

## The Connubial Crucible: Newlywed Years as Predictors of Marital Delight, Distress, and Divorce

Ted L. Huston  
University of Texas at Austin

John P. Caughlin  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Renate M. Houts  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Shanna E. Smith  
University of Texas at Austin

Laura J. George  
United Way of Palm Beach County, Florida

This study showed that couples' newlywed marriages and changes in their union over the first 2 years foreshadow their long-term marital fate after 13 years. Consistent with the enduring dynamics model, differences in the intensity of newlyweds' romance as well as the extent to which they expressed negative feelings toward each other predicted (a) whether or not they were happy 13 years later (among those who stayed married) and (b) how long their marriage lasted prior to separation (for those who divorced). The results provide little support for the idea that emergence of distress (e.g., increasing negativity) early in marriage leads to marital failure but instead show that disillusionment—as reflected in an abatement of love, a decline in overt affection, a lessening of the conviction that one's spouse is responsive, and an increase in ambivalence—distinguishes couples headed for divorce from those who establish a stable marital bond.

People who know engaged or newlywed couples almost inevitably wonder about the fate awaiting the new husband and wife. Marriage is challenging for most couples, whether they are navigating the familial constraints of an arranged marriage or entering a union of mutual love, shadowed for many by a fear of disenchantment or divorce. This article focuses on the benefits and sometimes hidden dangers of marrying “for love,” examining whether the path that marriages take from the altar can be accurately forecast from material gathered from newlywed couples.

The paucity of research following brides and grooms forward in marriage over more than just a few years has created an informational vacuum about the early marital roots of distress and divorce (Bradbury, 1998; Kurdek, 1998). The present study seeks to fill this gap by examining connections between the first 2 years of marriage and marital satisfaction and stability more than 13 years after couples are wed. Are couples who are highly affectionate as newlyweds more likely than other couples to sustain a satisfying marriage, or are highly romantic couples susceptible to divorce, particularly if the intensity of their romance dissipates? Are newlyweds who bicker likely to overcome their initial difficulties, or are they destined for an unhappy marriage or divorce?

### Models of Marital Distress and Divorce

Social scientists conducting longitudinal research on marriage generally proceed by testing intuitively plausible hypotheses about the interpersonal origins of distress and divorce. Much of the recent work has been based on social learning theory (see Karney & Bradbury, 1995), which focuses on emerging conflict and negativity as the key ingredients of marital failure. Such research emphasizes the behaviors couples enact when they seek to resolve their conflicts, yet research based on retrospective reports of the causes of divorce draw attention to the importance of the loss of romance, disillusionment, and similar themes that have yet to be

---

Ted L. Huston and Shanna E. Smith, Department of Human Ecology, University of Texas at Austin; John P. Caughlin, Department of Speech Communication, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Renate M. Houts, Center for Developmental Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Laura J. George, United Way of Palm Beach County, Florida.

This research was supported by National Science Foundation Grant SBR-9311846, National Institute of Mental Health Grant MH-33938, and a National Institute of Child Health and Human Development postdoctoral fellowship awarded to Renate M. Houts. A version of this article was presented at the International Conference on Personal Relationships, Banff, Alberta, Canada, July 1996.

We thank Paul Miller, Sylvia Niehuis, and Christopher Rasmussen for their thoughtful critique of a version of this article.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Ted L. Huston, Department of Human Ecology, University of Texas, Austin, Texas 78712. Electronic mail may be sent to huston@mail.utexas.edu.

systematically studied with prospective, longitudinal data. These contrasting lines of research undergird three models that provide different explanations of why some marriages succeed and others fail.

### *The Disillusionment Model*

The prevailing Western view of courtship portrays partners as blissful, optimistic lovers who are careful to behave in ways contrived to sustain their romance and are motivated to attend to each other's virtues rather than shortcomings (Huston, McHale, & Crouter, 1986; Miller, 1997; Murray & Holmes, 1993; Waller, 1938). As a consequence, suggested Brehm (1992), "people fall in love with their own imagined constructions rather than with the concrete reality of another human being" (p. 103). In courtship, such idealization may be the product of both imagination and impression management: Individuals not only perceive their mate in an idealized fashion but also govern their own behavior in such a way as to leave their partner with a favorable impression (Waller, 1938). Partners who develop romanticized illusions may maintain them by sidestepping important differences or burying their anxieties through exaggerated displays of affection, setting themselves up for eventual disillusionment (Huston, 1994; Miller, 1997).

Illusions about one's partner may be more difficult to maintain after the wedding, because increased interdependence makes character management more challenging (Swann, De La Ronde, & Hixon, 1994). Waller (1938) argued that disillusionment in marriage is nearly inevitable: "Before marriage we have our phantasies [sic] . . . after marriage we have the real person, which brings with it its own delights, but the phantasy is usually nobler and more kind" (p. 312). The loss of idealization, however, no doubt varies from one couple to another. Couples whose illusions are more an embellishment on fact than pure fantasy may be able to maintain some idealization, which may, in turn, promote marital quality (Murray & Holmes, 1993; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996). Spouses who enter marriage with more pronounced romantic illusions, however, may find them untenable and become disappointed. Accordingly, Orbuch and her colleagues (Orbuch, Veroff, & Holmberg, 1993) found that newlyweds whose accounts of their courtship had strong positive romantic themes became less happy early in marriage compared with couples whose accounts were equally positive but lacked the romantic elements.

Consistent with Waller's (1938) thinking that disillusionment is reflected in changes in the emotional climate of marriage, Karney and Bradbury (1997) assessed disillusionment by examining early marital changes in the ratio of negative to positive interpersonal events. Kayser (1993) defined disillusionment more narrowly in terms of disaffection, suggesting that it is the loss of love and a sense of closeness, in particular, that creates feelings of disillusionment. She defined disaffection as the "replacement of positive affect with neutral affect" and added that "for disaffection to occur, it is assumed that positive feelings existed in the beginning of the relationship" (p. 6). The husbands and wives she interviewed felt disillusioned when they realized their partner's behavior fell short of their "dreams, fantasies, and expectations prior to their marriage" (p. 32).

Given that people in Western societies generally feel love is an important basis for marriage (Simpson, Campbell, & Berscheid, 1986), a significant loss of love early in marriage may be disheart-

ening and may begin to threaten the partners' sense that the relationship is right for them. Aronson's (1969) gain-loss model suggests that shifts in a partner's regard or interest may be particularly important in predicting attraction. The realization that one's mate has become less affectionate or less in love, for example, may be more important than the mate's current level of affectional expression or love. Similarly, social exchange theorists have argued that the slope of change in a relationship's reward-cost balance is an important determinant of attraction (Huesmann & Levinger, 1976). Moreover, when formerly married spouses are asked to catalog reasons why their marriages ended, they often identify loss of interest in the relationship, diminished love, and loss of affection as particularly salient precursors of divorce (Buehlman, Gottman, & Katz, 1992; Kayser, 1993; Kitson, 1992; R. S. Weiss, 1975). Despite such compelling arguments, prospective research has yet to be carried out to investigate the importance of the loss of romance early in marriage for later distress and divorce.

The disillusionment model, in summary, suggests that newlywed spouses tend to behave in ways that are consistent with idealized conceptions of marriage, embellishing their displays of affection and avoiding conflict and muting negative feelings. Simultaneously, newlyweds are motivated to view their partner in the best possible terms; thus, spouses should see each other as possessing attractive or responsive traits and as lacking unattractive or contrary traits. Given their behavioral and psychological tendencies to augment the positive, newlywed spouses should be deeply in love and feel little ambivalence about their union. If disillusionment sets in—as reflected in losses of love and affection, rises in ambivalence, and changes in spouses' views of each other's responsiveness—couples should become distressed and may decide to divorce.

### *The Emergent Distress Model*

Like the disillusionment model, the emergent distress model presumes that newlyweds begin marriage as affectionate lovers. However, the emergent distress model suggests that people do not expect to maintain such extraordinary levels of love and affectional expression; thus, some abatement of positive feelings and behaviors is not, in itself, distressing. Instead, the emergent distress model posits that rises in conflict and negativity corrode relationships (cf. Bradbury, Cohan, & Karney, 1998). In fact, the prevailing view among marital scholars is that "the positive factors that draw people together—love, attraction, perceived and actual similarities, trust, and commitment—are indicative of marital choice, but not marital success. Instead, how couples handle differences is the critical factor" (Clements, Cordova, Markman, & Laurenceau, 1997, p. 352). Social learning theorists such as Jacobson and Margolin (1979) have argued that the seeds of distress are sown by the emergence of the partner's negative behavior. Perhaps the best documented finding derived from the application of social learning theory to marriage is that the expression of negative feelings—particularly if they are not situated in a constructive problem-solving context—undermines marital satisfaction (e.g., Gottman, 1994; Huston & Chorost, 1994; Noller, Feeney, Bonnell, & Callan, 1994).

The expression of negativity weakens satisfaction, which, in turn, amplifies spouses' propensities to express further negative

feelings (Huston et al., 1986; Huston & Vangelisti, 1991; Jacobson & Margolin, 1979). Although research has yet to determine how the expression of negativity changes as spouses move toward divorce, Gottman's (1994) analysis of distressed marriages suggests that if distress intensifies, spouses stonewall each other, withdraw, and turn more contemptuous. Once spouses decide their conflicts are intractable, they may reduce their interdependence (Rusbult, 1993) and begin to think seriously about leaving the marriage.

In short, the emergent distress model, like the disillusionment model, suggests (a) that newlyweds are deeply in love and unambivalent about their relationship, that they express high levels of affection and little negativity, and that they view one another's personality as responsive and lacking in contrariness; and (b) that these newlywed features of the relationship are not diagnostic of the long-term fate of couples' marriages. The emergent distress model departs from the disillusionment model by positing that declines in romantic attraction early in marriage are normative and, therefore, unlikely to distinguish couples in terms of their marital destinations. Instead, increases in negativity occur for couples headed for either distress or divorce. Moreover, the escalation of negativity ought to predict the timing of divorce, with those who divorce early showing greater increases across the first 2 years of marriage than do those who divorce later. The couples who stay married but are unhappy should increase less in their negativity than do those who divorce, but more than those who are later found to be happily married. Finally, unlike the disillusionment model, the emergent distress model does not presume that spouses are primed for distress by untenable idealizations of their partner; moreover, this model places no particular prognostic significance on changes in spouses' feelings of love, ambivalence, or views of their partner's responsiveness. For those on the path to distress, however, behavior that has negative consequences may increasingly be taken to imply negative intent; moreover, negative events in the relationship may increasingly be attributed to the disposition of the partner rather than to potentially changeable features of the relationship (Fincham & Bradbury, 1992). Thus, spouses who become distressed may also come to see their partner as having more contrary traits.

### *The Enduring Dynamics Model*

The third model, variously referred to as the perpetual problems model (Huston, 1994; Huston & Houts, 1998), the maintenance hypothesis (Karney & Bradbury, 1997), and the enduring dynamics model (Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000), presumes that certain interpersonal patterns are established during courtship and are maintained throughout the course of the marriage. This model, in contrast to the models previously presented, builds on data showing that problems in relationships arise initially in courtship and continue into marriage (Huston, 1994; Markman, Renick, Floyd, Stanley, & Clements, 1993; Noller & Feeney, 1998).

