The Developmental Course of Marital Dysfunction

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

g Premarital Predictors of Relationship Outcomes: A 15-Year Follow-up of the Boston Couples Study

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Selecting a mate is one of life's most important decisions. In our fiercely independent culture, young people place a premium on personal choice in matters of the heart. Unfortunately, current divorce statistics suggest that many Americans are not making good marital choices. At present, empirical research offers few guidelines for detecting which dating relationships are likely to develop into successful marriages. Although there is abundant research on factors such as good looks and attitude similarity that foster initial interpersonal attraction, we know little about the long-term importance of these factors in continuing relationships. There is also a growing literature using information about marital patterns at one point in time to predict later marital success (e.g., Bentler & Newcomb, 1978; Bradbury & Fincham, 1990; Gottman, 1994; Kurdek, 1993). Although such information assists in identifying existing marriages at risk for misery and dissolution, it may not help young lovers to avoid unhappy marriages.

Prospective studies of the premarital predictors of marital success are rare. In a pioneering study, Burgess and Wallin (1953) followed 666 couples from the time of their engagement in the late 1930s to a few years after their marriage. Burgess and Wallin concluded that successful marriage was more likely when individuals had been reared by happily married parents, were self-confident, showed sexual restraint before marriage, had a longer courtship, and endorsed the traditional belief that the husband should be head of the family and the wife should stay home. They reported a significant correlation between a composite measure of these premarital

The original data collection was supported by Nutional Science Foundation grant GS27422 to Zick Rubin. Collection of the 15-year follow-up data was supported by grants to Charles T. Hill from the Haynes Foundation and Whittier College, and by a University Research Grant from UCLA to Anne Peplau. We are grateful to John Graham for assistance with data analysis. This chapter has greatly benefited from the insightful comments of Thomas Bradbury, Khanh-Van T. Bui, Sheri DeBro, Ben Karney, and Paula Vincent.

predictors and marital success three to five years later *(r* = .31 for husbands and .27 for wives).

In another prospective study, Kelly followed 300 couples from their engagements in the 1930s until 1980 (Kelly & Conley, 1987). Eventually, 278 of these engaged couples were married and 50 later divorced. Divorce was more likely among participants who, before marriage, were rated high on neuroticism and had a history of more extensive premarital sexual activity. For men, low impulse control and less conventional attitudes about family life were also predictive of marital instability. On the basis of their long-term follow-up, Kelly and Conley categorized couples as divorced, stable but unhappy, or happily married. This "marital compatibility" measure was significantly correlated with three premarital personality measures: the husband's neuroticism, the husband's impulse control, and the wife's neuroticism (multiple R = .38). The prediction of marital success was improved (multiple R = .49) by adding 14 other premarital measures, including attitudes about marriage, sexual history, and childhood family background. These two studies of couples from the 1930s found that sexual restraint, traditional beliefs about marriage, and positive parental models contributed to marital success. How applicable these patterns are to contemporary young couples is an open question.

More recently, Olson and his colleagues have used PREPARE, a 125-item premarital inventory, to predict marital success (Powers & Olson, 1986; Larsen & Olson, 1989; cf. Holman, Larson, & Harmer, 1994). The PREPARE questionnaire assesses 14 areas of relationship functioning. Discriminant analyses indicated that PREPARE scores obtained premaritally correctly differentiated couples who later had satisfying marriages from those who did not (i.e., who divorced or who were maritally dissatisfied) with at least 80% accuracy. Couples who, before marriage, had more realistic expectations about their relationship, felt good about the personality of their partner and the way they resolved conflicts, enjoyed communicating with their partner, and agreed on their religious values were more likely to have a happy marriage a few years later. Olson's ability to predict marital success is impressive, but several limitations of his studies raise concerns about the generalizability of his findings. All participants initially took the PREPARE instrument as part of a counseling program for engaged couples, usually offered by their church. Virtually all couples were Caucasian and Christian. For the postmarriage follow-up, couples were nominated by clergy and then contacted by the researchers to complete a questionnaire. Response rates were low: 49% in the Powers and Olson (1986) study and 38% for the married sample in the Larsen and Olson

(1989) study. In analyzing data from the married couples, the researchers used extreme groups.

Two small longitudinal studies (Filsinger & Thoma, 1988; Markman, 1981) have attempted to link the premarital behavior of couples in a laboratory setting to relationship status or satisfaction several years later. Both studies suggest that premarital communication patterns may set the stage for later problems in a relationship. At present, however, various limitations of these studies raise questions about the generalizability of their findings (for a critique, see Bradbury & Karney, 1993).

The scarcity of prospective longitudinal studies makes it difficult to assess the potential importance of premarital predictors of marital outcomes. Indeed, researchers have come to opposite conclusions. Some argue for the premarital determinism of marital success. Olson (1990, p. 404) asserted that "the core of the marriage is formed during the premarital period, and... self-reported relationship characteristics are predictive of ultimate marital success or failure." In contrast, Whyte (1990, p. 247) concluded from a study of wives' retrospective reports that "most measures of dating and other premarital experiences have little impact on marital success." The research presented here investigates this issue. Before describing this study, however, consider two young couples we interviewed in the early 1970s when they were in college. (Their names have been changed.)

> *Ross and Betsy met during the second week of freshman year. At first, they spent endless hours talking to each other. After Christmas it was "just understood" that they wouldn'/ date anyone else, and in February they told each other, "I love you." Soon after, they became sexually intimate. Although Betsy had slept with her high school boyfriend, Ross had never had intercourse before. Ross described sex with Betsy as "a bond, an entrusting thing, a sharing - an outward sign of cementing our relationship." When conflicts arose, Betsy was more often the one to initiate a reconciliation. They agreed that the main sources of conflict were "external to the relationship," things outside their control - like Ross's mother. They both expected to go to graduate school - Ross in astrophysics and Betsy in dentistry. They planned to apply to more than a dozen graduate programs, hoping that they'd both be accepted in the same city.*
>
> *When Diane and Alan first met, they found each other boring. Later, they met again in Diane's dorm, where Alan had come to visit a female friend and smoke a joint of marijuana. Diane declined to*

sham the joint, explaining thai she was "very antidrug." But later that evening they began to talk and eventually a relationship developed. At first, Diane explained, "There were all those unveilings of self that go on for a couple of months until we got to know each other and felt comfortable with each other." Both agreed they were [44]in love" but whereas Diane was very open in expressing affection, Alan was more reticent and logical. Both were concerned about traditional versus nontraditional life styles. Diane did volunteer work for the Women '5 *Yellow Pages, a feminist group in Boston. Alan suggested that our intennew questions were too conservative because they emphasized dating and traditional marriage. He thought social scientists had an obligation to study alternative life styles, "like people in communal relationships and people in long-distance commuter relationships." Alan believed that "in general, marriage is not something to do until it becomes necessary" - that is, in order to have children. Both Alan and Diane told us that their relationship was very egalitarian. Diane and Alan were intellectual and introspective; she planned on a Ph.D. in English literature and he on a career in law.*

In considering what might have happened to these young couples over time, we wondered if there were clues in their attitudes and descriptions of their relationships that would enable us to predict their future together. In more formal terms, our primary goal was to determine whether or not comprehensive premarital assessments of dating couples can predict relationship outcomes 2 and even 15 years later. In pursuing this goal, we also considered more specific questions. Were there warning signs that a dating couple was headed for a breakup? Could we distinguish dating couples who eventually got married from those who broke up? Were there premarital predictors about which of these married couples would get divorced? Would the same factors that contributed to dating satisfaction affect marital success years later?

The Boston Couples Study

This chapter presents findings from the Boston Couples Study, a project begun in 1972 by Zick Rubin, Letitia Anne Peplau, and Charles T. Hill. Details of recruitment and sample characteristics are described more fully in Hill, Rubin, Peplau, and Willard (1979). Members of 231 college-age dating couples were recruited by letters mailed to a random sample of sopho-

mores and juniors at four colleges in Boston, and by advertising at one of the schools. The colleges included a large private university, a small private university, a Catholic university, and a state college enrolling commuter students. Reflecting the religious composition of these colleges, 44% of respondents were Catholic, 26% were Protestant, and 25% were Jewish. Most participants (97%) were white. The modal couple was a 20-year-old sophomore woman dating a 21-year-old junior man; they had been dating for a median of 8 months.

