergenerational transmission perspective as an explanation for where conflict may originate for newlyweds. It became abundantly clear that those who experienced dysfunction in the family of origin did show more negative conflict behaviors, in particular hostility. Use of the intergenerational transmission perspective is certainly justified as there are strong indications that

one learns to deal with conflict first in their family of origin, and unless some intervention occurs these behaviors are transmitted to the new marriage. However, this dissertation does reveal that these behaviors can change over time with couples learning to either accept or manage them, or allow them to increase and become more destructive.

The full model illustrates that husband's negative emotion is correlated with wives' exposure to dysfunction in her family of origin. Wives' frequency and behaviors were not influenced by family dysfunction when other variables, such as marital characteristic/quality variables were added into the model. These findings support those previously found by Amato and DeBoer (2001) and others. Family of origin dysfunction appears to have more of an impact on conflict behavior than on conflict frequency. As Chinitz and Brown presented, the intergenerational transmission perspective is also useful to show how religiosity becomes important to newlywed relationships since these beliefs are also transmitted over generations.

Practical Implications

This dissertation set out to understand what conflict looks like in a sample of newlywed couples and, once conflict was identified, how that conflict changed over time and whether or not the conflict transformed the marriage. It is clear from studying the conflict in these relationships that conflict indeed does appear at the beginning of the marriage and transforms, or changes, marital relationships. The overall decrease in all of the marital quality variables coupled with the overall increase in marital conflict supports this transformation observation. Further, without some intervention, such as conflict management, many of these couples could choose to dissolve their marriages. Although not new, this study confirms that the management of conflict is crucial to helping couples maintain their marriages. While not the only contributor to the possibility of a

divorce, we can see by the dramatic increases in conflict frequency and conflict behaviors that conflict is one area where interventions may help couples stabilize their marriage, if only for a brief time. This might help the couple stay together which helps society by creating a less traumatic marital environment for children and adults. Raising healthy and happy children who can thrive in a safe and loving environment should be the goal of any society.

The dramatic increase in disagreements over sex and physical intimacy is an important factor for any practitioner hoping to offer interventions for couples to deal with conflict.

Following Amato et al. (2007) this dissertation can contribute to the discussion surrounding whether marriage is declining or merely changing, and as they concluded with their own work, aspects of this dissertation support both viewpoints. Increased levels of conflict and decreased marital quality could suggest that many of these marriages are in decline. However, most of the changes in conflict, while significant statistically, are relatively small, and could indicate that the marriages, while conflictual, are resilient because they have not yet dissolved. A more detailed view of the impact of the conflict discovered in this exploratory analysis may allow for a broader discussion of the actual contribution to any decline in marital values.

Limitations

While shedding new light on some areas, most notably the dramatic increase in disagreements over sex and physical affection between married couples as the years go by, and the changes over time in negative conflict behavior, this study has several important limitations to be considered. First, because these data were gathered from one state in the Southern part of the country, the couples in this study are not representative of the population of the United States as a whole. The culture where these couples live may influence the findings. Second, covenant couples

are vastly over represented even compared to the population in the state of Louisiana. This over-representation may have an effect on the results even though the variable itself was not a primary consideration in all analyses. Thirdly, this sample, being newlyweds, is comprised primarily of young people entering marriage for the first time. This could influence the finding regarding the increase in conflict over sex and intimacy because this issue may be more important to one age group than another.

Analysis spanning more than five years from the beginning of the marriage would help expand upon the issue regarding disagreements over sex and physical intimacy. While many studies do examine this area in longer term marriages, few, if any studies, examine this issue from the beginning of the marriage and follow the same couple over time with both the husband and wife providing input. Because numerous researchers suggest that any number of factors may influence the frequency of sexual intimacy (health issues, children, hours at paid labor, unhappiness with division of labor between the couple), a more detailed examination over a longer time period would help to provide more clarity and insight in this area. It would also help to have a larger sample continuously over time. It is important to note that this study examines only those heterosexual individuals who were legally married and therefore does not attempt to make any generalizations regarding other relationships such as cohabitational, dating, same-sex unions, or single individuals.

While many of the findings are interesting and do contribute to the literature on marital conflict, this study focuses on a specific population in a specific geographical area. However, the findings of this dissertation do allow for many suggestions for future research, including but not limited to, asking more questions about what conflict means to the respondents. This would allow

for a definition of what the couple sees as conflict. Without this important contribution, these findings can only suggest that “conflict” increases in marriages over time, even though what is conflict to one person, or couple, may not be to another. In addition, this study did not address whether these specific areas of conflict lead any couples to dissolve their marriages as implied by the work of John Gottman. Future research using this specific methodology should analyze the couples who divorce to see if Gottman’s predictions toward divorce are accurate for this sample. While this data set does provide the opportunity to examine couples who divorced, the number of couples who responded is very small and would be beneficial only to provide suggestive generalizations.

The original study included qualitative interviews for a portion of the participants regarding aspects of the respondents’ marriage in general, and more specifically their beliefs in covenant marriage. It would be helpful to compare the quantitative answers and the interviews to assess the historical recollection of the participants since the interviews did not take place at the same time as the surveys. Having both extensive surveys and in-depth interviews from the same participants is not common and could be a beneficial contribution to the reliability and validity of both methods.

Discussion/Conclusion

This dissertation set out to offer a broader definition of marital conflict. While disagreements remain a good measure of possible conflict in relationships, disagreements alone do not tell the whole story. Breaking conflict into two dimensions provided a more in-depth picture of how conflict changes over time within relationships. This is especially important when considering the effect of the frequency of disagreements on the reactions and behaviors of the respondents, as well as how conflict may influence or effect overall marital quality. More than anything it supports

the opinions of several researchers that conflict should always be examined as its own construct instead of incorporated into overall marital quality.