The enduring dynamics model counters the disillusionment view of courtship, arguing that partners enter relationships with their eyes open to their partner's and their relationship's shortcomings. Surra, Batchelder, and Hughes (1995), drawing on accounts of the processes that lead courting couples toward marriage, went so far as to suggest that the idea of courtship as a period of character management and idealization is a cultural myth. They

noted that some couples "fall so agreeably into a comfortable relationship and into a common understanding of marriage as the desired goal that the need for either to woo the other is irrelevant" (pp. 113–114). In such cases, there is little need to hide one's own negative qualities or disproportionately attend to a partner's positive qualities.

That some premarital partners pay attention to the day-to-day realities of their relationship is evident in data showing that partners' hesitations about marriage and their decisions to move the relationship toward marriage are anchored in how well they get along with each other (Huston, 1994). Partners' personality characteristics and their compatibility, for instance, affect the course of their premarital relationship (Huston & Houts, 1998); this provides support for the idea that people display their qualities and attend to their partner's dispositions during courtship. Partners' incompatibilities also surface during courtship, disrupt the relationship, and create tension (Houts, Robins, & Huston, 1996; Huston & Houts, 1998); indeed, couples who report high levels of conflict before they marry also have more conflict after they are wed (Huston, 1994). Moreover, newlyweds who have emerged from rocky courtships see each other as having a more difficult or contrary nature and as being less responsive (Huston & Houts, 1998). In contrast, partners who love each other and mutually affirm each other during courtship are more likely to sustain a satisfying marital bond (Huston & Houts, 1998; Veroff, Douvan, & Hatchett, 1995).

Thus, there is evidence that at least some newly married spouses are far from blind to each other's shortcomings and that many people marry in spite of the apparent weakness of their bond (Burgess & Wallin, 1953). In contrast to the disillusionment and emergent distress models, which focus on the diagnostic significance of change in relationships for later distress or divorce, the enduring dynamics model suggests that initial differences between couples—be they lack of love and affection, heightened ambivalence and negativity, or views of each other as responsive or contrary—persist over time and augur later satisfaction and stability.

### The Contribution of the Present Study

The present study follows a large cohort of couples forward from their wedding day until a substantial portion of them divorce, making it possible to paint portraits of the early marital pathways that lead to a variety of long-term outcomes. The data used for this study were gathered as part of the Processes of Adaptation in Intimate Relationships (PAIR) Project, a 13-year longitudinal study of 168 couples who married for the first time in 1981.<sup>1</sup> The data concerning the early years of marriage were gathered on three occasions (Phases 1–3) at annual intervals, beginning when the couples were newlyweds. A follow-up study (Phase 4) designed to

<sup>1</sup> A number of articles analyzing portions of this data set have been published. Two of these articles, Caughlin et al. (2000) and M. P. Johnson, Caughlin, and Huston (1999), examined determinants of commitment and marital satisfaction among the couples who were still married during the follow-up study. The current investigation is the first to examine predictors of divorce as distinct from marital satisfaction. For a complete list of titles and abstracts of the articles based on the PAIR Project, consult <http://www.utexas.edu/research/pair/>.

obtain updated information on the couples' marital status and functioning more than 13 years after they married was conducted in 1994–1995. As detailed in this section, the design of the study overcomes four interrelated gaps in our understanding of the development of distress and the pathways to divorce.

First, few longitudinal studies have tracked the developmental course of marital disaffection and distress from the beginning of marriage to divorce. Instead, most longitudinal research focuses on couples who have already been married a number of years at the outset of the study, making it likely that couples who decline in satisfaction or who divorce over the course of the study were already unhappy or relatively near divorce when the data initially were collected (e.g., Buehlman et al., 1992). Thus, the marital behavior patterns may have resulted from rather than caused the unhappiness (Bradbury, 1998; Huston, 1993; R. L. Weiss & Heyman, 1990). In addition, because the first few years of marriage are particularly divorce prone (Glenn, 1998; Goode, 1993; U.S. Center for National Health Statistics, 1991), the predominant focus of research on couples whose marriages have survived the first few years may produce conclusions about the antecedents of distress and divorce that apply only to those who divorce after several years. Because the current study includes data gathered at regular intervals early in couples' marriages, we are able to procure a more detailed picture of the early etiology of marital distress and divorce.

Second, researchers typically use global measures of marital quality (Fincham & Bradbury, 1987) that combine a variety of conceptually distinct phenomena into a single measure; they also often use measures that examine the ratio of positive to negative behavior (e.g., Karney & Bradbury, 1997), even though positive and negative features of marriage are orthogonal (Fincham & Linfield, 1997; D. R. Johnson, White, Edwards, & Booth, 1986; Orden & Bradburn, 1968). The common use of these measures makes it difficult to know whether the absence of positive elements, the presence of negative elements, or both contribute to future marital distress or divorce. The measures we used were designed to go beyond these conventional instruments to capture the specific features of marriage that the three developmental models specify as important in predicting the future of couples' marriages. The disillusionment model focuses on the importance of romantic elements in relationships, including idealization of the partner and degree of certainty about the relationship; accordingly, we included measures of love, affectional expression, views of one's partner as responsive to others, and ambivalence. As the emergent distress model focuses on escalating conflict and disharmony, we included a measure of interpersonal negativity as well as spouses' views of the extent of their partner's contrariness. The enduring dynamics model suggests that a mix of positive and negative elements distinguishes couples headed down different marital pathways and thus incorporates all of the previously mentioned measures into its framework.

Third, with rare exceptions (e.g., Karney & Bradbury, 1997; Kurdek, 1998), longitudinal research has used variables measured on only one occasion to explain later satisfaction or to predict divorce. The developmental models discussed in this article place an emphasis on both how couples differ at one point in time (as newlyweds) and how their relationship changes during the first few years of marriage. Multiple occasions of measurement spaced at regular intervals are necessary to test the predictions of the

models, and the present study, which reassessed each variable at three time points, allows us to examine the prognostic significance of both newlywed differences and changes over time in features of couples' marriage relationship.

Fourth, most longitudinal research on marriage follows couples for only a handful of years (Karney & Bradbury, 1995), resulting in low base rates of divorce for any given study (Huston, 1993; Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Because studies with few divorced couples lack power, researchers (e.g., Gottman, 1994; Veroff et al., 1995) usually group unhappy couples with divorced couples, thereby assuming that the causal antecedents of marital unhappiness and divorce are similar. Such an assumption, plausible as it seems, may not hold up to empirical scrutiny. Moreover, low rates of marital dissolution preclude researchers from distinguishing couples who divorce early from those who divorce later, yet the predictors of divorce appear to vary depending on how long marriages endure before couples separate (Heaton, Albrecht, & Martin, 1985; Morgan & Rindfuss, 1985; South & Spitze, 1986; Tucker, Kressin, Spiro, & Ruscio, 1998). The relatively large initial sample recruited for the present study, coupled with both the comparatively long period before the follow up and our success in classifying almost all of the couples (98%) in terms of their later marital satisfaction and stability, make it possible for us not only to examine the early marital antecedents of divorce but also to distinguish happily married couples from not happily married couples and couples who divorced early in marriage from couples who divorced later.

## Method

### *Participants*

Marriage license records maintained in four counties in central Pennsylvania were used to identify the original sample. To be eligible for the study, spouses had to be in their first marriage, speak English, and have no plans to move from the area within 2 years. Of potential respondents contacted, 42% agreed to participate. Information reported in marriage license records indicated that participants were similar to those who declined in terms of age, education, and parents' occupational status (Robins, 1985). The final sample was mostly White, and the majority of respondents had working-class backgrounds. Couples resided largely in rural areas, towns, and small cities.

### *Procedure*

*Original study.* The first phase of data collection occurred 2 months after the couples' wedding, and the second and third phases followed at yearly intervals thereafter. These first three phases consisted of (a) face-to-face interviews, almost invariably conducted in the couples' homes, and (b) a series of telephone diary interviews. The face-to-face interviews, which husbands and wives completed separately, consisted of questionnaires (including measures of love and ambivalence), interview questions, and various other tasks (such as the card sort described below, used to assess spouses' view of their partner's personality; see Huston et al., 1986, for procedural details). The series of nine telephone diary interviews was usually completed during the 2–3 weeks following the face-to-face interviews. During these short interviews, spouses reported, among other matters, how often their partner expressed affection and negativity in particular ways during the 24-hour period ending at 5 P.M. the day of the telephone call.

*1994–1995 follow-up.* The fourth phase was conducted in the fall of 1994 and the winter of 1995, between 13 and 14 years after the couples

were wed. We were able to ascertain the marital status of all but 4 of the original 168 couples at the follow-up: 105 couples were still married, 56 had divorced, and 3 were widowed. The divorce rate of the PAIR sample is parallel to that of a national sample of couples who married for the first time in the United States between 1979 and 1983 (U.S. Center for National Health Statistics, 1991). Given current projections about the average life-span of this cohort of men and women, U.S. national data suggest that most of the couples in our sample who will divorce have already done so. These national data indicate that by the time couples have been married 14 years, the likelihood of divorce is about 2% per year; the percentage declines to less than 1% per year by the time couples reach their 25th anniversary. Extrapolating from these data, approximately 85% of the couples in the original sample who will someday divorce had done so by the time the follow-up investigation was carried out.

### Measures

*Feelings about one's partner and the relationship: Love and ambivalence.* Love and ambivalence were assessed using subscales of Braiker and Kelley's (1979) Relationship Questionnaire, which was administered during each of the three face-to-face interviews. Participants were asked to think about their marriage over the past 2 months and, using 9-point Likert scales, evaluate its various facets. The Love Scale consisted of 10 items assessing the extent to which spouses felt a sense of belonging, closeness, and attachment with their partner (e.g., "To what extent do you feel that the things that happen to your partner also affect or are important to you?"). The Ambivalence Scale consisted of 5 items dealing with feelings of confusion or anxiety about the relationship (e.g., "To what extent do you feel 'trapped' or pressured to continue in this relationship?"). The items on each scale were averaged, resulting in possible scores ranging from 1 to 9. Alpha coefficients were high for love (from .78 to .91) and moderately high for ambivalence (from .73 to .83).

*Beliefs about one's partner's personality: Responsiveness and contrariness.* During the face-to-face interviews, spouses were asked to characterize each other's personality using a series of adjective traits and Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (*not at all like my partner*) to 7 (*very much like my partner*). The adjectives were drawn from a more comprehensive list of personality trait words—half of which referred to likable traits and half of which referred to disagreeable traits (Anderson, 1968). We performed principal components analyses with oblique rotations on each of the first three panels of data. The resulting factors reflected two broadly based perceptions of personality dispositions: responsiveness (e.g., pleasant, friendly, cooperative, amusing, forgiving, sincere, and generous) and contrariness (e.g., hot-tempered, domineering, jealous, stubborn, fault-finding, moody, and possessive). Items were retained if they loaded .40 or more on the same factor each year and if they loaded more strongly on one factor than on the other. Alpha coefficients for the Responsiveness and Contrariness Scales ranged from .81 to .88 and from .77 to .84, respectively (for details, see Huston & Houts, 1998).

