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CONGRUENCY IN SELF- AND SPOUSE-PERCEPTIONS  
RELATED TO MARITAL ADJUSTMENT

by

LINDA IRENE REIFFER

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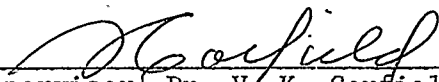
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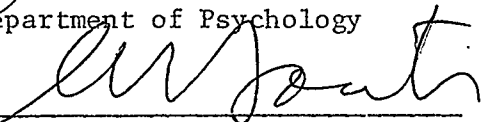
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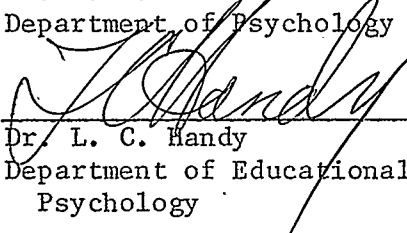
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled, "Congruency in Self- and Spouse-Perceptions Related to Marital Adjustment" submitted by Linda Irene Reiffer in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

  
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## ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the study was to determine whether a significant relationship exists between a person's marital adjustment and the comparison of his/her self-view with either his/her spouse's actual view of him/her or his/her perception of the spouse's view. A secondary purpose of the study was to investigate the person's self-esteem as a moderator of this relationship. An individual with high affective congruency (or a low discrepancy between his/her self-view and his/her spouse's view of him/her) was predicted to have a well-adjusted marriage, provided that both partners have high self-esteem. Sixty married couples between the ages of 20 and 34, who had been married an average of 3.6 years, voluntarily participated. The sample was homogeneous with respect to income, and most of the subjects were graduate students. The majority of the subjects were high in marital adjustment and self-esteem. Each subject completed the Tennessee Self Concept Scale three separate times under different instructions to provide measures of his/her self-esteem, the subject's perception of his/her spouse's evaluation of him/her, and the subject's actual evaluation of his/her spouse. A measure of marital adjustment was obtained for each individual using the Dyadic Adjustment Scale. Another questionnaire probed some areas of interaction between marital partners which were thought to be relevant to self-perception. The subjects met in groups of four couples on two occasions to complete the tests. The variable labelled perceived congruency, or the comparison of the individual's self-esteem with his/her idea of how his/her partner would

rate him/her, was operationally defined as a regressed difference score. Similarly, actual congruency, or the comparison of the individual's self-esteem with his/her partner's rating of him/her, was also defined as a regressed difference score. The data were subjected to a multiple linear regression analysis which was significant at the 1 percent level. Self-esteem was the sole significant predictor variable, accounting for 9 percent of the variance in the marital adjustment scores. Using correlational analyses, it was concluded that while actual congruency was not significantly related to marital adjustment, the individual's perception of the way his/her partner sees him/her was an important variable in the individual's marital adjustment. Self-esteem did not appear to moderate the relationship between perceived congruency and marital adjustment. The high self-esteem and high marital adjustment scores of the sample provided conditions for testing congruency when high congruency scores were expected. The lack of a significant relationship between actual congruency and marital adjustment was attributed to individual variations in the way in which the subjects wanted their spouses to view them. Nevertheless, it was speculated that the presence of congruent self-perceptions may be relevant to a relationship in terms of the initial attraction between the individuals, more so than in the maintenance of an established relationship. Further research might investigate affective congruency expressed in terms of behaviors, and its relationship to marital adjustment through its reinforcement of the partners' levels of self-esteem.

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother,  
Doris Mary Reiffer, and to Flower--  
two special friends who have always  
given me so much love and hope.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

The individual's passion for understanding and developing his/her self-concept may affect the way he/she relates to another person, though seldom has this idea been investigated in the literature. Separate aspects of the self-concept, such as physical attractiveness and personality traits, have long been considered as vital elements in a relationship; yet the self-concept as a whole, which may provide the perspective from which the individual reacts to another person, has rarely been examined in the context of a relationship. Researchers who pursue the self-concept as a solitary variable may neglect the ways in which the self-concept is revealed when viewed from the individual's perspective--as a summary whole in his/her relationship with another person. One type of relationship in which the self-concept may be considered is marriage.