The data used in this study provides an interesting look at conflict and how it changes over time among continuously married couples. Using conflict frequency and behavior as both dependent and independent variables helps provide insight into whether certain aspects of conflict “cause” other aspects or the reverse. Using marital quality variables as independent covariates also allows us to see that conflict may not always contribute to marital instability, but that negative aspects of marital quality may sometimes contribute to increases in conflict. The decrease in these marital quality variables as discussed in chapter five could help contribute to more disagreements and more negative behavior from unhappy people.

As with most research, the exact causality cannot be specifically determined with any certainty; however, the suggestions, especially regarding a person’s thoughts regarding ending their marriage, should lead future researchers to refine questions to more accurately “get to the heart of this matter,” to use a very appropriate colloquialism. Because it may often be the “heart” that inspires conflict situations, it seems likely that if people are asked specific questions about when they started thinking about divorce and what prompted it, a clearer picture could develop to explain the relationship between marital conflict and thoughts of divorce.

The finding that sex is the most disagreed upon topic for both men and women by year five, while not totally surprising, is a bit shocking especially when factoring in the degree of increase for this topic. The current study did not attempt to determine who is doing the complaining. However, in a recent publication using the same data set, Dzara (2010) focused exclusively on the frequency of sexual intercourse as a predictor of marital disruption. In this

analysis, Dzara (2010) found that the husband's dissatisfaction in this area has a consistent positive effect on marital disruption. Applying this finding to the current study suggests that husbands are more likely to be the one initiating disagreements about the frequency of sexual intimacy. This could also suggest an explanation for wives' avoidance. If the men are trying to initiate physical intimacy and the wife does not reciprocate, this could translate into avoidance on the wives part. Whereas, as many other researchers found, male avoidance is more likely to be associated with disagreements in other areas, such as their wives asking for help with household tasks.

Because there were significantly more covenant couples reporting disagreements about how leisure time is spent than about sex and showing of physical affection, a more detailed examination of these couples might help explain this difference between the two groups. Understanding what "leisure time" means to covenant couples might help answer this question. Theoretically, if covenant couples consider church attendance "leisure time," and since joint attendance at church services is significantly correlated with conflict frequency, this finding might make more sense.

Even though religiosity in general did have some impact on conflict frequency and behavior, the specific choice of covenant marriage did not significantly influence any conflict issues. Thus, the choice of a covenant marriage is unlikely to act as a buffer for conflict. In fact, the two-year waiting period and other requirements could act as inspiration for some conflict if one party wants to divorce and is stymied by these rules.

While collaborative behaviors were found to lower conflict, as suggested by other researchers, these behaviors only lower conflict if reciprocated, and were no longer significant by wave three when all other covariates were controlled for. It is more likely that general overall life

experiences influence their ability to manage conflict and not whether they are in a covenant marriage or not. The perception that covenant marriages may be less conflictual could not be confirmed in this study because more covenant wives suggest that they get hostile, and more covenant couples report physical violence in the relationship. The differences between the two types of couples would need more specific analysis to determine whether one type of marriage is more conflictual than the other.

While the premise that conflict experienced in the family of origin was supported, the impact seemed to be stronger in the beginning of the marriage than later. This is likely because, as Amato and DeBoer suggested, over time couples develop a method of dealing with conflict, whether positive or negative that may supersede the behaviors learned in the family of origin.

Marriages are as complex as the individuals that comprise them, and are very difficult to understand using quantitative data alone. As Amato et al. suggested in their book *Alone Together*, we must continue to combine methodologies in order to obtain richer information regarding marriage and marital outcomes. Trying to study marriages with only quantitative data does not provide us with a completely accurate portrayal of how important disagreements are to the marriage because too much is lost by not knowing the meaning applied by the couple. As is stressed throughout this dissertation a disagreement does not necessarily mean conflict to all couples. Some couples can “disagree” over many things and still not *feel* as if they have been conflictual. It is not until one of them, or someone else, applies meaning to the situation as conflict that it becomes conflict.

For example, the words, conflict, disagreement, quarrel, and argument, are all in the Marriage Matters survey with no definition qualifying any difference intended for the use of one

word over another. The original researchers might have had a definitive reason for the word choices, or were merely trying not to be repetitive. To the respondent, each of these words may mean completely different things, or they may mean the same thing. Therefore, in examining constructs such as “conflict” word usage in the questionnaire is essential since different meanings may be implied with each word. A comparison of respondents’ answers to questions using the different words might help illustrate a distinction, or similarity, in meaning.

Returning to the two major questions outlined in this dissertation, I have presented a definition of conflict and outlined what it looks like in these marriages. However, this examination did raise many new questions. I have also shown that conflict is definitely a contributor to reductions in marital quality and that the two types of conflict outlined in this dissertation contribute to overall all increases in conflict and decreases in marital quality for a significant proportion of the couples in this study. This demonstrates that conflict does indeed have the ability to transform a marriage and the couples’ view of the marriage over time. However, since conflict is merely one piece of a complex puzzle that is marriage, we must remember that there is often more than meets the eye.

**APPENDIX A:
SURVEY QUESTIONS**

Independent Variables

The Maintenance Variable

About how often do you personally	All the time					Never
Leave the house after a fight?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Think that things between you and your partner are going well?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Confide in your partner?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Regret that you got married?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Quarrel?	0	1	2	3	4	5
Get on each other's nerves?	0	1	2	3	4	5

Recoded c and d to go the same direction as others, so that the higher the number the stronger the marriage and the more likely that maintenance is going on. Did not include Consider ending your marriage, used that in divorce thoughts variable.

The Cohesion (Marital View) Variable

Here is a list of statements that people sometimes make about their marriages. For each statement, please indicate if you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree.

	Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
My partner and I get closer every day	5	4	3	2	1
My partner is my best friend	5	4	3	2	1
My partner likes to do things without me	5	4	3	2	1
I like to do things without my partner	5	4	3	2	1
My partner and I live pretty separate lives	5	4	3	2	1
Our happiest times together will be in the future	5	4	3	2	1
Our happiest times together were in the past	5	4	3	2	1
Our happiest times together are right now	5	4	3	2	1
I understand my partner's feelings	5	4	3	2	1
I admire my partner	5	4	3	2	1
I love my partner	5	4	3	2	1

Recoded c, d, e, h to indicate positive direction so that the higher the number the stronger the marriage, the more cohesion.

The Marital Satisfaction Variable

In every marriage, there are some things that are very good and other things that could use some improvement. Right now, how satisfied would you say you are with each of the following aspects of your marriage?

	Very Dissatisfied				Very Satisfied
The physical intimacy you experience	1	2	3	4	5
The love you experience	1	2	3	4	5
How conflicts are resolved	1	2	3	4	5
The degree of fairness in the marriage	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of communication	1	2	3	4	5
Economic well-being	1	2	3	4	5
The emotional intimacy you experience	1	2	3	4	5
Your overall relationship with your partner	1	2	3	4	5

Interaction Variable

How often do you and your partner do each of the following things? (Leave a question blank if it does not apply to you and your partner.)

	Every Day	Several times a week	Weekly	Some times	Rarely	Never
Kiss	6	5	4	3	2	1
Engage in outside interests together	6	5	4	3	2	1
Have a meal together at home	6	5	4	3	2	1
Have a stimulating exchange of ideas	6	5	4	3	2	1
Laugh together at something	6	5	4	3	2	1
Watch TV together	6	5	4	3	2	1
Calmly discuss an issue	6	5	4	3	2	1
Have an argument about something	6	5	4	3	2	1
Work together on a project	6	5	4	3	2	1
Have sexual relations	6	5	4	3	2	1
Visit your relatives	6	5	4	3	2	1
Visit your partner's relatives	6	5	4	3	2	1
Spend an evening with friends	6	5	4	3	2	1
Go to a bar or tavern together	6	5	4	3	2	1
Go bowling, golfing, or other sports	6	5	4	3	2	1
Just spend time alone with each other	6	5	4	3	2	1
Go out to a restaurant together	6	5	4	3	2	1
Talk about our child(ren)	6	5	4	3	2	1
Spend time with our child(ren)	6	5	4	3	2	1

Divorce Thoughts Variables

In every marriage, there are some things that are very good and other things that could use some improvement. Right now, how satisfied would you say you are with each of the following aspects of your marriage?

About how often do you personally	All the					Never
	time					
Consider ending your marriage?	0	1	2	3	4	5

It is always difficult to predict what will happen in a marriage, but realistically, what do you think the chances are that you and your partner will eventually separate or divorce?

Very Low.....Very High

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Presence of Children

(For Wave One Calculation) Altogether, how many children of each age currently live here with you and your partner in this household? Count all biological, adopted, or step children. If none, enter zero.

Age of Child or children	Number living in this household
1 year old or younger	_____ (enter zero if none)
2 to 4 years old	_____ (enter zero if none)
5 to 9 years old	_____ (enter zero if none)
10 to 15 years old	_____ (enter zero if none)
16 to 18 years old	_____ (enter zero if none)

(For Wave Two and Three Calculation) Just to make sure we have this right, are there any children at all who are living here with you and your partner?

1 No (Please skip to the next page)
0 Yes

Religiosity Variables

I3 (C1 in W2 and W3). About how often do you attend religious services?

- 0 Never
- 1 Less than once a year
- 2 About once or twice a year
- 3 Several times a year
- 4 About once a month
- 5 Nearly every week
- 6 Every week
- 7 Several times a week

I5 (C3 in W2 and W3). About how often do you pray?

- 5 Several times a day
- 4 Once a day
- 3 Several times a week
- 2 Once a week
- 1 Less than once a week
- 0 Never

I7 (C5 in W2 and W3). How important is religious faith in your life?

- 5 Extremely important
- 4 Very important
- 3 Somewhat important
- 2 Not too important
- 1 Not important at all

I8 (C6 in W2 and W3). How important is religious faith in your partner's life?

- 5 Extremely important
- 4 Very important
- 3 Somewhat important
- 2 Not too important
- 1 Not important at all

Family Dysfunction Variable

Were any of the following a problem or source of conflict in your family when you were growing up?

	Major Problem	Minor Problem	Not a Problem	Don't Know
Violence between your parents	3	2	1	0
Violence directed at you	3	2	1	0
Sexual abuse	3	2	1	0
Severe depression	3	2	1	0
Other mental illness	3	2	1	0
Alcoholism	3	2	1	0
Drug abuse	3	2	1	0
Foul and abusive language	3	2	1	0
Periods of unemployment	3	2	1	0
Not enough money to make ends meet	3	2	1	0
Serious physical illness	3	2	1	0
Not enough love in the home	3	2	1	0
High conflict between your parents	3	2	1	0
Name calling and sarcasm	3	2	1	0

L8. Thinking about the time when you were 16 years old, compared with American families in general then, would you say your family's income was

- 1 Far below average
- 2 Below average
- 3 Average
- 4 Above average
- 5 Far above average

L3. When you were about 16 years old, did you live with both of your natural parents, just your mother, just your father, or with someone else?

- 4 Both natural parents
- 3 Mother only
- 2 Father only
- 1 Some other living arrangement (such as, mother and step-father, with other relatives, etc.).

Social Network

Now that you and your partner have been married for a while, do these people generally approve or disapprove of your current marriage?