*Marital behavior: Affectional expression and negativity.* Data about marital behavior were gathered during nine diary telephone interviews in Phases 1–3. Husbands and wives were each read descriptions of specific affectionate and negative behaviors and were asked to report the number of times their spouse had engaged in each behavior during the 24 hours preceding 5 P.M. the evening of the call. The array of affectionate acts, drawn from a list developed by Wills, Weiss, and Patterson (1974), included seven behaviors (e.g., "Your partner expressed approval of you or complimented you about something you did," and "Your partner said 'I love you'"). The list of negative behaviors, taken from the same source, included six items (e.g., "Your partner showed anger or impatience by yelling, snapping, or raising his/her voice," and "Your partner criticized or complained about something you did or didn't do"). The frequencies of affectional expression and negativity, when aggregated over the nine Phase 1 diary telephone interviews, produced scales for affectional expression and negativity with acceptable alpha coefficients (.78–.84 for affec-

tional behavior, and .78–.91 for negativity; see Huston & Vangelisti, 1991).

Because the telephone diary procedure controls many of the biases associated with self-reports (Huston & Robins, 1982), it provides quasi-observational (R. L. Weiss & Heyman, 1990) data about marital behaviors. In addition to the diary procedure's relative lack of bias, previous research using the measures of affectional expression and negativity from the telephone diary procedure has documented their validity (Huston & Vangelisti, 1991), and results using the diary method are consistent with findings based on laboratory observation techniques. Discussion of the merits and limitations of diary procedures compared with other methods can be found in Huston, Robins, Atkinson, and McHale (1987) and Reis (1994).

### Marital Outcomes

We used a fivefold scheme to classify the fate of the marriages 13 years after the couples were wed. We obtained follow-up data on 164 of the 168 couples; 8 couples were excluded from the analyses either because of the death of one of the spouses prior to the follow up ( $n = 3$ ) or because we were unable to obtain marital satisfaction data from both spouses ( $n = 5$ ). The remaining 156 couples were categorized first by their marital status. The still-married group was then divided into two groups on the basis of their marital satisfaction at Phase 4, whereas the divorced group was separated into three groups on the basis of how long the marriage lasted prior to divorce, as described later.

*Stably married couples.* The couples who were still married at the 13-year follow up were classified as *happy* or *not happy* on the basis of their responses to the Marital Opinion Questionnaire (MOQ) during the telephone interview. The MOQ, which was adapted from Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers' (1976) life satisfaction measure, consisted of eight 7-point semantic differential items (e.g., *miserable* vs. *enjoyable*) and one 7-point global satisfaction rating ranging from 1 = *completely satisfied* to 7 = *completely dissatisfied* (reverse scored). Following the scoring method established by Campbell et al., we averaged the eight semantic differential items ( $\alpha = .93$  for husbands and .94 for wives). This average was then added to the single global item and divided by 2 (the correlation between the average of the eight items and the overall assessment was .80 for husbands and .88 for wives). This scoring method produced an index of marital satisfaction with possible scores ranging from 1 (the lowest satisfaction) to 7 (the highest satisfaction). Reflecting a disproportionate number of participants who were highly satisfied and the relatively few spouses who rated their marriage as less than neutral (i.e., 4), there was a statistically significant negative skew for both husbands (skewness =  $-.97$ ,  $SE = .24$ ) and wives (skewness =  $-1.29$ ,  $SE = .24$ ). Couples were classified as *married-happy* ( $n = 68$ ) if both spouses' satisfaction scores were greater than 4; couples were classified as *married-not happy* ( $n = 32$ ) if one or both spouses' satisfaction scores were 4 (neutral) or below. The group delineation was based on the scale midpoint rather than the sample mean, because many of the couples who were unhappy early in marriage had already divorced, thus, as noted above, the average individual at Phase 4 was fairly satisfied. Happy couples had an average score of 6.2 on the MOQ; those who were not happy averaged 4.5.

*Divorced couples.* Data on the year of final separation were obtained through court records or personal testimony from all 56 couples who were known to be divorced. Ten couples were classified as *quickly divorced* because they divorced before the third wave of data collection, which took place shortly after what would have been their second wedding anniversary. This group terminated their marriage before all the early marital data had been collected and, thus, were included only in the analyses of newlywed data. The *divorced-early* group consisted of 21 couples who divorced between 2 and 7 years after they were married, whereas the *divorced-later* group consisted of 25 couples whose marriages lasted at least 7 years. We chose 7 years as a cutoff point because the median length

of marriage in the United States for those who eventually divorce is 7.2 years (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1997). The demarcation of 7 years also yielded relatively equally sized groups of sufficient size to detect substantively important group differences.

## Results

The results are framed by the three models of marital distress, which focus on newlywed patterns and changes in those patterns over the early years of marriage. We begin by examining whether couples who divorced very quickly and thus could not be included in our longitudinal analyses had a particularly weak bond at the outset of their marriage. We then turn to the longitudinal analyses, focusing on whether the character of couples' relationships at the outset of their married life foreshadows different marital destinations and whether changes in the early years of marriage presage the stability and satisfactoriness of the marital bond.

### *The Quickly Divorced Couples as Newlyweds*

Couples who divorce within a few months of their wedding day constitute a particularly intriguing group about which almost nothing is known, largely because their ephemeral marriages are usually terminated before investigators have the opportunity to recruit them. Are the problems in these couples' marriages apparent from the outset? To address this question, we conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) using each of the six newlywed measures as dependent measures, marital-outcome group as the between-subjects factor, and, to control for dyadic interdependence, gender as a repeated measure. These analyses were based on the 152 couples who provided complete data when they were newlyweds, including the quickly divorced couples, most of whom divorced within a year after they were wed. The interaction effect between marital-outcome group and measure was significant,  $F(20, 584) = 2.24, p < .05$ , and univariate tests confirmed the presence of significant marital-outcome group differences for all measures except perceptions of contrariness: affectional expression,  $F(4, 147) = 3.03, p < .05$ ; love,  $F(4, 147) = 5.39, p < .001$ ; perceptions of each other's responsiveness,  $F(4, 147) = 4.49, p < .01$ ; ambivalence,  $F(4, 147) = 3.80, p < .01$ ; negativity,  $F(4, 147) = 3.30, p < .05$ ; perception of each other's contrariness,  $F(4, 147) = 1.29, ns$ . No significant gender main effects or interaction effects were found; we therefore combine husbands' and wives' data, focusing on newlywed differences between the quickly divorced group and each of the other groups, using Dunnett's (1955) post-hoc comparisons. In our summary, we use conventional criteria for judging differences as significantly ( $p < .05$ ) or marginally ( $p < .10$ ) different.

The quickly divorced couples had weak romantic bonds, and their relationships were filled with antagonism. They were less in love than were any of the other four groups of couples, and they were more ambivalent and saw each other as less responsive than did the couples in the married-happy and divorced-later groups. They were significantly less overtly affectionate than were the divorced-later couples. Also, they showed more negativity than did couples in the other groups, except that they were only marginally more negative than the married-not happy group. The distinctive newlywed patterns of the quickly divorced couples challenge the twin ideas that newlyweds are uniformly enamored

with one another and that newlywed patterns provide few clues that are useful in predicting where relationships are headed. Clearly, how well couples get along and how they feel about each other initially puts relationships at varying degrees of risk; however, the likelihood of divorce may also depend on how much the marriage changes after the honeymoon.

### *Longitudinal Analyses of the Early Years of Marriage*

We now turn to our evaluation of the longitudinal aspects of the models. The enduring dynamics model argues that relationship patterns surface during courtship and continue into marriage, shaping the union's eventual course. Thus, as newlyweds, couples destined for marital distress and divorce ought to differ from those who remain satisfied in terms of how they feel about their partner and their marriage, their view of each other's personality traits, and how they interact with each other. The disillusionment and emergent distress models, in contrast, see newlyweds as uniformly enamored with one another and argue that what happens after the honeymoon—whether disillusionment develops or distress emerges—determines the future stability and happiness of the marriage. The longitudinal analyses were based on the 146 couples who remained married at least 2 years, who could be classified in terms of marital status and satisfaction at Phase 4, and who at least completed the measures of interest at Phases 1 and 2.<sup>2</sup>

Given that our longitudinal data nest time within individuals within couples, we conducted these analyses using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM; Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992). HLM provides several benefits over traditional methods used to examine longitudinal couple-level data. First, unlike repeated measures analyses of variance, HLM allows us to estimate the growth curves of couples who have missed phases of data collection or have missed daily diary calls within phases. Second, the estimates provided by HLM are more efficient than are those that would be obtained using a two-stage ordinary least squares strategy (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1987; Tate & Hokanson, 1993). Third, HLM is designed to deal with nested data and thus allowed us to examine average levels and changes across the repeated measures simultaneously. Our strategy, however, also required us to group the couples in terms of marital outcomes, treating continuous variables as categorical variables. Thus, we conducted a series of additional analyses that treated length of marriage (for couples who divorced) and marital satisfaction at Phase 4 (for couples who remained married) as continuous variables. These follow-up analyses produced results consistent with the main findings of this study (see Footnote 4).

Our analysis focused on whether spouses' early marital trajectories differed according to marital-outcome group. Using techniques proposed by Raudenbush, Brennan, and Barnett (1995), we

<sup>2</sup> Although almost all the couples in the current study completed each of the first 3 phases, we analyzed the pattern of missing data to determine whether the marital-outcome groups experienced differential attrition. Results indicated that approximately 85% of the couples in either of the continuously married groups had complete data for all three early marital data collection points; in contrast, approximately 68% of the couples in either divorced group had complete data for all three early marital phases of data collection. However, findings based on analyses that used only couples with complete data were virtually identical to those reported here.

Table 1  
*Baseline Models of Couples' Early Marital Behaviors and Perceptions  
 of Relationship and Spouse*

Measure	Intercept			Slope		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\chi^2$	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\chi^2$
Love	8.29	0.04	379.03*** 653.84***	-0.26***	0.04	497.48*** 417.46***
Affectional expression	20.69	1.03	3,662.66*** 4,482.28***	-5.38***	0.47	1,132.00*** 1,458.57***
Responsiveness	6.00	0.04	553.85*** 787.11***	-0.14***	0.02	273.35*** 201.27***
Ambivalence	2.29	0.08	478.77*** 527.41***	0.24***	0.05	304.05*** 235.58***
Negativity	1.62	0.16	1,055.18*** 1,216.22***	-0.12*	0.06	288.39*** 389.42***
Contrariness	3.61	0.08	533.48*** 555.03***	-0.04	0.03	159.80* 128.19

*Note.* For affectional expression and negativity chi-squares,  $N = 145$  and degrees of freedom = 122. For love, ambivalence, responsiveness, and contrariness chi-squares,  $N = 146$  and degrees of freedom = 130. Significance tests for means of the intercepts are not included, because these tests are only useful when the lowest possible score on a measure is zero. For chi-squares, the test of wives' variance is given first, and the test of husbands' variance is given second.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

constructed separate models for each of the relationship variables under examination. First, the Level 1 (or baseline) model for each variable provided estimates of (a) individual couples' newlywed values (or intercepts) and (b) the degree to which the values for individual couples changed each year (or slope). Second, the Level 2 model, which incorporated marital-outcome group data, was used to compare couples' average intercepts and slopes among the four marital outcome groups.

