THE RELATIONSHIP OF STUDENT-LIFE STRESS TO MARITAL DEDICATION AMONG MARRIED UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AND THEIR SPOUSES

By

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This study investigated whether a relationship exists between levels of marital dedication and student-life stress among married undergraduate students. Student-life stress was examined using the Student-Life Stress Inventory (SLI) (Gadzella, 1991). Student-life stress was compared to levels of marital dedication (low, moderate, high) using the Relationship Scale (Stanley & Markman, 1992). Differences in student-life stress were examined between male and female students. In addition, differences in levels of marital dedication were examined between students and spouses. Levels of marital dedication were compared to a national sample of relatively happy and committed couples. Lastly, spouses ranked categories that have had the greatest impact upon them as spouse of
students. Ninety married couples (180 participants) at four universities and one community college in the Southeast participated in the study.

No statistically significant difference was found on the Student-life Stress Inventory (SLI) between male and female students. In the highly dedicated category, there was a statistically significant difference in levels of marital dedication between students and spouses. A greater proportion of spouses were more highly dedicated than students. No statistically significant difference in overall levels of marital dedication was found between spouses of male and female students. Male students were as equally dedicated to the national sample of males, whereas female students were less dedicated than the national sample of females. Lastly, male spouses scored higher than female spouses on every category concerning areas that have been most greatly impacted by being a spouse of a student. Though Recreation and Housework were highly ranked categories, the only category showing a significant difference was Sex. Husbands were more severely impacted in the Category of Sex than wives.

Although previous research found marital dedication to be higher among females than males, this was not the case for student wives. This may suggest that student wives prioritize their academic studies while they are in school. Male spouses struggle with multiple demands while
their wives are in school, calling for more attention to preclude the negative marital effects for male spouses.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Lewis, to whom I have been married for almost twelve years. Thank you for the many sacrifices you have made in order for me to complete this lengthy project. You loved me unconditionally, in spite of all my mood swings. To my son, Baker, who was conceived when I started this journey; he will soon be nine. Your hugs and sweet kisses really kept me going. To my parents, James and Ruby Hamblin, thanks for instilling in me the importance of a good education. To my brother and sister, Timothy Hamblin and Tamara Coleman, thanks for being there to encourage me and support me. To my Uncle, Travis Hamblin and to my father-in-law, “Molly” Halbert, though not here in body, live in my heart. To my grandmother, Leila C. Hand, thank you for your compassionate and giving spirit. To my colleagues at Baptist Behavioral Health Care Willowbrook and Mississippi University for Women, thank you for your friendship and professional guidance. To my dearest friends, B. J. Mann and Nan Whitehead, your fervent and unwavering love for the Lord has taught me to prioritize Him above everything else. To God and my precious Lord, who gave me purpose and inspired me to reach potential I never before thought possible.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale and Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of Purpose</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of the Theoretical Framework and Justification for Use of Commitment Theory</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of the Theoretical Framework and Justification for Use of Systems Theory</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of the Theoretical Framework and Justification for Use of Stress Theory</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I I. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment Theory</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment and Dedication Constructs</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spousal Support</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband and Wife Differences Regarding the RS</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Duties</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences in Educational Level</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Problems</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress Theory</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Life Stress</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Differences</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student versus Non-Student Status</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactions to Stressors and Coping</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiological</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time versus Part-time Enrollment</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Retention</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Systems Theory</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdependence Theory</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment Theory</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Roles</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. METHODS AND MATERIALS</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Selection</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection Procedures</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumentation</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Questionnaire</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Relationship Scale</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Life Stress Inventory</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. RESULTS</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Demographics</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question One</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Two</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Three</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Four</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Five</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Six</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER V. SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS ........ 87

Summary ........................................................................................................... 87
  Research Question One .................................................................................. 89
  Research Question Two .................................................................................. 90
  Research Question Three ............................................................................. 91
  Research Question Four .............................................................................. 93
  Research Question Five ............................................................................... 94
  Research Question Six ................................................................................. 95

Implications ......................................................................................................... 98

Recommendations ............................................................................................. 101

REFERENCES .................................................................................................. 104

APPENDIX

A. LETTERS OF APPROVAL FROM THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD’S FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH (EMCC, MSU, MUW, UM, UNA) ......................................................... 123

B. LETTERS OF APPROVAL TO USE AND REPRODUCE THE RELATIONSHIP SCALE AND STUDENT-LIFE STRESS INVENTORY ........................................................................................................... 129

C. DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE .............................................................. 132

D. RELATIONSHIP SCALE (RS) ........................................................................ 135

E. STUDENT-LIFE STRESS INVENTORY (SLI) .................................................. 137
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE                                                                 Page

1. Selected Demographic/Background Characteristics of Sampled Students and Spouses ..................... 76
2. Bivariate Correlation Between the Relationship Scale and the Student Life Stress Inventory ............... 77
3. Means and Standard Deviations for Student Husbands and Student Wives on the SLI ......................... 78
4. Means and Standard Deviations for Students and Spouses on Levels of the Relationship Scale (RS) ... 78
5. Crosstabulation on Low, Moderate, and High Levels of Marital Dedication Between Students and Spouses ..... 79
6. Crosstabulation on High Levels of Marital Dedication Between Students and Spouses ............................... 80
7. Student-Life Stress Scores among Students in the High Relationship Scale Category ......................... 80
8. Means and Standard Deviations of Marital Dedication Between Spouses of Male and Female Students ........ 81
9. Means and Standard Deviations of Marital Dedication Between Husbands and Wives ............................... 81
10. Means and Standard Deviations of Marital Dedication Between Student Husbands and Student Wives Compared to a National Sample of Relatively Happy and Committed Couples ........................................ 82
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Means and Standard Deviations of Marital Dedication Among Non-student Spouses Compared to a National Sample of Relatively Happy and Committed Couples</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Impact Categories for Male Spouses Listed on the Demographic Questionnaire</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Impact Categories for Female Spouses Listed on the Demographic Questionnaire</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Means and Standard Deviations of Student-Life Stress Scores by Number of Children</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Means and Standard Deviations of Relationship Dedication Scores by Household Income</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Rationale and Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this research is to help married undergraduate students and their spouses to begin and/or maintain dedicated marriages and to alleviate student-life stress among full-time undergraduate college students. The effects of stress can be both economically and physically costly in terms of absenteeism, reduced productivity, health expenses, and personal suffering. Research has shown that individuals exposed to stress are more likely to have cardiovascular disease, gastrointestinal problems, allergic reactions, and muscular tension (Kohn & Frazer, 1986).

Statement of Purpose

Results from Gadzella’s 1992 study showed differences in levels of student-life stress among marital status groups; however, no studies have explored the relationship between student-life stress and marital dedication. In addition, marital dedication has been under-researched in the literature, when compared to other constructs of communication and
satisfaction (Stanley & Markman, 1992). The purpose of this study was to investigate the following six research questions:

**Research Questions**

(1) Is there a relationship between student-life stress and marital dedication among undergraduate students? (2) Is there a difference in student-life stress between male and female undergraduate students? (3) Is there a difference in marital dedication between married undergraduate students and their spouses? (4) Is there a difference in marital dedication between spouses of male and female undergraduate students? (5) Do student husbands/wives and their spouses differ from the mean average of marital dedication from a sample of relatively happy and committed married couples as defined in the Relationship Dedication Scale key? (6) How is a non-college enrolled husband or wife impacted per categories as listed on the demographic questionnaire? The independent variables addressed are spouse gender and student/non-student status. The dependent variables are student-life stress and relationship dedication. The researcher hypothesized an inverse relationship between marital dedication and student-life stress in which high marital dedication would be correlated with lower student-life stress and low marital dedication would be correlated with higher student-life stress.
Research related to commitment theory, the complex factors that lead a person to want a long-term relationship with his or her partner, has been conducted for several decades (Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Odom, 1998; Ross, 1995; Nock, 1995; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993; Stanley & Markman, 1992; Wyke & Ford, 1992; Canary & Stafford, 1992; Lund, 1985; Johnson, 1985; Beach & Broderick, 1983; Johnson, 1982; Rusbult, 1980, 1983; Levinger, 1979; Cook & Emerson, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1977). These studies suggest the importance of marital commitment, especially for relationship stability, longevity, economic well-being, childrearing, and improved mental and physical health. Marriage has historically benefited community life and civilization. Yet, the variables that are associated with marital commitment are unsubstantiated and under-researched.

The probability of divorce among people marrying today is between 40 and 45% (Popenoe & Whitehead, 2002) and the percentage of remarriages that end in divorce is 60% (U.S. Divorce Statistics, 1997). Today, more marriages dissolve by divorce than by death and many couples who remain together are distressed in their relationships (Leber, Markman, Peters, & Stanley, 1995). According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, there were 2.3 million marriages and 1.2 million divorces in 2000. Nevertheless, most Americans value marriage as an important life goal, with 85% marrying at least once in their lifetimes.
Empirical research suggests that serious psychological impairment and chronic illness often results from marital distress, separation, and divorce (Wyke & Ford, 1992). The risk of men’s alcoholism, women’s depression (Horwitz, White, & Howell-White, 1996) and mortality (Hu & Goldman, 1990; Lillard & White, 1995) increases among the unmarried, as does the prevalence of obesity (Joung, Stronks, van de Mheen & Mackenback, 1995). Other negative consequences of separation and divorce are increased risk for suicide, homicide, aggression, disease, and automobile accidents (Bloom, Asher & White, 1978). The dissolution of marital relationships also creates emotional burdens, role strain (Asseltine & Kessler, 1993) and changes in relationships, finances, childcare, housework, employment, and residency (Brown & Foye, 1984).

News broadcasts from the New York Times, television, radio, and religious programs have focused attention upon the United States divorce rate and the depreciating value for marriage (Paul, 2002; Whitehead, 1997). Many religious and political leaders have been called to “do something” in a “marriage movement” reflected in preventive efforts in the United States (Stanley, 2001). The Annual Smart Marriages, Smart Families Conference in the U.S., the International Association of Marriage and Family Counselors, and the Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment have sounded the alarm in an effort to prevent marital and family dissolution.
Stanley (2001) estimates that 75% of couples marry for the first time in a religious ceremony. The message from premarital counseling conveys that the institution of marriage depends on the couples’ attitudes and behaviors. President George Bush, Jr. announced that $300 million would be spent on pre-marital counseling (Wolcott, 2002; Ooms, 2002) under the premise that stronger marriages would produce healthier children.

Affecting more than one million children in the United States each year, some potential effects of divorce upon children are depression, poor social skills, health problems, conduct disorders, poor academic performance, parental absence, economic hardship, confused expectations, and recurrent life stress (Amato, 2001; Wallterstein, 2000; Katz & Gottman, 1991a, 1991b; Howes & Markman, 1989; Gottman & Katz, 1989; Emery, 1988; Easterbrooks, 1987). Parental stress can also cause other problems, such as parental depression, anger, invalidation, exhaustion, and child abuse (Azar & Seigal, 1990). High blood pressure, insomnia, and accident-proneness may be symptoms of physiological impairment; while sexually transmitted disease (caused by outside marital affairs), increased psychiatric need, and decreased productivity in the workplace are additional concerns (Fraenkel, Markman, & Stanley, 1997). Consequently, familial discord results in financial decline,
impaired physical and mental health, and compromised welfare of the family and its members.

Overview of the Theoretical Framework and Justification for Use of Commitment Theory

Couples often mention commitment when asked what they consider is imperative in their relationships. Attridge (1994); Rusbult & Buunk (1993); and Canary & Stafford (1992) view spousal commitment as a fundamental determinant in relationship permanence. Yet, commitment has been under-researched when compared to other constructs in the literature such as communication and satisfaction (Stanley & Markman, 1992). Stanley and Markman sought to change this by creating a practical, well-designed measure to conceptualize relationship commitment. The Commitment Inventory (CI) separately measures the constructs of constraint commitment and personal dedication and has been shown to be a reliable and valid instrument.

For purposes of this study, the construct of personal dedication among heterosexual couples was considered. Although the two constructs (constraint commitment and personal dedication) are related, the characteristics of marital relationships were of interest in this study. Relationship dedication is the notion of seeing something (i.e., the relationship) through to the end (Lobitz, Markman, & Stanley, 1995). Whereas personal dedication is evidenced by one's devotion to the
relationship and his or her desire to make improvements, sacrifices, and investments for it, constraint commitment by contrast emerges from internal and external obligations which make leaving a relationship more economically and personally costly. The notion of personal commitment is motivated by a desire to continue the relationship, rather than by ethical and structural pressures (Johnson, 1999). Therefore, the construct of personal dedication includes components of both relationship quality and relationship satisfaction. Stanley and Markman (1992) proposed that marital dedication is a more forceful and influential predictor of future relationship quality and stability than is present relationship satisfaction. High dedication yields motivation to learn constructive communication techniques and problem-solving skills in psychotherapy (Beach & Broderick, 1983) and to make the relationship better (Kusbult, Zembrodt, & Gunn, 1982).

The subscales of the Commitment Inventory relevant to dedication come from various sources and have been found to be to be intuitively captivating to couples in addressing pertinent marital issues such as couple identity and making sacrifices (Beach & Broderick, 1983; Leik & Leik, 1977; Rusbult, 1980; Stanley & Markman, 1992). Relationship Agenda is the extent to which one wants to continue the relationship long-term and has been directly related to the development of commitment by exchange theorists (Dean & Spanier, 1974; Leik & Leik,
1977; Levinger, 1979). Primacy of Relationship refers to the order of precedence of the relationship with regard to one’s hierarchy of needs. Couple Identity is the degree to which one considers the relationship as a team, with the objective to maximize shared outcomes. Satisfaction with Sacrifice is feeling satisfied by doing something mostly or exclusively for their partner’s benefit. Alternative Monitoring refers to one’s scrutiny of alternative partners. The more appeal to prospective partners, the less dedicated to their current partners. Meta-commitment refers to a level of commitment to commitments, representing a value that one brings to a relationship.

Constituents of enduring marriages are commitment, friendship, unity, and humor (Lauer & Lauer, 1986), as well as enjoyment, sexual gratification, tolerance, and perseverance (Sporakowski and Axelson, 1984). Other family strengths according to Stinnett (1983) are gratitude, time together, conversation, compatible religious beliefs, and competence in effective crisis/conflict management. For the married college student, these constituents are doubly difficult to attain due to multiple academic demands (T. W. Hosie, February 25, 2005).

Overview of the Theoretical Framework and Justification for Use of Systems Theory

Marital relationships are not one-sided, rather they are interdependent upon one’s spouse (Kenny, 1996). Previous research led
to assumptions about marital relationships based upon perceptions from either the husband or the wife. Lazarus & Folkman (1984); Lazarus & Launier (1978); and Lazarus (1966) proposed that stress involves a transaction between the environment and the person. As one appraises a situation as potentially harmful, threatening, or stressful, coping mechanisms are implemented to deal with the person-situation problem. Since several types of stressors can affect an individual simultaneously, more than one reaction to the stressor is expected (Kenny, 1996). This interdependence of cross-spouse perceptions and behaviors, analyzing both self and spouse, represents a more accurate representation of marital relationships.