	Strongly Approve	Approve	Disapprove	Strongly Disapprove	Does not apply	Don't know
Your father	4	3	2	1	9	0
Your mother	4	3	2	1	9	0
Your partner's father	4	3	2	1	9	0
Your partner's mother	4	3	2	1	9	0
Your brothers and sisters	4	3	2	1	9	0
Your partner's brothers and sisters	4	3	2	1	9	0
Your friends	4	3	2	1	9	0
Your partner's friends	4	3	2	1	9	0

Dependent Variables

Conflict Frequency Variables

Please indicate the extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Sometimes Disagree	Frequently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
Handling family finances	5	4	3	2	1	0
How we spend our leisure time	5	4	3	2	1	0
Religious matters	5	4	3	2	1	0
Showing physical affection	5	4	3	2	1	0
My friends	5	4	3	2	1	0
My partner's friends	5	4	3	2	1	0
Our sex life	5	4	3	2	1	0
Philosophy of life	5	4	3	2	1	0
Dealing with parents and in-laws	5	4	3	2	1	0
Our aims and goals and things believed important	5	4	3	2	1	0
The amount of time we spend together	5	4	3	2	1	0
Who does what around the house	5	4	3	2	1	0
How to raise children	5	4	3	2	1	0
Whether to have children or more children	5	4	3	2	1	0

Career discisions	5	4	3	2	1	0
Your drinking and drug use	5	4	3	2	1	0
Your partner's drinking or drug use	5	4	3	2	1	0

Conflict Behavior/Emotion Variables

Here are some statements about how people handle the disagreements and conflicts that come up in their marriage. For each of these statements, just indicate how true it is in your marriage right now.

When disagreements and conflicts come up	Very True	Somewhat True	Not True at All
I withdraw to avoid a big fight	3	2	1
I feel tense and anxious	3	2	1
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint	3	2	1
I just give in	3	2	1
I get physically violent	3	2	1
I feel unloved	3	2	1
I get physically violent	3	2	1
I try to find the middle ground	3	2	1
I just want to kiss and make up	3	2	1
I get sarcastic (I say things intended to hurt my partner)	3	2	1
My partner gets sarcastic	3	2	1
I get hostile (I act like we are enemies)	3	2	1
My partner gets hostile	3	2	1

Race Variable

What race do you consider yourself?

- 1 Black, or African American
- 2 White - not of Hispanic origin
- 3 Mexican American, Chicano, Mexicano
- 4 Puerto Rican
- 5 Cuban
- 6 Other Hispanic
- 7 Asian, including South Asian
- 8 American Indian
- 9 Other: Please specify _____

Age

What is your birth date? _____
Year Month Day

Education

What is the highest grade in school that you finished and got credit for or the highest degree you have earned? And how about your partner?

Self: _____ Highest grade completed or highest degree
Partner : _____ Highest grade completed or highest degree

Income

For purposes of statistical calculations only, we would like to know about your family income from all sources last year before taxes and other deductions. Please check the box for you and for your partner

	Your Income (L33a)	Your Partner's Income (L33b)
1. No income <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Less than \$ 5,000 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
3. \$ 5,000 - \$ 9,999 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
4. \$10,000 - \$19,999 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
5. \$20,000 - \$29,000 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
6. \$30,000 - \$39,999 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
7. \$40,000 - \$49,999 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
8. \$50,000 - \$59,999 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
9. \$60,000 - \$69,999 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
10. \$70,000 - \$79,999 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
11. \$80,000 - \$89,999 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
12. \$90,000 - \$99,999 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
13. \$100,000 or more <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Hours Worked

How many hours do you work in an average week? _____ HOURS

Fairness of Household Division of Labor

Do you personally feel that the division of responsibility for household chores between you and your partner is fair or unfair to you?

3 Very fair to me

- 2 Somewhat fair to me
- 1 Somewhat unfair to me
- 0 Very unfair to me
- 9 Don't know

And how about your partner? Do you personally feel that the division of responsibility for household chores between you and your partner is fair or unfair to your partner?

- 3 Very fair to my partner
- 2 Somewhat fair to my partner
- 1 Somewhat unfair to my partner
- 0 Very unfair to my partner
- 9 Don't know

Covenant Marriage

Just to be sure we have it right, is your current marriage a covenant marriage?

- 1 Yes, our marriage IS a covenant marriage.
- 2 No, our marriage is NOT a covenant marriage.

**APPENDIX B:
CHI SQUARE RESULTS FOR ALL COMPLETE COUPLES**

Chi Square Results for Wave 1 Between All Complete Couples

Conflict Frequency Wave 1	N	Value	DF	p
Finances	561	37.055	1	.000
Leisure time	561	28.451	1	.000
Religious Matters	552	121.100	1	.000
Physical Affection	558	86.318	1	.000
Partner's friends	557	52.245	1	.000
Sex life	562	125.300	1	.000
Philosophy of life	555	28.141	1	.000
Resp. friends	554	28.316	1	.000
Parents and in-laws	558	72.364	1	.000
Aims and goals	558	9.127	1	.003
Time spent together	561	82.880	1	.000
Household division of labor	556	65.156	1	.000
Raising children	513	63.965	1	.000
Whether to have children	538	74.193	1	.000
Career decisions	556	42.708	1	.000
Resp. drinking or drug use	402	23.808	1	.000
Part. drinking or drug use	402	31.695	1	.000

Conflict Behavior Wave 1	N	Value	DF	p
I withdraw to avoid a fight		0.796	1	.372
I feel tense and anxious		23.953	1	.000
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint (R pos)		27.073	1	.000
I just give in		0.042	1	.838
I feel unloved		13.890	1	.000
I try to find the middle ground (R pos)		9.837	1	.002
I just want to kiss and make up (R pos)		0.616	1	.432
I get physically violent		32.071	1	.000
I get sarcastic		41.685	1	.000
My partner gets sarcastic		49.775	1	.000
I get hostile		54.606	1	.000
My partner gets hostile		56.257	1	.000