We began the analysis by specifying the baseline models and determining the most parsimonious growth curve for each variable. Individuals' models took the form of within-couple regressions in which husbands' and wives' curves were estimated simultaneously to control for nonindependence of spouses' data. Each couple's equation also included an error term representing random within-couple error, which is assumed to be independent and normally distributed across couples (Raudenbush et al., 1995). We treated the individual items that make up each scale as parallel indicators for each variable and constrained husbands' and wives' fixed effects to be equal, which allowed us to describe trajectories for couples rather than for husbands and wives.<sup>3</sup> As random effects were not constrained, separate variance estimates are available for husbands and wives. Table 1 shows the intercepts (or newlywed levels) and linear slopes of the baseline models for each of the measures. The values of the intercepts suggest that newlywed couples were highly affectionate, deeply in love, and viewed each other as being high in trait responsiveness. Couples also demonstrated low levels of negativity, felt little ambivalence, and tended see each other as lacking contrary traits. On average, couples' marriages deteriorated with time in that spouses became less deeply in love, more ambivalent, less affectionate, and less inclined to see each other as responsive; despite the weakening of their romantic bonds, couples' negativity did not increase and, in fact, slightly decreased. These findings, when considered together, suggest that marriages often lose some of their intensity after the honeymoon is over.

Our next step in the analysis of the longitudinal data addressed whether couples headed for disparate marital destinations could be distinguished, as newlyweds and over the first 2 years of marriage, with regard to the emotional tenor of their relationship. Before we examined whether the marital-outcome groups differed in terms of intercepts or linear change, it was first important to determine whether there was sufficient variation among the terms to make prediction of these parameters possible. All measures except husbands' views of their spouses' contrariness exhibited significant variation in both the intercept and the slope. Because wives exhibited significant variation in the slope for their perception of their spouses' contrariness and because we needed comparable models to constrain the fixed effects for husbands and wives, we chose to retain the random effect for the husbands' slopes as well. Next, to compare the trajectories among the outcome groups, it was necessary to specify a series of conditional Level 2 models. In this step, we used marital-outcome groups coded as indicator variables to explain the variation in couples' intercepts and slopes for each measure. Specifically, for each Level 2 equation, the indicator variable for one of the groups was omitted, resulting in a conditional model in which the Level 2 intercepts represented the means of the omitted group and the coefficients corresponding to the indicator variables for the other groups represented the differential effects of belonging to those groups, relative to the omitted category. The omitted group was varied to allow for all possible comparisons among the groups.

<sup>3</sup> The initial specification of the models allowed husbands' and wives' terms to vary and included quadratic effects. However, because the three theoretical viewpoints do not make specific predictions regarding either the shape of the curve or gender differences, we focus on the linear models, with husbands' and wives' fixed effects constrained to be equal. The models presented here fit the data satisfactorily, provide a clearer test of the competing viewpoints, and yield results similar to those for the full models.

Table 2  
*Comparisons of Marital Outcome Groups, Early Marital Behaviors and Perceptions of Relationship and Spouse*

Measure	Intercept				Slope			
	Married		Divorced		Married		Divorced	
	Happy (n = 68)	Not happy (n = 32)	Later (n = 25)	Early (n = 21)	Happy (n = 68)	Not happy (n = 32)	Later (n = 25)	Early (n = 21)
Love	8.40 <sub>2,4</sub>	8.08 <sub>1,3</sub>	8.40 <sub>2,4</sub>	8.09 <sub>1,3</sub>	-.15** <sub>4</sub>	-.28*** <sub>4</sub>	-.31** <sub>4</sub>	-.62*** <sub>1,2,3</sub>
Affectional expression	19.86 <sub>3</sub>	17.94 <sub>3</sub>	26.87 <sub>1,2,4</sub>	20.03 <sub>3</sub>	-4.68*** <sub>3</sub>	-4.53*** <sub>3</sub>	-7.70*** <sub>1,2</sub>	-6.34*** <sub>1,2,3</sub>
Responsiveness	6.12 <sub>2,4</sub>	5.81 <sub>1,3</sub>	6.17 <sub>2,4</sub>	5.75 <sub>1,3</sub>	-.11** <sub>3,4</sub>	-.09* <sub>3,4</sub>	-.24*** <sub>1,2</sub>	-.27*** <sub>1,2</sub>
Ambivalence	2.08 <sub>2,4</sub>	2.72 <sub>1,3</sub>	2.15 <sub>2</sub>	2.49 <sub>1</sub>	.09 <sub>3,4</sub>	.11 <sub>3,4</sub>	.42** <sub>1,2,4</sub>	.74*** <sub>1,2,3</sub>
Negativity	1.33 <sub>2</sub>	2.21 <sub>1</sub>	1.72	1.53	-.13 <sub>3</sub>	-.27* <sub>3</sub>	.27† <sub>1,2,4</sub>	-.21 <sub>3</sub>
Contrariness	3.54	3.69	3.55	3.80	-.14** <sub>2,3,4</sub>	.00 <sub>1</sub>	.14† <sub>1</sub>	.00 <sub>1</sub>

*Note.* Significance tests for the means of the intercepts are not included, because these tests are only useful when the lowest possible score on a measure is zero. Marital outcome groups are compared with regard to their intercepts (left side of the table) and with regard to their slopes (right side of the table). Subscripts indicate that the corresponding mean is significantly (boldface;  $p < .05$ ) or marginally (italic;  $p < .10$ ) different from (1) married–happy, (2) married–unhappy, (3) divorced–later, or (4) divorced–early.

†  $p < .10$  (marginally significant). \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

The average trajectories of the variables broken down by marital-outcome groups (see Table 2) support the contention that both newlywed patterns and their change over time differentiate couples in terms of later marital outcomes.<sup>4</sup> The three models of the social–psychological roots of marital distress and divorce are used to frame our discussion of the results shown in Table 2 and portrayed in Figure 1. The group comparisons use conventional criteria for judging differences as significant ( $p < .05$ ) or marginal ( $p < .10$ ).

*Newlywed patterns and long-term marital outcomes.* The enduring dynamics model asserts that relationship patterns surface during courtship, carry forward into marriage, and shape the union's eventual fate; thus, couples headed for distress or divorce should have less favorable relationships as newlyweds. Because the disillusionment and emergent distress models presume that newlywed spouses are uniformly enamored with one another, these models suggest that newlywed patterns should not betray whether couples are headed for distress, divorce, or long-term marital happiness. The relevant comparisons of the group's intercepts are summarized in Table 2. Consistent with the enduring dynamics model, couples destined for marital happiness more than 13 years later (the married–happy group) had a stronger marital bond as newlyweds than did couples who later found themselves less happily married (the married–not happy group). The spouses in happy marriages, compared with those in not happy marriages, were more deeply in love as newlyweds and saw each other as possessing a more responsive personality; they also reported less ambivalence about their relationship and expressed negativity toward one another less often. The married–happy couples also had a stronger romantic bond as newlyweds than did the divorced–early couples: Spouses in the former group were more in love and marginally less ambivalent, and they saw each other as having a more responsive personality. The pattern of results deviates considerably from the expectations of the enduring dynamics model, however, when we turn to the marriages of the divorced–later group. As newlyweds, these couples were involved in marriages that appeared particularly promising. The divorced–later spouses were comparable to the married–happy spouses as newlyweds in that they were more in love and viewed each other as having a

more responsive personality than did the spouses in either the married–not happy or the divorced–early groups. They also were less ambivalent than were the married–not happy spouses. Notably, these divorced–later couples behaved more affectionately than did couples bound for any of the other marital outcomes, even those headed for a long-term happy union. In short, intercepts generally distinguished married couples who differed in marital happiness but did less well differentiating couples who stayed married from those who divorced.

*Changes in the early years of marriage.* Although the disillusionment and the emergent distress models both focus on the importance of change in early marriage, the former concentrates on the loss of romance and illusion, and the latter focuses on increases in negative behaviors and the development of unfavorable images of one's partner. As shown in Table 2, the differences in linear slopes between couples who divorced and couples who stayed married were more consistent with disillusionment than they were with the emergence of distress. During the first 2 years of marriage, the two groups of couples who divorced—regardless of whether they divorced early or later—developed stronger feelings of ambivalence about their union and began to see each other as

<sup>4</sup> Additional analyses were conducted, using the intercepts and slopes obtained from the baseline HLM models, to predict Phase 4 marital satisfaction (for couples who stayed married) and length of marriage (for couples who divorced) as continuous variables. With regard to marital satisfaction, these analyses confirmed the main findings of the study, with one notable exception. Although husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction at Phase 4 was associated with spouses' initial levels of love (as was shown in HLM analyses), a decline in love (the slope) was also associated with lower levels of later marital satisfaction. This association between the decline in love and marital satisfaction was significant even when differences in initial love are taken into account. Given that declines in love did not distinguish between spouses in the married–happy and married–not happy groups, it is likely that the couple groupings may have obscured some relatively subtle predictions of marital outcomes. Turning to the length of marriage among couples who divorced, we find the results were also consistent with the HLM analyses, with the exception that increasing negativity early in marriage was not related to the length of the marriage.