Gottlieb (1981) maintained in his book on social support and social networks that researchers sought to understand “the manner in which human attachments are structured as systems of support and the resources that are exchanged among the members of these systems” (p. 1.). Researchers have found that understanding the interpersonal experiences of various people to be a perplexing task.

A network of good social support is inherent within general systems theory (GST), founded by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the early 1920s. GST refers to members of a system as mutually interdependent among themselves and the environment (Jurich & Myers-Bowman, 1998). The premise of GST's multidisciplinary application is founded in Bowen
family systems theory (BFST), which examines cross-spouse examination (Papero, 1995).

BFST stipulates that an individual's instinctive emotional response is altered in the relationship dyad, as well as the broader system in which the marital relationship is situated. In simpler terms, the emotional system of a separate individual extends itself to the marital relationship. Psychological strain experienced by college students, for example, will contribute to family stress, as much as familial strain will relate to academic stress (Laszlo, 1972). Therefore, perceptions of marital dedication and student life stress are best examined within the context of GST and BFST which incorporate the individual and the family unit. According to Ballard-Reisch and Weigel (1999), self-perception and cross-spouse perceptions of a relationship are systemically connected. In other words, the feelings and behaviors of one spouse influence the other spouse. In particular, wives' feelings and behaviors were more connected to the feelings and behaviors of their husbands than husbands were to their wives (Ballard-Reische & Weigel, 1999). In addition, spousal support, health monitoring behaviors (Beggs et al, 1996; Wyke & Ford, 1992), equitable sharing of resources (Feinstein, 1993, Waldron et al, 1996; Wyke & Ford, 1992), and engagement in less risky behaviors results in improved mental and physical health (Ross, 1995; Waite & Gallagher, 2000). This presents a more complete view of the systems
approach to cross-spouse examination and the interdependence between wives and husbands.

As portrayed in the traditional works of Erikson, Levinson, and Kohlberg, the psychosocial development of women was not fully developed. Gilligan (1982), Clinchy and Zimmerman (1982/1993), Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) and Baxter Magolda (1992) examined gender differences in student learning for over two decades and found that female values related to adult education was vital to understanding the development of women over the life span. In addition, strands of feminism emerged to provide more insight about females. Liberal feminism advocates a system void of inequity and rewards appropriately based upon merit (Whelehan, 1995), whereas Left or Marxist feminism includes men in confronting oppression of class and capitalistic labor (Whelehan, 1995). “The political is personal” is the phrase coined from radical feminists, who advocate separatism instead of assimilation into the social structure. Meanwhile, psychoanalytic feminism focuses on the uniqueness of women and correcting biases created by a patriarchal world (Calas & Smircich, 1998). In summary, three major themes emerge from the literature: 1) relationships are vital to the overall development of women; 2) varied and nonlinear patterns are the norm for women; and 3) identity and intimacy are of continuance importance to women throughout their lives.
Overview of the Theoretical Framework and Justification for Use of Stress Theory

Though research in the past two decades indicated that marriage diminishes college attendance more for women than for men (Alexander & Reilly, 1981; Marini, 1978; Sewell et. Al., 1980), little is known about the facets associated with women’s return to college after marriage (Teachman & Paasch, 1989). Time pressures, unilateral intellectual growth, and academic exhaustion are just a few of the many problems women experience in both their academic and personal lives (Hedstrom & Hedstrom, 1983). According to Englander (1998), financial conflict is often a cause, if not the primary cause, of divorce among married college students. Other sources of stress in the college environment are exams, relationships with faculty and peers, public speaking, and transitions from home to independent living (Grace, 1997). Moreover, college students today experience more strain, more competition, and greater demands than their predecessors (Newton, 1998).

While moderate amounts of stress can help to motivate students and increase their performance (Moore, Burrows, & Dalziel, 1992), excessive stress can lead to emotional and physical problems (Selye, 1976). Depression, headaches, anxiety, and fatigue are among the many symptoms associated with excessive stress, which can contribute to absenteeism, poor academic achievement, substance abuse, and career
disappointment (McKee, 1993). These problems are evidence of the unsettling trend of student stress nationwide and illustrate how stressors affect one’s health, behaviors, and relationships (Sax, 1997). For purposes of this study, stress is defined as a mentally or emotionally disruptive or upsetting condition occurring in response to adverse external influences and capable of affecting physical health, usually characterized by increased heart rate, a rise in blood pressure, muscular tension, irritability, and depression (Gadzella, 1994).

An extensive divorce rate among graduate and professional school students peaks soon after their college graduations (Hibbs, 1982). As the college years often mark a transitional period from childhood to adulthood, forming autonomy and identity (Chickering, 1969), the married college student must also simultaneously form a couple identity balanced with the needs of his or her partner in order to succeed.

Many couples pursuing higher education may be adversely affected in their marital relationships due to a multitude of stressors. Several studies show that academic experiences produce stress and tension within the family unit and can be potentially destructive to family life (Gadzella, 1992; Suitor, 1987; Gilbert, 1982; Hooper, 1979). The demands of college life have detrimental effects upon the adjustment to university living. Adult living, academic pressures, financial constraints, and career planning are stressors that contribute to such distress.
Although existing research has focused on psychological symptoms (e.g. anxiety and depression) of stress, little is known about specific stressors in educational settings and their impact upon students and their families (Heppner & Neal, 1983; Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Selby (1972) reported the need to examine whether or not married students have any greater marital distress than non-student couples. In addition, few studies examine women’s sense of satisfaction in balancing academics and family life. Nor do they explain why women are more overburdened than men (Miklie & Peltola, 1999).

According to Feldman (1974), Solomon (1976), and Weissman (1974), pressures such as academic isolation, time constraints, limited financial aid and childcare compound the problems for the married female student and lower her probability for success. Feldman also speculated that women who combined their student/wife roles would not be as successful as the women who placed primary emphasis on her academic career. Since most college counseling center clients are women, information on the kinds and effects of stressors is of great importance in higher education settings (Johnson, Ellison, & Heikkinen, 1989).

Women who perform multiple roles outside their campus are at high risk for academic withdrawal or failure if attempts are not made to integrate them into college life (Tinto, 1988). Two studies conducted by
Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda (1993) and Hatcher & Prus (1991) examined perceived workload, stress, academic progress, and grade point average among college students. Both studies indicated that non-academic factors such as caring for children and finding child-care have a statistically significant adverse effect upon college retention and academic attainment. Household demands may also induce poor academic performance, and in some cases, drop-out, for female college students (Edwards, 1990, 1993).

Adult students ages 25 and older comprise up to 41% of higher education enrollment and are more likely to be married and be of lower socioeconomic status than traditionally-aged students (Wlodkowski, Mauldin, & Gahn, 2001). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2001), twenty-two percent of 1999-2000 undergraduates were married. This amounts to more than one-fifth of all undergraduate students.

Women have a different set of stressors than men, not only pregnancy and giving birth, but performing as employee by day and domestic worker by night. Although day responsibilities should accompany a reduction of home responsibilities, this is not necessarily the case (Vanfossen, 1981).

Feldman (1974) argued, “there is a concern about the conflict between the role of wife and full-time (student). . . Perhaps
some women avoid a potential conflict by remaining single, while others end their marriages.”

Since 1960, the number of women students over 25 years of age on college campuses has increased substantially (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1975, 1984, 1986). In fact, the latest trend indicates that women age 25-34 are just as likely as men to have attained four or more years of college (Ottinger & Sikula, 1993).

Maynard and Pearsall (1994) report that adult learners account for 25% of the entire student population, 70% of whom are married. Yet, very little research has been conducted on how marriage impacts levels and types of support during stressful times for female college students (Durm, 1999).

As the view expands that marriage is no longer a lasting relationship, the nature of commitment becomes a principal factor in relationship permanence. Markman and Stanley (1992) emphasized the need to distinguish between the constructs of commitment and dedication, (external and internal forces that may influence relationship stability), to establish construct validity. Constraint commitment is defined as a sense of obligation, which forces individuals to stay in a relationship whether or not they are happy. Dedication is defined as the intrinsic desire and behavior to improve the quality of a relationship for the inclusive good of both partners. Dedication is evident in one’s desire to sacrifice for and
invest in the relationship, link personal goals to it, and to seek the partner’s welfare, not simply one’s own (Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 1994).

Several other researchers as cited in Lobitz et al., (1995) found marital dedication to be: (1) positively associated with marital adjustment (Murstein & MacDonald, 1983), satisfaction (Stanley & Markman, 1992; Acker & Davis, 1992), and investment (Rusbult, 1980, 1983); (2) higher among engaged and married couples than dating couples (Johnson & Shuman, 1983, Stanley & Markman, 1992), (3) higher among females than males (Murstein & MacDonald, 1983), and (4) predictive of female’s satisfaction from marital therapy (Beach & Broderick, 1983). This study will contribute to existing research in understanding marital dedication of college students and their respective spouses.

Limitations

The current study included college-aged undergraduate participants and their spouses at four universities and one community college in the rural South. Female students were more highly represented in the participant pool, since the small liberal arts institution utilized was predominantly female (80%) and more female students than male students were enrolled in Education courses. Due to small sample size, discretion is advised in generalizing these findings to ethnic minorities
and those groups who differ in socioeconomic status and developmental maturity.

Other limitations include lack of participation among students who were already separated and/or unwillingness of spouses to participate in the study. Subjective reporting among participants, the tendency to rate extreme scores on a Likert type scale, and obtaining honest responses on the Relationship Scale were other potential limitations. The assumption that each component within a system has equal interactive influence (Constantine, Fish; Whitchurch & Constantine as cited in Jurich & Myers-Bowman, 1998) implies that one factor, such as financial constraints, may or may not have as a great an impact on marital dedication as another factor, such as years of marriage. Systems theory has attempted to make sense of this complication by integrating phenomena into a meaningful framework, comparable to Aristotle’s notion of formal cause.

This study does not specifically determine stress factors and exemplifies a global approach to understanding these factors. Marital demands and high academic expectations, coupled with stress factors, are crucial to understanding college students and their spouses. Transactional stress theory recognizes the interaction of life events (Holmes & Rahe, 1967), personality traits, thoughts, and behaviors to the onset of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).
Summary

Commitment Theory, Stress Theory, and Systems Theory were identified as the appropriate frameworks for the proposed study of the relationship of student-life stress to marital dedication among married undergraduate students and their spouses. The rationale and statement of purpose were identified, and the research questions to guide the proposed study were established. The statement of the problem was discussed and limitations for the study were identified.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Commitment Theory

Relationship researchers (Clark & Reis, 1988; Berscheid, 1985) have presumed that those satisfied in their relationships are most likely committed to their partners. This notion contends that those happy with their partners are most likely to stay in their relationships and considers the strength of one’s fortitude to follow through (Klinger, 2000; Brickman & Coates, 1987). Unfortunately, this simplistic understanding is not sufficient to explain why some relationships grow more robust over time while others become weak and die. Therefore, for purposes considered in this study, relationship commitment is examined as it relates to marital dedication and the interdependence between husbands and wives.

Although relationship satisfaction has an ebb and flow in the best relationships, the question remains why some survive the bad times and others do not. Those fluctuations may be attributed to causes other than the spouse or the relationship. For example, husbands who very much love their student wives may become disgruntled when their class and study schedule temporarily interferes with their spending time together.
The husband may not feel that the marriage is going well, but may not necessarily feel his wife is to blame. Canary and Stafford (1992) have linked commitment to maintenance behaviors that serve to protect ongoing relationships. Less frequent use of positivity, openness, assurance, networks, and tasks are indicative of relationship problems (Guerrero et al., 1993).

Rusbult, Drigotas, & Verette (1994) propose that quality and quantity of investments and alternatives are additional variables which determine relationship stability. Investments are resources connected to a relationship that would lose value if a relationship were to break up. As a partner invests time, effort, and self-disclosure, other external resources emerge, such as children, acquaintances, and joint material possessions. The size of these investments and levels of dependence are personally experienced as commitment and have a direct influence upon whether or not individuals stay in their relationships.

Given the dynamic nature of relationships, it is important to regard commitment as a developmental construct (Ballard-Reisch & Weigel, 1999; Johnson, 1982; and Rusbult, 1980). The interaction of various dimensions of commitment, along with other relevant factors, influences the degree of commitment and relationship stability over time.
Commitment and Dedication Constructs

This study will examine the construct of marital dedication for individuals pursuing higher education degrees. Markman & Stanley (1992) emphasize the need to distinguish between the constructs of constraint commitment and dedication, the external and internal forces, respectively, that may influence relationship stability. Constraint commitment is defined as a sense of obligation, which forces individuals to stay in a relationship whether or not they are happy. Longitudinal studies suggest that constraint factors are better predictors of relationship quality than relationship satisfaction and attraction (Udry, 1981; Lund, 1985).

Several researchers as cited in Lobitz et al., (1995) have found marital dedication to be: (1) positively associated with marital adjustment (Murstein & MacDonald, 1983), satisfaction (Stanley & Markman, 1992; Acker & Davis, 1992), and investment (Rusbult, 1980, 1983); (2) higher among engaged and married couples than dating couples (Johnson & Shuman, 1983, Stanley & Markman, 1992), (3) higher among females than males (Murstein & MacDonald, 1983), and (4) predictive of female’s satisfaction from marital therapy (Beach & Broderick, 1983).

Dimensions of dedication are derived from Beach & Broderick (1983) and Rusbult (1980). Dedication implies an intrinsic desire and associated behaviors to improve the quality of the relationship for the inclusive good
of both partners. Dedication is evident in one’s desire to sacrifice for and invest in the relationship, and to seek the partner’s welfare, in addition to one’s own (Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 1994). High marital dedication scores suggest being better able to work through troubles than those having lower scores (Nordeen, 1993). Stanley & Markman (1992) assert that marital dedication is a crucial factor to future relationship traits and stability.

In a study of dating with engaged and married couples using the Commitment Inventory (CI), gender differences were examined for personal dedication and constraint commitment over time (Nordeen, 1993). The sample consisted of 37 participants (21 females and 16 males) from diverse backgrounds. Males had significantly higher levels of constraint than females and levels of constraint tended to increase over the time the couple was married. Dedication, however, was similar for both males and females and remained relatively stable over time.

**Social Support**

The effect of social support on stress associates more support with better performance at higher levels of stress (Cohen & Wills, 1995; Gottlieb, 1981; Mitchell & Trickett, 1980; Cassel, 1974). In so doing, support buffers stress, referred to as the stress-buffering hypothesis,
which also relieves the effects of emotional anguish and illness (Gore, 1978; Brown, Brolchan, & Harris, 1975; Henderson, 1977).