In 1972, both members of each couple independently completed a 38-page questionnaire about themselves and their dating relationship. Periodic follow-ups were conducted, and response rates were relatively high. In 1974, 80% of the individuals who initially participated returned a mailed questionnaire (Hill, Rubin, & Peplau, 1976). Since the relationship status (together versus broken up) of a couple could be ascertained from the report of only one partner, these responses provided information about the current status of 95% of the original couples.

In 1987, fifteen years after the initial data collection, a brief follow-up was conducted by mail. This assessed the person's history of education, employment, marriage, and childrearing. These questionnaires were completed by 70% of the original participants, representing 87% of the original couples. Of the 138 questionnaires not completed, 81 (59%) were undeliverable because of invalid addresses. Our response rate compares favorably with other longitudinal studies. For example, the 15-year response rates of the National Longitudinal Surveys of Labor Market Experience were 69% for young women and 65% for young men (Center for Human Resource Research, 1987). We investigated whether individuals who responded to the 15-year follow-up differed systematically from nonrespondents on the many characteristics assessed in 1972. Only one significant difference was found. This concerned the few participants who were not college students in 1972, but were recruited through a dating partner who was in college. These individuals were less likely to participate in the 15-year follow-up, usually because we could not obtain their current mailing addresses from a college alumni office. No other differences were found in the background characteristics, attitudes, or relationship experiences of respondents versus nonrespondents.

By the time of the 15-year follow-up, participants were in their mid-30s and most were married with children. Of the original 231 dating couples, 4% had an unknown marital outcome (based on reports from 1974 and 1987). Among the rest, 67% had broken up before marriage and 33% had married their college partner. Among those who never married their college

partner, 77% of women and 78% of men were known to have married someone else.

A few limitations of our sample and measures are noteworthy. Virtually all participants were white college students drawn from a single metropolitan area. Participants were bright, with mean combined SAT scores just under 1200. These couples attended college during the turbulent early 1970s, a time when many aspects of male-female relationships were being reexamined. Their experiences are undoubtedly different from those of other historical cohorts. Like all longitudinal studies, our analyses rely on measures created many years ago. Therefore, some topics of current interest such as adult attachment and interpersonal trust could not be addressed. Furthermore, the quality of the available measures varies from highly reliable multi-item scales to single-item ratings. Our pattern of findings may be affected by these differences in the types of measures. Finally, most of our measures are paper-and-pencil self-reports, and all premarital predictors were assessed at the same testing session. The intercorrelations found among premarital predictor variables may be affected by common method variance; this should be less problematic for associations between premarital predictors and reports of relationship status obtained 2 and 15 years later.

The Boston Couples data have many strengths. They provide prospective, longitudinal information about the long-term outcomes of dating relationships initially studied in considerable depth. The size of the initial sample was relatively large, involving 231 dating couples that led to 73 marriages. Compared with other research on premarital predictors that has studied engaged couples or newlyweds, participants in this research were first contacted at an earlier stage in their relationship, when only 10% of couples were engaged to be married. We were able to investigate five relationship outcomes: initial dating satisfaction, the stability of the dating relationship over a 2-year period, whether or not the dating partners eventually married each other, whether these marriages continued or ended in divorce, and the marital satisfaction of those couples still together at our 15-year follow-up. Another advantage of our research is the availability of extensive information about the premarital attitudes and dating experiences of participants. This enabled us to conduct a comprehensive analysis of a range of premarital predictors including partners' feelings of love and intimacy and their perceptions of the rewards and costs of their relationship. We also have information about each individual's background and attitudes, personal goals, and social network.

In the sections that follow, we describe our measures of relationship out-

comes, consider how well dating couples were able to predict the future of their own relationship, and then examine how well our various premarital measures predicted the developmental course of the young couples in the Boston Couples Study.

Assessing Relationship Outcomes

Five different relationship outcomes were considered. Of particular interest was the possibility that different factors may predict immediate versus long-range outcomes of a relationship. First, we used participants' reported satisfaction with their dating relationship in 1972 at the time of initial testing. Each partner responded on a 9-point scale to the question: "All in all, how satisfied would you say you are with your relationship with (_____)?" On average, participants were quite satisfied (mean = 7.3, sd = 1.4 for women; mean = 7.4, sd = 1.4 for men). Second, we assessed the short-term stability of relationships by comparing the 103 couples who had broken up by 1974 to the 117 couples who were still together. This measure will be referred to in tables as "Together 2 Years Later," with a high score indicating stability. There was a modest but significant correlation between dating satisfaction and staying together for 2 years (point-biserial r(219) = .23, $p < .001$ for women;r(219) = .31,p<.001 for men).

The 15-year follow-up questionnaire provided three measures of long-term relationship outcomes. To assess stability, we compared the 73 dating couples who were known to have married their college partner with the 149 couples who were known to have broken up before marriage. This measure will be referred to as "Ever Married P" (with a high score indicating that the couple was married). We also compared the 50 couples who were known to still be married to their college partner in 1987 with the 15 couples whose marriage to their college partner had ended in divorce. This measure will be referred to as "Stayed Married to P" (with a high score indicating the couple was still married). Finally, a single item 9-point rating of marital satisfaction was available for 48 women and 44 men who were still married to their college partner at the time of our 15-year follow-up and completed our questionnaire. In general, these respondents were highly satisfied with their marriage (mean = 7.5, sd = 1.5 for women; mean = 7.5, sd ss 1.6 for men) and had been married for an average of 12.8 years. Initial dating satisfaction was significantly correlated with marrying one's college partner (point-biserial r(221) = .23, $p < .001$ for women; r(220) = .27, $p < .001$ for men), but not with divorcing the partner or with marital satisfaction 15 years later.

Forecasting the Future

Burgess and Wallin (1953) noted that when a couple contemplates marriage, friends and family as well as the couple often use their knowledge and intuition to forecast the future, declaring, "This is a marriage made in heaven" or "You two will never be happy." At the time of our initial testing, participants estimated the likelihood that they and their dating partner would eventually marry each other. Estimates ranged from virtually no chance of marriage to certainty of marriage, with mean estimates of roughly 50% for both sexes.

How accurately did respondents forecast the future? Marriage probability estimates correlated significantly with staying together over a 2-year period (point-biserial r(217) = .30, $p < .001$ for women; $r(216) = .32$, $p < .001$ for men). They also correlated with whether or not the couple ever married (r(218) = .39,;? < .001 for women; K218) = $.45$, $p < .001$ for men). For example, when the man estimated the likelihood of marriage as 80% or better, 66% of couples eventually married, whereas when his estimate was below 40%, only 14% of couples married. So, to some extent, students were able to foresee the future accurately. But it is also clear that their forecasts were not foolproof - people who did not initially expect to marry changed their views, and some of those who expected to wed chose not to do so. Initial estimates of marriage likelihood were not correlated with whether or not a couple stayed married or got divorced, nor with marital satisfaction 15 years later.

Predicting Relationship Outcomes

To provide a comprehensive examination of factors affecting the developmental course of dating relationships, we investigated eight classes of premarital predictors. Our presentation of results begins with measures of intimacy and dyadic interdependence - a view of the "psychological interior" of a relationship. We then consider the partners' personal goals and attitudes, including their plans for combining marriage with paid employment. We then move beyond the circle of the couple to consider social networks and family background. We conclude with the issue of partner similarity.

The general analysis strategy for each class of predictors was the same. First, we examined the bivariate correlations between predictor variables in that class and each of five outcome measures. For the two continuous outcome measures (dating and marital satisfaction), Pearson correlations were

used. For the three dichotomous outcome measures of relationship status, correlations were point-biserial. As will be readily apparent in Tables 8.1 to 8.8, a great many correlations were computed, and therefore some statistically significant correlations may have occurred by chance. Consequently, we can have more confidence in a consistent pattern of findings than in any one isolated correlation and in the general findings for a class of predictors rather than for one individual measure.