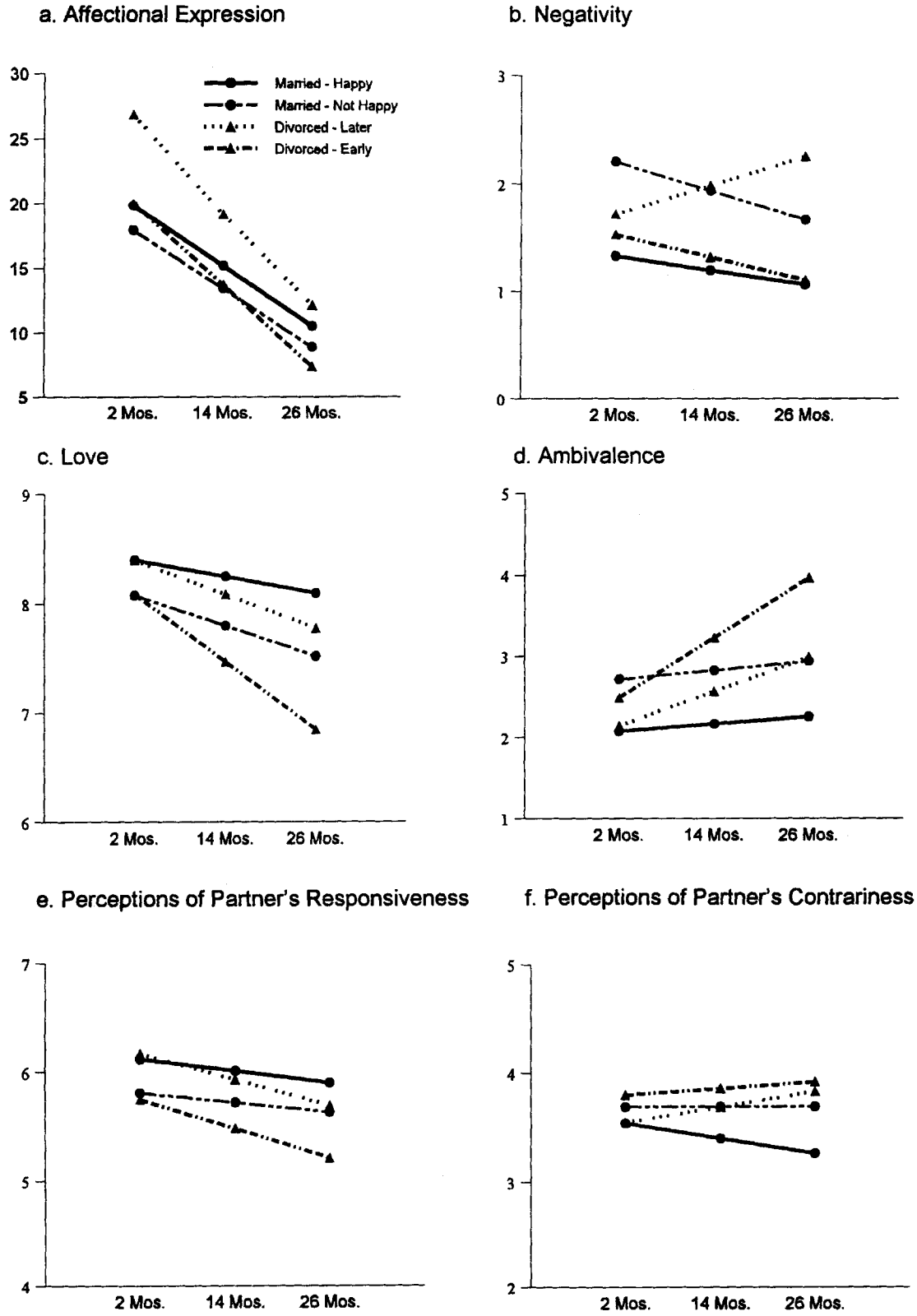


Figure 1. Trajectories of marital-outcome groups for six relationship measures across the first 2 years of marriage.

having a less responsive personality than did the two groups who remained married. Other changes in the romantic bond of the divorcing couples differed, however, depending on whether couples divorced early or later. Divorced-later couples (who as newlyweds expressed considerable affection) showed significantly greater declines in affectional expression than did either group of couples who remained married; divorced-early couples showed sharper declines in love and rises in ambivalence than did couples in the other outcome groups.

The emergent distress model takes as axiomatic that problems surface in marriage, erode satisfaction, and lead some couples to divorce. However, the groups, on the whole, changed very little in either their expression of negativity or their perception of their partner's contrariness. Indeed, couples who were later found in not happy marriages began to express significantly *less* negativity over the course of the first 2 years of their marriages. The couples in the divorced-later group, however, became increasingly differentiated from the couples in the other groups in their expression of negativity, the result of the combination of marginal increases in their negativity and small declines in negativity for couples in the other groups. With regard to contrariness, the married-happy spouses came to view each other as having a less contrary personality with time; this decline among the happy couples, paired with a marginal increase among the spouses in the divorced-later group, produced a significant difference in the slopes for contrariness between these two groups.

The trend of increasing negativity among the couples who divorced later might be taken to provide some support for the emergent distress model. However, if negativity erodes positive feelings, we would expect that increases in negativity early in marriage would covary with declines in love and increases in ambivalence. To test this possibility, we correlated the Bayesian estimates of linear change in spouses' negativity derived from the HLM analyses with estimates of linear changes in their partners' love and ambivalence. We found, contrary to the emergent distress model, that increases in one spouse's negativity were not associated with declines in the other's love (husbands' negativity and wives' love,  $r = -.12$ , *ns*; wives' negativity and husbands' love,  $r = -.07$ , *ns*). The association between increases in wives' negativity and rising ambivalence on the part of their husbands also was nonsignificant ( $r = .12$ , *ns*); however, there was a modest but significant association between husbands' increasing negativity and the surfacing of wives' ambivalence ( $r = .20$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In short, whereas changes in variables associated with the romantic nature of relationships were quite useful in distinguishing couples who remained married from those who divorced, there was minimal support, at best, for the notion that emergent distress early in marriage leads to divorce.

### Additional Analyses

The HLM analyses suggest that the enduring dynamics model may account for differences in satisfaction among couples who stay married, whereas disillusionment may distinguish those who divorce from those who stay married. The timing of divorce, however, appears to depend on the heights from which couples drop, such that those who divorce later had more promising relationships as newlyweds than did couples who divorce early. To explore these ideas, we performed sets of sequential logistic re-

gression analyses, using the empirical Bayes estimates of the intercepts and slopes derived from the baseline models of the HLM analyses as predictor variables. The patterns obtained earlier suggest that (a) marital happiness for those who stay married (happy vs. not happy) should be predicted by initial levels of the variables (i.e., the intercepts), (b) marital status (married vs. divorced) should be predicted by changes in the variables over time (i.e., the slopes), and (c) the timing of divorce among those who divorce should be predicted by initial levels of the variables rather than by slopes.

Each measure was run in its own logistic regression model containing both partners' HLM estimates of the intercepts and slopes. Two models were tested for each variable. In one model, the intercepts were entered as the first step, and the slopes were entered as the second step. In another model, the slopes were entered first and the intercepts second.

We begin with the logistic regressions predicting that marital happiness (happy vs. not happy) among those who stayed married would be predicted by the intercepts of each variable rather than by the slopes. Indeed, the intercepts, when entered first, significantly improved the fit of the model for love,  $\chi^2(2, N = 100) = 11.07$ ,  $p < .01$ , responsiveness,  $\chi^2(100, N = 2) = 10.66$ ,  $p < .01$ , and ambivalence,  $\chi^2(2, N = 100) = 9.60$ ,  $p < .01$ , and marginally improved fit for views of partners' contrariness,  $\chi^2(2, N = 100) = 4.94$ ,  $p < .10$ . The addition of slopes in the second step did not increase predictive power for any variable. A reversal of the steps yielded similar results. When spouses' slopes were entered in the first step, the model fit improved significantly for contrariness,  $\chi^2(2, N = 100) = 7.58$ ,  $p < .05$ , and marginally for love,  $\chi^2(2, N = 100) = 5.88$ ,  $p < .10$ . The addition of the intercepts in the second step, however, significantly increased model fit for love,  $\chi^2(2, N = 100) = 7.68$ ,  $p < .05$ , responsiveness,  $\chi^2(2, N = 100) = 10.13$ ,  $p < .01$ , and ambivalence,  $\chi^2(2, N = 100) = 9.32$ ,  $p < .01$ . For those who remained married, then, newlywed levels of love, responsiveness, and ambivalence continued to predict marital happiness even after the slope was controlled.

The next set of logistic regressions explored the premise, suggested by the HLM results, that later marital status (married vs. divorced) would be differentiated by the slopes rather than by the intercepts. Because our interest here is in whether the slopes differentiated couples by marital status, we combined the happy and not happy married couples into a married group, and the divorced-early and divorced-later couples into a divorced group. These analyses show, consistent with the disillusionment hypothesis, that slopes predict marital status (married vs. divorced) more consistently than do intercepts. When slopes were entered first, they significantly contributed to the prediction of marital status with regard to love,  $\chi^2(2, N = 146) = 10.41$ ,  $p < .01$ , ambivalence,  $\chi^2(2, N = 146) = 11.10$ ,  $p < .01$ , and spouses' view of their partner's responsiveness,  $\chi^2(2, N = 146) = 10.94$ ,  $p < .01$ , and contrariness,  $\chi^2(2, N = 146) = 6.58$ ,  $p < .05$ , and marginally improved model fit for affectional expression,  $\chi^2(2, N = 146) = 5.66$ ,  $p < .10$ . Adding intercepts during the second step improved model fit only for ambivalence,  $\chi^2(2, N = 146) = 8.30$ ,  $p < .05$ . When the steps were reversed, with the intercepts entered as the first step in the model, the intercepts did not significantly improve prediction with regard to any of the variables studied; the addition of the slopes in the second step of each model significantly improved the model's chi-square with regard to love,  $\chi^2(2,$

$N = 146$ ) = 8.31,  $p < .05$ , responsiveness,  $\chi^2(2, N = 146) = 10.46$ ,  $p < .01$ , ambivalence,  $\chi^2(2, N = 146) = 14.86$ ,  $p < .001$ , and contrariness,  $\chi^2(2, N = 146) = 8.69$ ,  $p < .05$ . Changes over time in love, responsiveness, ambivalence, and contrariness, then, predicted the outcomes of marriage versus divorce even after the initial level of the variable of interest was controlled; however, only the initial level of ambivalence predicted marital status after the slope was controlled.

The third and final set of logistic regressions dealt with the prediction of early versus later divorce among the subset of couples who divorced. Again, as the HLM results suggested, spouses' intercepts were more consistent predictors of marital outcome than were spouses' slopes. The intercepts of love,  $\chi^2(2, N = 46) = 6.44$ ,  $p < .05$ , and responsiveness,  $\chi^2(2, N = 46) = 8.99$ ,  $p < .05$ , significantly improved model fit when entered first. Adding slopes in the second step of the model marginally improved model fit for love,  $\chi^2(2, N = 46) = 5.44$ ,  $p < .10$ . When the model was reversed, the slopes for love strongly predicted the timing of divorce,  $\chi^2(2, N = 46) = 6.04$ ,  $p < .05$ , whereas slopes for negativity,  $\chi^2(2, N = 46) = 5.34$ ,  $p < .10$ , marginally improved fit. Adding intercepts to the model, however, significantly improved fit for responsiveness,  $\chi^2(2, N = 46) = 9.10$ ,  $p < .05$ , and marginally improved fit for affectional expression,  $\chi^2(2, N = 45) = 5.23$ ,  $p < .10$ , and love,  $\chi^2(2, N = 46) = 5.84$ ,  $p < .10$ . Thus, for couples destined for divorce, the initial levels of love and responsiveness in marriage were better predictors of the timing of divorce than were the changes in those variables over time.

Overall, the results from these final analyses were consistent with the earlier HLM findings that suggested that the enduring dynamics model accounted for differences in later satisfaction among couples who stayed married, that disillusionment processes distinguished couples who divorced from couples who stayed married, and that for those who divorced, the timing of divorce depended on how spouses felt about each other and got along with each other as newlyweds.<sup>5</sup>

## Discussion

We examined the early years of marriage to determine whether the tenor of a couple's alliance as newlyweds and the way it changes early in marriage presages whether the couple stays married and creates a mutually satisfying union more than 13 years after they are wed. The size of the initial sample, our success in obtaining follow-up data, and the temporal scope of the study allowed us to make finer distinctions among marital outcomes than have heretofore been made, even in otherwise exemplary studies such as Karney and Bradbury's (1997) research. Unlike Karney and Bradbury's investigation, which followed a more modest number of newlyweds for only 4 years, the nature of our study allowed us to make important distinctions in marital outcomes. We were able to distinguish the early marital experiences of couples who stayed married from the experiences of those who divorced, to differentiate the married couples on the basis of their marital satisfaction, and to differentiate divorced couples in terms of how long their marriages lasted. The value of such distinctions is clear in the results, which highlight some of the limitations of the behavioral or social learning perspective and point to the importance of disillusionment as a precursor of divorce.