Early pioneers of social support psychology emphasized one’s social network and how the availability of such support was conducive to health. Later research concluded that social relationships could have both positive and negative consequences, even to the extent of dissatisfaction concerning the quality and quantity of support offered in a life crisis. Other evidence suggests that not all types or components of social support are equally helpful in alleviating stress (Dean, Lin, & Ensel, 1980; Eaton, 1978), though Jackson (1992) asserts that spouses are better able than friends to buffer role strain due to the matching support of the partner’s need. In fact, Hobfoll (1986) found that social support among intimate friends during anxious and/or depressed states led to more psychological distress than for women with fewer intimate friends. In this case, social support in itself was a stressor, much like a “pressure-cooker’ in which more distressed women sought more support. Intimacy with family, however, was not related to distress (Hobell, 1980). For example, a provider in one’s immediate system serves as a useful buffer to ongoing stressors due the propinquity to the sufferer. This support is only effective to the extent of corresponding to the partner’s need (Cohen & McKay, 1984), such as assistance with household chores, shopping, and child-care. Practical needs such as these require practical
solutions and may alleviate stress more easily than problems requiring a wide range of informational and emotional support.

Interestingly, some women exposed to high stress levels are virtually symptom-free, while others with low stress levels are markedly depressed. Though studies have shown that social support has been linked to alleviating depression (Aneshensel & Frerichs, 1982), they have not supported the stress-buffering model (Aneshensel & Stone, 1982).

Few studies have investigated sex differences in accepting support, excluding Hobfoll (1986), Belle (1982) and Warren (1976). From existing research, women who reported the most positive mental health had an informal social network and a few intimate relationships (Stein & Rappaport, 1986). These women also reported that they could count on their intimates to attend to their issues without fear of disapproval. Hobfoll (1986) also found that the perception of adequate support was beneficial to women, regardless of the level of tension in their marriages and workplaces.

The direct effects of life events cannot be adequately measured before social support, since life events often evoke changes in support systems (Thoits, 1982). Even without life stressors, including non-married and non-working women, authors contend that intimate relationships have more than just a mediating effect on stress, but a pervasive role in

Since spousal support is a buffer against stress, strain in married student relationships will be examined in the context of the academic environment. The structure of higher education, requiring deadlines, competition, and constant interruptions dictates a potentially stressful situation.

Spousal Support

In an early study involving students and spousal support, Mechanic (1978) found that wives giving encouragement to their student husbands was that they should not worry about their exams with the added expectation that they will do just fine. First, the student husband is extremely anxious about the exam, but the wife challenges his feelings and invalidates him. Second, reassurance from his wife, and perhaps the professor, puts more pressure on him, perhaps with overrated ability and confidence. So, if he does not pass, those who gave his reassurance will be disappointed and his reputation will be devastated.

If the wife were to empathize with her husband’s anxiety and just encourage him to do his best, and instill comfort in their ability to manage, regardless of the outcome, then the husband would be validated and relieved of the pressure to succeed. Likewise, if the professor
acknowledged respect for students regardless of their performance, then that would help to alleviate some pressure as well. The point is that support delivered with tact and sensitivity, not just good intent, is most likely to help.

**Husband and Wife Differences Regarding the RS**

In a sample of relatively happy and committed couples, the mean average of relationship dedication for husbands was $86.13, SD = 10.25$, while wives had a mean average of $84.51, SD = 11.27$. Low dedication scores ranged from 36.00 to 80.00, $SD = 9.58$.

To ignore the meaning of gender in couple relationships is to ignore a significant and coherent issue. In a review of the literature on husbands’ work and family roles, Pleck (1985) found that men perceived their familial roles as more psychologically gratifying than their workplace roles. Baruch & Barnett (1986) added that fathers who were more active in caring for their children and doing chores felt more adept as parents. Evidence suggests that marriage is more beneficial to men than women, with lower rates of depression, mental and physical illness, disease morbidity, and mortality for married persons in general, but more so for married men. Weiss (1985) holds that men often define work as the means to fulfill their familial duties.
Marital roles among women are also relevant, with the need to integrate the link between gender and power. In addressing familial domains, women have less control over their autonomy and resources than men (Barnett, Biener, & Baruch, 1987). Some of the reasons are obvious, from pregnancy, childbirth, and childrearing to low standing and low security in the labor force. Considering the maternal role, mothers are more likely to stay home when children are sick or comfort them when they cry.

In the late 1970’s, a full decade after the women’s movement, Hare-Mustin (1980) challenged the conventional roles of women. By the early 1980s, feminist discussion was appearing in national conferences and workshops. Diverse groups of female family therapists began to rethink and rewrite how gender influenced behaviors and reformed the practice of couple therapy. Hare-Mustin maintained that neutrality implies support of the status-quo, an innate pro-sexist position. With respect to feminism, multiculturalism, and modernism, multiple forces determine a perception of reality and truth (Hare-Mustin, R. T., 1980). Conceptualizing appropriate roles in committed relationships is a thorny issue, of which there is still no universal agreement.

Those who would not necessarily call themselves feminist are nonetheless interested in how gender influences how clients construe and react to their problems. The bottom line is to investigate what works
and what does not work in marriage. Specifically, what kinds of couple interactions lead to greater satisfaction and what kinds of interactions lead to decline and divorce.

Though gender research does not support universal and distinct categories of maleness and femaleness, the differences that do exist are meaningful. Findings by Gottman and Notarius (2003) include the following: 1) balance in power of husbands and wives was related to greater marital satisfaction; 2) men have a more compelling style of handling conflict, while women have a more collegial style; 3) men who intensely rejected influence from their wives predicted divorce; 4) birth of the first child led to stereotypical gender roles (fathers withdraw into work; sex and conversation decrease) and abrupt drop in marital quality; 5) women experience more health problems in distressed marriages; 6) husbands with less power were more physically abusive toward wives. The implications of this research are that egalitarian relationships are more satisfying and that children tend to create more conventional, less satisfying relationships.

When women occupy roles of wife and mother, it is automatically assumed they are stressed. In the 1950s and 1960s, women traditionally married and had children. As more women elect to attend college, they are confronted with serious choices regarding academia and family roles. Today, women comprise 47% of the labor force, earn 57% of all
bachelor’s degrees; and 30% are the primary bread-winner over their husbands. Likewise, student parents sacrifice sleep and companionship for their family. Though men are challenged with these same decisions, women who are also housewives and mothers have greater consequence (Teachman & Paasch, 1989).

**Household Duties**

According to Newsweek (June, 2003), dual career couples without children share evenly the household chores. However, when children do come along, researchers report that 55 percent of fathers actually spend extra time at work and less time doing chores around the house. Contrary to Weiss (1955) that men define work as means to fulfill familial duties, other experts presume that fathers may take their breadwinner role more seriously or that they may feel slighted in getting less attention from their wives when children come along.

**Differences in Educational Level**

One may have heard about the wife earning her PHT (putting him through), only for him to outgrow and divorce her after completing his degree. Interestingly, when the wife advances her education, the quality of the marriage is higher (Bergen & Bergen, 1978). This could be attributed to the liberation movement in which higher education affirms a woman’s self-worth.
Financial Problems

Students who married before college enrollment persisted better if their spouses contributed major financial assistance; whereas the opposite was true when spouses only offered minor assistance (Astin, 1975). Interestingly, for students who married after college enrollment, any amount of spousal financial assistance aided diligence.

Sex

According to Newsweek (2003), lack of time for married couples with children and work responsibilities can cause discord in the bedroom and beyond. Some psychologists estimate that 15-20 percent of the 113 million married Americans only have sex 10 times or less a year, the definition of sexless marriage. Whereas, married couples report having sex slightly more often, according to a 2002 study of the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. Most marriage counselors agree that happy marriages usually include some degree of sex frequency as an indicator of marital long-term health. Though the once or twice a week benchmark is default due to unrepresentative volunteer sample (Kinsey Report, 1953), many couples would like to have sex more often (Newsweek, 2003).
Religion

Though not all people are religious, one of the means by which commitment is conveyed would be among those who are religious, to varying degrees. For those who never saw a need for religion until they have children, perhaps religion is viewed as necessary for moral edification. As commitment is inflexible, religion may go with the idea of how we live, what goals we have, and what life goals we want our children and fellow citizens to adopt (Gilbert, 2000).

In summary, issues cited in the literature as reasons for marital break-up are sexual incompatibilities (Burns, 1984; Thurnher, Fenn, Melichan, & Chiriboga, 1983), conflicts over housework (Cupach & Metts, 1986; Parmelee, 1987), lack of time spent together (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), communication difficulties (Bloom, Hodges, & Caldwell, 1983; Cupach & Metts, 1986; Kitson & Sussman, 1983), lack of leisure time and need for more friends (Gruver & Labadie, 1975), and concern with control and influence (Gray-Little & Burks, 1983; Hays et al, 1980). Of all situational factors, financial problems (Albrecht, Bahr & Goodman, 1983) were reported as the most frequent contributors to divorce.

Stress Theory

When one has high expectations of himself and others, the examination of stress is important to understanding individuals and
groups. The Student-Life Stress Inventory (SLI) (Gadzella, 1991) was based on the supposition that more than one type of stressor affects individuals at the same time and there is more than one reaction to a stressor or combination of stressors. The SLI was designed to examine patterns among stressors and reactions to stressors across stress level groups among male and female college students. Based upon a model by Morris (1990), the SLI consists of five types of stressors (frustrations, conflicts, pressures, changes, and self-imposed) and four reactions to stressors (physiological, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive) for a total of nine categories.

Since most people are subjected to stress at one time or another, many researchers and theorists have varied definitions of stress. Holmes and Rahe (1967) defined stress as life events or changes that influence us, whether those changes are wanted or not. Others examine stress as a readjustment to those changes (Weiten, Lloyd, & Lashley, 1990; Horowitz & Wilner, 1980). A combination of variables, including conventional insight and cognitive therapy, influence how change occurs. Four concepts, in particular, influence how changes in appraisal and coping come about: (a) emotions form thought and action; (b) actions shape thought and emotion; (c) the environment forms thought, emotion, and action and (d) thoughts form emotion and action (Lazarus, 1999). How
these concepts are organized in the brain and the person’s incentive to put forth the effort to change are prime factors in the adaptation process.

R. S. Lazarus and other top scholars argue that stress is a function of personal disposition and situation, whereas Lazarus & Fokman (1987) view stress, not in a situation or person, but the transaction between the situation and the person. How the person evaluates and adjusts to the interaction is what determines the consequence (Weiten, Lloyd, & Lashey, 1990; Goleman, 1979). Whether viewed as a stimulus, response, or stimulus-response reaction, stress levels are investigated using the Student-Life Stress Inventory (SLI) to determine what positive or negative correlation exists with levels of marital dedication.

Student-Life Stress

Gadzella (1994) defines stressors as events or conditions (stimuli) that require adjustments beyond the ordinary wear and tear of every day life. According to transactional stress theory, stress is comprised of three interacting components: (a) environmental events that threatens an individual’s well-being or is beyond one’s coping resources; (b) personality mediators such as stress provoking social roles and behaviors; and (c) emotional stress responses such as anger, anxiety and depression (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In the process of primary appraisal, the person judges the potential of a situation to be
threatening. According to Barnett, Biener, & Baruch, 1987), perceived survival and control threatens well-being, regardless of related plans and values. Stressors cause various physiological, emotional, and behavioral responses that have the potential for generating coping difficulty among some individuals (Gadzella, 1994).

Although academic stress in higher education has been a topic of interest for several decades, student-life stress and stress reactions have not been fully explored. Variables include time management problems, financial constraints, grade competition, professors, career attainment, and parental and/or interpersonal conflicts (Cahir & Morris, 1991). Other variables correlated with stress are test anxiety (Abouserie, 1994; Everson, Tobias, Hartman & Gourgey, 1993; Sloboda, 1990), self-esteem (Abouserie (1994); Newby-Fraser & Schlebusch, 1997), student coping mechanisms (Dwyer & Cummings, 2001), burnout (Jacobs & Dodd, 2003), and student health behaviors (Weidner, Kohlmann, Dotzauer, & Burns, 1996). Excessive and/or negatively perceived stress can be detrimental to one’s health (Rahe, 1989) and academic performance (Campbell & Svenson, 1992).

In a study of 675 second-year undergraduate students (Abouserie, 1994), the highest causes of stress were exam results, followed by studying for examinations, and the tremendous amount of material to learn. While 77.6% and 10.4% of students fell into moderate and serious
stress categories, respectively, female students reported more academic stress and more life stress than males.

**Gender Differences**

Studies using the SLI reported differences and patterns between male and female students. In a study of 95 undergraduate psychology students at a southwestern state university, high correlations for both genders were change and conflict, change and pressure, and pressure and frustration (Gadzella, Fullwood, & Ginther, 1991). Lower correlations for both genders were self-imposed and conflict, and self-imposed and frustration. Similar high and low patterns emerged for both men and women in reactions to stressors. The most obvious difference was a much higher cognitive and behavioral correlation for men than for women.

The actions, capabilities, and mannerisms our culture expects, based upon gender role, affects how males respond to female stress. Likewise, studies have shown that men and women differ in their ambition and incentives for continuing their education (Stewart, Gimenez, & Jackson, 1995). Social support and control may be the primary reason that men benefit more from marriage than women (Crawford, Houts, Huston, & George, 2002). Women’s benefits may originate from increased material
comfort (Lillard & Waite, 1995; Waldron et. al, 1996) and labor force participation.

In a study of women’s psychological development, Carol Gilligan (1982, p. 1) reported that women’s “voices sounded distinct.” She suggested “that the way people talk about their lives is of significance, that the language they use and the connections they make reveal the world they see and in which they act” (p.2). In the role of “student wife”, women often perceive themselves as a primary support in spite of their own stress of marriage, family, financial constraints, and husbands consumed in the obligations of their academic labor (Stein & Rappaport, 1986).

Whereas a man who derives self-worth from his work might be more stressed upon the ending of his career, a woman whose self-image is based upon multiple roles would not find this as stressful. Women typically respond to stress by nurturing others or looking for social support for means to alleviate stress. Other behavioral responses such as aggressiveness, withdrawal, or openly showing emotion are deemed more appropriate for one gender than another (Insel & Roth, 2002).

Using Gadzella’s Student Life Stress Inventory (SLSI) at a Midwestern university, Misra, McKean, West & Russo (2000) surveyed 249 students to assess levels of academic stress and reactions to stress. Overall, students experienced most stress from pressures and self-imposed
stress; whereas females reported more stress than males in the areas of frustrations, pressures, and self-imposed stress. Emotional reactions to stress such as worry, fear, anger, guilt, anxiety, grief, and depression were most common, followed by cognitive reactions (situation appraisal) and behavioral reaction (self/other abuse, crying, irritability, smoking). Less frequently occurring reactions were physiological, i.e. body aches, weight loss/gain, trembling, sweating, and headaches. No statistically significant difference was found in stress reactions between males and females, except in the areas of self-imposed stress and physiological reactions, in which females reported more than males. These findings are consistent with previous research that females report being affected by stressful experiences more frequently and more noticeably than men.

Recognizing potential sources of stress is important to managing life changes, especially those perceived as threatening. The college years and early adulthood, in particular, requires adaptation and reconciliation (Insel & Roth, 2002). Daily hassles may take the form of having car trouble, waiting in lines, losing keys or an assignment, or having a conflict with a roommate. Financial responsibility such as paying tuition, borrowing loans, and managing living expenses can be strenuous, especially when some students have a spouse and child(ren) to support. Other pressures arise from time constraints that could result from poor time management or too many responsibilities. For others, with full time
jobs and a family, these pressures may be especially acute. Self-imposed stress often results from one’s own beliefs, perceptions, and method of reasoning. Fretting about things in life that one cannot restrain is like digging smoke. Thinking about what one can control and heeding certain steps to resolve it is a way to think and behave effectively.

