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## ABSTRACT

The communication patterns of young married couples may affect the satisfaction and longevity of the relationship. A study examined two young married couples who reported about their relationship with each other. Each couple was interviewed together, and then each member of each couple completed a questionnaire based on the ICPS Family Functioning Scale and selected a descriptor for the marital type which he/she believed best describes the marriage. Several themes and patterns emerged: both couples reported high levels of intimacy and interdependence; interdependence was also demonstrated in the interaction between relational partners in the co-construction of answers to the interview. Both couples reported a tendency not to triangulate parents or children into marital conflicts. Both couples reported high levels of similarity in likes and attitudes, and both couples exhibited characteristics of traditional and independent marital types. Future studies may consider applying analysis to conversational data inherent in the interview process. Given the findings of this study, combinations of research methods seem plausible and warranted in studies on family communication. The measures combined with the interviewing procedures seem to work well as a form of methodological triangulation. It is hoped that the methodology employed here can be utilized in further studies of relational communication. (Contains 3 notes and 26 references; ICPS Family Functioning Scale is appended, as are ideologies/beliefs about marriage questionnaire, relational communication interview protocol, and a table of data.)  
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### Building Little Communities:

#### Relational Communication and Early Parenthood

#### in Two Young Couples

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Paper Presented at the Eightieth Annual Meeting of the  
Speech Communication Association, New Orleans, LA,  
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Running head: EARLY PARENTHOOD: TWO CASE STUDIES

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## Abstract

The communication patterns of young married couples may affect the satisfaction and longevity of the relationship. In this study, two young married couples reported about their relationship with each other. Each married couple was interviewed together, and then each member of each couple was requested to complete a questionnaire based on the ICPS - Family Functioning Scale (Noller, Seth-Smith, Bouma, and Schweitzer, 1992), and select a descriptor for the marital type (Fitzpatrick, 1976, 1988) which he or she believed best describes the marriage. Several themes and patterns emerged. Both couples reported high levels of intimacy and interdependence. Interdependence was also demonstrated in the interaction between relational partners in the co-construction of answers to the interview. Both couples reported a tendency not to triangulate parents or children into marital conflicts. Both couples reported high levels of similarity in likes and attitudes, though some differences did occur particularly in ways of dealing with emotions. Also, both couples exhibited characteristics of traditional and independent marital types. It is hoped that the methodology employed in this study can be utilized in further studies of relational communication.

Building Little Communities:  
Relational Communication and Early Parenthood  
in Two Young Couples

Persons couple for a variety of reasons, such as to meet the need for intimacy, social convention or expectation, or to start a family. The desire to start a family may result from a belief system about the value of family or from a human "instinct" to procreate. Regardless of the reasons, people do couple and experience relationships as a couple. Couples may then add children, which increases the level of complexity of the family system.

The family takes on characteristics of a system in which the boundaries, rules and roles of the family are defined through interaction by the members of the family (Bochner, 1976; Galvin & Brommel, 1986; Bavelas & Segal, 1982; Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967). However complex the family system itself is, within the family are dyadic subsystems such as the spousal unit (i. e. the marital couple) and the parent-child unit (Trost, 1990). The characteristics of dyadic subsystems are influenced by the characteristics of the larger system of which the dyadic partners are members.

The focus of this study is to examine some of the characteristics which define marital relationships within the context of family. Specifically, this study examines the perceptions and beliefs about communication between members of a

marital dyad, the effects of those perceptions on the relationship, and the communicative interaction between partners in the construction and expression of those perceptions and beliefs. Additionally, this study proposes a triangulated method for examining the complexities of marital and family communication.