Once bivariate associations were identified, we conducted stepwise multiple regression analyses to assess the predictive strength of each *class* of predictors for each of the five outcome measures. Predictive strength was determined by the percentage of variance in the outcome measure (multiple *R* squared) explained by the class of predictors. Since the predictor variables in each class were intercorrelated with each other, it would be difficult to interpret the unique contribution of any one variable in the absence of a causal model relating them. Furthermore, we often had many measures within a class (e.g., 9 intimacy measures; 14 interdependence measures). Including all possible measures in a given regression analysis would have increased subject loss due to listwise deletion of missing cases. Consequently, only those predictors with statistically significant bivariate correlations were used as independent variables in stepwise multiple regression analyses. These multiple regressions were then repeated using only variables that met standard statistical criteria for inclusion in the final regression equation; these analyses are presented in Tables 8.1 to 8.8.

In each table, the columns on the left present correlations between women's scores on the predictor variables and each outcome. The columns on the right present correlations for men's scores. Outcomes are arranged from most immediate (dating satisfaction assessed at the same time as the predictors) to more long-term measures of staying together over time. For those couples who were married to their college partner at the 15-year follow-up, a measure of marital satisfaction was also available.

Intimacy

Many young Americans believe that love is the sine qua non for a happy relationship (e.g., Simpson, Campbell, & Berscheid, 1986). Theories of relationship stability also include positive attractions to the partner as a key ingredient (e.g., Levinger, 1979; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). Several studies have shown that love and intimacy contribute to the short-term stability of dating relationships (e.g., Berg & McQuinn, 1986; Rubin, 1970).

However, research linking premarital love to long-term outcomes is scant

and contradictory. In a study of 459 wives in Detroit, Whyte (1990) found that retrospective reports of premarital love correlated significantly with marital stability (together versus divorced, $r = .29$, $p < .05$) and marital quality ($r = .30$, $p < .05$). Whyte correctly observed, however, that retrospective accounts of premarital love do not provide clear evidence about the causal connections involved. Kelly, Huston, and Gate (1985) correlated newlyweds' retrospective reports of premarital love with reports by the same couples two years later. They found no significant association between retrospective accounts of premarital love and marital love, satisfaction, or dyadic adjustment. Similarly, Olson (1990, p. 404) reported, without presenting specific data, that "surprisingly, love was not a significant predictor of marital success in our studies, possibly because all of these premarital couples were in love." Our prospective study may help to clarify these inconsistent findings.

Our questionnaire contained many measures of intimacy. When asked directly "Are you and (_____) in love?" 70% of respondents said yes. Re sponses to Rubin's (1970) Love Scale were generally high (with a maxi mum score of 9, the mean = 7.1, sd = 1.4 for women; the mean = 7.0, sd = 1.4 for men). Participants also completed Rubin's Liking Scale and rated on 9-point scales how close they felt to their partner and how well they knew their partner. Two 17-item scales assessed self-disclosure given to and re ceived from the partner. All these intimacy measures were significantly intercorrelated, with correlations ranging from .3 to .7. We also asked partic ipants about cohabitation and sexuality. At the time of our first testing, only 23% of respondents reported that they and their partner were living together most or all of the time. In contrast, 80% of the couples had had sexual in tercourse with their current partner, and these respondents were asked to rate their sexual satisfaction. Couples who had not had intercourse were asked to rate on 9-point scales how interested they would be in having in tercourse and how this might affect the closeness of their relationship.

As shown in Table 8.1, virtually all intimacy measures were significantly correlated with dating satisfaction. For women only, cohabitation and having had sexual intercourse were also associated with greater dating satisfaction. Multiple regressions showed that intimacy measures accounted for 41 % of the variance in women's dating satisfaction and 48% of the variance for men. In interpreting these and later results for dating satisfaction, it should be kept in mind that all predictor measures and the measure of dating satisfaction were based on self-reports obtained at the same testing session.

Next we considered the association between initial intimacy and later relationship outcomes. For both sexes, several intimacy measures predicted

Table 8.1. *Predicting relationship outcomes from premarital intimacy*

	Predicting from women's measures					Predicting from men's measures				
Intimacy measures	Her dating satisfaction	Together 2 years later	Ever married college partner	Stayed married to college partner	Her marital satisfaction	His dating satisfaction	Together 2 years later	Ever married college partner	Stayed married to college partner	His marital satisfaction
Rubin's Love Scale	.55*	.32**	.21**	.35**	-.23	.46*	.18**	.23**	.03	.08
Rubin's Liking Scale	.51*	.15*	.12*	.16	-.12	.49*	.11	.09	.04	.14
You & P in love?[0]	.45*	.29**	.21**	-.02	-.10	.45*	.28**	.25**	-.06	-.07
Closeness rating	.55*	.25**	.20**	-.02	-.05	.63*	.28**	.28**	-.10	.13
How well I know P	.45*	.13	.10	-.05	-.09	.40*	.19**	.20**	-.01	.11
Disclosure to P	.31*	.16*	.07	.05	.06	.28*	.08	.08	-.10	-.21
P's disclosure to me	.31*	.12	.08	.10	.01	.19*	.09	.06	-.07	-.18
Sex with P[11]	.19*	.04	-.02	-.06	.11	.09	.00	-.05	.01	-.07
Live with P"	.15*	.07	.02	-.28*	-.21	.11	.04	.03	-.19	-.10
Multiple/?	.64**	.32**	.21**	.46**	n.s*	.69**	.28**	.28**	n.s.	n.s.
R^2 (variance explained)	.41	.10	.04	.21	n.s.	.48	.08	.08	n.s.	n.s.
If had sex with P, sexual satisfaction with P	.41**	.08	.06	-.25	.18	.35**	.11	.15	-.25	-.07
If had not had sex with P:										
Interest in having sex	.31*	.34*	.36*	-.43	.28	-.07	.29	.43**	-.36	-.18
Expected closeness	.18	.34*	.46**	-.22	.19	.04	.21	.19	-.18	.46

Note: In this and subsequent tables, the maximum *N* for zero-order correlations varies. The maximum *N* for dating satisfaction = 231, for together in 2 years = 220, for ever married = 222, for stayed married = 65, and for marital satisfaction = 48 for women and 44 for men. Sexual variables for "if had sex" and "if had not had sex" were not included in regression analyses because of reduced sample size. "High vaJue indicates "yes" response. [6]n.s. indicates nonsignificant. *p<,05. **p<.01.

relationship stability. Those young people in closer, more loving relationships were significantly more likely to be together two years later and ultimately to marry each other. In contrast, whether or not a couple had had sexual intercourse or lived together at the time of our initial testing was unrelated to staying together for two years or getting married. However, for those more sexually conservative couples who had not had intercourse with their dating partner, strong sexual attraction was predictive of relationship stability and marriage, especially for women. Although our study included multi-item measures of self-disclosure given and received, we found few associations between disclosure and long-term relationship outcomes. Taken together, premarital intimacy measures accounted for 21% of the variance in women's marital stability but were unrelated to marital stability for men or to marital satisfaction 15 years later. Two findings deserve special comment.

Love. Lay people often assume that the more "in love" dating partners are, the higher the likelihood that they will have a happy marriage. Previous studies (Kelly et al.$_f$ 1985; Olson, 1990) failed to identify premarital love as a significant predictor of marital experiences. In contrast, our results, based on a 9-item Love Scale administered to dating partners, demonstrated the importance of love. We found that premarital love was a significant predictor not only of staying together for 2 years but also of marriage. Fifteen years later, women's initial love for their boyfriends predicted whether a couple was still together or had divorced. Love was a stronger predictor of relationship outcomes than either liking (feelings of affection and respect for a partner) or sexual intimacy. Yet premarital love was not related to marital satisfaction 15 years later. This lack of association may reflect the generally high level of marital satisfaction among the couples who avoided breakups and divorce to stay together for 15 years, as well as the ups and downs in feelings of love that may take place in relationships that endure many years.