### *Does Marital Distress Emerge Early in Marriage in Stable Unhappy Unions?*

Contrary to both the disillusionment and emergent distress models, we found that most of the differences between couples who stay married but differ in marital happiness exist at the outset of marriage rather than developing during the first 2 years of their marriage (see Footnote 4 for an exception). As predicted by the enduring dynamics model, the spouses who were not happy 13 years into marriage were less in love, viewed each other as less responsive, were more ambivalent, and were more negative than were spouses who stayed married and were happy. Furthermore, even though couples who remained married generally became less overtly affectionate and less in love, these declines were probably seen by the spouses who stayed married, regardless of their later marital happiness, as normative, a natural consequence of the transition from a romantic relationship to a working partnership.

A substantial minority of newlyweds seem content, or at least resigned, to enter and remain in marriages that fall short of the romantically suffused cultural ideal. Some of these marriages are like the stable, long-term marriages classified by Cuber and Harroff (1965) as *passive-congenial*, whereas other couples seem to maintain *conflict-habituated* marriages. Spouses in passive-congenial marriages "give little evidence that they had ever hoped for anything much different from what they are currently experiencing" (Cuber & Harroff, 1965, p. 50). Such spouses see marriage more as a backdrop than as the focal point of their lives, preferring to invest their energy in their work, outside activities, friendships, and children. As such, they may provide a modern Western equiv-

<sup>5</sup> Given that newlywed patterns and disillusionment distinguish couples headed for different long-term destinations, we examined the length of couples' courtships to pursue the possibility that a long courtship may reflect enduring problems in the relationship while also buffering couples against disillusionment. First, we compared the five marital-outcome groups in terms of average length of courtship. The courtships in the divorced-early and the divorced-later groups were significantly different from one another—averaging 37.8 months and 18.5 months, respectively. The average length of courtship for the other three groups fell between these groups and were distinguishable from neither of them (married-happy = 28.0 months, married-not happy = 29.4 months, quickly divorced = 33.1 months). Given that both the divorced-early and divorced-later groups appeared to experience forms of disillusionment, the significant difference between them does not suggest that a long courtship, in and of itself, reduces the likelihood that spouses will experience some form of disillusionment. Second, correlations were calculated between length of courtship and the Bayesian estimates of the intercepts and slopes of the six dependent measures used in this investigation. The length of courtship was inversely related to the intercepts and slope of husbands' (intercept,  $r = -.35$ ,  $p < .01$ ; slope,  $r = .29$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and wives' (intercept,  $r = -.36$ ,  $p < .01$ ; slope,  $r = .29$ ,  $p < .01$ ) affectional expression, indicating that couples with shorter courtships were more affectionate as newlyweds and that they declined more in affectional expression. Couples who experienced relatively longer courtships also were less in love as newlyweds (husbands,  $r = -.18$ ,  $p < .05$ ; wives,  $r = -.24$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Finally, length of courtship also was inversely associated with the degree to which wives viewed their husbands as responsive as newlyweds ( $r = -.20$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and the degree to which husbands saw their wives as more contrary over time ( $r = -.16$ ,  $p = .05$ ). These results, when considered together, suggest that the roots of distress and divorce are traceable, at least in part, to courtship processes.

alent to the traditional arranged marriage—a union that is centered on the public sphere rather than on private matters of individual fulfillment. Spouses in conflict-habituated marriages are aware “that incompatibility is pervasive, that conflict is ever-potential, and that an atmosphere of tension permeates the togetherness” (Cuber & Harroff, 1965, p. 44). These couples, however, may remain married because they feel that conflict is an inevitable part of marriage; indeed, according to Cuber and Harroff, some seem to almost enjoy their sparring. Thus, though not particularly satisfied with their marriage, passive-congenial and conflict-habituated couples may be unlikely to seek therapy or divorce, because they see their lack of closeness or their conflicts as normal and inescapable. Thus, the paucity of stably married couples in clinical samples may have misled researchers into believing that marital dissatisfaction typically emerges over time, as a function of the inability of couples to solve conflicts or to effectively work through their differences.

The findings from the present study supporting the enduring dynamics model are consistent with other data gathered from the same sample of couples. For example, couples who had courtships filled with high levels of conflict also reported more conflict during the early years of their marriage (Huston, 1994; Huston & Houts, 1998). Moreover, we have calculated stability coefficients (i.e., correlations of the same variables across phases) for the first 2 years of marriage for the couples who stayed married and compared these coefficients with coefficients calculated from the 2nd to the 13th year. The coefficients are very robust, both across the early years of marriage and across the longer span of time; indeed, some of the coefficients between Phases 3 and 4 exceed the substantial coefficients found across the first 2 years of marriage (Huston, Niehuis, & Smith, 1997). Such remarkable stability in the marriages of couples who stay together may be rooted, in part, in durable psychological traits that spouses bring to their relationship. Research has shown, for instance, that “psychological femininity” is associated both with how much affection spouses express toward each other (Huston & Geis, 1993) and with marital satisfaction (Lamke, 1989). Similarly, spouses who are zestful—who take a positive attitude toward life—are more likely to maintain satisfying marriages (Veroff, Douvan, Orbuch, & Acitelli, 1998). Conversely, moodiness, emotional lability, abrasiveness, and nervousness are associated with relatively high levels of interpersonal negativity (Caughlin et al., 2000) and with low levels of marital satisfaction (Caughlin et al., 2000; Karney & Bradbury, 1997; Veroff et al., 1998).

#### *What Processes Lead To Divorce?*

Differences in how well couples function initially put their relationship at risk in varying degrees; however, the likelihood of divorce depended significantly on how much the marriage changed away from the romantic ideal over its first 2 years. Couples who divorced quickly had a weak, frayed alliance as newlyweds, whereas those who divorced after 2 or more years showed evidence of becoming disillusioned with each other and their relationship over time.

#### *Quickly Divorced Couples: Distressed as Newlyweds?*

The quickly divorced couples were distressed even 2 months after they were wed; these spouses began marriage with relatively

weak feelings of love and behaved quite negatively toward one another compared with the other couples. In fact, among the quickly divorcing couples, the average daily ratio of positive-to-negative behavior was approximately 1:4 for the husbands and 1:3 for the wives; such ratios are akin to those of couples whom Gottman (1994) found to be deeply distressed. Some of our earlier research suggests that these quickly divorced couples' newlywed distress was prefigured by chaotic courtships (Huston, 1994) that embodied many features of event-driven courtships (Surra & Hughes, 1997): turbulent, dramatic relationships that are thought to have relatively bleak futures. It is not surprising that the comparatively rocky courtships of the quickly divorced couples led to fragile marital unions.

Why, then, did these couples get married in the first place? The quickly divorced couples were young, and many may have married, at least in part, to escape unhappy life circumstances. Furthermore, even if a courtship is unpromising, the partners may subscribe to the idea, espoused in romance novels, that marriage furnishes a new, more positive basis for a relationship. That cultural myth could lead to the belief that marriage serves as the cure for a partner's jealousy, infidelity, or lack of attentiveness. If desired improvements do not materialize after the wedding, however, the continued costs of the relationship weigh increasingly heavily and quickly overwhelm the partners' desire to stay together.

#### *Does Disillusionment Lead To Divorce?*

Both groups of couples who divorced after at least 2 years of marriage, when compared with both groups who stayed married, came to view their spouses as less responsive and became more ambivalent about their marriage. These patterns of change suggest that disillusionment may underlie divorce. A relationship that is worsening with time may lead spouses to anticipate further decreases in rewards along with further increases in costs (Aronson, 1969; Huesmann & Levinger, 1976) and, as a consequence, may lead them to think seriously about divorce. Although our analyses could not separate the unique contribution of each of these changes to divorce, the multiple ways marriages move away from the romantic ideal undoubtedly reinforce each other, leading couples down the pathway to dissolution. These interlocking processes of disillusionment also appear to differ somewhat, depending on whether couples divorce early or later.

*Early divorce.* As newlyweds, the early divorcing couples had marriages that were not distinguishable from the marriages of those who stayed in relatively unhappy unions. The couples who divorced early, however, quickly distinguished themselves from those who remained in not happy marriages by becoming significantly more ambivalent about their union, by falling farther out of love, and by coming to see each other as having a less responsive personality. The question of why their love and sense of each other's responsiveness deteriorated remains unresolved, but perhaps partners in these relationships tried to put the best possible interpretation on each other's behavior during courtship and the first months of marriage. Newlyweds, in general, may be motivated to make benign attributions for their partner's behavior (Murray & Holmes, 1993); however, the strength of this propensity may depend on how hopeful they are that their relationship will endure and how motivated they are to maintain a positive

image of each other. If an unpromising marriage further unravels, the propensity to give one's partner the benefit of the doubt may give way. Alternatively, couples who divorce early may be unwilling or unable to use certain behavioral, emotional, and cognitive tools that help maintain commitment. Perhaps some partners who stay married initially expect less or adapt their expectations to conform to the realities of the relationship (cf. Huston & Houts, 1998; E. Johnson & Huston, 1998). Others may reduce the consequences of negative behavior by responding in ways that deescalate conflict (Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991). Still others may consciously or unconsciously devalue alternatives to the relationship so as to maintain commitment to their current situation (D. J. Johnson & Rusbult, 1989). Individuals who do not have such skills—or who refuse to practice them, disdaining them as mental “tricks”—may be at a higher risk for divorce.

*Later divorce.* As newlyweds, the couples who divorced after 7 or more years were almost giddily affectionate, displaying about one third more affection than did spouses who were later happily married. However, consistent with the disillusionment model, the intensity of their romance dissipated over the 1st year of marriage, as reflected in a dramatic drop in how affectionate they were with each other and in declines in their views of each other's responsiveness. These spouses also began to develop ambivalence about their marriage, became marginally more negative, and began to view each other as marginally more contrary.

The steep drop in affectional expression characterizing the later-divorced couples may, in part, be a function of the elevated love and affectional expression they displayed during courtship. Their short “whirlwind” courtships suggest that these couples may have been particularly motivated during courtship to make their relationship work. As a consequence, they may have sustained artificially high levels of cohesion through a “delusive solidarity”: a “rapport which deceptively hides a multitude of unexpressed grievances, habit amputations, and differences of opinion that have yet to come to light” (Waller, 1938, p. 339). Such illusory compatibility may create a facade of blissful romance while hidden problems fester. At least one study (Markman, Jamieson, & Floyd, 1983) has shown that although romanticism and love are highly intercorrelated and positively associated with premarital adjustment, neither romanticism nor love is correlated with the intensity of problems in the relationship. Although such problems may not affect a couple's premarital passion, after the wedding they may be more likely to erode the couple's sense of togetherness.