Although many aspects of the self-concept (including roles, personality traits, attitudes, values, and needs) have been empirically linked with marital adjustment, relatively few studies have explored interspousal perception of the self-concept as a factor in marital adjustment. The notion that spouses who perceive each other congruently will have well-adjusted marriages has only limited conceptual and empirical backing. An awareness of the way in which self-esteem moderates this relationship between spouses may facilitate further understanding of the role of significant others in the validation of the

self-concept.

### Definition of Self-Concept

Most theoretical definitions of the self-concept agree that it encompasses "the set of cognitions and feelings an individual holds toward himself" (Secord & Backman, 1965, p. 91). The self-concept includes personality attributes, behavioral tendencies, and multiple roles. For example, a person may incorporate into his/her self-concept the perception of being attractive, domineering, and a husband or wife. Identifying the content of the self-concept is a major problem, particularly since the self-concept is a dynamic process which, Gergen (1968, p. 307) advised, should be viewed in terms of "multiple selves." As a consequence of the difficulties of defining this phenomenological event (Shavelson, Hubner & Stanton, 1976; Wylie, 1978), many tests of the self-concept lack construct validity (Wylie, 1974). The operational definitions of the self-concept, according to these tests, are often contradictory.

A dimension of the self-concept which has less diversity of content is the self-esteem. As an evaluative component of the self-concept, the self-esteem is "a positive or negative attitude toward . . . the self" indicating "how the individual values and regards himself" (Calhoun & Morse, 1977, p. 320). An individual who has high self-esteem rates himself/herself highly. Similarly, an individual who has low self-esteem rates himself/herself at a low level. Self-esteem may be considered in relation to all or only certain aspects of the self-concept. The salient aspects of the self-concept are subjectively defined and unique to each person, but may not be consciously

known to the individual. However, self-esteem is assumed to be of central importance to each person, regardless of whether it is high or low.

Before presenting the theoretical framework of the study in Chapter 2, a brief discussion of the self-concept from the general perspective of symbolic interactionism is useful. The third chapter reviews the literature relating the congruency of self-perceptions to marital adjustment. The rationale and hypotheses of the study are stated in the fourth chapter, followed by a description of the method and an analysis of the results. Finally, the findings are discussed in the last chapter and suggestions for further research are contemplated.

#### Self-Concept and Symbolic Interactionism

Although most studies in the area of the self-concept have not embraced the same theoretical framework (Wylie, 1974), symbolic interactionism provides a general orientation for relating the self-concept to the interaction with other persons. Based on the ideas of Cooley (1902) and Mead (1934), symbolic interactionism postulates that the self-concept is formed through social interaction with others. According to this school of thought, "one's self-concept is a reflection of one's perceptions about how one appears to others" (Shrauger & Schoeneman, 1979, p. 549). Cooley (1902) postulated that the individual's concept of the self as a "looking glass" develops in early childhood from seeing how other persons respond to him/her. In order to anticipate their responses so that he/she can behave appropriately, the individual needs to perceive the world as they do. The major way by which the individual acquires his/her perception of other persons'

perspectives is through symbols which give meaning to behaviors. The unwritten symbols of communication designate roles, or the social class positions which carry shared behavioral expectations (Stryker, 1968). The individual interacts with other persons according to his/her own and their roles. Thus, roles enable the individual to proceed from gestural communication, consisting of direct responses to overt behaviors, to the interpretation of other persons' perspectives (Manis & Meltzer, 1972, p. 17). In adopting other persons' roles, the individual acquires further knowledge of others' perspectives and, concurrently, his/her self-concept develops.

The symbolic interactionist view of the self was first systematized into a set of testable hypotheses when Kinch (1963) proposed his causal theory of the self-concept:

The actual responses of others to the individual will be important in determining how the individual will perceive himself and this perception will influence his self-conception which, in turn, will guide his behavior. (p. 482)

The individual's behavior will influence the actual responses of others, creating a circular interaction between perceptions and responses. When the theory is applied to marriage, it suggests that the spouse's behavior toward the individual will affect the way the individual views himself/herself; consequently the individual's self-concept will be influenced which, in turn, will guide his/her behavior toward his/her spouse. Thus, an individual's idea of what is meant by his/her spouse's behavior may be important to the individual's self-concept and to his/her relationship with his/her spouse.