Sexual Restraint. In the 1930s, premarital sexual restraint was associated with marital success (Burgess & Wallin, 1953; Kelly & Conley, 1987). The dating couples we studied came of age in a time of increasing sexual permissiveness, spurred by the availability of reliable contraceptives and the so-called "sexual revolution" of the era. We found that whether or not dating partners had sexual intercourse was unrelated to future relationship outcomes, perhaps because 80% of couples had already had intercourse by the time of our first testing and many of the rest may have done so later in their

dating relationship. For women, however, premarital cohabitation - a living arrangement typically understood to imply sexual intimacy between partners - was associated with an increased likelihood of divorce. Women who niarried their college partner were less likely to stay married if they had lived with him while dating. We can speculate that cohabitation was characteristic of less traditional women who were less committed to the institution of marriage. Indeed, there was a weak but significant negative association between cohabitation and sex-role traditionalism ($r(225) = -.16$, $p < .02$ for women; $r(219) = -.25$, $p < .001$ for men). In a review of other studies linking premarital cohabitation to higher probability of divorce, White (1990, p. 906) noted that a common interpretation is that "the kinds of people who choose to flout convention by cohabiting are the same kinds of people who flout normative marital behavior, have lower commitment to marriage as an institution, and disregard the stigma of divorce." In a later section, we will see that permissive sexual attitudes also correlated with relationship instability (Table 8.4).

Interdependence and Social Exchange

Theorists suggest that relationship happiness and stability depend on the rewards and costs a person obtains in a relationship, as well as the currently available alternatives to the relationship (e.g., Rusbult & Buunk, 1993; Sabatelli & Shehan, 1993). Exchange theory also emphasizes the balance between partners in their relative involvement in the relationship (e.g., Blau, 1964). Our questionnaire assessed these constructs (see Table 8.2).

Rewards and Costs. To the extent that a partner provides many rewards, an individual should be satisfied and seek to continue the relationship. In our study, respondents used 9-point scales to rate their partner on such qualities as physical attractiveness, intelligence, and desirability as a marriage partner (see Table 8.2). For both sexes, positive evaluations of the partner were significantly correlated with dating satisfaction, perhaps because attractive partners create satisfying relationships or because the glow of a good dating relationship favorably colors perceptions of the partner's looks. In contrast, partner ratings were generally not correlated with long-term outcomes. The exception was rating the partner as a desirable mate, which correlated with continuing to date and marrying the college partner.

Relationships can entail many costs, both material and psychological. Perceiving low costs should be associated with higher satisfaction and greater relationship stability. One type of cost involves relational problems,

Table 8.2. *Predicting relationship outcomes from premarital interdependence*

	Predicting from women's measures					Predicting from men's measures				
Interdependence measures	Her dating satisfaction	Together 2 years later	Ever married college partner	Stayed married to college partner	Her marital satisfaction	His dating satisfaction	Together 2 years later	Ever married college partner	Stayed married to college panner	His marital satisfaction
Rewards										
My ratings of P										
Creativitv	.24**	.04	-.00	-.22	-.11	.24**	.05	-.07	-.10	-.15
Physical attractiveness	.22**	.05	.03	-.06	.13	.23**	.03	.09	-.08	-.11
Intelligence	.34**	.08	.10	-.17	.08	.24**	-.04	-.06	-.26*	.18
Self-confidence	15*	03	01	- 11	13	16*	- 04	- 01	- 01	32*
Desirable date	.56**	.18**	.09	.00	.13	.37**	.06	.04	-.06	-.05
Desirable mate	.54**	.25**	.30**	.16	-.12	.50**	.25**	.25**	.14	.15
Costs										
Problem index	-.30**	-.14*	-.14*	-.04	-.04	-.42**	-.22**	-.27**	-.10	-.12
We argue a lot	-.29**	-.23**	-.17*	-.25*	-.06	-.21**	-.10	-.11	-.15	-.09
We can argue without harming relationship	.41**	.22**	.10	-.18	-.15	.36**	.12	.09	-.11	-.06
Alternatives[0]										
Date other now	-.26**	-.31**	-.24**	-.01	.07	-.17*	-.21**	-.23**	.07	-.05
Other I could date	-.22**	-.10	-.08	.07	.10	-.17*	-.08	-.15*	-.24	.28
Sex with another	-.26**	-.18**	-.23**	.07	-.15	-.15*	-.15*	-.13	-.08	.04
Prefer *not* to be single	.06	.13	.19**	.28**	.09	.13	.13	.18*	.17	.51**
Balance of involvement	.42**	.17*	.18*	.10	.14	.41**	.20**	.25**	.13	.25
Multiple *R*	.73**	.41**	.36**	.25*	n.s*	.66**	.27*	.31*	.26*	.51**
R^2 (variance explained)	.53	.17	.13	.08	n.s.	.44	.07	.10	.07	.26

"High value indicates "yes" response. [6]n.s.
indicates nonsignificant.
*p<.05.**p<.01.

such as differing sexual attitudes, differing interests, boredom, or a partner's desire for independence. Our initial questionnaire assessed 14 specific problem areas. Table 8.2 presents a scale constructed by summing responses across these 14 problems. There is no necessary reason why reporting one type of problem should necessarily be associated with reporting other types of problems. Nonetheless, scale reliability was moderate (alpha = .72 for women and .69 for men). For both sexes, a higher level of problems was associated with lowered dating satisfaction, a greater likelihood of breakup, and a lower probability of marriage.

Another cost is conflict, and there is growing evidence that premarital conflict can set the stage for a troubled marriage. For example, Larsen and Olson (1989) found that self-reports of poor conflict resolution before marriage predicted marital dissatisfaction and divorce. Using retrospective reports of premarital experiences, Kelly, Huston, and Gate (1985) found that premarital conflict did not covary with partners' love for one another during courtship but did predict subsequent conflict and dissatisfaction 2 years after marriage. These researchers suggested that although partners may ignore conflict during courtship, it erodes positive feelings over time.

Participants in our study rated on a 9-point scale how "true" it was that "(_____) and I argue a great deal of the time." As shown in Table 8.2, reports of frequent arguments were associated with less dating satisfaction. This finding differs from that of Kelly et al., who found no immediate links between conflict and premarital love. To pursue this matter, we also examined correlations between frequent arguments and respondents[1] scores on the Love Scale, a measure more similar to that used by Kelly et al. (1985). Frequency of arguing was *not* related to love, nor to estimates of the likelihood of marrying the partner. In sum, we found that frequent arguments were associated with lower dating satisfaction, but not with lower love or poorer marriage prospects. Would we, like Kelly et al. (1985), find long-term effects of premarital conflict? For women only, frequent arguing during courtship was significantly linked to ending the relationship rather than marrying this partner. In those cases where partners did marry, women's reports of frequent premarital conflict increased the likelihood of divorce.

Why does conflict not detract from love or provide a stronger warning to young lovers that marriage may be risky? A possible explanation is provided by responses to another statement, that"(_____) and I can have arguments without hurting our relationship." Scores on this measure were not correlated with frequency of arguments (r(227) = -. 11, ns for women; K229) = -.03, ns for men). Some partners who argued constantly believed that conflict was harmless, as did some partners who seldom argued. However, the

more a person loved the partner, the stronger their belief that conflict is not detrimental ($r(227) = .42$, $p < .001$ for women; $r(226) = .39$, $p < .001$ for men). Similarly, the more they believed they would marry this partner, the stronger their conviction that arguments cause no harm ($r(224) = .27$, $p < .001$ for women; $r(222) = .24$, $p < .001$ for men). In short, although empirical studies indicate that premarital conflict can increase the chances of a troubled marriage, some young adults believe that arguments are harmless. As a result, they may not use conflict as a sign of possible long-term relationship problems.