Chi Square Results for Wave 2 Between All Complete Couples

Conflict Frequency Wave 2	N	Value	DF	p
Finances	403	30.725	1	.000
Leisure time	400	35.167	1	.000
Religious Matters	396	83.812	1	.000
Physical Affection	398	55.093	1	.000
Partner's friends	396	35.692	1	.000
Sex life	402	118.200	1	.000
Philosophy of life	398	43.339	1	.000
Resp. friends	397	32.641	1	.000
Parents and in-laws	399	31.196	1	.000
Aims and goals	403	38.673	1	.000
Time spent together	401	45.839	1	.000
Household division of labor	402	71.392	1	.000
Raising children	327	58.593	1	.000
Whether to have children	355	83.087	1	.000
Career decisions	390	33.075	1	.000
Resp. drinking or drug use	260	16.556	1	.000
Part. drinking or drug use	260	12.276	1	.000

Conflict Behavior Wave 2	N	Value	DF	p
I withdraw to avoid a fight	401	1.424	1	.233
I feel tense and anxious	396	10.859	1	.001
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint (R pos)	401	13.242	1	.001
I just give in	399	0.613	1	.434
I feel unloved	397	9.293	1	.002
I try to find the middle ground (R pos)	399	4.746	1	.021
I just want to kiss and make up (R pos)	402	2.780	1	.062
I get physically violent	404	32.547	1	.000
I get sarcastic	404	41.027	1	.000
My partner gets sarcastic	401	43.950	1	.000
I get hostile	404	41.822	1	.000
My partner gets hostile	404	45.119	1	.000

Chi Square Results for Wave 3 Between All Complete Couples

Conflict Frequency Wave 3	N	Value	DF	P
Finances	359	30.810	1	.000
Leisure time	358	30.269	1	.000
Religious Matters	359	93.858	1	.000
Physical Affection	357	60.065	1	.000
Partner's friends	354	10.330	1	.001
Sex life	357	92.293	1	.000
Philosophy of life	355	17.218	1	.000
Resp. friends	351	13.964	1	.000
Parents and in-laws	354	42.645	1	.000
Aims and goals	355	15.051	1	.000
Time spent together	358	49.482	1	.000
Household division of labor	358	65.785	1	.000
Raising children	291	63.552	1	.000
Whether to have children	316	75.610	1	.000
Career decisions	353	23.176	1	.000
Resp. drinking or drug use	228	13.132	1	.000
Part. drinking or drug use	230	15.430	1	.000

Conflict Behavior Wave 3	N	Value	DF	P
I withdraw to avoid a fight	427	2.154	1	.142
I feel tense and anxious	356	3.264	1	.071
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint (R pos)	358	5.998	1	.014
I just give in	356	1.224	1	.269
I feel unloved	358	17.789	1	.000
I try to find the middle ground (R pos)	356	7.532	1	.006
I just want to kiss and make up (R pos)	359	0.036	1	.849
I get physically violent	360	28.753	1	.000
I get sarcastic	429	25.288	1	.000
My partner gets sarcastic	428	36.743	1	.000
I get hostile	427	11.276	1	.001
My partner gets hostile	427	31.564	1	.000

**APPENDIX C:
CHI SQUARE RESULTS FOR COMPLETE COVENANT AND STANDARD COUPLES**

Chi Square Results for Wave 1 Between Covenant and Standard Couples

Conflict Frequency Covenant Wave 1	N	Value	DF	p
Finances	246	11.006	1	.001**
Leisure time	246	8.147	1	.004**
Religious Matters	246	58.230	1	.000***
Physical Affection	247	25.251	1	.000***
Partner's friends	246	25.828	1	.000***
Sex life	246	46.019	1	.000***
Philosophy of life	243	19.525	1	.000***
Resp. friends	245	13.715	1	.000***
Parents and in-laws	247	48.546	1	.000***
Aims and goals	244	5.308	1	.021*
Time spent together	246	33.988	1	.000***
Household division of labor	246	24.769	1	.000***
Raising children	220	34.481	1	.000***
Whether to have children	240	42.642	1	.000***
Career decisions	246	7.047	1	.008**
Resp. drinking or drug use	153	9.380	1	.002***
Part. drinking or drug use	152	24.608	1	.000***

Conflict Frequency Standard Wave 1	N	Value	DF	p
Finances	310	26.476	1	.000***
Leisure time	310	18.533	1	.000***
Religious Matters	301	56.303	1	.000***
Physical Affection	306	58.655	1	.000***
Partner's friends	306	24.177	1	.000***
Sex life	311	74.709	1	.000***
Philosophy of life	307	7.848	1	.005**
Resp. friends	304	14.462	1	.000***
Parents and in-laws	307	24.265	1	.000***
Aims and goals	309	4.482	1	.034*
Time spent together	310	48.437	1	.000***
Household division of labor	305	40.848	1	.000***
Raising children	290	28.038	1	.000***
Whether to have children	295	42.642	1	.000***
Career decisions	306	32.926	1	.000***
Resp. drinking or drug use	247	13.757	1	.000***
Part. drinking or drug use	248	12.505	1	.000***

Conflict Behavior Covenant Wave 1	N	Value	DF	p
I withdraw to avoid a fight	246	0.000	1	.991
I feel tense and anxious	247	5.071	1	.024*
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint (R pos)	246	10.092	1	.001**
I just give in	247	0.019	1	.891
I feel unloved	247	5.128	1	.024*
I try to find the middle ground (R pos)	246	3.747	1	.053
I just want to kiss and make up (R pos)	245	0.063	1	.802
I get physically violent	247	0.353	1	.552
I get sarcastic	247	13.585	1	.000***
My partner gets sarcastic	246	15.730	1	.000***
I get hostile	247	22.494	1	.000***
My partner gets hostile	247	14.391	1	.000***