Higher levels of self-imposed stress may suggest that female students want to satisfy others. Yet, this can cause elevated stress and anxiety due to unrealistic expectations. The tendency for female students to multi-task as care-takers, students, and workers may attribute to higher stress reactions than males. The male tendency to inhibit emotion may be attributed to societal precedents that expression is a sign of weakness (Davidson-Katz, 1991).

Although never-married women are healthier emotionally than never married men, married women are more likely than men to be distressed in their marriages, and to have a negative regard for themselves (Gove, 1979; Campbell, 1975; Silverman, 1968; Pearlin, 1975; Rodlof, 1976; Gurin, Versoff, & Feld, 1960; McKee & Cherriffs, 1959). The implications of this research suggest that sex differences and social patterns contribute to emotional health within the institution of marriage.

Bernard (1971) argued that women receive less support than they need from their spouses. As social support is a dominant function of married women, they rear children, empathize, and yield to the needs of
others. According to historical research and functionalist theory (Parsons, 1949), the division of labor based upon carnal roles legates gentle and loving sustenance to women, while achievement and attainment tasks are legated to men. The problem lies with lack of reciprocity within the family circle.

Today, many women who are married and have children are earning degrees and pursuing vocational goals in record numbers. Likewise, women are disappointed with jobs that simply provide a paycheck; they want intellectual challenge, meaningful work, competitive income, and upward mobility, the same kinds of fulfillment as men (Herkelmann, Dennison, Branham, Bush, Pope, & Cangemi (1993). Maynard and Pearsall (1994) and Feldman (1974) contradict the presumption that women want vocational competitiveness. Their supposition is that women are more pragmatic than men, having the ultimate goal of paid work for the purpose of economic independence.

Another study involving 290 subjects at a southwestern university showed that women students reported significantly higher stress and more reactions to stressors than men (Gadzella, 1994). While men appeared less concerned about the source and tactics to overcome their stress, women reported more stress as a result of caring for their families, commuting to classes, working, and earning good grades. For men, being in school was related to lower levels of depression, yet men
having young children at home had lower health status than that of women with young children (Crawford, Houts, Huston, & George 2002).

Gonchar (1995) added that students who are on campus for classes only, due to outside employment and family responsibilities, are at a disadvantage from developing a fulfilling college-student role. This does not discount the importance of the mother-student role, which serves as a criterion of success among many women (Gilligan, 1982).

Three decades ago, women who were wives and mothers took longer than men to finish advanced degrees, although the terms of actual semesters in study were similar (Solomon, 1976). More recent research found increased costs and sacrifices, increased hardship in balancing work and family, and greater demands overall in the social sphere for women (Mirowsky & Ross (1995). Consistent with the marriage protection hypothesis, taking responsibility for the health of their husbands and other household members may be the primary reason that men tend to enjoy better health benefits from marriage than do women (Kessler, Price, & Wortman, 1985; Wu & Hart, 2002).

Student versus Non-Student Status

Students ranked the following areas in terms of how often the area was a factor in their level of stress. Frustrations are defined as daily hassles, failures, and lack of resources. Conflicts involve making
decisions considering desirable and undesirable conditions. Pressures may take the form of deadlines, interpersonal relationships, and overload; while changes may involve adverse consequences or too many changes occurring at once. Lastly, personality attributes may contribute to self-imposed stress and stress susceptibility (Linn & Zippa, 1984).

Compared to non-student couples, married college students identified lack of communication and lack of time as areas of dissatisfaction (Craven, 1974). Academic demands, for example, consume time that would have ordinarily been spent in completing household tasks (Halleck, 1976). In a study of Access students, females reported guilt feelings about lower household performance after they became students (Cody, 1991). Excessive assignments (Kohn & Frazer, 1986), continuous evaluations (Wright, 1964), and sleeping/eating habits were additional stressors (Wright, 1967). Overall, non-students reported better health than students who were enrolled or recently out of school. This is congruous with the notion that student status may result in increased stress and detriments in health (Fisher, 1994). In spite of these findings, women who return to school at midlife experienced greater positive outcomes and satisfaction from their multiple roles than their neighboring housewives (Gerson, 1975). Mature women students are also twice as likely than men to express concern about non-academic problems (Metcalf, 1993).
Reactions to Stressors and Coping

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) advocated a systems approach to understanding stress and coping. This multidirectional approach involves listing the antecedents, the appraisal process, and the immediate and long-term outcomes. The idea of appraisal is derived from psychological stress theory that stress and emotion depends upon how one evaluates (i.e. appraises) transactions within his milieu (Lazarus, 1966). In Folkman et. al. studies, positive reappraisal was associated with having a caregiver. In terms of marital support, spousal caretaking tends to generate positive experiences and effectiveness of coping. Personality traits of self-esteem and mastery are found to improve one’s ability to cope with life stressors (Hobfoll & Walfisch, 1984; Tinn & Zippa, 1984; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978).

Coping is defined as the method used to handle stressful life circumstances. In this sense, stress and coping would have an inverse relationship. When coping level is low, the stress level is high; however, when coping level is high, the stress level is low. Those confident in their coping skills are likely to take on more stressful challenges. At any rate, coping is a vital component of stress and stress reactions that deserves our attention in order to adapt to stress and unpredictable life conditions.
According to ego psychologists, coping was said to be the most responsible means for handling stress and suffering, whereas defenses were said to be a maladaptive, unrealistic, and neurotic effort to do so (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). According to Lazarus (1993), process (flux or change) and trait (structure or style) are two sides of the same coin in understanding the elements of coping.

Coping as a process connotes an effort to manage psychological stress. Of course, efficacy in doing so depends upon severity of the threat, the stage of the alarm reaction, and the subjective welfare and social aptitude of the person. Effective process formulation must also be sensitive to shifting relational burdens. The resonant and varied means of coping through thoughts, actions, and strategies are the hallmark of the process approach. According to Menghan (1982), coping attempts can be manifested in one of three ways: (a) where one relies on his own personal strengths and resources; (b) interpersonally turning to family, friends, and other personal associations for help; and (c) institutionally – contacting a group, center, or church.

Coping as a trait/style can be viewed in three ways. First trait/style implies an action characteristic of the person (Lazarus, 1998). Second, disposition to a desired goal formulates a consistent approach to coping which transcends environmental conditions. Third, and most importantly, the conditional trait approach implies that one’s traits
shape reactions that are most important in particular environmental conditions.

Coping used to be considered a one-dimensional response to stress. Mediated by appraisal, coping dispositions are actually two-fold: problem-centered, which focuses upon the stress-response trigger, and emotional-centered, which focuses upon emotion regulation. In adaptive coping, a new process of appraisal is instigated. Hence, adaptive coping becomes more significant than the stress incident itself.

The multivariate view of stress considers the interaction of environmental and personality variables to fully encompass a systems view approach. This is not to say that the process of trait/style approach to coping does not have limitations, though it assumes a relational meaning approach that is measured separately from the outcome.

Effective coping is greatly restricted by academic principles, available alternatives, time allocations, and legitimate coping mechanisms (Martin & Osborne, 1993). Students may not cheat; they may not be fully released from familial demands; nor can they advance without adequate preparation. Stressors like these create internal strain that have negative consequences on health (Rahe, 1989). However, if an individual becomes accustomed to the recognition of threat and comes to terms with it, the level of physiological arousal levels off in response to the stimulus event.
As Mechanic (1978) explains, timing plays a vital part in adaptive coping. A student who is self-confident too soon runs the risk of bridling effective motivation toward successful coping. Likewise, a student who defends against anxiety too soon may avoid reviewing schoolwork, and may lose benefits from such review. Another student who fails to pace himself may reach study exhaustion at a time when effective study would have been beneficial.

Selye (1976) defined stress as a response educed by an outside event. If stress continues from an alarm reaction to a threat, then physiological arousal can lead to an exhaustive stage. For example, Mechanic (1978) offered an analogy between students and combat troops, in that soldiers, like students, must learn exactly what elicits anxiety in stressful situations and to carefully compose their reactions and course of action. These stress responses included avoidance, animosity, identification with similar others, joking, and comforting cognitions. For instance, communication with other students serves as an effective defense, but joking would be minimized to avoid distraction during in-depth discussions. In contrast, the “I don’t give a damn” reaction appears to alleviate anxiety, but this attitude is unstable and serves to mask depression in long-term stress situations.

The degree to which students reverse the stress reaction depends upon the extent to which the situation demands attention (duration) and
their involvement in the situation (importance). Further, students’ aptitudes and capabilities, within the cultural and social system, are needs that must be examined to discover how they adjust and persist in an ever-changing environment.

**Physiological**

Hans Seyle (1956/1976) formulated the most crucial theory on physiological stress. In relation to stress and health, general adaptation syndrome (GAS) was devised to show how the body responds and copes with stress. GAS involves three progressive stages: 1) alarm reaction – a noxious agent instigates an elaborate process of defense in the body; 2) resistance – second stage in which the body mobilizes to defend itself if stress continues and 3) exhaustion – third stage of bodily depletion to the cost of defense if the stress is severe and chronic enough.

The pituitary gland, close to the hypothalamus, activates GAS after being initiated by the noxious agent. Serving as an endocrine glad, the pituitary stimulates the adrenal glands and secretes adrenal hormones in to the bloodstream. ADTH (andrenocortidotrophic hormone), the master hormone, produces euphoria and defends the body against pain. The antagonistic function of the hormones stimulates one part of the nervous system and dulls another, allowing the body to return to a state of equilibrium.
Cognitive

Cognitivists believe that appraising and coping with stress, then changing the appraisal and coping process is key to adaptation. Even though a threat is psychological and presents harm not yet visible, it can adversely effect the body via anxiety. For example, exercise will produce much of the same bodily change as psychological stress, such as perspiration and more rapid heart rate. Selye (1956/1976) proposed that GAS could be initiated by psychological threat and harm, as well as by noxious agents. When the cause of defense is in the mind, the process of GAS becomes an indirect form of the same process.

Cognitive coping can manipulate stress by simply appraising and reappraising the individual in relation to it’s environment. Primary appraisal is estimating whether or not the threat is worthy of consideration and action. Secondary appraisal of implementing a coping strategy interacts with the primary appraisal. As with any stressful situation, one must decide which coping mechanisms to choose and how to implement them. These decisions must often be modified in adaptation to evolving events, though some decisions remain irrevocable beyond a certain point. Lazarus (1989) contends that recurrent long-term adaptational failures result in entrenched pathogenic thinking patterns.
Emotional

Coping has typically been associated with stress, much to the exclusion of emotions. Unfortunately, stress and emotion cannot be treated as separate entities. While certain emotions such as anger, guilt, and anxiety arise from threatening circumstances, it should also be apparent that positive emotions such as happiness, love and gratefulness are also related to stress. Even in light of good happenings, one may fear their good fortune will end and engage in coping mechanisms to get ready for the best or the worst of outcomes. Coping, then, is best viewed as an integral part of stress and emotion. Other behavioral, physiological, cognitive reactions to stress form together as a conceptual unit.

Behavioral

The problem-focused purpose of coping with stress involves obtaining information and acting upon changing the reality of the self and/or the environment (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). For example, a failing student may seek tutoring, talk to an advisor, or simply incorporate better study and time management techniques. This approach illustrates the function of behavioral coping. Later research links social support with coping, in that having support depends upon one’s effort to cultivate relationships and pull from others when under stress (Thoits, 1986).
In a research study conducted by Ross, Niebling, Bradley, & Heckert (1999), 100 students at a mid-sized, Midwestern university were surveyed about their major sources of stress. The distribution of responses was intrapersonal (38%), environmental (28%), interpersonal (19%), and academic (15%). Daily nuisances were reported more often than major life events, with the top five sources of stress as: change in sleeping habits (89%), vacations/breaks (82%), change in eating habits (74%), new responsibilities (73%), and increased work load (73%). Lack of self-confidence in academic settings is another major source of distress among nontraditional students, particularly female students (Chartrand, 1990). Interestingly, in a research study at National University, married students had significantly higher GPA scores than single students in a sample of 194 adult learners (Ngati, 1997).

Seigal (1985) found equal rates of depression among college men and women, although Funabiki (1980) found that undergraduate women were more likely to make self-devaluing statements. The results of these studies were neither replicable or substantiated, though women’s depression appears to be due to lack of control, lower social status, and demands within the female social sphere (Barnett, Biener, & Baruch, 1987). Among depressed women, marital problems are listed as a primary complaint (Merikangas, Prusoff, Kupfer & Frank, 1985).
Unhappily married women also have 25 times more risk for depression than happily married women (Weissman, 1987).

*Full-time versus Part-time Enrollment*

The likeness between wives’ employment and college enrollment suggests that the conditions affecting marital satisfaction when wives are employed will also affect marital satisfaction when wives are in school (Suitor, 1987). As with full-time employees, full-time students adopt the academic community as a normative reference group, and in so doing, adopt the governing values and interests of their well-educated peers. Full-time enrollment, defined as twelve semester hours or more (Mississippi University for Women, 2002), requires a commitment to the student role that is greater than part-time students; e.g. more time studying, more time spent on campus, and less time for family involvement. Husbands of full-time students discuss how enrollment affected family life:

She lives in the library. She lives there! Has to! And that’s affected our home life quite a bit. . . (The children) saw so much less of her that they resented it definitely.

And I had to explain and re-explain, you know, where she was and why she was in the library at night (Suitor, 1984, p. 321).
Says Kathy Campbell (2002), public relations major at Brigham Young University, “By the time I run all the errands, fix dinner, play with the kids, and put them to bed, it’s 10:30 and my husband is asleep. That’s when I start studying for my classes.”

In response, husbands of full-time students provided less support during their wives enrollment, whereas support and marital satisfaction changed little among couples in which wives were enrolled part-time.

I think her going to school in general has . . . helped mold (the children’s) opinions of school, in the sense that they don’t view school as something that people have to do when they’re little. . . But they view it as something that people with a choice will actually do.

(Suitor, 1984, p. 322).

Coser and Coser (1974) explain that the greediness of family roles constrains women’s involvement in nonfamilial roles. Greedy institutions “make total claim on their members. . . seek exclusive and undivided loyalty and. . . attempt to reduce the claims of competing roles and status positions on those they wish to encompass within their boundaries” (Coser, 1974, p. 4).

Cahir and Morris (1991) compared stress scores of female graduate students and their male counterparts. Although females had higher stress scores than males, the researchers questioned whether cultural
sex roles may have conditioned them to be more expressive about their stress. A later study conducted by Mirowsky and Ross (1995) disconfirmed this conjecture after adjusting for emotional expressiveness. They concluded that women genuinely suffer about 30 percent more distress than men. Further, since most counseling center clients are female, university counseling centers need to know about the kinds of stressors experienced by college women and the effects of those stressors upon them (Johnson, Ellison, & Heikkinen, 1989).