### Family Characteristics

One definition proposes that a family is "a group of two or more individuals who are perceived as interdependent" (Arliss, 1993, p. 7). Yet this definition belies the difficulty of defining family. To be sure, individuals have differing conceptions of family depending upon their experience (Brennan & Wamboldt, 1990). Each of these conceptions may differ in terms of membership or other characteristics of the experienced family. For example, does a family require blood relations? If so, then adoptive relations do not qualify as family. The definition of the family has even been debated in the political arena and the popular press as in the example of then Vice-President Dan Quayle versus the fictional character Murphy Brown. However, certain characteristics of family appear to have been agreed upon by researchers.

One such characteristic of family relationships is interdependence. Interdependence has been conceptualized as the degree to which the behaviors of one individual influences the behaviors of another (Kelley et al., 1983; Sears, Peplau, Friedman, & Taylor, 1988). Within a family, interdependence has been

measured by examining the degree of intimacy shared, the occurrence of group goals and the amount of cooperation in meeting group goals, and the degree to which individual family members require input of other members to meet individual needs.

Intimacy is "the extent of sharing and closeness, as well as expressiveness and openness in communication" (Noller, Seth-Smith, Bouma, & Schweitzer, 1992, p. 105; Pearson, 1989). Family members may experience a dialectical tension between the need for emotional closeness (intimacy) and autonomy. This dialectical tension has been termed cohesion (Olson, Sprenkle, & Russell, 1979). Noller et al. (1992), found a strong positive correlation between measures of intimacy and cohesion.

Sharing between family members may include meeting the practical requirements of daily living or individual needs. The meeting of group and individual needs requires a negotiation of roles between family members. The marital dyad goes through a period of adjustment in which they must change from the requirements of daily living as a single individual to having responsibility to another. The degree to which individuals come together in that responsibility may be a function not only of their interaction but also of their beliefs regarding marital roles. Fitzpatrick (1988) examined marital couples and found that couples could be characterized as traditional, independent or separate. The differences between each

of these types involves characteristics of intimacy, conflict, support, and roles including division of labor and parenting styles. Marital type may influence the negotiation of roles and the relationship.

A result of such negotiation may take the form of conflict. Hocker and Wilmot defined conflict as "an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference in achieving those goals" (1991, p. 12). Given the need for achieving group goals regarding the requirements of daily living, conflict in the family seems inevitable. However, the methods by which conflict is handled may be considerably different by marital or family type.

Conflict may arise between marital partners on issues of division of labor and styles for raising children. Parenting styles, as proposed by Baumrind (1971), include authoritarian, authoritative and permissive. Each of these parenting styles differ by degree of cohesion and adaptability, intimacy and conflict (Noller, et al., 1992). More importantly, parenting style may be a function of beliefs that are related to the beliefs regarding marital roles. These beliefs may include notions regarding family power structure and gender differences regarding marital and parental roles. To be sure, these beliefs may change as the couple moves from a family comprised of only the spousal unit to the coming of a new family member, such as the arrival of a baby. These changes, and subsequent changes in the

division of labor, may increase the conflict and stress between members of the marital dyad (Crnic & Booth, 1991; Sutor, 1991). Lavee and Olson (1991) found that response to stress was a function of family type as determined by degree of cohesion, adaptability, or an interaction of cohesion and adaptability. Family stress may also be contributed to by the practical limitations of time for dealing with family matters such as the division of labor and parenting concerns. The division of earner roles, as in single or dual-earner families, may contribute to increased stress (Volling & Belsky, 1991) and therefore conflict.

Conflict demonstrates interdependence between family members. However, other characteristics are associated with definitions of family. Another such characteristic of family relationships is the experience of cohabitation at some point in the lives of family members (Trost, 1990). Whether the family being considered is the family-of-origin or family-of-procreation, a common theme in the description of the experience of family is commonly shared experience. This commonly shared experience requires proximity. Proximity may be experienced through co-participation in life-events. However, it is this requirement of proximity which may lead to the conception that cohabitation at some point in the lives of relational partners is a necessary component in definitions of family.