Conflict Behavior Standard Wave 1	N	Value	DF	p
I withdraw to avoid a fight	310	0.909	1	.340
I feel tense and anxious	307	19.541	1	.000***
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint (R pos)	307	14.960	1	.000***
I just give in	307	0.137	1	.711
I feel unloved	307	9.156	1	.002**
I try to find the middle ground (R pos)	307	6.063	1	.014*
I just want to kiss and make up (R pos)	307	0.323	1	.570
I get physically violent	310	33.719	1	.000***
I get sarcastic	310	28.235	1	.000***
My partner gets sarcastic	307	35.885	1	.000***
I get hostile	310	29.322	1	.000***
My partner gets hostile	311	41.081	1	.000***

Chi Square Results for Wave 2 Between Covenant and Standard Couples

Conflict Frequency Covenant Wave 2	N	Value	DF	p
Finances	202	5.223	1	.022*
Leisure time	200	16.156	1	.000***
Religious Matters	200	36.444	1	.000***
Physical Affection	198	32.366	1	.000***
Partner's friends	198	7.920	1	.005**
Sex life	202	48.093	1	.000***
Philosophy of life	199	21.322	1	.000***
Resp. friends	201	11.637	1	.001**
Parents and in-laws	199	16.248	1	.000***
Aims and goals	202	23.122	1	.000***
Time spent together	200	23.436	1	.000***
Household division of labor	202	32.003	1	.000***
Raising children	158	30.716	1	.000***
Whether to have children	176	34.759	1	.000***
Career decisions	196	23.239	1	.000***
Resp. drinking or drug use	118	1.570	1	.210
Part. drinking or drug use	116	4.157	1	.014*

Conflict Frequency Standard Wave 2	N	Value	DF	p
Finances	197	27.166	1	.000***
Leisure time	196	20.921	1	.000***
Religious Matters	192	41.544	1	.000***
Physical Affection	196	24.528	1	.000***
Partner's friends	194	22.352	1	.000***
Sex life	196	71.431	1	.000***
Philosophy of life	195	17.879	1	.000***
Resp. friends	193	19.265	1	.000***
Parents and in-laws	196	15.707	1	.000***
Aims and goals	197	17.655	1	.000***
Time spent together	197	24.784	1	.000***
Household division of labor	196	37.324	1	.000***
Raising children	166	28.585	1	.000***
Whether to have children	175	44.247	1	.000***
Career decisions	190	12.747	1	.000***
Resp. drinking or drug use	140	13.548	1	.000***
Part. drinking or drug use	142	6.533	1	.011*

Conflict Behavior Covenant Wave 2	N	Value	DF	p
I withdraw to avoid a fight	200	2.080	1	.149
I feel tense and anxious	198	10.399	1	.001**
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint (R pos)	202	14.737	1	.000***
I just give in	200	0.146	1	.702
I feel unloved	199	4.726	1	.030*
I try to find the middle ground (R pos)	200	0.921	1	.337
I just want to kiss and make up (R pos)	201	3.197	1	.074
I get physically violent	202	19.920	1	.001**
I get sarcastic	202	14.978	1	.000***
My partner gets sarcastic	200	13.669	1	.000***
I get hostile	202	18.535	1	.000***
My partner gets hostile	202	22.040	1	.000***

Conflict Behavior Standard Wave 2	N	Value	DF	p
I withdraw to avoid a fight	197	0.065	1	.799
I feel tense and anxious	194	1.507	1	.220
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint (R pos)	195	1.501	1	.220
I just give in	195	0.318	1	.573
I feel unloved	194	4.929	1	.026*
I try to find the middle ground (R pos)	195	3.138	1	.076
I just want to kiss and make up (R pos)	197	0.289	1	.591
I get physically violent	198	12.921	1	.000***
I get sarcastic	198	24.483	1	.000***
My partner gets sarcastic	197	32.469	1	.000***
I get hostile	198	22.730	1	.000***
My partner gets hostile	198	22.680	1	.000***

Chi Square Results for Wave 3 Between Covenant and Standard Couples

Conflict Frequency Covenant Wave 3	N	Value	DF	p
Finances	186	10.682	1	.001**
Leisure time	184	20.019	1	.000***
Religious Matters	181	43.484	1	.000***
Physical Affection	186	23.200	1	.000***
Partner's friends	185	10.118	1	.001**
Sex life	185	44.483	1	.000***
Philosophy of life	183	2.759	1	.097
Resp. friends	182	3.722	1	.054
Parents and in-laws	184	16.321	1	.000***
Aims and goals	184	0.582	1	.446
Time spent together	184	15.575	1	.000***
Household division of labor	186	21.829	1	.000***
Raising children	148	31.583	1	.000***
Whether to have children	168	15.280	1	.000***
Career decisions	184	6.629	1	.010*
Resp. drinking or drug use	107	0.416	1	.519
Part. drinking or drug use	106	7.511	1	.006**

Conflict Frequency Standard Wave 3	N	Value	DF	p
Finances	167	18.139	1	.000***
Leisure time	168	6.953	1	.008**
Religious Matters	171	42.135	1	.000***
Physical Affection	165	37.749	1	.000***
Partner's friends	165	2.023	1	.155
Sex life	166	43.266	1	.000***
Philosophy of life	166	9.608	1	.002**
Resp. friends	164	8.254	1	.004**
Parents and in-laws	166	24.417	1	.000***
Aims and goals	165	13.100	1	.000***
Time spent together	168	35.417	1	.000***
Household division of labor	166	43.243	1	.000***
Raising children	138	27.258	1	.000***
Whether to have children	143	55.659	1	.000***
Career decisions	165	16.886	1	.000***
Resp. drinking or drug use	117	11.730	1	.001**
Part. drinking or drug use	120	6.937	1	.008**