Alternatives. An interdependence perspective suggests that the availability of more attractive alternatives can reduce relationship satisfaction. Alterna tives should also affect the stability of relationships, with greater access to alternatives decreasing one's dependence on a particular partner. Several measures of the quality of a person's alternatives were used. We assessed the exclusivity of the current dating relationship by asking, "Do you cur rently date or go out with anyone other than (_____)?" About 18% of women and 14% of men said they were dating others. A second question asked, "Is there a particular other person whom you might be going with, if you were not currently going with (_____)?" To this question, 32% of women and 31% of men said "yes." As shown in Table 8.2, exclusive dat ing was associated with greater dating satisfaction, with staying together for 2 years, and with marriage. Similar but weaker trends were found for the question about a potential alternative partner. A third question asked about sexual exclusivity: "During the past two months, have you had sexual in tercourse with anyone other than (_____)?" Only 15% of women and 14% of men said "yes." As before, exclusivity was associated with higher dating satisfaction and a greater likelihood of staying together over time. It is unclear from these correlational data whether dissatisfied individuals seek alternative partners, or whether the existence of alternatives diminishes satisfaction with a current partner.

Finally, another possible alternative to a romantic relationship is to remain "unattached." A person who does not want to be single rejects this alternative and hence should be more committed to continuing a current relationship. We asked partners to rank four life styles, including being single. For women, a rejection of being single correlated with getting married and staying married to the college partner. For men, rejection of being single correlated with marrying the college partner and with marital satisfaction (see Table 8.2).

Relative Involvement. On the basis of their research, Burgess and Wallin (1953) listed "unequal attachment" as a factor underlying breakups. The hypothesis that equal involvement facilitates the continuation of a relationship was spelled out by Blau (1964, p. 84): "Commitments must stay abreast for a love relationship to develop into a lasting mutual attachment." We asked participants which partner is "more involved in your relationship" on a 5-point scale, and receded responses so that high scores indicated equal involvement. Slightly less than half the participants (49% of women and 43% of men) reported equal involvement. As shown in Table 8.2, equal involvement was significantly correlated with dating satisfaction, staying together for 2 years, and marrying one's partner. For example, among women who reported equal involvement, 41 % married their boyfriend compared to 25% of those who perceived unequal involvement (x^2 (1) = 6.2, $p < .02$). Among men reporting equal involvement, 45% married their partner compared with 24% in unequal relationships (x^2 (1) = 10.4, $p < .002$).

For both sexes, multiple regressions showed that interdependence measures were strong and significant predictors of dating satisfaction, accounting for close to half the variance. Although the strength of association between interdependence measures and outcomes decreased over time, the multiple *Rs* were significant in 9 of 10 analyses. One surprising finding was that although premarital measures of interdependence did not affect women's marital satisfaction, they accounted for 26% of the variance in men's marital satisfaction 15 years later.

Personal Goals

Young adulthood is a time when people clarify their life goals and take steps to accomplish these goals. When our study began in the early 1970s, many young people were questioning traditional roles for women and men. The women's movement urged educated women to consider full-time careers and challenged the view that marriage and childrearing should be the defining activities in a woman's life. Virtually all participants in our study expected that they would eventually marry someone, not necessarily their college dating partner. However, participants varied considerably in their educational goals, their preferences for combining marriage and paid employment, and their plans about having children.

Educational Plans. In our study, some individuals expected to complete their education with a college degree. Others, 47% of women and 58% of

fanned to go to graduate school. We anticipated that plans for ad-^ced education might have different effects on the relationship outcomes of "men and women. In the 1970s, graduate training usually increased a man's desirability as a mate by improving his ability to be a good provider. In contrast, for women, graduate training was still less conventional. Models of couples trying to coordinate their graduate school acceptances were scarce and women's plans for graduate school might be less compatible with the stability of a college romance. As shown in Table 8.3, men's educational plans were unrelated to relationship outcomes. Women's educational plans were unrelated to dating satisfaction, but women who sought advanced degrees were less likely to marry their college dating partner. (Other analyses indicate, however, that they were no less likely than other women to marry someone else.)

Combining Marriage and Career. Participants were asked their preferences among four options for combining marriage and a career 15 years in the future. A majority of women (65%) ranked as their first choice being a married career woman, 22% preferred to be a homemaker with a part-time job, 7% preferred to be a full-time homemaker, and 6% preferred to be a single career woman. As shown in Table 8.3, women's preferences about combining work and marriage were unrelated to dating satisfaction or to maintaining a relationship with their college partner. However, women who preferred to be full-time homemakers and who married their college partner were less likely to get divorced.

Men were asked a parallel question about preferences for their future wife. Many men (49%) preferred a career wife, 23% preferred a full-time homemaker, 22% preferred a homemaker with a part-time job, and 6% preferred to remain single. Men who wanted their wife to stay home full-time were more likely to marry their college partner, to stay married, and to be maritally satisfied.

Children. Respondents indicated how many children they would ideally like to have (mean = 2.4, sd = 1.3 for women; mean = 2.4, sd = 1.1 for men). They also used a 9-point scale to rate how important having children was to them personally. These future-oriented beliefs about children had no impact on respondents[1] dating relationships or likelihood of marrying their college partner. However, among women who married their college partner, wanting more children was associated with greater marital stability. Among men who married their college partner, giving greater importance to having children was associated with greater marital satisfaction.

Table 8.3. *Predicting relationship outcomes from premarital personal goals*

	Predicting from women's measures					Predicting from men's measures				
Goal measures	Her dating satisfaction	Together 2 years later	Ever married college partner	Stayed married to college partner	Her marital satisfaction	His dating satisfaction	Together 2 years later	Ever married college partner	Stayed married to college partner	His marital satisfaction
Prefer full-time home-maker in 15 years	-.02	.09	.11	.32*	.27	.01	.07	.19**	.31*	.38*
Number kids I want	-.06	.08	-.01	.30*	.24	-.03	.06	.09	.08	.20
Importance of kids	.05	.10	.05	.24	.06	.05	.08	.07	-.10	.32*
Year in school	.09	.07	.19*	.16	.06	.03	.02	.17*	-.14	.05
Plan graduate school"	-.06	-.15*	-.23**	-.21	-.12	-.01	-.05	-.05	-.09	.25
Multiple R	n.s."	.15*	.31**	.32*	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.19**	.31*	.38*
R^2 (variance explained)	n.s.	.02	.10	.10	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.04	.10	.14

"High value indicates "yes" response.
"n.s. indicates nonsignificant.

In summary, multiple regression analyses (see Table 8.3) indicated that personal goals were generally unrelated to dating satisfaction and short-term stability but were modest predictors of marital outcomes. Individuals who preferred a more traditional family orientation (emphasizing the homemaker role for women and the importance of children) were more likely to marry their college partner and to stay married.

Individual Attitudes and Experiences

As mentioned earlier the young adults we studied went to college during a time of changing values. The topics of the day included the new women's movement and the "sexual revolution." As we will see, the participants in our research varied substantially in their adherence to traditional beliefs about love, sex, gender roles, and religion - and these differences affected the outcomes of their relationships.

Romanticism. The questionnaire included a six-item Romanticism Scale, assessing adherence to a romantic, "love conquers all" ideology about intimate relationships (Rubin, Peplau, & Hill, 1981). For both men and women, higher romanticism scores were correlated with greater dating satisfaction. For women only, romanticism also predicted staying married to one's college partner many years later. In an earlier study of dating couples, Rubin (1970) reported that love scores were predictive of progress toward a more intense relationship 6 months later, but only for couples who were high in romanticism. We tested this hypothesis, but found no evidence that love was more predictive of staying together among high romantics than among low romantics.

Sexual Permissiveness. In their early study, Burgess and Wallin (1953) reported that marital success was associated with premarital sexual restraint. For instance, individuals who had sexual intercourse with fewer partners before their spouse reported greater marital happiness. Would a similar pattern emerge in the more sexually "liberated" 1970s? The answer for our participants who married a college partner appears to be yes. For example, we asked participants to rate on a 9-point scale the acceptability of casual sex for an unmarried woman (mean = 3.9, sd = 2.8 for women; mean = 5.1, sd = 2.7 for men). As shown in Table 8.4, greater sexual permissiveness was associated with a greater likelihood of divorce.

We also asked participants if they had ever had sexual intercourse with someone other than their current partner and, if so, with how many partners.