## Method

### Subjects

For the study, two couples were chosen who met the following criteria: (a) they must be married and residing together, (b) they must have a child or children residing with them, and (c) the two couples must be similar to each other in their present situation. Both couples were young married couples with an infant and extended family members present in the household. Thomas and Kimberly, Couple 1, are in their mid-twenties, have been married for three years and have a seven month old daughter. They are presently living with Kimberly's parents. Couple 2, Jim and Tracie, are in their late-twenties, have been married for five years and have a three month old son. Tracie's mother and sister are presently living with Jim and Tracie. Although, the difference in ownership of household between Couple 1 and Couple 2, as a function of whether the couple is living with parents or parents are living with the couple, may contribute to differences in the power dynamics between the couple and extended family members, the focus of the study is on the marital dyad. Thus, the fact that extended family members are present as a similarity between the two couples is of more importance for purposes of this study.

For both couples, the decision for extended family members to either live with the couple (Couple 2) or for the couple to live with the extended family

(Couple 1) was based on economic and care needs. All four interviewees are presently in college, and the stress of money and the time required for school has placed a heavy burden on each of the couples. Both couples reported that the care for the child at this time of their life was difficult, and the choice to live with extended family members was made based on the help that could be provided by extra care givers.

### Procedure

This study employed an interview protocol developed in a seminar on relational communication. Each couple was interviewed with both partners present. Following the interview, both partners of each couple were asked to complete a questionnaire (see Appendix A) and choose one of three marital type descriptions which best represented his or her marital relationship (see Appendix B). The questionnaire was developed by Noller, et al. (1992) to measure three factors: (a) level of intimacy, (b) parenting style, (c) and level of conflict<sup>1</sup>. According to Noller, et al. (1992), the instrument was based on previous research into family functioning. The questionnaire was chosen for two reasons: (a) the factors of interest were relevant to the study and the questions asked in the interview protocol (see Appendix C)<sup>2</sup>, (b) the questionnaire allows for a statistical determination of similarity between members of a marital dyad without the confounding context of the presence of the other as in the interview process, and

(c) the combination of the questionnaire with the interview allows the researcher to check the subjective interpretation of the interviewer. The results of data collection using this particular questionnaire are readily available from published sources.

This availability is relevant because a sample of two couples is not sufficient for statistical purposes. However, the results from the questionnaire in this study can be compared to the results of the previous study to determine common elements of family functioning provided that the characteristics of the families in the present study are sufficiently similar to the families examined in earlier studies. Although in the present study, the two families do not have adolescent children, the basic family structure is the same, and is matched between couples.

The second task for each respondent was to choose which marital type description best represented the relationship. The descriptive paragraphs used in this study were drawn from a study by Honeycutt, Woods, and Fontenot (1993). In this study, Honeycutt et al. (1993), found that determinations of marital type could be made from paragraph descriptions of marital ideology for purposes of comparison with other operationalized definitions, in this case rules and rule endorsement. These descriptions were based on the work of Fitzpatrick (1976; 1988, p. 245) who described three types of marriages: (a) type 1, traditional, (b) type 2, independent, and (c) type 3, separate.

The results of both the questionnaire and the descriptions of marital types were compared to the couple's description of their relationship in the interview. The purpose of the comparison was to determine if common elements or themes existed in the reports of the relationship between and among the couples, and to determine if these elements were common to other couples studied elsewhere (Noller, et al., 1992; Fitzpatrick, 1976; Noller and Fitzpatrick, 1993).

The perceptions of the marital partners will be compared to determine within system similarities and differences which may contribute to the interactions reported and observed. Overall, it is hoped that accurate descriptions of the couples may illuminate characteristics in such a way as to make them identifiable with present theories regarding relationships and relational communication.

## Results

### Couple 1

Thomas and Kimberly met after being cast in a play production at school. They started dating following their experience together in the play. Ironically, they were cast as husband and wife in that play. They determined at the beginning of their dating that they shared many common interests and similarities of attitudes. They also have some similarities in family background. Both come from small, midwestern families. They dated for three months before they became engaged. They married one year later.