Houser (1990) examined how couples’ coping in stressful situations affected their marital satisfaction. His research was performed with couples in which the wife was a student. Techniques such as “escape-avoidance” and “confrontive coping” were significantly negatively correlated to dyadic satisfaction (Houser, 1990). D’Zurilla and Sheedy (1991) demonstrated that problem-solving ability reduced psychological stress and dysphoria among college students. The ability to solve problems served to reduce stress levels by facilitating effective problem resolution and curtailing stressful adjustment periods during the course of a semester. In contrast, if the ability to handle stress was ineffective, then sleeplessness, nervousness, excessive worry, and loneliness resulted (Wright, 1967). This calls for stress management programs and interventions that identify and diffuse the sources of stress among college students. In particular, problem appraisal and solution
implementation can contribute to an effective means of coping and decision-making.

**College Retention**

According to a national student sample of women, factors such as marriage, full-time employment, and having children at the time of college entry were related to school drop-out (Astin, 1975). More recent statistics are that 60 percent of adult students drop-out before graduation (Wlodkowski, Mauldin, & Gahn, 2001). Lili Anderson (2002), faculty member of the School of Family Life at Brigham Young University, reported that nearly 25% of fathers and 40% of mothers postpone graduation after the birth of their first child. A later study confirmed that domestic obligations may also have an adverse affect upon women students and their academic performance, which, in some cases, lead to drop out (Edwards, 1990). The demands of home and college study, coupled with the mutable identity of the student, pose a threat to marital relationships. In a study of mature women students, 25% of the respondents indicated that the pressures of continuing education contributed to separation and divorce in their personal relationships (Edwards, 1993). The conflict of incompatible multiple roles among women students may partially explain why they are less likely than their unitary-role counterparts to complete degrees (Bean & Metzner, 1985).
Non-intellectual factors, such as familial approval, contribute greatly to academic persistence, according to the Student Attrition Model (Bean & Vesper, 1990). In fact, a study conducted by Cabrera, Nora, & Castenda (1993) found that institutional commitment and encouragement from family and friends accounted for the largest total effect on Intent to Persist. These results support Nora’s perspective that support from significant others should be considered when understanding the individual, institutional, and environmental variables that influence student persistence and retention.

Although a student’s personality and commitment level play a crucial part in how they will adjust to married and college life, institutions have a responsibility to assist with these new conditions. Social support structures and problem-solving training, for instance, can help to moderate the effects of stress within student couples; while resources within the college social system can help married students to manage the anxiety of academic tasks (Misra, McKean, West, & Russo, 2000).

Tinto (1988) contends that early persistence and full social and academic integration are necessary to avoid early withdrawal from college, yet this time on campus is restricted for students with families due to different normative behaviors. Programs such as Orientation, extracurricular activities, social clubs, and intramural athletics, are often short-lived, and do not always reach all students. In addition, because
securely attached individuals constructively ask for help, they have more satisfying relationships and are more resistant to developing problems when confronted with stressors (Bowlby, 1969).

*General Systems Theory*

In his highly influential book, *General Systems Theory*, von Bertalanffy (1968) incorporated mathematics to understand the interaction of elements within marriage. Motivated by von Bertalanffy, Gottman, Swanson & Swanson (2002) returned to the theme that complex “systems”, such as husband and wife, could represent a set of values that transform over time.

The premise of systems theory is to consider the complex interaction of mind, body, and emotion and their influence upon action. In this sense, outcomes are not a linear process, but a continuous process of examining those variables that can act as a cause or effect at various points in time. Systems theory evolved to the study of related elements that interrelate as a whole entity, such as a group of family members who interact constitutes a whole entity (Nichols & Schwartz, 1994). For instance, when a spouse changes, the other partner will also change if he or she supports the changed partner. Therefore, examining cross-spouse perceptions is best done in the context of systems theory. The systems
approach also applies to variables of student-life stress, coping, and adaptation.

*Interdependence Theory*

Researchers examined relationship maintenance between partners and explained how relationship stability is maintained in spite of attractive alternatives and degree of subjective commitment (Kelley, 1979; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Hence, interdependence between partners differentiates levels of satisfaction from levels of dependence.

This study incorporates interdependence theory by surveying both husband and wife. The Relationship Scale also examines levels of constraint commitment as it relates to marital dedication. To committed partners, dependence is a feeling of connection and need for their relationship. Such cohesion (Levinger, 1979) and attachment (Johnson, 1982; Rosenblatt, 1977) compels couples to share a larger, long-term perspective, which is more likely to result in various relationship maintenance behaviors.

According to National Center for Education Statistics (1999-2000), 21.6% of undergraduates in the United States are married. Marriage bestows health benefits by inducing spousal control and health monitoring behaviors (Joung et. al., 1995; Ross, 1995), equitable sharing
of household resources, and maintenance of socioeconomic standing (Feinstein, 1993; Waldron et. al., 1996; Wyke & Ford, 1992).

**Attachment Theory**

Our relationships and commitments to others are based upon much more than learning and reciprocity. Bowlby (1969) refers to this phenomena as attachment and concluded that natural selection spurred motivation of infants to be bounded to their mothers. This pattern of attachment remains constant across many years, unless they experience acute distress. As normal attachment is seen as desirable, Bowby relied on this developmental pattern to explain attachment.

Hazen and Shaver (1994) have categorized people according to their attachment style. “Secure” people tend to trust others and are capable of intimate relationships. ‘Ambivalent” people desire intimacy, but fear others will let them down. “Avoidant’ people view others as dishonest and assume a negative view of humanity (Reis & Patrick, 1996). The consistency of attachment styles over time depends upon the “internal working model” of how others will behave and how we respond in return (Berschied, 1994).

Bartholomew & Horowitz (1991) define attachment styles as either secure, dismissing, preoccupied, or fearful. This four-category system has implications for how we manage relationships. Whether or not we
handle a committed relationship depends upon heredity and our perceptions about others. Nonetheless, emotional attachment of adults may be quite distinct from tendency of infants to attach to their mothers. Subjective commitment may well be the venue that binds us together. Conversely, those who lack those capabilities may suffer significant drawbacks.

Multiple Roles

Vanfossen (1986) defines roles as behaviors expected of the occupants of statuses. Role multiplicity has been associated with lower stress and improved physical and mental health (Stewart & Malley, 1987). Marital separation and divorce create relationship disturbances and emotional susceptibility in nearly all areas of life, in particular, with role change and social support transitions (Aseltine & Kessler, 1993).

As quoted from Pearlin and Johnson (1977), . . . marriage can function as a protective barrier against the distressful consequences of external threats. Marriage does not prevent economic and social problems from invading life, but it apparently can help people fend off the psychological assaults that such problems otherwise create. (p. 717).
Chapter Summary

Research suggests that significant others alleviate stress in our daily lives (Jackson, 1992), although no research to date has examined the link between student-life stress and marital dedication. Spouses are often depended upon during stressful times with the implicit disclosure of life strains with one another. In an attempt to conceptualize this link, this study considers student life stress and levels of marital dedication when compared to sample means of relatively happy and committed couples from the RS scoring key. Spouses having higher marital dedication are hypothesized to have lower academic stress. Conversely, low marital dedication is hypothesized to result in higher student-life stress.
CHAPTER III
METHODS AND MATERIALS

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether a relationship exists between levels of marital dedication and student-life stress among married undergraduate students. First, student-life stress was examined using the Student-Life Stress Inventory (SLI), an experimental measure developed by Gadzella (1991). Second, student life stress was compared to levels of marital dedication (low, moderate, high) using the Relationship Scale. Third, the study investigated differences in student-life stress among male and female students at four universities and one community college in the Southeast. Fourth, differences in levels of marital dedication were examined among students and spouses. Fifth, differences in levels of marital dedication were examined among spouses of male and female students. This chapter describes the methods and procedures used in the study. The following components of the study are discussed: (a) research design, (b) participant selection, (c) data collection procedures, (d) instrumentation, and (e) data analysis.
Research Design

This study employed descriptive and correlational research designs. The correlational component involved correlating each of the dependent variables (student-life stress and marital dedication) with each of the independent variables (spouse gender and student/non-student status). Descriptive data were gathered from categories as listed on the Demographic Questionnaire (DQ) about how a non-college enrolled husband or wife is affected when his or her spouse is enrolled in college. Weaknesses and limitations of the design are threats to internal and external validity.

Participant Selection

Married undergraduate students and their spouses, excluding first-year students and two-student couples, were recruited at mid-sized and small-sized public universities in the South. All participants were married students or spouses of a student, enrolled in twelve credit hours or more, at mid-way or near the end of their program of study. Students who participated in the research or alternate options received extra credit in the enrolled course from which they were recruited and/or a 1 in 50 chance to win a $50 Wal-Mart gift card. Extra credit was not offered as an incentive at one of the universities and the community College, per stipulations of college/university research guidelines.
Data Collection Procedures

Only heterosexual married couples were included in the present study. Two-student couples were also excluded from the study due to differing stress and relationship dynamics of symmetrical unions from husband-only and wife-only student marriages (Scheinkman, 1988; Bergen & Bergen, 1978). The authors assert that asymmetrical relationships (husband student or wife student) are more stressful than symmetrical relationships, due to differing priorities, interests, and standards of living. McRoy & Fisher (1982) found that marital satisfaction was highest among two-student couples. Second, first-year students were excluded from the study in having insufficient time to fully adapt to the university setting (Tinto, 1988). Only students in their sophomore, junior, or senior years were included in the study. Lastly, graduate students were excluded, since the Student-Life Stress Inventory had only been used with undergraduates.

Following receipt of approval from (a) Mississippi State University, Mississippi University for Women, University of North Alabama, University of Mississippi, East Mississippi Community College Review Boards for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research and (b) authors of the Student Life Stress Inventory (SLSI) and the Relationship Scale RS (see APPENDICES), data collection occurred during the first six weeks of Fall 2003 semester, first twelve weeks of Fall 2004 semester, and first
twelve weeks of Spring 2005 semester. Recruiting participants was accomplished by several means (e.g. phone, flyers, campus listserv, word-of-mouth, and personal visits) at Mississippi State University, Mississippi University for Women, University of North Alabama, University of Mississippi, and East Mississippi Community College. A brief introduction explaining the research was followed by a request for voluntary participation. The researcher distributed packets containing a copy of the informed consent form, the demographic questionnaire (DQ), the SLI, and RS, and instruction forms to those students who voluntarily agreed to participate. A three-digit code was assigned to the packet envelope, score sheets, demographic questionnaire, and informed consent for matching purposes.

The DQ, the RS (Stanley & Markman, 1992), and the SLI were collected at one time from the students, while each spouse was instructed in the informed consent letter to complete his or her packet separately. Spouse packets did not include the SLI, which would be irrelevant to them. Extra credit and/or a 1 in 50 chance to win a $50 Walmart gift card was offered to participants who returned completed surveys (excluding extra credit incentive at UM and EMCC). All participants were asked to sign informed consent forms and to respond to a likert question about how much specific areas have been a problem in their current relationship. Separate envelopes for the husbands and
wives were dropped off at counseling offices, returned to the researcher on site, or sent by campus mail or in a postage-paid return envelope. All instruments were coded and contained no identifying information. All data was reported in aggregate form with no data on individual participants included. Research data was locked in a secure location.

Research instrumentation, requiring about 30 minutes to complete, was administered individually or in small groups up to 4 participants. Students who participated in the research received extra credit in the enrolled course and/or a chance to win a $50 Wal-mart gift card (excluding UM and EMCC), upon return of the completed survey from the spouse. Participants were asked to sign informed consent forms and to complete the instrumentation separately. Due to the sensitive nature of the Relationship Scale, the researcher emphasized the need for honest responses and fully protected confidentiality and anonymity of participants.

Instrumentation

Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic Questionnaires (DQ) were developed by the primary author of the study and her dissertation committee. The Student DQ consists of 14 short-answer items, asking a variety of questions about age, sex, major, GPA, classification, number of semester hours enrolled,
number of hours a week spent attending class and completing class assignments, and how much spouses were impacted by being a spouse of a student on ten categories listed on the DQ. The Spouse DQ consists of 10 short-answer items, asking all of the same questions as the Student DQ, except for those of student-related content.

The Relationship Scale

The Relationship Scale (RS) (version 1.3) was derived from the last 14 questions of the Commitment Inventory (CI), a 60-item, 10-subscale instrument that separately measures the constructs of constraint and dedication. The CI showed consistent relationships among relationship stage, relationship adjustment, problem intensity, and religiosity (Stanley & Markman, 1992; Stanley, 1986; Pramann, 1986). The dedication commitment items are comprised of the following subscales: Relationship Agenda (items 2, 6, & 14); Meta-commitment (items 3 & 10); Couple Identity (items 4 & 9); Primacy of relationship (items 1, 7, & 12); Satisfaction with sacrifice (items 8 & 11); Alternative monitoring (items 5 & 13).

The Relationship Scale (RS) (version 1.3) was developed by Stanley and Markman (1992). This short form for measuring marital dedication consists of 14 items with 7 point Likert ratings ranging from 1 to 7 (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). Items 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, and 14 are
reverse scored. Higher scores are indicative of a higher degree of dedication. Two selected items from the RS are: (a) I want this relationship to stay strong no matter what rough times we may encounter; and (b) I like to think of my partner more in terms of "us" and "we" rather than "me" and "him/her." Higher scores among the items suggested higher dedication levels. With an alpha reliability of .85, the short form of the RS has high reliability.

Internal consistency of the CI subscales were originally examined using a sample consisting of 279 subjects (162 females and 117 males) from 10 religious groups (one Jewish and nine Christian; \( n = 137 \)), several speech-communication undergraduate classes from two local universities \( (n = 118) \) and a sub-sample of participants in an ongoing marital research project \( (n = 24) \) (Stanley & Markman, 1992). The subjects were predominantly Caucasian (96%) with an average educational level of 14.76 years and an average household income of $30,700. Sixty percent were married, 12.5% were engaged or planning marriage, 23.5% were “exclusively dating” and 4% were “regularly dating.” Each of the 12 CI subscales met or exceeded the .70 criterion. No gender differences on total dedication comparing males with females of the couples were found, \( t(71) = .39 \), though other studies have found higher dedication scores among females than males (Pramann, 1986).
Several other studies lend evidence to the validity of the dedication scale. For example, the short form of the dedication scale demonstrated higher dedication among couples who attended premarital counseling programs, yet no comparable increase among couples in the wait-list control condition (Trathen, 1995). In another study, the short form of the dedication scale discriminated between couples who completed premarital research from those who dropped out (Blumberg, 1991). In a random national telephone survey, four key items from the short form of the dedication scale yielded a positive relationship of satisfaction among engaged and married subjects, while dating, non-engaged, and cohabitating couples yielded a negative correlation of conflictual patterns that put relationships at significant risk (Stanley & Markman, 1996).