Conflict Behavior Covenant Wave 3	N	Value	DF	p
I withdraw to avoid a fight	218	1.028	1	.311
I feel tense and anxious	185	0.245	1	.621
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint (R pos)	186	5.326	1	.021*
I just give in	185	1.684	1	.194
I feel unloved	186	10.509	1	.001**
I try to find the middle ground (R pos)	184	3.559	1	.059
I just want to kiss and make up (R pos)	185	0.209	1	.647
I get physically violent	186	4.521	1	.033*
I get sarcastic	218	5.824	1	.016*
My partner gets sarcastic	218	9.136	1	.003**
I get hostile	216	8.274	1	.004**
My partner gets hostile	217	9.451	1	.002**

Conflict Behavior Standard Wave 3	N	Value	DF	p
I withdraw to avoid a fight	203	1.283	1	.257
I feel tense and anxious	165	5.276	1	.022*
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint (R pos)	167	0.757	1	.384
I just give in	166	0.014	1	.907
I feel unloved	166	6.323	1	.012*
I try to find the middle ground (R pos)	167	4.431	1	.035*
I just want to kiss and make up (R pos)	168	0.036	1	.849
I get physically violent	168	34.192	1	.000***
I get sarcastic	204	20.216	1	.000***
My partner gets sarcastic	203	29.501	1	.000***
I get hostile	204	3.474	1	.062
My partner gets hostile	203	24.936	1	.000***

**APPENDIX D:
CHI SQUARE RESULTS BETWEEN COVENANT AND STANDARD WOMEN AND
MEN DIVIDED BY WAVES**

Chi Square Results for Wave 1 Between Women and Men

Conflict Frequency Women Wave 1	N	Value	DF	p
Finances	673	0.785	1	.376
Leisure time	674	0.052	1	.820
Religious Matters	669	25.204	1	.000***
Physical Affection	666	0.067	1	.796
Partner's friends	664	3.627	1	.057
Sex life	674	0.033	1	.855
Philosophy of life	668	1.764	1	.184
Resp. friends	666	9.399	1	.002**
Parents and in-laws	669	2.812	1	.094
Aims and goals	672	2.118	1	.146
Time spent together	671	0.408	1	.523
Household division of labor	669	0.345	1	.557
Raising children	636	1.289	1	.256
Whether to have children	656	2.773	1	.096
Career decisions	667	4.099	1	.043*
Resp. drinking or drug use	526	7.062	1	.008**
Part. drinking or drug use	540	4.847	1	.028*

p<.05* p<.01** p<.001***

Conflict Behavior Women Wave 1	N	Value	DF	p
I withdraw to avoid a fight	674	1.717	1	.190
I feel tense and anxious	672	0.006	1	.940
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint (R pos)	674	0.663	1	.415
I just give in	674	0.034	1	.853
I feel unloved	670	1.574	1	.210
I try to find the middle ground (R pos)	671	1.039	1	.308
I just want to kiss and make up (R pos)	672	0.050	1	.823
I get physically violent	675	4.614	1	.032*
I get sarcastic	675	0.981	1	.322
My partner gets sarcastic	673	2.306	1	.129
I get hostile	673	4.157	1	.041*
My partner gets hostile	676	1.144	1	.285

p<.05* p<.01** p<.001***

Conflict Frequency Men Wave 1	N	Value	DF	p
Finances	575	3.014	1	.083
Leisure time	574	0.000	1	.983
Religious Matters	569	17.419	1	.000***
Physical Affection	575	0.644	1	.422
Partner's friends	575	2.453	1	.117
Sex life	575	0.010	1	.921
Philosophy of life	573	6.976	1	.008**
Resp. friends	572	1.104	1	.293
Parents and in-laws	574	0.490	1	.484
Aims and goals	571	3.637	1	.056
Time spent together	576	0.424	1	.515
Household division of labor	572	0.149	1	.700
Raising children	550	7.182	1	.007**
Whether to have children	562	0.121	1	.728
Career decisions	573	3.992	1	.046*
Resp. drinking or drug use	481	1.186	1	.276
Part. drinking or drug use	475	0.134	1	.714513

p<.05* p<.01** p<.001***

Conflict Behavior Men Wave 1	N	Value	DF	p
I withdraw to avoid a fight	576	0.783	1	.376
I feel tense and anxious	573	1.646	1	.199
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint (R pos)	572	0.307	1	.579
I just give in	574	5.128	1	.024*
I feel unloved	574	0.065	1	.799
I try to find the middle ground (R pos)	573	1.0711	1	.301
I just want to kiss and make up (R pos)	574	0.957	1	.328
I get physically violent	576	3.182	1	.074
I get sarcastic	575	0.920	1	.337
My partner gets sarcastic	571	0.873	1	.350
I get hostile	576	0.003	1	.954
My partner gets hostile	575	0.313	1	.576

p<.05* p<.01** p<.001***

Chi Square Results for Wave 2 Between Women and Men

Conflict Frequency Women Wave 2	N	Value	DF	p
Finances	513	3.888	1	.049*
Leisure time	514	0.082	1	.774
Religious Matters	512	9.418	1	.002**
Physical Affection	512	1.761	1	.184
Partner's friends	508	10.092	1	.001**
Sex life	514	1.206	1	.272
Philosophy of life	508	6.099	1	.014**
Resp. friends	507	23.591	1	.000***
Parents and in-laws	511	0.004	1	.950
Aims and goals	512	.1758	1	.185
Time spent together	511	0.288	1	.591
Household division of labor	513	9.761	1	.002**
Raising children	445	1.556	1	.212
Whether to have children	469	0.613	1	.434
Career decisions	501	0.047	1	.828
Resp. drinking or drug use	388	5.652	1	.017**
Part. drinking or drug use	397	4.644	1	.031*