Couple 1's common activities demonstrate a moderate to high level of interdependence. Examples of activities performed which show a high level of interdependence include reading aloud to each other. They share common interests in the theatre, and have been cast together in many shows. Also, in household duties, they share responsibilities in somewhat equal fashion. Although presently Kimberly's mother handles many of the household chores, prior to the move in with parents, Thomas took care of the laundry and dishes because that was a chore that Kimberly did not like. Both Thomas and Kimberly took care of the baby, and both shared in the cooking.

Thomas and Kimberly also discuss financial matters and decisions with each other. They described their spending habits as being similar, and they described their work together on financial matters as a way to balance and check those tendencies. Thomas and Kimberly experience moderate competitiveness when playing games. However, it is more important for them to play than to win.

Thomas and Kimberly reported dissimilarities in the way they handle stress and express anger. Kimberly reported that she becomes hysterical and that Thomas does not want to deal with her when she is upset. They acknowledged and described a habitual spiral which involves Thomas not wanting to get near Kimberly when she is upset, and Kimberly not calming down until Thomas shows affection which requires him to get near her when she is upset. They reported that

although it usually takes time to resolve such situations, neither of Kimberly's parents mediate arguments.

Kimberly and Thomas both selected the description for the independent marriage (Type 2) as more representative of the marriage. The results of the ICPS Family Functioning Scale show a high level of agreement on issues of intimacy, conflict, and parenting style. *t*-tests failed to find any significant differences on each of the factors (see Appendix D). For the intimacy factor, both Thomas and Kimberly consistently reported high levels of support, the extent of closeness and sharing, and openness in communication ( $\bar{x} = 5.818$ ,  $\bar{x} = 5.545$ , respectively). For the conflict factor, both Thomas and Kimberly reported low levels of interference and misunderstanding, and difficulty in solving problems ( $\bar{x} = 2.222$ ,  $\bar{x} = 1.777$ , respectively). For the parenting style factor, both Thomas and Kimberly reported high levels of group decision making and independence ( $\bar{x} = 5.750$ ,  $\bar{x} = 5.500$ , respectively). Overall, Couple 1 has characteristics of both traditional and independent marital types and seem to be functioning well as a couple.

### Couple 2

Jim and Tracie first met at a bookstore at college. They believed early in their dating that they would become married. Although they did not become engaged until two years after they met, they reported that each other knew within

the first month of dating that they would be married. They were engaged for five months.

Jim and Tracie have similar backgrounds. They share the same religion, and their families of origin were modest and traditional. Both Jim and Tracie experienced a parent divorcing. For Tracie, her parents first separated when she was seven and lived together again when she was eleven. Although they did not divorce until she was sixteen, she reported that her father was rarely present, and that she was raised in a single parent home. Jim's parents divorced before he was born; Jim's mother remarried when he was eight. Jim grew up as a single child. Tracie grew up in a large household, with seven children. Jim and Tracie's experiences growing up seem to impact greatly their relationship with each other. The similarities in background help support the relationship. The dissimilarities in background help each other complement one another.

This combination of support and complementariness demonstrate a moderate to high level of interdependence. Jim reported more dependence on Tracie for care and support needs than Tracie. However, he also reported an ability to be content with his own activities. Tracie, on the other hand, reported an ability to be self-sufficient and independent in terms of her care and support needs. However, she reported a need to be in regular contact with Jim. Although these tendencies complement each other, they also result in conflict.

As did Couple 1, Jim and Tracie reported dissimilarities in the way they handle stress and express anger. Tracie reported that she "brewed" for a period of time and would then explode and be angry for a longer period than Jim. Jim reported that he would "blow off steam" and then be fine. They used a metaphor of a coffee pot and tea kettle to describe their difference in expressing anger (see Pawlowski, Blok, & Staab, 1993). Also as Couple 1, Couple 2 reported that they do not triangulate parents to mediate conflicts. They reported a high level of commitment to each other and the relationship.