A commitment measure developed by Rusbult (1980) focuses more on personal dedication than constraint. As expected, the correlation between the commitment scale and the dedication scale was significantly greater than the correlation between Rusbult’s commitment measure and the total constraint scale, $t(17) = 2.36, p < .05$. The personal dedication scale correlated more highly with the total dedication scale than the total constraint scale, $t(137) = 2.46, p < .02$. These findings are consistent with the theoretical construct of dedication.
Student-Life Stress Inventory

Based upon a conjectural model by Morris (1990), the Student-Life Stress Inventory (SLI) (Gadzella, 1991) is a subjective, paper and pencil survey consisting of 51 items grouped under nine sections. The first five types of stressors are: 1) frustrations (daily hassles, failures), 2) conflicts, 3) pressures (deadlines, overload), 4) changes (unpleasant or too many), and 5) self-imposed (competitiveness, worrying) as perceived by university students. The four types of reactions were grouped as: 6) physiological (nervousness, ulcers), 7) emotional (anger, fear, anxiety, depression, guilt), 8) behavioral (crying, attempting suicide), and 9) cognitive (analyzing stressful situations and strategies to cope with stress). The nine items were summed for each subsection to obtain a total score in all categories.

Internal consistencies for 381 participants registered at a state university were .92 for the entire test, .90 for Men and .92 for Women (Gadzella, 2001). Internal consistencies for the SLI for the following sections for gender (Men; n = 120) and (Women; n = 258) and each subscale were as follows:

Frustrations (Men -.74; Women -.69; Total -.70);
Conflicts (Men -.68; Women -.67; Total -.68);
Pressures (Men -.81; Women -.79; Total -.80);
Changes (Men -.86; Women -.87; Total -.86);
Self-Imposed (Men -.64; Women -.64; Total -.63) and
Total Stressors (Men -.92; Women -.91; Total -.92)
Physiological (Men -.89; Women -.84; Total -.86);
Emotional (Men -.83; Women -.82; Total -.82);
Behavioral (Men -.78; Women -.69; Total -.71);
Cognitive Appraisal (Men -.89; Women -.78; Total -.82)
Reactions to Stressors (Men -.79; Women -.74; Total -.75)
Total Inventory (Men -.90; Women -.92; Total -.92).

To test the reliability of the SLI, Gadzella (1991) analyzed the
responses of 95 university students, who took the inventory twice within
a twelve-day period. Cronbach’s alpha and test-retest correlations
indicated that the SLI is highly reliable and valid (Gadzella, Masten, &
Starks, 1998). Internal consistency ranged from .69 to .82 on the nine
categories (Misra, McKean, West & Russo, 2000). This supports the
position that the SLI is a valid research instrument and provides
substantiated information on college students’ stressors, reactions to
stressors, and total stress index.
**Discussion**

The specific factors and dimensions of satisfying enduring marriages remain unclear (Blanton & Robinson, 1993). While researchers have studied marital stability and student-life stress as separate entities, very few studies have examined the interplay between the two. This study investigated the relationship between marital dedication and student-life stress among undergraduate students in higher education, and their spouses. Other studies have suggested that a comprehensive approach involving marital stability and quality is more appropriate for marital interventions and programs than focusing on each individual component (Schumm as cited in Blanton & Robinson). Likewise, Lobitz et al., (1995) advocate for the examination of dedication and constraint as interrelated entities. For example, as personal dedication increases, so does constraint in terms of children, money, and possessions.

This study contributes to the knowledge base of the psychosocial needs of married students in higher education. Recognizing these needs is of utmost importance to the college institution if educational experiences are to become more meaningful and satisfactory to married students. Of particular importance is making higher education more affordable, time-accessible, adaptable to the needs of married students, and implementing appropriate interventions befitting to their academic and personal roles (Barnett & Baruch; Sarbin as cited in Gonchar, 1995).
Results from this study indicate no statistically significant differences between spouse gender and the level of student-life stress. Nor did spouse gender or student/non-student status have a statistically significant effect upon marital dedication. Similarly, college students and their spouses in terms of marital dedication were not found statistically different from the marital dedication of relatively happy and committed married couples. Murstein and MacDonald (1983) found that marital dedication appears less among females than males. This may suggest that as women become more educated and self-reliant, they may experience fewer marital constraints. However, money, lack of free time, housework, career, and recreational concerns were mentioned as significant problems for married students and their spouses.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship existed between marital dedication and student-life stress among married undergraduate college students. The research questions to be addressed were: (1) Is there a relationship between student-life stress and marital dedication among students? (2) Is there a difference in student-life stress between male and female students? (3) Is there a difference in marital dedication between students and spouses? (4) Is there a difference in marital dedication between spouses of male and female students? (5) Do student husbands/wives and their spouses differ from the mean average of marital dedication from a sample of relatively happy and committed married couples as defined in the Relationship Dedication Scale key? (6) How is a non-college enrolled husband or wife impacted per categories as listed on the demographic questionnaire?

Sample Demographics

Ninety married couples (180 participants) participated in the study, comprising 21 male students, 69 female students, and their spouses. Demographic characteristics for the 90 couples are provided in Table 1.
The average length of marriage for the couples was 9.93 years ($SD = 8.90$). One hundred thirty-one (76.2%) participants indicated that this was their first marriage. All students in the study were undergraduate students. In this group, there were 23 (24%) sophomores; 22 (22.9%) juniors; and 47 (49%) seniors.

The educational level of the spouses was as follows: 4 (4.8%) did not complete high school; 45 (53.6%) graduated from high school or GED; 14 (16.7%) have an Associates degree; 15 (17.9%) have a Bachelor’s degree; and 5 (6.0%) have a Master’s degree; 1 (1.2%) reported other.

The sample comprised 131 (72.2%) Caucasians; 41 (22.9%) African Americans; three (1.7%) Hispanics; three (1.7%) Asians; and one (.6%) other.

The median age of participants was 32, with a range between the ages of 21 and 60. The median age of the male participants was 33 years. The median age of the female participants was 30 years.

Fifty-nine (65.6%) of the 90 couples reported having one or more children living in the household. Twenty-one (35.0%) had one child, 29 (48.3%) had two children, and ten (16.7%) had three children or more children. Thirty-one (34.4%) of the 90 couples reported having no children.

The categories for annual household income were: 13 (7.5%) earning less than $10,000 per year; 27 (15.5%) earning between $10,001 –
$20,000 per year; 29 (15.5%) earning between $20,001 – $30,000 per year; 35 (20.1%) earning between $30,001 – $40,000 per year; 43 (24.7%) earning between $40,001 - $50,000 per year and 29 (16.7%) earning over $50,000 per year. Forty-six (27.1%) were employed 0 – 10 hours a week; 16 (9.4%) were employed 11 – 20 hours a week; 14 (8.2%) were employed 21 – 30 hours a week; 38 (22.4%) were employed 31 – 40 hours a week; and 56 (32.9%) were employed 41 hours or more a week.

Both men and women students had a cumulative grade point average of 3.21 ($SD = .55). The mean grade point average for student husbands was 3.32 and 3.17 for student wives. The average number of credit hours enrolled was 13.63, while the average number of hours studying per week was 25.67.
Table 1: Selected Demographic/Background Characteristics of Sampled Students and Spouses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Students</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Students</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Spouses</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Spouses</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-10 years</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>61.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 years</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31+ years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Level of Spouse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not complete HS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduated HS/GED</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associates Degree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's Degree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Classification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Male/Female Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children in the Household from Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 child</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 children</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 children or more</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-$10,000</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,001-20,000</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,001-30,000</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30,001-40,000</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40,001-50,000</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 50,000</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question One

The first research question investigated whether there was a relationship between student-life stress and marital dedication. Correlation analyses are presented in Table 2. Although the direction of the correlation coefficient suggests an inverse relationship ($r = -.065, p > .545$), the relationship was not statistically significant at the .05 level.

Table 2: Bivariate Correlation Between the Relationship Scale and the Student Life Stress Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Scale</th>
<th>Student-Life Stress Inventory (SLI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RS Pearson</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>-.065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLI Pearson</td>
<td>-.065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question Two

The second research question examined whether there was a difference in student-life stress between student husbands and student wives. A $t$-test was used to examine differences in the means of the Student Life Stress Inventory between student husbands and student wives. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 3. No statistically significant difference was found between these groups ($t =$ 0).
.142, \( p = .887 \). Students’ subjective report of overall student-life stress was 15 (8.3%) mild, 47 (26.1%) moderate, and 13 (7.2%) severe.

Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations for Student Husbands and Student Wives on the SLI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Std Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husbands</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>133.87</td>
<td>24.36</td>
<td>5.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wives</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>132.95</td>
<td>26.11</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question Three

The third research question investigated whether there was a difference in levels of marital dedication between students and spouses. Means and standard deviations for students and spouses are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Means and Standard Deviations for Students and Spouses on Levels of the Relationship Scale (RS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Std Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>82.80</td>
<td>11.43</td>
<td>1.20434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouses</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>85.05</td>
<td>11.86</td>
<td>1.25016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 shows that 42.24% of spouses fell into the highly dedicated category, whereas only 24.4% of students fell into this category. A chi-square test of independence to examine the relationship between
students and spouses was statistically significant, \((90) = 6.5, p < .05\).

Spouses were more highly dedicated than students.

**Table 5: Crosstabulation on Low, Moderate, and High Levels of Marital Dedication Between Students and Spouses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Spouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low, Moderate, High</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relate Scale</td>
<td>% within</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>student/spouse</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>student/spouse</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>student/spouse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To further explore the difference among the 60 participants in the high marital dedication category, a cross-tabulation was formulated. Table 6 shows that among the 60 participants in the high category, 64.8\% \((n = 26)\) were male spouses, comprising the vast majority. A chi-square test of independence to examine the difference between these variables was statistically significant, \(\chi^2(60) = 5.83, p = .016\). Male spouses were more highly dedicated than female spouses and students.
Table 6: Crosstabulation on High Levels of Marital Dedication Between Students and Spouses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Spouse</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within student/spouse</td>
<td></td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within student/spouse</td>
<td></td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within student/spouse</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The means of student-life stress scores among students in the highly dedicated area are reported in Table 7. The range for the Low Category was 36 – 80. The range for the Moderate Category was 81-90 and the range for the High Category was 91 – 98.

Table 7: Student-Life Stress Scores among Students in the High Relationship Scale Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low, Moderate, High Relate Scale</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>70.34</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>9.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>85.95</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>94.97</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>83.93</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>11.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question Four

The fourth research question examined whether there was a difference in marital dedication between spouses of male and female students. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 8. A $t$-test revealed no statistically significant difference ($t = -.667$, $p = .506$).

Table 8: Means and Standard Deviations of Marital Dedication Between Spouses of Male and Female Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spouse</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>84.59</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>11.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>86.57</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question Five

The fifth research question investigated whether student husbands/wives and their spouses differed from the mean average of marital dedication from a national sample of relatively happy and committed couples (Stanley, 1986). Means and standard deviations of the four groups are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Means and Standard Deviations of Marital Dedication Between Husbands and Wives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Students</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Spouses</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husbands</td>
<td>86.71</td>
<td>10.04</td>
<td>84.59</td>
<td>11.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wives</td>
<td>81.61</td>
<td>11.62</td>
<td>86.57</td>
<td>14.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student husbands and student wives were compared to a national sample of relatively happy and committed couples in Table 10. There was no statistically significant difference between student husbands and the national sample of males ($t = .267$, $p = .792$). There was a statistically significant difference between student wives and the national sample of females ($t = -2.076$, $p = .042$). Student wives ($M = 81.61$) were less dedicated than the national sample of females ($M = 84.51$).

Table 10: Means and Standard Deviations of Marital Dedication Between Student Husbands and Student Wives Compared to a National Sample of Relatively Happy and Committed Couples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Student Couples</th>
<th>National Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>86.71</td>
<td>10.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females*</td>
<td>81.61</td>
<td>11.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = significant

Non-student spouses were compared to a national sample of relatively happy and committed couples in Table 11. There was no statistically significant difference between Non-student husbands and the males in the national sample ($t = -1.144$, $p = .256$). There was no statistically significant difference between Non-student wives and the females in the national sample ($t = .688$, $p = .512$).
Table 11: Means and Standard Deviations of Marital Dedication Among Non-student Spouses Compared to a National Sample of Relatively Happy and Committed Couples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Non-student Spouses</th>
<th>National Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>84.59</td>
<td>11.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>86.57</td>
<td>14.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question Six

The last research question investigated how a non-college enrolled husband or wife is impacted per ten categories listed on the Demographic Questionnaire. Participants were asked to rate on a 1 – 5 scale (1 = least severe; 5 = most severe) what areas have been most greatly impacted by being a spouse of a student. As depicted in Table 12, Non-student Husbands ranked Recreation ($M = 3.17, SD = 1.18$); Housework ($M = 3.12, SD = 1.18$); and Sex ($M = 2.84, SD = 1.38$) as having the highest impact, and Religion ($M = 1.88, SD = 1.24$); Jealousy ($M = 1.52, SD = 1.07$); and Alcohol/Drugs ($M = 1.25, SD = .79$) as having the least impact.

As shown in Table 13, Non-student Wives ranked Housework ($M = 2.81, SD = 1.44$); Recreation ($M = 2.75, SD = 1.21$), and Parenting ($M = 2.12, SD = 1.36$) as having the highest impact, while In-Laws ($M = 1.90, SD = 1.45$); Jealousy ($M = 1.48, SD = 1.03$); and Alcohol/Drugs ($M = 1.15, SD = .67$) were ranked as having the least impact. Among spouses, there was a statistically significant difference in impact between husbands and
wives on Sex ($t = 2.864, p = .005$). Non-student husbands ($M = 2.84$) were more severely impacted in the Sex category than non-student wives ($M = 1.84$). No other significance was found.

Table 12: Impact Categories for Male Spouses Listed on the Demographic Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>communication w/spouse</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>1.244</td>
<td>.150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recreation</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.175</td>
<td>.141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jealousy</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>1.066</td>
<td>.128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friends</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>1.249</td>
<td>.151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>housework</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>1.175</td>
<td>.143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in-laws</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>1.308</td>
<td>.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parenting</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>1.338</td>
<td>.161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alcohol/drugs</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>.785</td>
<td>.096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* sex</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>1.377</td>
<td>.168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religion</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>1.243</td>
<td>.150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13: Impact Categories for Female Spouses Listed on the Demographic Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>communication w/spouse</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>.973</td>
<td>.212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recreation</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>1.209</td>
<td>.270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jealousy</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.030</td>
<td>.225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friends</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>housework</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1.436</td>
<td>.313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in-laws</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.446</td>
<td>.316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parenting</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>1.364</td>
<td>.331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alcohol/drugs</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>.671</td>
<td>.150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sex</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>1.167</td>
<td>.268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religion</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1.204</td>
<td>.276</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additional analyses were conducted to determine if children living in the household affected student-life stress (SLI) levels among students. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 14. Level of stress did not vary by number of children \((f = .883, p = .453)\).

Table 14: Means and Standard Deviations of Student-Life Stress Scores by Number of Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>SLI Mean</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Children</td>
<td>127.66</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Child</td>
<td>137.20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>35.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Children</td>
<td>137.20</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21.52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three or More</td>
<td>131.29</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, the researcher investigated whether household income levels affected relationship dedication scores. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 15. Relationship dedication did not vary by level of income \((f = .416; p = .797)\).