Regardless of why they began marriage with such strong love and frequent expressions of affection, the couples who divorced later, in contrast to those who divorced early, fit Kayser's (1993) disaffection model of disillusionment, because their marriages began on a romantic “high,” only to lose much of their romantic aura over time. The strong pattern of disaffection among the later divorced couples is also reminiscent of the journey that Cuber and Harroff's (1965) devitalized couples took from an initially intense relationship. Whereas 35 years ago such couples may have remained married, contemporary couples in devitalized marriages may believe that a marriage is not worth sustaining if it is no longer as meaningful, fulfilling, and intense as it once was.

Still, after 2 years of marriage, the later divorcing spouses retained generally positive evaluations of each other and their relationship. As R. S. Weiss (1975) suggested,

the highly charged positive emotions of courtship and early marriage may facilitate the development of attachment. . . . Once developed, attachment seems to persist. Even when marriages turn bad and the other components of love fade or turn into their opposites, attachment is likely to remain. (p. 44)

It may have taken these couples several more years to completely lose faith in their marriages, perhaps because they harbored the hope that their relationship would recover its original vibrancy. Such spouses may initially be reluctant to blame their partner for difficulties in the relationship; at first, they may entertain a mixture of explanations for their problems that encompass the self, the partner, and extradyadic factors, but with time, blame increasingly focuses on the partner's shortcomings (Kayser, 1993). After that turning point, partners' attributions about behavior in the relationship are apt to shift.

The present study, with its 2-year window on the early years of marriage, may capture only the early stages of disillusionment. Kayser's (1993) view of the disaffection process suggests that had we followed the couples beyond the first 2 years of marriage, we would have discovered that divorcing spouses experienced an increasing sense of disillusionment with their partner. Some spouses may respond to their disappointment by expressing anger and hurt, instigating conflict at the slightest provocation. Other spouses may psychologically withdraw from the relationship, lose interest in either conflict or reconciliation, and seek a new partner with whom they can try again to create a romantic and exciting relationship.

This research documents that bonds weaken more notably and doubts develop more rapidly across the first years of marriage among couples who divorce compared with those who stay married. Perhaps, as the disillusionment model suggests, these changes in marriage are more apt to take place if spouses enter marriage with unduly favorable images of each other, but this notion has yet to be tested directly. Do spouses who begin marriage with overly rosy views of each other and high hopes for the marriage set themselves up for disappointment, as Waller (1938) suggested? Or do high expectations encourage spouses to overlook each other's shortcomings or redefine them as virtues (Murray & Holmes, 1993; Murray et al., 1996)? It is certainly possible that during courtship, couples who stay married and those who eventually divorce engage in idealization equally, but that divorcing couples' illusions are more difficult to sustain after the wedding knot is tied.

### *The Emergent Distress Model Reconsidered*

The results provide little support for the notion that emergent distress characterizes the early years of marriage for couples who are destined for either long-term marital distress or divorce. Given the prominence of the emergent distress model, as evidenced by the strong influence of social learning or behavioral theories in past research (Karney & Bradbury, 1995), the lack of support for the emergent distress model deserves special attention. Four sets of findings seem to undermine the pertinence of the model as an explanation of the early roots of distress and divorce. First, the emergent distress model specifically dismisses the predictive significance of the initial strength of the romantic bond as well as declines in its strength over time (cf. Bradbury et al., 1998; Clements et al., 1997); however, the results suggest that newlywed

levels of and changes in the romantic features of marriage foreshadow later satisfaction and predict marital stability. Second, the model posits that increases in negativity and changing views of the contrariness of one's partner should distinguish couples whose marriages are later found not to be happy rather than happy; this expectation also was not borne out. Third, the emergent distress model indicates that signs of distress should increase most markedly among couples who divorce relatively soon after they are wed. The spouses in the group that divorced early, however, did not evince increasing negativity, nor did they come to see each other as more contrary over the first 2 years of marriage. Finally, negativity does not appear to undermine spouses' love for each other or increase their ambivalence during the early years of marriage, probably because such negativity is usually embedded in a relationship that is still highly affectionate (see Huston & Chorost, 1994). Thus, it appears that the well-documented deleterious effects of negativity on marriage may occur after marital enchantment gives way.

### *Some Final Thoughts*

Whereas longitudinal studies of distress and divorce typically have emphasized the inability of couples to deal effectively with conflict, our results suggest that greater attention needs to be paid to the extent to which relationships have positive elements and whether these elements dissipate over time. There is evidence outside the longitudinal literature on marriage that positive features of marriage are important to relationship quality and stability. Spouses involved in long-term happy marriages often point to each other's admirable qualities and take note of the pleasure they find in their relationship as significant factors accounting for the durability of their bond (e.g., Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995); the loss of affection and good feeling, in contrast, is often invoked by individuals who have divorced as playing a significant role in the demise of their marriage (e.g., Vaughan, 1986; R. S. Weiss, 1975). Recent research carried out by Aron and his colleagues (Aron & Aron, 1997; Aron, Norman, Aron, McKenna, & Heyman, 2000) has shown that the pursuit of exciting activities together serves to enhance relationship satisfaction; declines in such joint pursuits may lay beneath some of the loss of romance early in marriage that predicts divorce. More generally, research needs to explore the motivational systems that create and sustain the positive features of marriage. Thus, for example, it would be useful to know whether spouses who see their marriage as a communal (rather than as an exchange) relationship are better able to create and sustain a mutually satisfying marriage (cf. Clark, Mills, & Powell, 1986); in a similar fashion, spouses who are disposed to accommodate—to make allowances for each other by responding constructively when their partner exhibits undesirable behavior—may be better equipped to sustain a strong marital alliance (cf. Rusbult et al., 1991).

Despite these lines of research, most longitudinal studies have largely missed the role that positive features play in marriage for two reasons. First, the decline in romantic love and affectionate behavior often commences shortly after the wedding, with declines particularly evident during the 1st year of marriage (Huston et al., 1986), before most researchers have been able to recruit the couples. Second, the typical conflict resolution task used in behaviorally oriented laboratory research provides a context that may

elicit numerous negative behaviors but a limited range of positive behaviors and emotions. Expressions of enduring love and feelings of attachment, pleasure, comfort, and friendship, which are prominently identified with satisfaction and stability in retrospective qualitative studies of marriage, would not be highlighted by a laboratory conflict task.

This study, by embedding a short-term longitudinal study of the early years of marriage within a long-term longitudinal study of marital outcomes, overcomes many of the problems that have obscured our understanding of the developmental processes through which marital relationships stabilize or deteriorate (Glenn, 1990; Karney & Bradbury, 1995). We are able to take into account systematic attrition due to divorce, to examine not only differences among couples at one point in time but also differences in how their marriages changed over time, and to examine the early marital correlates of what might be thought of as "delayed-action divorces." Had any of these features been missing, we would have found few differences between outcome groups, and we would have entirely missed the distinctive pathways that differentiate couples who stay married from those who divorce as well as those that differentiate couples who divorce relatively soon after they are wed from those who divorce years later.

In spite of the strengths, the study is not without its weaknesses. First, because we were unable to collect data between the 2nd and 13th years of couples' marriages, we could not study the experiences that might intensify disillusionment nor examine the impact on marriage of events that occurred after couples had been married more than 2 years. Such events could include changes in couples' economic circumstances, infidelity, or illness. Second, we are mindful of the tradeoff between the greater scope of behavior captured using diary reports and the greater precision afforded through direct observation (Huston & Robins, 1982; Huston et al., 1987; Reis, 1994). Third, although we believe that the results described here probably generalize to any culture in which romantic ideals are pervasive and divorce is an option, conclusions beyond Western cultures should be made with caution. Spouses in societies with arranged marriages, for example, may initially come to marriage with low levels of love and affectional expression compared with their Western counterparts, perhaps making disillusionment processes less prevalent in such societies. And fourth, we leave unexplored why some spouses enter into and stay in marriages that are not satisfying (cf. Surra et al., 1995; Surra & Hughes, 1997) as well as why some newlywed spouses and not others become disillusioned early in marriage.

As a final note, the results clearly show that the early marital roots of marital delight, distress, and divorce are different in important ways. Although "most marital dysfunction either exists at the beginning of marriages or arises in the first few years" (Glenn, 1998, p. 437), unique patterns may arise as couples reach middle age and the later years of marriage. Thus, we leave as a final mystery whether those who divorce after 15 years of marriage exhibit early marital patterns similar to those who divorce earlier or whether an entirely new dynamic is involved.

### References

- Anderson, N. H. (1968). Likableness ratings of 555 personality-trait words. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 9, 272-279.
- Aron, A., & Aron, E. N. (1997). Self-expansion motivation and including