In term of household duties, Couple 2 reported that it usually fell on Tracie to do much of the household work. The reasons given for this tendency were twofold: (a) Jim has much responsibility to his school work at the present, and (b) the characteristics of both Tracie and Jim's upbringing contribute to these tendencies. Jim expressed a desire to do more, but he admitted to a lack of preparedness in reaching that goal. However, Jim did report that at times the relationship worked well for both of them in terms of give and take, and that he hopes after school is done he could have more time to invest in that aspect of the relationship.

The results of the ICPS Family Functioning Scale show a high level of agreement on issues of intimacy, conflict, and parenting style. *t*-tests failed to find any significant differences on each of the factors (see Appendix D). For the



intimacy factor, both Jim and Tracie consistently reported high levels of support, the extent of closeness and sharing, and openness in communication ( $\bar{x} = 5.727$ ,  $\bar{x} = 5.818$ , respectively). For the conflict factor, both Jim and Tracie reported low to moderate levels of interference and misunderstanding, and difficulty in solving problems ( $\bar{x} = 2.667$ ,  $\bar{x} = 3.000$ , respectively). For the parenting style factor, both Jim and Tracie reported high levels of group decision making and independence ( $\bar{x} = 6.000$ ,  $\bar{x} = 5.714$ , respectively). Jim selected the description for the independent marriage (Type 2) as more representative of the marriage, whereas Tracie selected the description for the traditional marriage (Type 1). As did Couple 1, overall Couple 2 has characteristics of both traditional and independent marital types and seem to be functioning well as a couple.

Between group *t*-tests were performed to measure differences between Couple 1 and 2, and between husbands and wives. No significant differences were found with the exception of a significant difference in the conflict factor between couples ( $t() = -2.773$ ,  $p > 0.024$ ). Couple 2, as reported above, had overall higher levels of conflict than Couple 1.

### Discussion

Conflict by couple may be related to the ratio of dominance within each couple (Millar & Rogers, 1985). Couple 1 reported low levels of conflict. The interaction between Kimberly and Thomas revealed much cooperation in

co-constructing meaning about the relationship through co-telling of co-participated events (see Mandelbaum, 1985)<sup>3</sup>. For Couple 2, conflict was reported to be higher relative to Couple 1. The interaction between Jim and Tracie during the interview revealed a trend toward a greater tendency to dominate the conversation by the husband and submission of the wife during overlaps (see West & Zimmerman, 1983) with a few exceptions in which the wife raised her voice and continued talking when overlapped by the husband. This tendency in Couple 2 may be related to their more traditional upbringing, as suggested in the literature review.

These interactional tendencies suggest that the interaction present between members of a couple may shed light on how perceptions of the relationship by participants as well as observers might be developed (see Waln, 1984). The comparison of couple self-reports with observation of actual behavior may allow the researcher to check for discrepancies between the ideal and the real due to social desirability bias. One limitation of this study is that systematic methods (such as lag sequential analysis) were not employed to examine interactional characteristics of the interview. Although the interview was transcribed with notation of overlaps and timing sequences between responses of couple members, future studies may consider applying analysis to conversational data inherent in the interview process.

Another limitation of the present study was the small sample size. Although qualitative studies such as ethnographic case studies or phenomenological explications do not require a large sample size for their procedures, attempts at grounding qualitative thematizing by using already existing theoretical constructs through the use of quantitative methods requires a larger sample size than employed here in order to determine internal validity. Given the findings of the present study, combinations of research methods seems plausible and warranted in studies on family communication.

However, the themes derived from the interview matched the findings of the ICPS Family Functioning Scale and the Marital Type descriptions. Overall, the findings for both couples in terms of intimacy and conflict were consistent between measures. The differences in perceptions about communication within the context of family for each couple were not found to be statistically significant, therefore this study determined that similarities in perceptions demonstrated a high level of sharing and understanding among marital partners. This level of cohesion was also evident in the actual interaction between partners during the interview process.