Table 15: Means and Standard Deviations of Relationship Dedication Scores by Household Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-$10,000</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>83.0000</td>
<td>17.45948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,001-20,000</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>84.8491</td>
<td>10.99919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30,001-40,000</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>84.5693</td>
<td>10.50022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40001-50,000</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>81.6977</td>
<td>12.70458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,000+</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>83.9285</td>
<td>10.25019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>83.5155</td>
<td>11.85255</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

In summary, spouses were more likely than students to be highly dedicated in their marital relationships. Male spouses comprised the vast majority in the high dedication area. No other statistically significant difference in levels of marital dedication was found across the four groups. There was no statistically significant relationship between student-life stress and marital dedication. Male spouses reported being more greatly impacted than female spouses on every category listed on the Demographic Questionnaire.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Previous chapters in this study provided a rationale and statement of the problem, a review of related literature, a description of the methodology and instrumentation used, and a discussion of the results. This chapter presents an overall summary of the research, implications of the study, and recommendations for future research.

From a pool of 90 married student couples who participated in this study, 69 female students and 21 male students completed the Student Life Stress Inventory, the Relationship Scale, and the Demographic Questionnaire. Their spouses completed the Relationship Scale and Demographic Questionnaire, which included a 1-5 Likert scale of ten categories on how severely they were impacted by being a spouse of a student. The independent variables were spouse gender and student/non-student status. The dependent variables were student life stress and marital dedication.
The Student-Life Stress Inventory (SLI) (Gadzella, 1991) was based on the supposition that more than one type of stressor affects individuals simultaneously and that there are more than one reaction to a stressor or combination of stressors. The SLI was designed to examine patterns among stressors between male and female college students. Based upon a model by Morris (1990), the SLI consists of five types of stressors (frustrations, conflicts, pressures, changes, and self-imposed) and four reactions to stressors (physiological, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive) for a total of nine categories.

Results from Gadzella’s 1992 study show differences in levels of student-life stress among marital status groups; however, no studies have explored the relationship between student-life stress and marital dedication. In addition, marital dedication has been under-researched in the literature, when compared to other constructs of communication and satisfaction (Stanley & Markman, 1992).

Stanley and Markman (1992) propose that marital dedication is a more forceful and influential predictor of future relationship quality and stability than present relationship satisfaction. Marital relationships are not one-sided and interdependent upon one’s spouse (Kenny, 1996). Therefore, perceptions of marital dedication and student life stress are best examined within the context of General Systems Theory, which incorporates the individual and the family unit.
Research Question One

(1) Is there a relationship between student-life stress and marital dedication among students?

Several studies show that academic experiences in higher education produce stress and tension within the family unit and can be potentially destructive to family life (Gadzella, 1992; Suitor, 1987; Gilbert, 1982; Hooper, 1979). Yet, little is known about specific stressors in educational settings and their impact upon students and their families (Heppner & Neal, 1983; Holmes & Rahe, 1967). Psychological strain experienced by college students, for example, will contribute to family stress, as much as familial strain will relate to academic stress (Laszlo, 1972). Selby (1972) reported the need to examine whether or not married students have any greater marital distress than non-student couples. Little research has been conducted on how marriage impacts levels and types of support during stressful times for female college students (Durm, 1999).

There was no statistically significant correlation between student-life stress and marital dedication. The direction of the correlation coefficient suggests an inverse relationship ($r = -.065, p > .545$).

Only a bivariate analysis was conducted, so other variables may not have been accounted for. A potential limitation is obtaining honest responses on the Relationship Scale and the assumption, as it is for all theory, that each component within a system has equal interactive
influence (Constantine, Fish; Whitchurch & Constantine as cited in Jurich & Myers-Bowman, 1998). This implies that other factors, such as years of marriage, may or may not have as great an impact on marital dedication as other factors, such as years in the program of study.

**Research Question Two**

(2) Is there a difference in student-life stress between male and female students?

The structure of higher education, requiring deadlines, competition, and constant interruptions dictates a potentially stressful situation and potential health detriments (Fisher, 1994). Full-time enrollment requires more time studying and less time for recreation and family activities. Although both genders experience academic stress, the literature suggests that women are more overburdened than men (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). In addition, women students reported significantly higher stress and more reactions to stressors than men (Gadzella, 1994).

This research was conducted to contribute to the literature that examines women's sense of satisfaction in balancing academics and family life. Feldman (1974) speculated that women who combined their student/wife roles would not be as successful as the women who placed primary emphasis on her academic career. The tendency for female students to multi-task as care-takers, students, and workers may
attribute to higher stress reactions than males. This contradicts later research that role multiplicity is associated with lower stress and improved physical and mental health (Stewart & Malley, 1987). Men appeared less concerned about the source and tactics to overcome their stress and lower levels of depression as a result of being in school.

Contrary to previous research, women did not report more stress than their male counterparts in this study. No statistically significant difference was found on the means of the Student-life Stress Inventory (SLI) between male and female students ($t = .142$, $p = .887$).

**Research Question Three**

(3) Is there a difference in levels of marital dedication between students and spouses?

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2001), twenty-two percent of 1999-2000 undergraduates were married. Marriage bestows health benefits by inducing spousal control and health monitoring behaviors (Joung et. al., 1995; Ross, 1995), equitable sharing of household resources, and maintenance of socioeconomic standing (Feinstein, 1993; Waldron et. al., 1996; Wyke & Ford, 1992). Many other citations in the literature point that marriage benefits community life, children and civilization.
Today, more marriages dissolve by divorce than by death and many other couples who remain together are distressed in their relationships (Leber, Markman, Peters, & Stanley, 1995). The variables that are associated with marital commitment are unsubstantiated and under-researched when compared to other constructs in the literature, such as communication and satisfaction. The construct of personal dedication includes components of relationship quality and relationship satisfaction (Stanley & Markman, 1992). Dedication as measured by the Relationship Scale (RS) implies an intrinsic desire and associated behaviors to improve the quality of the relationship for the inclusive good of both partners (Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 1994).

Consistent with the marriage protection hypothesis, wives who take responsibility for the health of their husbands and other household members may be the primary reason that men tend to enjoy better health benefits from marriage than women (Kessler, Price, & Wortman, 1985; Wu & Hart, 2002).

Pleck (1985) found that men perceived their familial roles as more psychologically gratifying than their workplace roles. Evidence suggests that marriage is more beneficial to men than women, with lower rates of depression, mental and physical illness, disease morbidity, and mortality for married persons in general, but more so for married men. Weiss (1985) holds that men often define work as the means to fulfill their
familial duties. Social support and control may be the primary reason that men benefit more from marriage than women (Crawford, Houts, Huston, & George, 2002).

In the highly dedicated category, there was a statistically significant relationship of marital dedication between students and spouses, 

\[(90) = 6.5, p < .05.\] A greater proportion of spouses were more highly dedicated than students. This may suggest that students are more vested in their academic studies, with lower dedication to their relationship when compared to their respective spouses. Unilateral intellectual growth and increased independence could be other contributing factors to lowered relationship dedication of students. Spouses may believe that their student husband or wife may be able to contribute to the marriage and household more economically after their graduations, and may feel more successful in a supporting role.

The finding that male spouses were more highly dedicated than female spouses supports findings in the literature that marriage is more beneficial to men. In addition, a male spouse may be more dedicated when his wife advances her education. The quality of the marriage is higher (Bergen & Bergen, 1978) and could be affirming to her self-worth. Conversely, the wife-student role and/or mother-student role is a criterion of success among many women (Gilligan, 1982).
Research Question Four

(4) Is there a difference in marital dedication between spouses of male and female students?

Rusbult, Drigotas, & Verette (1994) propose that quality and quantity of investments and alternatives are additional variables which determine relationship stability. The size of these investments (e.g. putting a spouse through school) and levels of dependence are personally experienced as commitment and have a direct influence upon whether or not individuals stay in their relationships.

No statistically significant difference in overall levels of marital dedication was found between spouses of male and female students in this sample population. This is contrary to previous research that found marital dedication to be higher among females than males (Murstein & MacDonald, 1983).

Research Question Five

(5) Do student husbands/wives and their spouses differ from the mean average of marital dedication from a sample of relatively happy and committed married couples as defined in the Relationship Dedication Scale key?
Male students were as equally dedicated to the national sample of males, whereas female students were less dedicated than the national sample of females. This may suggest that women rank their education higher on their list of priorities and that they are able to focus on their academic goals.

Research Question Six

(6) How is a non-college enrolled husband or wife impacted per categories as listed on the demographic questionnaire?

Among Non-student Husbands, Recreation ($M = 3.17, SD = 1.18$); Housework ($M = 3.12, SD = 1.18$); and Sex ($M = 2.84, SD = 1.38$) were ranked as having the highest impact. Male spouses scored higher than female spouses on every category concerning areas that have been most greatly impacted by being a spouse of a student. Though Recreation and Housework were highly ranked categories, the only category showing a significant difference was Sex (.005). Husbands were more severely impacted in the Category of Sex than wives.

Among Non-student Wives, Housework ($M = 2.81, SD = 1.44$); Recreation ($M = 2.75, SD = 1.21$); and Parenting ($M = 2.12, SD = 1.36$) were ranked as having the highest impact. A woman whose self-image is based upon multiple roles would not find this as stressful. Women typically respond to stress by nurturing others or looking for social
support for means to alleviate stress. Social role reversal suggests that women are more adept as caregivers to balance multiple roles, while men are less adept due their competitive nature.

Recreation was found to be the highest ranked category for male spouses and the second highest category for female spouses. Full-time students must allocate their time and energy to academic priorities. Limited discretionary time for Recreation among students may impose upon their spouses who may compensate in areas of domestic responsibility or have conflicting schedules for leisure activity.

Housework was the highest ranked category for female spouses and the second highest category for male spouses. According to functionalist theory (Parsons, 1949; Zelditch, 1955), the division of labor is based upon carnal roles that legate gentle and loving sustenance to women, while achievement and attainment tasks are relegated to men. Housework falls closely behind that of Recreation for male spouses, which implies that they contribute to domestic tasks while their wives are in school. Non-student wives may have bypassed educational opportunities because of domestic demands. A woman behaving in an ascribed role is generally not rewarded for domestic success, yet is severely sanctioned if she fails. Later studies found that women want intellectual challenge, meaningful work, competitive income, and upward
mobility, the same kinds of fulfillment as men (Herkelmann, Dennison, Branham, Bush, Pope, & Cangemi (1993).

Parenting was the third most highly ranked category among non-student wives. Lili Anderson (2002), faculty member of the School of Family Life at Brigham Young University, reported that nearly 25% of fathers and 40% of mothers postpone graduation after the birth of their first child. According to Newsweek (June, 2003), dual career couples without children share evenly the household chores. However, when children do come along, researchers report that 55 percent of fathers actually spend extra time at work and less time doing chores around the house.

Sex was the only category with a significant difference, affecting male spouses more severely than female spouses. Fatigue levels at home may be similar to what students experience at school. When energy is depleted, students and spouses may feel physically, emotionally, and mentally exhausted, resulting in less time for sex. Male spouses are more negatively affected than female spouses, which may suggest gender related differences for physical intimacy.

Findings from this study are consistent with several themes from the literature. Vangelisti & Huston (1994), issues cited in the literature as reasons for marital distress are sexual incompatibilities (Burns, 1984; Thurnher, Fenn, Melichan, & Chiriboga, 1983), conflicts over housework
(Cupach & Metts, 1986; Parmelee, 1987), lack of time spent together
(Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), and communication difficulties (Bloom, Hodges,
& Caldwell, 1983; Cupach & Metts, 1986; Kitson & Sussman, 1982).
Gruver and Labadie (1975) identified these same problem areas for
married college students, in addition to insufficient funds, lack of leisure
time, need for more friends, and sexual discontent with regard to
frequency and time of day.

Implications

The discrepancy between the high divorce rate of college graduates
and those students and spouses who report high marital dedication
requires further investigation. Counselors must be able to conduct
therapeutic interventions with students and their families. By serving as
an intermediary between the institutional system and married students,
while effecting change through colleagues and administrative personnel,
counselors can reduce the disparaging impact of school on students and
their families.

According to a study conducted at a midwestern university of married
college students (Bergen & Bergen, 1978), couples in which both spouses
were enrolled rated better quality of marriage than couples in which only
one spouse was enrolled. Because of this supposition, the present study
examined assymetrical marital relationships, in which only one spouse in
enrolled in college. Due to outdated research regarding symmetrical unions, more research is needed to examine the quality of marriages in which both spouses are college-enrolled.

Bradbury (1998) adds that we need to know more about marital distress and how to prevent it. As argued in the literature, society needs to act on what it knows to reduce risk factors and improve the quality of life of both adults and children through preventive premarital education. The proposal benefits of premarital strategies are to foster delay for the sake of deliberation, to increase length of time the couple knows one another, and to convey the message that marriage matters.

Stages of college life largely assume a residential model and may not generalize to students who commute, as do many married students. Although all individuals must make some type of adjustment, more research is needed to address the unique needs of the non-residential married student.

The implications of the findings in promoting marital dedication are several. Although previous research has found marital dedication to be higher among females than males, this was not the case for student wives. For married college students, spousal role reversal may bring complexity to the dynamics of marital relationships. Sex roles may lead to differences in achievement and differences in the lucidity and consistency in which those sex-role demands are defined.
Recognizing potential sources of stress is important to managing life changes, especially those perceived as threatening. The college years and early adulthood, in particular, requires adaptation and reconciliation (Insel & Roth, 2002). Qualities like competitiveness and competence will displayed differently by men and women in different kinds of situations. A general disposition is to avoid success that conflicts with social norms relating to sex roles. This is consistent with findings that male spouses struggle with multiple demands while their wives are in school and may suggest that more attention is needed to preclude the negative marital effects for male spouses.

Recreation and housework, in particular, suffer in the lives of male and female spouses. One possible reason is lack of time among students and spouses to invest in these areas. Managing time for recreation, sex, parenting and household responsibilities can be problematic. Dividing household tasks when a spouse is working and/or going to school may also minimize their time together.

The context of gender roles within the institution of marriage and the institution of higher learning need to be examined. Coser and Coser (1974) explain that the greediness of family roles constrains women’s involvement in non-familial roles. Yet, current research shows that role multiplicity is associated with lower stress and improved physical and mental health (Stewart & Malley, 1987).
Researchers in the field of feminist theory advocate that performance and attitudes are socially and situationally produced rather than intrinsic to the individual. As college institutions emphasize the contribution of educated women in the world, perhaps the media will also portray women, as well as men, as competent, capable, and esteemed individuals who are able to concentrate on their academic goals. This has implications for integration of feminist theory and the reconstruction of gender roles in our society.

Recommendations

This study contributed to existing research in understanding marital dedication of college students and their respective spouses and how individual spouses can balance his or her identity as individuals and as a couple. In addition, this study examined correlational patterns of student life stress and marital dedication between student wives and student husbands.

Although cross-spouse perceptions represent a more comprehensive view of relational maintenance among married couples, more longitudinal research is needed to examine constructs of maintenance behaviors, marital satisfaction, love, and commitment (Weigel, 1999). Irrespective of stress levels or marital dedication, the perception of dedication may be beneficial in and of itself. While this study did not examine the
perception of dedication of one’s spouse, perhaps cross-spouse perceptions of dedication could be correlated with levels of self-stress.