p<.05* p<.01** p<.001***

Conflict Behavior Women Wave 2	N	Value	DF	p
I withdraw to avoid a fight	513	1.766	1	.184
I feel tense and anxious	509	1.394	1	.238
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint (R pos)	511	0.346	1	.557
I just give in	511	3.089	1	.095
I feel unloved	505	2.532	1	.112
I try to find the middle ground (R pos)	512	0.442	1	.506
I just want to kiss and make up (R pos)	513	0.107	1	.743
I get physically violent	513	0.130	1	.718
I get sarcastic	514	0.020	1	.887
My partner gets sarcastic	511	0.790	1	.374
I get hostile	513	1.143	1	.285
My partner gets hostile	513	0.545	1	.460

p<.05* p<.01** p<.001***

Conflict Frequency Men Wave 2	N	Value	DF	p
Finances	421	2.640	1	.104
Leisure time	418	0.029	1	.864
Religious Matters	414	9.479	1	.002**
Physical Affection	418	0.193	1	.660
Partner's friends	417	14.238	1	.000***
Sex life	420	1.331	1	.249
Philosophy of life	418	17.753	1	.000***
Resp. friends	417	2.216	1	.137
Parents and in-laws	419	0.151	1	.697
Aims and goals	421	2.472	1	.116
Time spent together	421	0.766	1	.382
Household division of labor	421	5.939	1	.015*
Raising children	375	2.098	1	.147
Whether to have children	395	0.012	1	.914
Career decisions	414	3.492	1	.062
Resp. drinking or drug use	332	1.252	1	.263
Part. drinking or drug use	326	2.327	1	.127

p<.05* p<.01** p<.001***

Conflict Behavior Men Wave 2	N	Value	DF	p
I withdraw to avoid a fight	420	3.066	1	.080
I feel tense and anxious	419	1.918	1	.166
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint (R pos)	420	0.159	1	.690
I just give in	418	2.561	1	.110
I feel unloved	421	0.494	1	.482
I try to find the middle ground (R pos)	418	1.226	1	.268
I just want to kiss and make up (R pos)	420	0.748	1	.387
I get physically violent	422	0.016	1	.901
I get sarcastic	422	0.468	1	.494
My partner gets sarcastic	420	0.834	1	.361
I get hostile	422	0.084	1	.772
My partner gets hostile	422	2.846	1	.092

p<.05* p<.01** p<.001***

Chi Square Results for Wave 3 Between Women and Men

Conflict Frequency Women Wave 3	N	Value	DF	p
Finances	474	5.946	1	.015*
Leisure time	473	7.547	1	.006**
Religious Matters	476	8.831	1	.003**
Physical Affection	475	0.002	1	.963
Partner's friends	472	1.225	1	.268
Sex life	473	0.157	1	.692
Philosophy of life	474	4.098	1	.043*
Resp. friends	465	4.330	1	.037*
Parents and in-laws	469	0.042	1	.839
Aims and goals	472	0.755	1	.385
Time spent together	473	1.021	1	.312
Household division of labor	473	0.049	1	.824
Raising children	414	4.596	1	.032*
Whether to have children	446	1.236	1	.266
Career decisions	471	0.002	1	.965
Resp. drinking or drug use	341	5.191	1	.023*
Part. drinking or drug use	349	3.358	1	.067

p<.05* p<.01** p<.001***

Conflict Behavior Women Wave 3	N	Value	DF	p
I withdraw to avoid a fight	529	0.151	1	.697
I feel tense and anxious	474	4.292	1	.038*
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint (R pos)	475	0.119	1	.731
I just give in	474	0.306	1	.580
I feel unloved	472	0.003	1	.957
I try to find the middle ground (R pos)	474	0.162	1	.687
I just want to kiss and make up (R pos)	475	0.019	1	.889
I get physically violent	476	1.174	1	.279
I get sarcastic	530	0.062	1	.803
My partner gets sarcastic	529	2.102	1	.147
I get hostile	529	0.034	1	.854
My partner gets hostile	529	0.064	1	.800

p<.05* p<.01** p<.001***

Conflict Frequency Men Wave 3	N	Value	DF	p
Finances	378	7.586	1	.006**
Leisure time	379	2.528	1	.112
Religious Matters	378	15.178	1	.000***
Physical Affection	377	0.414	1	.520
Partner's friends	375	11.446	1	.001**
Sex life	378	1.611	1	.204
Philosophy of life	375	16.296	1	.000***
Resp. friends	375	7.195	1	.007**
Parents and in-laws	375	0.012	1	.911
Aims and goals	377	4.728	1	.030*
Time spent together	377	0.127	1	.722
Household division of labor	379	6.674	1	.010*
Raising children	340	10.128	1	.001**
Whether to have children	350	1.147	1	.284
Career decisions	376	0.853	1	.356
Resp. drinking or drug use	315	3.790	1	.052
Part. drinking or drug use	312	2.586	1	.108

p<.05* p<.01** p<.001***

Conflict Behavior Men Wave 3	N	Value	DF	p
I withdraw to avoid a fight	450	2.245	1	.134
I feel tense and anxious	377	1.702	1	.192
I look at things from my partner's viewpoint (R pos)	379	1.975	1	.160
I just give in	378	1.415	1	.234
I feel unloved	379	0.175	1	.676
I try to find the middle ground (R pos)	378	4.028	1	.045*
I just want to kiss and make up (R pos)	379	0.192	1	.662
I get physically violent	379	0.596	1	.440
I get sarcastic	450	2.367	1	.124
My partner gets sarcastic	449	7.650	1	.006**
I get hostile	449	0.084	1	.772
My partner gets hostile	449	0.003	1	.995

p<.05* p<.01** p<.001***

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