Table 8.4. *Predicting relationship outcomes from premarital individual attitudes*

	Predicting from women's measures					Predicting from men's measures				
Attitude measures	Her dating satisfaction	Together 2 years later	Ever married college partner	Stayed married to college partner	Her marital satisfaction	His dating satisfaction	Together 2 years later	Ever married college partner	Stayed married to college partner	His marital satisfaction
Romanticism	.17*	.11	.03	.35**	.09	.17**	.04	.05	.14	.23
Casual sex for women	-.06	-.08	-.07	-.29*	-.12	-.17**	-.07	-.06	-.26*	-.13
No. other sex partners	-.06	-.15*	-.18*	-.05	-.14	.03 -	-.12	-.11	-.22	.11
Sex-role traditionalism	.08	.06	.09	.46**	.24	.01	.00	.09	.28*	.43**
Religiosity Multiple *R*	-.06	-.05	-.02	.22	.16	.16*	.01	.03	.27*	.13
R^2 (variance explained)	.17* .03	.15* .02	.18* .03	.54*	n.s.°	.23*	n.s.	n.s.	.27*	.43**
				.29	n.s.	.05	n.s.	n.s.	.07	.17

[tt]n.s. indicates nonsignificant.
*/7<.05. **p<.01.

Approximately 37% of women and 25% of men had no previous sex partners when they began to date their current partner. At the other extreme, about 18% of women and 27% of men reported having had "6 or more" other sex partners. Women with more sexual partners were more likely than other women to break up with their dating partner. We also found that age of first intercourse, while not affecting short-term outcomes, did affect marital stability. A later age of first sex was associated with a greater likelihood of staying married to one's college partner ($r(50) = .31$, $p < .03$ for women; $r(60) = .26$, $p < .04$ for men). Although the magnitude of these correlations is relatively small, the pattern of findings suggests that for some respondents, sexual restraint was correlated with relationship stability.

Sex-role Traditionalism. Previous studies about the links between gender attitudes and relationship outcomes have been inconsistent. For example, Powers and Olson (1986) found no association between the "egalitarian roles" scale of their premarital inventory and later marital outcomes. In a subsequent study using the same inventory, Larsen and Olson (1989) reported that couples with more egalitarian or flexible beliefs about roles were more likely to have happy, stable marriages. In contrast, Whyte (1990) found that women with more liberal or feminist attitudes about women's roles tended to report poorer marital quality and a higher incidence of divorce.

Our questionnaire included a 10-item Sex-Role Traditionalism Scale (Peplau, Hill, & Rubin, 1993). It assessed respondents' agreement or disagreement with such statements as "If both husband and wife work full-time, her career should be just as important as his in determining where the family lives" and "When a couple is going somewhere by car, it's better for the man to do most of the driving." As shown in Table 8.4, sex-role attitudes were not associated with dating satisfaction or the likelihood of marrying one's college partner. However, for both men and women who married their college partner, greater traditionalism was significantly associated with staying married rather than getting divorced. For men, traditionalism also correlated with marital satisfaction.

Religiosity. Participants were asked to rate "How religious a person would you say you are?" on a 9-point scale. There was considerable variation on this measure (mean = 4.1, sd = 2.4 for women; mean = 3.9, sd = 2.5 for men). In general, religiousness was not associated with relationship satisfaction or stability. The one exception was that, for men only, greater religiosity was associated with greater dating satisfaction and lesser tendency to divorce. In a later section, we will consider the effects of particular religious affiliations.

In summary, dating satisfaction and short-term stability were only weakly linked to partners' attitudes. In contrast, over time a trend emerged for conservative attitudes to foster relationship stability and, in particular, staying married to a college partner rather than getting divorced. Among women who married their college partner, divorce was less likely if the woman held a romantic view of love, had less permissive attitudes about premarital sex, and had more traditional attitudes about gender roles. As we saw earlier in Table 8.3, divorce was also less likely among women who evaluated being a homemaker more highly and wanted a larger number of children. Among men who married their college partner, divorce was less likely if the man had more conservative attitudes about premarital sex, had more traditional sex-role attitudes, was more religious, and preferred a homemaker wife. Traditionalism also affected men's marital happiness. Men's marital satisfaction was significantly higher when men held traditional sex-role attitudes, wanted to have a homemaker wife, and gave greater importance to children (Table 8.3).

In interpreting these findings, it is important to remember that the married couples we studied were a highly selected group who had followed a fairly conventional life style of finding a mate in college. For this group of college graduates, traditional attitudes were associated with marital stability. It is possible, however, that traditionalism has different effects in couples who pursue other life patterns. We will return to this issue later in the chapter.

Self-Evaluations

Respondents rated themselves on six personal qualities such as physical attractiveness and intelligence. They also rated how satisfied they were with themselves. As shown in Table 8.5, multiple regressions indicated that self evaluations were significantly associated with 7 of 10 relationship outcomes, although the magnitude of these associations was often modest. Positive self-evaluations were associated with greater dating satisfaction for both sexes. The causal direction of this pattern is unclear: does a positive self-image foster good dating relationships or does a satisfying dating relationship enhance self-perceptions? Over time, different links between self-evaluations and long-term marital outcomes emerged for women and for men.

For men, higher self-ratings on physical attractiveness, desirability as a date, and "satisfaction with self were significantly related to greater marital satisfaction 15 years later, accounting for 27% of the variance. Men with a positive self-view who married their college partner tended to find their

Table 8.5. *Predicting relationship outcomes from premarital self-evaluations*

	Predicting from women's measures					Predicting from men's measures				
Self-evaluation measures	Her dating satisfaction	Together 2 years later	Ever married college partner	Stayed married to college partner	Her marital satisfaction	His dating satisfaction	Together 2 years later	Ever married college partner	Stayed married to college partner	His marital satisfaction
Self-ratings										
Creativity	.04	-.09	-.13	-.12	.04	.03	-.04	-.07	-.18	-.21
Physical attractiveness	-.03	-.14*	-.14*	-.30*	.07	.13*	.03	.05	.02	.34*
Intelligence	-.04	-.16*	-.16*	-.39*	-.21	.03	-.07	-.01	-.13	-.05
Self-confidence	.09	-.13	-.10	-.09	.19	.22**	.01	-.01	-.12	.29
Desirable date	.19*	-.13	-.13*	-.03	.27	.22*	.08	.05	.02	.39**
Desirable mate	.24**	.00	.01	.13	.17	.17*	.13	.18**	.06	.20
Satisfied with self	.18**	-.14*	-.10	.08	.22	.26**	.05	.01	-.09	.40**
Multiple *R*	.24**	.16*	.16*	.39*	n.s.[fl]	.26**	n.s.	.18**	n.s.	.52**
R^2 (variance explained)	.06	.03	.03	.15	n.s.	.07	n.s.	.03	n.s.	.27

"n.s. indicates nonsignificant.
*/?<.05. **p<-(H.

marriage rewarding. In contrast, for women, higher self-ratings on physical attractiveness and intelligence were associated with relationship *instability.* Women who viewed themselves positively on these two qualities were more likely to break up with their college boyfriend in the next two years, less likely to marry their college partner, and if they did marry, were more likely to divorce. These self-evaluations accounted for 15% of the variance in women's marital stability. Perhaps these women felt more confident about attracting alternate partners or being successful in a career.

Social Networks

What impact do social networks have on the progress of romantic relationships? In a longitudinal study of dating relationships, Sprecher and Felmlee (1992) found that perceived support from family and friends correlated with current relationship satisfaction, love, and commitment and also predicted relationship quality 18 months later. For women only, support from family and friends was also associated with relationship stability: the less support women reported receiving, the more likely their relationship was to end and the sooner the breakup occurred. Leslie, Huston, and Johnson (1986) make the further point that dating partners are often selective in what they tell their parents about a relationship: the more involved and committed a person is to a relationship, the more likely he or she is to inform parents about it and try to influence their opinions. However, Leslie et al. found that the amount of support provided by parents did not predict change in the premarital relationship over time. We were able to investigate several aspects of social networks.