The measures combined with the interviewing procedures seem to work well as a form of methodological triangulation. It is important to match research tools from various perspectives to achieve high levels of accuracy and validity in the description and interpretation of relational communication data. While both

approaches attempted to access the same concepts, the interview process allowed more detailed description by the participants which helps the researcher in the interpretation. The quantitative measures allowed the researcher to compare the data of a couple with tested theoretical constructs. This model of research, method triangulation, may serve as a more inclusive approach and bring to light a better understanding of the processes and effects of human interaction.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion regarding how each scale item of the ICPS Family Functioning Scale loads on the factors of Intimacy, Conflict, and Parenting Style, see Noller, Seth-Smith, Bouma, and Schweitzer (1992).

<sup>2</sup> The interview protocol used in this study is a modified version of a protocol developed in a graduate seminar: Relational Communication (Fall 1993).

<sup>3</sup> A copy of the transcribed interviews is available from the author.

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## APPENDIX A

## ICPS Family Functioning Scale

Rate the extent to which each of the following statements is true of the family in which you are now living. Circle the appropriate number using 6 point scale provided.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Totally Agree
1. People in our family help and support each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Each member of our family has a say in important family decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. It is hard to get a rule changed in our family.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. We are honest with each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. We often misunderstand each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Parents usually agree on things involving the family.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. We are flexible about who does what in our family.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Even though we mean well, we interfere too much in each other's lives.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. There is a lot of anger between family members.	1	2	3	4	5	6

10. Family members feel very close to each other.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6
11. Children have a say in the rules.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6
12. We interrupt and talk over each other.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6
13. We show affection and tenderness to one another.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6
14. One parent sides with children against the other parent.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6
15. We work together to sort out problems.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6
16. Each person is encouraged to make up their own mind about things.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6
17. Once we have decided something, we have difficulty making changes.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6
18. Family members show their true feelings to each other.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6
19. Making decisions and plans is a problem for our family.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6
20. Each family member is accepted for what they are.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6
21. Children are consulted with and participate in decision making.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6
22. It is easier to talk about problems with people outside the family than with other family members.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6

- |     |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|
| 23. | We listen to and respect each other's point of view.              |   |   |   |   |
| 1   | 2   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 24. | We try to change each other in big ways.                          |   |   |   |   |
| 1   | 2   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 25. | Members of our family are able to stand on their own feet.        |   |   |   |   |
| 1   | 2   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 26. | We can usually sort out problems by talking about them.           |   |   |   |   |
| 1   | 2   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 27. | Family members share interests and hobbies with each other.       |   |   |   |   |
| 1   | 2   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 28. | Family members have a say in family matters.                      |   |   |   |   |
| 1   | 2   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 29. | Even when we disagree, we still show our love for each other.     |   |   |   |   |
| 1   | 2   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 30. | Parents and children talk about things before decisions are made. |   |   |   |   |
| 1   | 2   | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

This scale is based on the ICPS Family Functioning Scale developed by Patricia Noller, Department of Psychology, University of Queensland Australia. Used with permission.

## APPENDIX B

Following are descriptions of three different ideologies and beliefs about marriage. Indicate which one best applies to you, all things considered.

Type 1: You believe that your marriage is very important and that you should sacrifice some personal independence for the marriage. You believe in stability and stress the importance of being able to predict your partner and your life together. You spend a lot of time with your spouse, avoid conflict in general and may argue only over very important issues. You actually disclose more positive than negative feelings-matters that are hardly risky to reveal. You and your spouse present yourselves as a couple to others and downplay distinct individual traits, habits or skills.

You believe you are highly interdependent in your marriage with your spouse. You may engage in conflicts with your partner when the issues are serious ones.