It is also critical to recognize how one’s perceptions and attitudes of economic well-being determines how resources will be used. Students and their spouses may not have the luxury of allocating resources for long-term goals and may have to allocate their resources to meet more immediate goals. Some of the financial stressors that college students find most distressful are inability to pay college costs, inability to find a part-time job, and difficulty managing money. To the extent that students and spouses accomplish these tasks is one means to measure their quality of life (Kratzer & Keefe, 1993).

A predominant perspective on the relationship between marriage and health is that the healthy are selected into marriage, whereas the unhealthy are selected out (Goldman, 1993). Compared with other states of union, a disproportionate number of healthy individuals are found in marital unions, yet related literature suggests that ill health reduces marital quality just as a decline in marital quality adversely affects health (Wickrama, Lorenz, & Conger, 1997). Future studies should examine the relationship between health and marital quality.

An extensive divorce rate among graduate and professional school students peaks soon after their college graduations (Hibbs, 1982). This unsettling trend requires more investigation. Cahir and Morris (1991)
compared stress scores of female graduate students and their male counterparts. Although females had higher stress scores than males, the researchers questioned whether cultural sex roles may have conditioned them to be more expressive about their stress. These problems are evidence of the unsettling trend of student stress nationwide and illustrate how stressors affect one’s health, behaviors, and relationships (Sax, 1997).
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

LETTERS OF APPROVAL FROM THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD’S FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH
October 22, 2004

Ms. Linda Halbert
1100 College Street
MUW 1607
Columbus, MS 39701

Dear Ms. Halbert:

It is my pleasure to grant you permission to conduct research at East Mississippi Community College in accordance with the proposal which I have previously approved. Please find enclosed a copy of the college's policy on the conduct of external research.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

David F. Mullins, Ph.D.
Vice President for Institutional Research

enclosure

rw
September 16, 2003

Linda Halbert
MUW, W-Box 1607
417 Serenade Drive, Raneau Hall, Suite 118
Columbus, MS 39701

Re: IRB Docket #03-182: The Relationship of Student-Life Stress to Marital Dedication among Students in Higher Education

Dear Ms. Halbert:

The above referenced project was reviewed and approved via expedited review for a period of September 15, 2003 through August 15, 2004 in accordance with 45 CFR 46.110 #7. Please note the expiration date for approval of this project is August 15, 2004. If additional time is needed to complete the project, you will need to submit a Continuing Review Request form 30 days prior to the date of expiration. Any modifications made to this project must be submitted for approval prior to implementation. Forms for both Continuing Review and Modifications are located on our website at http://www.msstate.edu/dept/compliance.

Any failure to adhere to the approved protocol could result in suspension or termination of your project. Please note that the IRB reserves the right, at anytime, to observe you and any associated researchers as they conduct the project and audit research records associated with this project.

Please refer to your docket number (#03-182) when contacting our office regarding this project.

We wish you the very best of luck in your research and look forward to working with you again. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me at 325-3294 or at tarwood@research.msstate.edu.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Tracy S. Arwood
Regulatory Compliance Officer

cc: Thomas Hosie
September 12, 2003

Dr. Sheila V. Adams
Provost, Vice President for Academic Affairs
W-910
Campus, MS 39701

Re: Committee on the Use of Humans in Experimentation
"The Relationship of Student-Life Stress to Marital Dedication Among Students in Higher Education"
Investigator: Linda K. Halbert
Sponsor: Dr. Tom Hosie, Department Head of Counselor Education and Educational Psychology, MSU

Dear Dr. Adams:

As Chairman of the Committee on the Use of Humans in Experimentation, I have reviewed the above proposal with the recommendation that the researcher expand the consent agreement to explain more fully how the data will be kept confidential. It is also recommended that the researcher place the statement that “failure to participate in the study shall not affect the subject’s standing at the University” on the consent agreement.

Sincerely yours,

H. J. Davidson, Jr.
Chairman, Committee on the Use of Humans in Experimentation

HJDrJr./sb
September 7, 2004

Dear Mrs. Halbert and Dr. Hosie,

This is to inform you that your application to conduct research with human subjects, *The Relationship of Student-Life Stress to Marital Predication among Students in Higher Education*, (Protocol No. 05-004), has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and approved under the Expedited category of research. The approval period for this study ends September 7, 2005.

If you have not already done so, please read the *Multiple Project Assurance of Compliance with DHHS Regulations for Protection of Human Research Subjects* (http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/research/irb/assurance.htm) which outlines the university’s policies and procedures regarding human subject research and explains your responsibilities as a research investigator. The following sections are especially relevant (sections in italics indicate specific University policies):

Research investigators acknowledge and accept their responsibility for protecting the rights and welfare of human research subjects and for complying with all applicable provisions of this Assurance.

Research investigators are responsible for providing a copy of the IRB-approved informed consent document to each subject at the time of consent, unless the IRB has specifically waived this requirement. All signed consent documents are to be retained in a manner approved by the Office of Research...[in a secure location for 3 years after completion of the research.]

Research investigators will promptly report proposed changes in previously approved human subject research activities to the IRB. The proposed changes will not be initiated without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.

Research investigators are responsible for reporting progress of approved research to the Office of Research..., as often as and in the manner prescribed by the approving IRB on the basis of risks to subjects, but not less than once per year. In compliance with the Assurance, we will be sending you, in approximately 10 months, an IRB form, "Progress Report for Investigators Involving Human Subjects." Please complete it, obtain the necessary signatures, and return it to our office as soon as possible. If your study is still in progress at that time, please request that your approval period be re-activated.

Research investigators will promptly report to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Diane Lindley, IRB Coordinator, at (662) 915-6534.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Thomas W. Lombardo, Ph.D.
Member, Institutional Review Board

A Great American Public University
www.olemiss.edu
http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/graduate_school/research
Principal Investigator(s):  
Linda K. Halbert

Title of Research Proposal:  
"The Relationship of Student-Life Stress to Marital Dedication among Students in Higher Education"

Date: February 26, 2004

IRB Action:

This proposal complies with University and Federal Regulations for the protection of human subjects (45 CFR 46). Approval is effective for a period of one year from the date of this notification.

Matthew G. Schoenbachler, Ph.D  
Chair, Human Subjects Committee

cc: Dr. Priscilla Holland
APPENDIX B

LETTERS OF APPROVAL TO USE AND REPRODUCE

THE RELATIONSHIP SCALE AND STUDENT-LIFE

STRESS INVENTORY

128
March 10, 2006

Fax 662-244-2575

Linda Halbert has permission to use the PREP Relationship Scale (abbreviated version) in her dissertation.

Sincerely,

Todd Boyd
General Manager,
PREP Inc.
720-227-0144

[Signature]
REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO USE STUDENT-LIFE STRESS INVENTORY IN A STUDY
Copyrighted Material

Description:
Author's Full Name: Bernadette M. Gadzella

Title of the Instrument: Student-life Stress Inventory
Title of the Journal: Psychological Reports
Date: April 1994, Volume 74(2) Page: 395-402
Publisher of article: Psychological Reports

Permission is hereby granted for Linda Halbert and Donna Mott to use the instrument described above for her research study. It is understood that the use of this material is limited to the specified purpose and is limited to a one time use only basis.

Date: June 10, 2002
Signed: Bernadette M. Gadzella, Ph.D.
Bernadette M. Gadzella, Ph.D.
Copyright Holder
APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRES
STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: Please supply the requested information or check the appropriate space for each item.

1. Sex
   ___ Male
   ___ Female

2. Age ______

3. Ethnic Group
   ___ Asian
   ___ Black
   ___ Hispanic
   ___ White
   ___ Other

4. With 1 being least severe and 5 being most severe, please rate how each of the following has been impacted by your being a student.

   1 2 3 4 5 communication with spouse
   1 2 3 4 5 recreation
   1 2 3 4 5 jealousy of spouse
   1 2 3 4 5 friends
   1 2 3 4 5 housework
   1 2 3 4 5 in-laws
   1 2 3 4 5 parenting
   1 2 3 4 5 alcohol and drugs
   1 2 3 4 5 sex
   1 2 3 4 5 religion
   1 2 3 4 5 other ____________________________

5. Do you have children living with you in your home?
   ___ Yes  If yes, how many ______
   ___ No  Ages _______________________

6. If employed (including work study), how many hours do you work each week?
   ___ 0-10
   ___ 11-20
   ___ 21-30
   ___ 31-40
   ___ 41+

7. What is your annual household income?
   ___ $0-$10,000
   ___ $10,001-$20,000
   ___ $20,001-$30,000
   ___ $30,001-$40,000
   ___ $40,001-$50,000
   ___ $50,000 +

8. What is your classification?
   ___ Freshman
   ___ Sophomore
   ___ Junior
   ___ Senior

9. Please specify your major:

   ______________________________

10. How long have you been married?
    ___ years ___ months

11. Is this your first marriage?
    ___ Yes
    ___ No

12. How many hours a week do you study, attend class, or complete assignments?

   _______________________

13. How many hours are you taking now?

   _______________________

14. What is your cumulative GPA?

   _______________________
SPouse Demographic Questionnaire

1. Sex
   ___ Male
   ___ Female

2. Age ______

3. Ethnic Group
   ___ Asian
   ___ Black
   ___ Hispanic
   ___ White
   ___ Other

4. With 1 being least severe and 5 being most severe, please rate how each of the following has been impacted by your being a spouse of a student:
   
   1 2 3 4 5 communication with spouse
   1 2 3 4 5 recreation
   1 2 3 4 5 jealousy of spouse
   1 2 3 4 5 friends
   1 2 3 4 5 housework
   1 2 3 4 5 in-laws
   1 2 3 4 5 parenting
   1 2 3 4 5 alcohol and drugs
   1 2 3 4 5 sex
   1 2 3 4 5 religion
   1 2 3 4 5 other

5. Do you have children living with you in your home?
   ___ Yes  If yes, how many _____
   ___ No  Ages ______________________

6. If employed, how many hours do you work each week?
   ___ 0-10
   ___ 11-20
   ___ 21-30
   ___ 31-40
   ___ 41+

7. What is your annual household income?
   ___ 0-$10,000
   ___ 10,001-20,000
   ___ 20,001-30,000
   ___ 30,001-40,000
   ___ 40,001-50,000
   ___ 50,000 +

8. What is the highest educational level that you have attained?
   ___ did not complete high school
   ___ graduated high school/GED
   ___ Associate's degree
   ___ Bachelor's degree
   ___ Master's degree
   ___ Doctorate

9. How long have you been married?
   ___ years  ___ months

10. Is this your first marriage?
    ___ Yes  ___ No

PLEASE RETURN TO:
MSU Mail Stop 9727 or
MUW W-Box 1607

DROP OFF LOCATIONS:
Allen 598 (MSU) or
Reneau 118 (MUW)
APPENDIX D

RELATIONSHIP SCALE (RS)
RELATIONSHIP SCALE

Please answer each question below by indicating how strongly you agree or disagree with the idea expressed. You can circle any number from 1 to 7 to indicate various levels of agreement or disagreement with the idea expressed. Please try to respond to each item.

1 = Strongly Disagree
2
3
4 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree
5
6
7 = Strongly Agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 My relationship with my partner is more important to me than almost anything else in my life.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I want this relationship to stay strong no matter what rough times we may encounter.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I do not feel compelled to keep all of the commitments that I make.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I like to think of my partner and me more in terms of "us" and "we" than "me" and "him/her."

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I think a lot about what it would be like to be married to (or dating) someone other than my partner.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 My relationship with my partner is clearly part of my future life plans.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 My career (or job, studies, homemaking, childrearing, etc.) is more important to me than my relationship with my partner.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 It makes me feel good to sacrifice for my partner.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I do not want to have a strong identity as a couple with my partner.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I don’t make commitments unless I believe I will keep them.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Giving something up for my partner is frequently not worth the trouble.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 When push comes to shove, my relationship with my partner often must take a back seat to other interests of mine.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I am not seriously attracted to anyone other than my partner.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 I may not want to be with my partner a few years from now.

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APPENDIX E

STUDENT-LIFE STRESS INVENTORY (SLI)
Student-Life Stress Inventory
Bernadette M. Gadzella, Ph.D., 1991 Copyright
East Texas State University

This inventory contains statements dealing with student-life stress. Read it carefully and respond to each statement as it has related or is relating to you as a student. Use the 5-point scale which indicates the level of your experiences with:

1= never, 2= seldom, 3= occasionally, 4= often, and 5= most of the time

Record your responses on the accompanying answer sheet.

You may detach the last sheet for your convenience

I. STRESSORS:

A. As a student:
1. I have experienced frustrations due to delays in reaching my goal.
2. I have experienced daily hassles which affected me in reaching my goals.
3. I have experienced lack of sources (money for auto, books, etc.)
4. I have experienced failures in accomplishing the goals that I set.
5. I have not been accepted socially (became a social outcast).
6. I have experienced dating frustrations.
7. I feel I was denied opportunities in spite of my qualifications.

B. I have experienced conflicts which were:
8. Produced by two or more desirable alternatives.
9. Produced by two or more undesirable alternatives.
10. Produced when a goal had both positive and negative alternatives.

C. I have experienced pressures:
11. As a result of competition (on grades, work, relationships with spouse and/or friends).
12. Due to deadlines (papers due, payments to be made, etc.)
13. Due to an overload (attempting too many things at one time).
14. Due to interpersonal relationships (family and/or friends expectations, work responsibilities).

D. I have experienced:
15. Rapid unpleasant changes.
16. Too many changes occurring at the same time.
17. Changes which disrupted my life and/or goals.

E. As a person:
18. I like to compete and win.
19. I like to be noticed and be loved by all.
20. I worry a lot about everything and everybody.
21. I have a tendency to procrastinate (put off things that have to be done).
22. I feel I must find a perfect solution to the problems I undertake.
23. I worry and get anxious about taking tests.
II. REACTIONS TO STRESSORS:

F. During stressful situations, I have experienced the following:
   24. Sweating (sweating palms, etc.)
   25. Stuttering (not being able to speak clearly).
   26. Trembling (being nervous, biting finger-nails, etc.)
   27. Rapid movements (moving quickly from place to place)
   28. Exhaustion (worn out, burned out)
   29. Irritable bowels, peptic ulcers, etc.
   30. Asthma, bronchial spasms, hyperventilation
   31. Backaches, muscle tightness (cramps), teeth-grinding]
   32. Hives, skin itching, allergies.
   33. Migraine headaches, hypertension, rapid heartbeat.
   34. Arthritis, overall pains.
   35. Viruses, colds, flu.
   36. Weight loss (can’t eat)
   37. Weight gain (eat a lot)

G. When under stressful situations, I have experienced:
   38. Fear, anxiety, worry
   39. Anger
   40. Guilt
   41. Grief, depression

H. When under stressful situations, I have:
   42. Cried
   43. Abused others (verbally and/or physically)
   44. Abused self (use of drugs, etc.)
   45. Smoked excessively
   46. Was irritable towards others
   47. Attempted suicide
   48. Used defense mechanisms
   49. Separated myself from others

I. With reference to stressful situations, I have:
   50. Thought and analyzed about how stressful the situations were.
   51. Thought and analyzed whether the strategies I used were most effective.