Parents. Participants indicated on a 9-point scale how well their parents knew their partner. As shown in Table 8.6, parental knowledge was positively correlated with dating satisfaction only for men, but was predictive of staying together for 2 years and getting married for both sexes. Other questions (using 9-point rating scales) asked if the parents approved of the partner as someone to date and as someone to marry. Parental approval was correlated with greater dating satisfaction, with staying together, and with marriage. For women, parental approval of the college dating partner was also a significant predictor of marital satisfaction 15 years later.

Living at Home. Another index of a young person's social connection to their family is their place of residence. When our study began, 24% of respondents lived at home with parents or relatives. The rest lived on campus

Table 8.6. *Predicting relationship outcomes from premarital social networks*

	Predicting from women's measures					Predicting from men's measures				
Social network measures	Her dating satisfaction	Together 2 years later	Ever married college partner	Stayed married to college partner	Her marital satisfaction	His dating satisfaction	Together 2 years later	Ever married college partner	Stayed married to college partner	His marital satisfaction
Parents know P	.10	.21**	.28**	.15	.20	.15*	.19**	.23**	-.05	.09
Parents approve of P as date	.22**	.17*	.23**	.11	.29*	.26**	.14**	.22**	.06	.07
Parents approve of P as mate	.22*	.13*	.25*	.04	.13	.26**	.12	.21**	.04	-.01
I live at home[a]	.04	.15*	.24* ,	.13	.35*	.12	.18**	.27**	.25*	.20
My friends like P	.32**	.10	.06	.23	.10	.33**	.14*	.11	.16	.08
P likes my friends	.16*	.10	.10	.34**	.06	.32**	.08	.07	.15	.01
P knows my friends	.12	.16*	.13*	.23	.25	.16*	.14*	.06	-.03	.07
No. best friends who are male (of 4)	.00	.05	.03	-.28*	-.14	.03	.03	.03	.09	-.21
Someone introduced me to P	.03	.04	.06	.23	-.14	.04	-.00	.02	.37**	-.19
Multiple R	.36**	.21**	.31**	.44**	.35*	.38**	.19*	.33**	.44**	n.s*
R^2 (variance explained)	.13	.04	.10	.19	.12	.14	.04	.11	.19	n.s.

[a]High value indicates "yes" response.
*n.s. indicates nonsignificant.
*p<.05. **p<.01.

in dorms, in fraternities or sororities, or in apartments. Place of residence was not related to dating satisfaction, but was significantly associated with later relationship outcomes (see Table 8.6). For instance, the percentage of women who married their college partner was 53% among those living at home compared to 27% among those living elsewhere ($\%^2$ (1) = 12.4, $p <$ .001). For men, the comparable figures were 55% versus 25% (x^2 (1) = 16.1, $p <$ .000). For women only, living at home during college was significantly associated with marital satisfaction 15 years later (mean of 8.2 for those who lived at home versus 7.1 for others, $t(46)$ = 2.88, $p <$ .01). Divorce was also linked to college residence. Among men who married their college partner, only 11% of those who had lived at home got a divorce, compared to 32% of those who lived away from home (x^2 (1) = 4.0, $p <$ .04). For women the comparable figures were 16% versus 28%, a difference that was not statistically significant. One interpretation is that students who were more closely tied to their parents tended to be more marriage-oriented. Those living at home were significantly more traditional in their sex-role attitudes (f(222) = 2.0, $p <$ .05 for women; f(217) = 2.4, $p <$ .02 for men) and were more often Catholic (83% of women and 64% of men compared to 33% of women and 34% of men who did not live at home).

Friends. Respondents indicated on 9-point scales how much their friends liked the partner, and how much the partner liked these friends. As shown in Table 8.6, both liking measures were correlated with dating satisfaction. For women only, the partner's liking for the friends was related to staying married 15 years later. We also asked how well the partner knew the respondent's four best friends (shown in Table 8.6 as "P knows my friends"). For women, this measure predicted breakup and marriage, albeit weakly. The better the partner knew the friends, the more likely the couple was to stay together and to get married. For men, this measure predicted dating satisfaction and staying together during the 2-year period. Another measure was the number of the respondent's four best friends who were men (ranging from zero to four men). For women who married their college partner only, reporting a high number of male best friends was associated with a greater likelihood of divorce. A last question asked how the partners had met. About 45% of respondents had initially been introduced to their partner by someone. Personal introductions by a third party may indicate that a couple is more involved in a shared social network. For men who married their college partner, being introduced was significantly associated with marital stability.

Finally, Table 8.6 presents multiple regressions using social network

variables to predict each relationship outcome. With the exception of men's marital satisfaction, all multiple *Rs* were significant and accounted for nearly 10% of the variance in marrying one's college partner and even more of the variance in staying married to that partner.

Background Characteristics

Summarizing evidence available in the mid-1950s, Burgess and Wallin (1953, p. 513) asserted that "a young person has better than an average chance of marital success if he has been reared in a home of education and culture where the parents are happily mated, where they have close and affectionate relations with their children." We were able to test many of these ideas. The participants in our study had fairly diverse family backgrounds. Their parents' educational levels were varied: 49% of fathers had not completed college, 26% had college degrees, and 25% had graduate degrees. Mothers had less education, with 70% attaining less than a college degree, 18% having a college degree, and 12% holding a graduate degree. Many mothers had stayed home full-time with their children: 46% of respondents said that their mother did not work for pay at any time during their childhood. Only 22% of women and 18% of men said their mothers had worked when they were very young. The majority of respondents (84%) came from intact marriages. When parents were not living together, death and divorce were equally common reasons. There was also variability in respondents' ratings of their parents' marital satisfaction, their own closeness to their mother and father, and how similar their partner was to their parent of the same sex. Despite the range of backgrounds in our sample, virtually no aspect of family background was associated with any measure of relationship success. As shown in Table 8.7, the sole exception was the mother's education, which had inconsistent links to relationship stability with lower maternal education predicting staying together.

We also investigated various background characteristics of the individual such as birth order but found no associations with relational outcomes. The one exception concerned religion. Religion was unrelated to measures of relationship satisfaction, either during dating or marriage. However, there was a tendency for Catholic women to marry their college partner and for Catholic men to stay married. In contrast, Jewish women were less likely to marry their college partner (but no less likely than other women to get married to someone).

Multiple regressions indicate that background predictors had limited associations with relationship outcomes. Only 4 of 10 multiple *Rs* were

Table 8.7. *Predicting relationship outcomes from premarital background characteristics*

	Predicting from women's measures					Predicting from men's measures				
Background measures	Her dating satisfaction	Together 2 years later	Ever married college partner	Stayed married to college partner	Her marital satisfaction	His dating satisfaction	Together 2 years later	Ever married college partner	Stayed married to college partner	His marital satisfaction
Parents										
Father's education	-.07	-.08	-.08	-.08	.06	.11	.01	.03	-.21	-.02
Mother's education	-.13	-.14*	-.11	-.07	.01	.08	-.01	-.03	-.28*	.05
Extent of mother's work in childhood	.06	.06	.06	.11	.26	.12	.09	.02	.13	.11
Marital satisfaction	-.05	-.03	-.01	.22	.18	.03	-.04	.03	.15	-.01
Similarity of P to parent of P's sex	-.04	-.03	.02	.17	.02	.12	.08	.01	.13	.21
Self Birth order	.04	.04	.05	-.12	.17	-.06	.04	.04	.12	.18
Catholic vs. other*[1]	.02	.13	.21*	.02	-.00	.05	.14*	.05	.25*	.06
Jewish vs. other"	.03	-.17*	-.19*	.14	-.04	-.03	-.07	-.11	-.24	.14
Multiple K R^2 (variance explained)	n.s.[r] n.s.	.17* .03	.21* .04	n.s. n.s.	n.s. n.s.	n.s. n.s.	.14* .02	n.s. n.s.	.38* .14	n.s. n.s.