Type 2: You believe that a marriage exists for the gratification that the relationship gives to partners and that marriage should be based on the satisfaction that each partner gets from the relationship. You believe that in this quickly changing world it is vital that each individual has a strong sense of self that is not lost just because that person is married. You do not keep regular daily schedules with your partner and you have outside friends and interests. You disclose both positive and negative feelings to your partner. You are not afraid to openly express your views, are likely to engage in conflict, bargaining, and negotiation. You may agree to disagree.

You hold what some may consider non-conventional values about marriage. You are moderately interdependent with your partner and willingly engage in conflicts whether or not the issues are serious ones.

Type 3: In your marriage, togetherness is a matter of habit and convenience. You believe your marriage is stable yet includes little sharing of time together. The majors points of contact occur at mealtimes or other regularly scheduled daily events. You go to great lengths to avoid conflict. You have a sense of duties and obligations connected with being a husband or wife. Even though you tend to avoid conflict, you may sometimes confront your partner and take a verbal "pot shot" at the other. You feel you can not express your innermost thoughts to your partner. You are careful in conversations with your partner, tend not to interrupt

each other, and generally don't talk very much to your partner. You see marriage as the product of factors that are outside of your control, factors that are part of normal stages of life.

You are not very interdependent with your partner in that you do not share a lot of things. You actively avoid conflict with your partner regardless of the issues under discussion.

## APPENDIX C

### Relational Communication Interview Protocol

#### Context Setting

1. Where are each of you from?
2. How, where, and how long ago did you meet?
3. How long did you date before marriage?
4. How long have you been married?
5. Do you have children? If so, how old are they?
6. What are your present living arrangements? Who is in the household?

#### Intimacy

7. Tell me about your similarities: Do you have similar family backgrounds?
8. Do you have similar interests?
9. What topics do you enjoy talking about together? What do you do together for fun?
10. What initially attracted you to one another? Have you talked about that?
11. How do you show affection? Do you show affection in similar ways?
12. Tell me about your dissimilarities?

#### Conflict

13. How do you divide household duties?
14. Do you consider the relationship to be equal?
15. Do you experience conflict or communication breakdowns? How do you handle it? What strategies do you employ when in conflict?
16. Do you ask others to mediate conflicts? Do others mediate without your asking?
17. Do you feel free to be open with each other about your feelings?
18. What topics do you avoid talking about, if any?

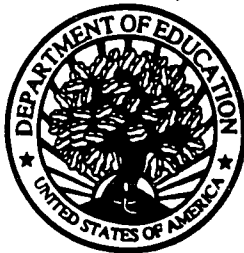
## APPENDIX D

<i>t</i> -test results			
Subjects / Factors	degrees of freedom	<i>t</i> -statistic	probability of <i>t</i>
Couple 1:			
Intimacy	1	<i>t</i> = 1.936	<i>p</i> < .081
Conflict	1	<i>t</i> = 1.512	<i>p</i> < .169
Parenting Style	1	<i>t</i> = 1.000	<i>p</i> < .391
Couple 2:			
Intimacy	1	<i>t</i> = -0.559	<i>p</i> < .588
Conflict	1	<i>t</i> = -0.447	<i>p</i> < .666
Parenting Style	1	<i>t</i> = 1.549	<i>p</i> < .172
Couple 1 vs. Couple 2:			
Intimacy	1	<i>t</i> = -0.516	<i>p</i> < .617
Conflict	1	<i>t</i> = -2.773	<i>p</i> < .024*
Parenting Style	1	<i>t</i> = -0.397	<i>p</i> < .718
Husbands vs. Wives:			
Intimacy	3	<i>t</i> = 0.803	<i>p</i> < .440
Conflict	3	<i>t</i> = 0.170	<i>p</i> < .869
Parenting Style	3	<i>t</i> = 1.567	<i>p</i> < .215

\* Significant difference



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