- other in the self. In S. Duck (Ed.), *Handbook of personal relationships* (2nd ed., pp. 251–270). London: Wiley.
- Aron, A., Norman, C. C., Aron, E. N., McKenna, C., & Heyman, R. E. (2000). Couples' shared participation in novel and arousing activities and experienced relational quality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, 273–284.
- Aronson, E. (1969). Some antecedents of attraction. In W. J. Arnold & D. Levine (Eds.), *Nebraska symposium on motivation* (Vol. 17, pp. 143–173). Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Bradbury, T. N. (1998). Introduction: The developmental course of marital dysfunction. In T. N. Bradbury (Ed.), *The developmental course of marital dysfunction* (pp. 1–8). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Bradbury, T. N., Cohan, C. L., & Karney, B. R. (1998). Optimizing longitudinal research for understanding and preventing marital dysfunction. In T. N. Bradbury (Ed.), *The developmental course of marital dysfunction* (pp. 279–311). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Braiker, H., & Kelley, H. H. (1979). Conflict in the development of close relationships. In R. L. Burgess & T. L. Huston (Eds.), *Social exchange in developing relationships* (pp. 135–168). New York: Academic Press.
- Brehm, S. S. (1992). *Intimate relationships* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Bryk, A. S., & Raudenbush, S. W. (1987). Application of hierarchical linear models to assessing change. *Psychological Bulletin*, 101, 147–158.
- Bryk, A. S., & Raudenbush, S. W. (1992). *Hierarchical linear models: Applications and data analysis methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Buehlman, K. T., Gottman, J. M., & Katz, L. F. (1992). How a couple views their past predicts their future: Predicting divorce from an oral history interview. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 5, 295–318.
- Burgess, E., & Wallin, P. (1953). *Engagement and marriage*. Philadelphia: Lippincott.
- Campbell, A., Converse, P., & Rodgers, W. (1976). *The quality of American life: Perceptions, evaluations, and satisfaction*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Caughlin, J. P., Huston, T. L., & Houts, R. M. (2000). How does personality matter in marriage? An examination of trait anxiety, interpersonal negativity, and marital satisfaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, 326–336.
- Clark, M. S., Mills, J., & Powell, M. C. (1986). Keeping track of needs in communal and exchange relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51, 333–338.
- Clements, M. L., Cordova, A. D., Markman, H. J., & Laurenceau, J. (1997). The erosion of marital satisfaction over time and how to prevent it. In R. J. Sternberg & M. Hojjat (Eds.), *Satisfaction in close relationships* (pp. 335–355). New York: Guilford Press.
- Cuber, J. F., & Harroff, P. B. (1965). *The significant Americans: A study of sexual behavior among the affluent*. New York: Appleton-Century.
- Dunnett, C. W. (1955). A multiple comparison procedure for comparing several treatments with a control. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 50, 1096–1121.
- Fincham, F. D., & Bradbury, T. N. (1987). The assessment of marital quality: A reevaluation. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 49, 797–809.
- Fincham, F. D., & Bradbury, T. N. (1992). Assessing attributions in marriage: The relationship attribution measure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 62, 457–468.
- Fincham, F. D., & Linfield, K. J. (1997). A new look at marital quality: Can spouses feel positive and negative about their marriage? *Journal of Family Psychology*, 11, 489–502.
- Glenn, N. (1990). Quantitative research on marital quality in the 1980s: A critical review. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 52, 818–831.
- Glenn, N. (1998). Problems and prospects in longitudinal research on marriage: A sociologist's perspective. In T. N. Bradbury (Ed.), *The developmental course of marital dysfunction* (pp. 427–440). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Goode, W. J. (1993). *World changes in divorce patterns*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Gottman, J. M. (1994). *What predicts divorce? The relationship between marital processes and marital outcomes*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Heaton, T. B., Albrecht, S. L., & Martin, T. K. (1985). The timing of divorce. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 47, 631–639.
- Houts, R. M., Robins, E., & Huston, T. L. (1996). Compatibility and the development of premarital relationships. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 58, 7–20.
- Huesmann, L. R., & Levinger, G. (1976). Incremental exchange theory: A formal model for progression in dyadic social interaction. In L. Berkowitz & E. Walster (Eds.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 9, pp. 191–229). New York: Academic Press.
- Huston, T. L. (1993). *A longitudinal study of the antecedents of marital distress and divorce*. Proposal funded by the National Science Foundation (SBR-9311846), Washington, DC. (Available from Ted L. Huston, Department of Human Ecology, University of Texas, Austin, Texas 78712)
- Huston, T. L. (1994). Courtship antecedents of marital satisfaction and love. In R. Erber & R. Gilmore (Eds.), *Theoretical frameworks for personal relationships* (pp. 43–65). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Huston, T. L., & Chorost, A. F. (1994). Behavioral buffers on the effect of negativity on marital satisfaction: A longitudinal study. *Personal Relationships*, 1, 223–239.
- Huston, T. L., & Geis, G. (1993). In what ways do gender-related attributes and beliefs affect marriage? *Journal of Social Issues*, 49, 87–106.
- Huston, T. L., & Houts, R. M. (1998). The psychological infrastructure of courtship and marriage: The role of personality and compatibility in romantic relationships. In T. N. Bradbury (Ed.), *The developmental course of marital dysfunction* (pp. 114–151). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Huston, T. L., McHale, S. M., & Crouter, A. C. (1986). When the honeymoon's over: Changes in the marriage relationship over the first year. In R. Gilmore & S. Duck (Eds.), *The emerging field of personal relationships* (pp. 109–132). New York: Erlbaum.
- Huston, T. L., Niehuis, S., & Smith, S. E. (1997, November). *Divergent experiential and behavioral pathways leading to distress and divorce*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Council on Family Relations, Washington, DC.
- Huston, T. L., & Robins, E. (1982). Conceptual and methodological issues in studying close relationships. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 44, 901–925.
- Huston, T. L., Robins, E., Atkinson, J., & McHale, S. M. (1987). Surveying the landscape of marital behavior: A behavioral self-report approach to studying marriage. In S. Oskamp (Ed.), *Family processes and problems: Social psychological aspects* (pp. 45–71). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Huston, T. L., & Vangelisti, A. L. (1991). Socioemotional behavior and satisfaction in marital relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61, 54–73.
- Jacobson, N., & Margolin, G. (1979). *Marital therapy: Strategies based on social learning and behavior exchange principles*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Johnson, D. J., & Rusbult, C. E. (1989). Resisting temptation: Devaluation of alternative partners as a means of maintaining commitment in close relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57, 967–980.
- Johnson, D. R., White, L. K., Edwards, J. N., & Booth, A. (1986). Dimensions of marital quality: Toward methodological and conceptual refinement. *Journal of Family Issues*, 7, 31–49.
- Johnson, E., & Huston, T. L. (1998). The perils of love, or why wives adapt

- to husbands during the transition to parenthood. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 60, 195–204.
- Johnson, M. P., Caughlin, J. P., & Huston, T. L. (1999). The tripartite nature of marital commitment: Personal, moral, and structural reasons to stay married. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61, 160–177.
- Karney, B. R., & Bradbury, T. N. (1995). Longitudinal research on marriage. *Psychological Bulletin*, 118, 3–34.
- Karney, B. R., & Bradbury, T. N. (1997). Neuroticism, marital interaction, and the trajectory of marital satisfaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72, 1075–1092.
- Kayser, K. (1993). *When love dies: The process of marital disaffection*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Kitson, G. C. (1992). *Portrait of divorce: Adjustment to marital breakdown*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Kurdek, L. A. (1998). The nature and predictors of the trajectory of change in marital quality over the first four years of marriage for first-married husbands and wives. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 12, 494–510.
- Lamke, L. K. (1989). Marital adjustment among rural couples: The role of expressiveness. *Sex Roles*, 21, 579–590.
- Markman, H. J., Jamieson, K. J., & Floyd, F. (1983). The assessment and modification of premarital relationships: Preliminary findings on the etiology and prevention of marital and family distress. In J. P. Vincent (Ed.), *Advances in family intervention, assessment, and theory* (Vol. 3, pp. 41–90). Greenwich, CN: JAI Press.
- Markman, H. J., Renick, M. J., Floyd, F. J., Stanley, S. M., & Clements, M. (1993). Preventing marital distress through communication and conflict management training: A 4- and 5-year follow-up. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 61, 70–77.
- Miller, R. S. (1997). We always hurt the ones we love: Aversive interactions in close relationships. In R. M. Kowalski (Ed.), *Aversive interpersonal behaviors* (pp. 11–29). New York: Plenum.
- Morgan, S. P., & Rindfuss, R. R. (1985). Marital disruption: Structural and temporal dimensions. *American Journal of Sociology*, 90, 1055–1077.
- Murray, S. L., & Holmes, J. G. (1993). Seeing virtues in faults: Negativity and the transformation of interpersonal narratives in close relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65, 707–722.
- Murray, S. L., Holmes, J. G., & Griffin, D. W. (1996). The benefits of positive illusions: Idealization and the construction of satisfaction in close relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70, 79–98.
- Noller, P., & Feeney, J. A. (1998). Communication in early marriage: Responses to conflict, nonverbal accuracy, and conversational patterns. In T. N. Bradbury (Ed.), *The developmental course of marital dysfunction* (pp. 11–43). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Noller, P., Feeney, J. A., Bonnell, D., & Callan, V. G. (1994). A longitudinal study of conflict in early marriage. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 11, 233–252.
- Orbuch, T. L., Veroff, J., & Holmberg, D. (1993). Becoming a married couple: The emergence of meaning in the first years of marriage. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 55, 815–826.
- Orden, S. R., & Bradburn, N. M. (1968). Dimensions of marriage happiness. *American Journal of Sociology*, 73, 715–731.
- Raudenbush, S. W., Brennan, R. T., & Barnett, R. C. (1995). A multivariate hierarchical model for studying psychological change within married couples. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 9, 161–174.
- Reis, H. T. (1994). Domains of experience: Investigating relationship processes from three perspectives. In R. Erber & R. Gilmour (Eds.), *Theoretical frameworks for personal relationships* (pp. 87–110). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Robins, E. J. (1985). *A theoretical and empirical investigation of compatibility testing and marital choice*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, University Park.
- Rusbult, C. E. (1993). Understanding responses to dissatisfaction in close relationships: The exit-voice-loyalty-neglect model. In S. Worchel & J. A. Simpson (Eds.), *Conflict between people and groups: Causes, processes, and resolutions* (pp. 30–59). Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- Rusbult, C. E., Verette, J., Whitney, G. A., Slovick, L. F., & Lipkus, I. (1991). Accommodation processes in close relationships: Theory and preliminary empirical evidence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60, 53–78.
- Simpson, J. A., Campbell, B., & Berscheid, E. (1986). The association between romantic love and marriage: Kephart (1967) twice revisited. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 12, 363–372.
- South, S., & Spitze, G. (1986). Determinants of divorce over the life course. *American Sociological Review*, 51, 583–590.
- Surra, C. A., Batchelder, M. L., & Hughes, D. K. (1995). Accounts and the demystification of courtship. In M. Fitzpatrick & A. L. Vangelisti (Eds.), *Explaining family interactions* (pp. 112–141). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Surra, C. A., & Hughes, D. (1997). Commitment processes in accounts of the development of premarital relationships. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 59, 5–21.
- Swann, W. B., Jr., De La Ronde, C., & Hixon, G. (1994). Authenticity and positivity strivings in marriage and courtship. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 66, 857–869.
- Tate, R. L., & Hokanson, J. E. (1993). Analyzing individual data status and change with hierarchical linear models: Illustration with depression in college students. *Journal of Personality*, 61, 181–206.
- Tucker, J., Kressin, N., Spiro, A., & Ruscio, J. (1998). Intrapersonal characteristics and the timing of divorce: A prospective investigation. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 15, 211–225.
- U. S. Bureau of the Census. (1997). *Statistical abstract of the United States: 1997* (117th ed.). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- U. S. Center for National Health Statistics. (1991). Advance report of final marriage statistics, 1988. *Monthly Vital Statistics Report*, 40(4).
- Vaughan, D. (1986). *Uncoupling: Turning points in intimate relationships*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Veroff, J., Douvan, E., & Hatchett, S. (1995). *Marital instability: A social and behavioral study of the early years*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Veroff, J., Douvan, E., Orbuch, T. L., & Acitelli, L. K. (1998). Happiness in stable marriages: The early years. In T. N. Bradbury (Ed.), *The developmental course of marital dysfunction* (pp. 152–179). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Waller, W. (1938). *The family: A dynamic interpretation*. New York: Cordon.
- Wallerstein, J., & Blakeslee, S. (1995). *The good marriage: How and why love lasts*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Weiss, R. L., & Heyman, R. E. (1990). Observation of marital interaction. In F. Fincham & T. N. Bradbury (Eds.), *The psychology of marriage: Conceptual, empirical, and applied perspectives* (pp. 87–118). New York: Guilford Press.
- Weiss, R. S. (1975). *Marital separation*. New York: Basic Books.
- Wills, T., Weiss, R., & Patterson, G. (1974). A behavioral analysis of the determinants of marital satisfaction. *Journal of Counseling and Clinical Psychology*, 42, 802–811.

Received February 25, 1999

Revision received February 15, 2000

Accepted July 5, 2000 ■