[a]High score indicates Catholic.
"High score indicates Jewish,
"n.s. indicates nonsignificant.

significant, and these primarily reflected the influence of religion, a topic we will explore further later in this report. Although our study found little evidence for the importance of background characteristics, we believe caution is warranted in generalizing these findings. For example, demographic studies using more representative samples amply demonstrate that the probability of divorce is increased by such factors as parental divorce, young age at marriage, low education, low income, premarital pregnancy, and race (e.g., Raschke, 1987; White, 1990). In a recent 5-year prospective study of newly weds, Kurdek (1993) found that personal demographic factors including education and length of courtship predicted marital stability as well or better than social-psychological factors such as interdependence and spousal discrepancy variables.

Similarity and Agreement

It is an axiom of research on interpersonal attraction that similarity leads to liking, and empirical studies demonstrate that intimate relationships tend to be homogamous. According to a review by Buss (1985), age, education, race, and religion show the strongest similarity effects, followed by attitudes, cognitive abilities, socioeconomic status, and personality. Some of these patterns of demographic homogamy could not be tested meaningfully in our sample, because virtually all couples were similar in education and race. When our study began, dating partners had already been together for several months and were significantly matched in many ways. For example, when both partners were currently enrolled in college, 69% of couples attended the same school. They tended to be similar in their previous sexual experience: in 68% of couples both partners were sexually experienced or both were virgins when their relationship began. Partners were significantly matched in such diverse ways as religiosity ($r(226) = .37$, $p < .001$), SAT scores ($K186) = .23$, $p < .01$), height ($r(230) = .21$, $p < .01$), and desired number of children ($r(227) = .51$, $p < .001$). There was also some consensus in partners' views of their relationship, for instance in reports of how often they argued ($r(230) = .50$, $p < .001$) and the likelihood that they would marry each other ($r(223) = .80$, $p < .001$) (Hill, Peplau, & Rubin, 1981). Would couple differences in the *degree* of similarity and agreement affect relationship outcomes?

We used as our measure of similarity the absolute difference between the responses of dating partners. These scores were then reversed so that high scores indicate greater similarity or agreement. Note that unlike the previous analyses in which we used women's measures to predict women's out-

comes and men's measures to predict men's outcomes, these analyses use information from both partners (difference scores) to predict outcomes. Table 8.8 presents the strongest predictors uncovered in our systematic investigation.

Intimacy. We investigated agreement in participants' assessment of intimacy in their relationship. In general, partners tended to give similar reports of their love for their partner ($r(230) = .40$, $p < .001$), liking ($r(230) = .15$, $p < .03$), and feelings of closeness ($r(230) = .55$, $p < .001$). These correlations reflect the degree of mutuality or balance of intimacy in the relationship. As shown in Table 8.8, there is some evidence that more similar levels of premarital intimacy were associated with greater dating satisfaction, but did not predict long-term marital outcomes.

Attitudes. Partners tended to have similar attitudes about romanticism (r(230) s .20, $p< .002$), premarital sex among acquaintances ($r(225) = .25$, $p < .001$), sex-role traditionalism ($r(213) = .46$, $p < .001$), their personal preference concerning marriage and women's work (for example, $r(202) = .25$, $p < .01$ for wife with career), and their preference for being (or not being) single (K 188) = .45, $p < .001$). Perhaps as a result, the degree of similarity for most attitudes was unrelated to relationship outcomes. Two significant findings emerged, however, concerning partners' preferences for combining work and marriage. Specifically, greater agreement about being (or rejecting being) single was correlated with greater dating and marital satisfaction for men. In addition, partners who married were more likely to stay married if they had similar preferences about the wife's having (or not having) a career.

Background. A final set of analyses concerns the association between similarity in partners' background characteristics and relational outcomes. We found no significant correlation between partners in our sample with respect to parents' education, mother's work history, or perception of parents' marital satisfaction. In general, degree of background similarity was not correlated with relationship outcomes, with a few notable exceptions. Women's marital satisfaction was higher when the fathers had similar educations and when both sets of parents were perceived as similar in marital satisfaction. Men's marital satisfaction was higher when both mothers had similar histories of work outside the home.

As shown in Table 8.8, couples of the same religion were no more or less likely than other couples to marry. Overall, 45% of the dating couples were

Table 8.8. *Predicting relationship outcomes from premarital similarity and agreement*

Similarity measures	Her dating satisfaction	His dating satisfaction	Together 2 years later	Ever married college partner	Stayed married to college partner	Her marital satisfaction	His marital satisfaction
Intimacy							
Rubin's Love Scale	.19**	.18**	-.04	.04	.14	-.20	-.21
Rubin's Liking Scale	.10	.32**	.04	.05	-.21	-.12	-.02
Closeness rating	.23**	.34**	.19**	.13	.06	.08	.07
Attitudes and goals							
Romanticism	-.08	.02	.10	.00	.01	-.12	-.05
Sexual permissiveness	-.07	-.03	.00	-.07	-.05	.02	.00
Sex-role traditionalism	.08	.06	.10	.03	.07	-.20	-.09
Prefer *not* to be single	.13	.28**	.10	.11	.24	.12	.48**
Prefer career wife	.03	-.01	.06	.01	.30*	.04	.19
Background							
Father's education	.02	.09	.01	.04	.10	.34*	-.27
Mother's education	.14*	.12	.10	.16*	.07	-.02	-.11
Extent of mother's work in childhood	-.02	.04	.10	.12	.21	.06	.40*
Parents' marriage satisfaction	.03	.16*	.11	.11	.06	.35*	.05
Own age	.00	.11	.08	.05	-.06	.11	-.25
Religion	-.09	-.05	.00	-.01	.29*	.07	.08
Photo rating	.22**	-.07	.10	.06	.02	.12	.36*
Multiple *R*	.31*	.43**	.19**	.16*	.30*	.35**	.64*
R^2 (variance explained)	.10	.18	.04	.03	.09	.12	.41

Note: Correlations are based on difference scores (the absolute difference of the woman's response minus her boyfriend's response), recoded so that high scores indicate greater similarity or agreement between partners. *p<.05. **p<.01.

of the same religion, as were 45% of those who got married. However, religious similarity did affect the likelihood of divorce: Only 10% of same-religion marriages ended in divorce compared with 35% of couples of different religions (x^2 (1) = 5.4, $p < .02$). Although this pattern held for Protestant, Jewish, and Catholic couples, it should be noted that in our sample, 79% of the same-religion marriages were Catholic. Finally, partners tended to be similar in physical attractiveness as rated by judges from photos (K174) = .24, $p < .001$). Degree of similarity in attractiveness was associated with greater dating satisfaction for women and greater marital satisfaction for men.

Multiple regressions indicated that similarity was a significant predictor of all relationship outcomes, with multiple *Rs* ranging from .16 to .64. The strongest findings were for men's marital satisfaction. Here, similar attitudes about married life (not being single) and similar maternal work histories accounted for 41% of the variance in men's marital satisfaction.

A final measure, not included in the multiple regressions, was each person's own rating of how similar he or she was to the partner. On this 9-point scale, the mean similarity rating was 5.6 (sd 2.2) for women and 5.7 (sd 2.4) for men. For both sexes, this subjective measure of similarity was significantly correlated with dating satisfaction (r(230) = .30, $p < .001$ for women; r(228) = .33, $p < .001$ for men) and with marrying the college partner (r(221) = . 13, $p < .05$ for women; r(220) = . 15, $p < .03$ for men).

These data suggest that matching on background characteristics and attitudes may occur relatively early in the development of a relationship. We found considerable similarity between partners, who had typically been dating for 8 months. Despite the general homogeneity of the sample and their initial matching, differences in the degree of similarity still had some significant but modest associations with relationship outcomes.

Assessing Premarital Predictors of Relationship Outcomes

After this long journey through eight classes of premarital predictors of five relationship outcomes, it is time to take stock. How well have we done in our primary goal of predicting relationship outcomes from premarital measures? Table 8.9 summarizes the results of multiple regressions for each class of predictor and then presents a final set of regressions based on all classes of predictors combined. As in previous tables, we use only women's measures to predict women's satisfaction and only men's measures to predict men's satisfaction, with the exception of similarity scores that are a composite measure. Unlike earlier tables, however, we use premarital measures