The symbolic interactionist notion of intercorrelations among the individual's self-concept, his/her perception of other persons'

attitudes and responses to him/her, their actual responses, and the individual's behavior is the essential feature of Secord and Backman's theory of interpersonal congruency. Congruency theory as a framework for investigating marital adjustment has much to recommend it, particularly its emphasis on the relationship between the self-concept and the interaction between two persons. Although other theories also originate from the symbolic interactionist perspective, their suitability for relating the self-concept to the individual's interaction with another person is somewhat lacking. One of these theories in particular, role theory, has been frequently used as a basis for investigating self-perceptions between spouses. Some of the limitations of role theory will be noted.

#### Interspousal Perception and Role Theory

Previous studies of interpersonal perception of the self-concept utilized the role theory, which appeared in the "spawning of smaller, less inclusive theories" from inquiry into symbolic interactionism (Kuhn, 1964, p. 63). Role theory postulates that roles, or the socially defined functions assigned to a person, determine the nature of the person's self. Dymond's (1954) emphasis on role perceptions between spouses was derived from her definition of the self-concept as a compilation of roles. She assumed that the relationship between a person's self-concept and his/her spouse's actual view of the person's self-concept (or "insight") depended upon the "ability to take the role of others" (Dymond, 1950, p. 343). This assumption was consistent with the symbolic interactionist view that the development of the self-concept depends upon the individual's ability to perceive the other

person's perspective which, in turn, depends upon the individual's ability to take the other person's role. Only by adopting others' roles could one "stand off and look at oneself from the point of view of others" (Dymond, 1950, p. 343). Turner (1968) concurred, noting that "social roles constitute the organizing framework for the self-concept" (p. 94).

In spite of the reliance of previous studies on role theory, its value for understanding the perception of the self-concept between spouses may be limited. Within marriage, interaction is not restricted to role behaviors, particularly when the diversity of behaviors in modern marital relationships is considered. The accurate perception of the spouse's views is expected to reciprocally influence the self-concept and many types of behaviors, not just roles. Douvan (1977) articulated the difference between role relationships and interpersonal relationships in this way:

Interpersonal relationships are face-to-face relationships between whole persons; they are affectively loaded, particularistic, and nonnormative. Role relations are partial, less affective, universalistic and governed by norms, by shared expectations about the rights and obligations of role occupants. (p. 17)

When a person in an interpersonal relationship behaves in an unpredicted manner, unless the behavior indicates disloyalty, the other person will usually react in a positive way. However, in a role relationship the unexpected represents a violation of shared moral expectations.

According to Douvan's view of interpersonal relationships, a study of the self-concept and its perception between spouses needs to encompass more than role beliefs. In role theory the emphasis is, in Kuhn's (1964) opinion, "on overt role playing and on the researchable relation between role expectations and role performances; the emphasis is either



less, or altogether lacking, on role-taking, on the interior process of the self" (p. 67). Role-taking is the accurate prediction of the other person's responses, but it does not imply agreement with those views. Since role theory concerns normative behaviors and their expectations, it does not explore the intimate nature of the self within a relationship, which may emphasize nonnormative actions.

#### Consistency Theory and the Self-Concept

Distinct from role theory, but a theory also subsumed under the symbolic interactionist school of thought is consistency theory, which assumes that an individual's ability to accurately perceive his/her spouse's views depends upon the consistency of the spouse's behaviors. Theories of consistency postulate that an individual strives to maintain a consistent cognitive state regarding his/her self-concept. The basic premise is that "there exists a need for the socialized human being to establish and maintain stable and consistent orientations toward the self, other persons, and the non-person environment" (Alexander & Simpson, 1964, p. 183). It is assumed that a person will seek consistency when in the presence of inconsistency because he/she will want to feel less uncomfortable. Several theories of cognitive consistency which share this basic assumption of a tendency toward consistency in behavior include the following: Lecky's (1945) theory of consistency, Newcomb's (1953, 1961) symmetry model, Osgood and Tannenbaum's (1955) theory of congruity, Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance, Heider's (1958) balance theory, Abelson and Rosenberg's (Abelson, 1959; Rosenberg, Hovland, McGuire, Abelson & Brehm, 1960) balance theory, and Secord and Backman's (1961) theory of interpersonal congruency.

The theory of interpersonal congruency appears to be more relevant to the study of self- and spouse-perceptions than other consistency theories for several reasons. Firstly, it considers the perceptions of other persons as critical to the individual's self-concept and to his/her subsequent evaluation of those persons. Secondly, the theory of congruency includes an analysis of the self-concept as a whole, in addition to an analysis of the specific aspects of the self-concept, such as attitudes or role beliefs. Thirdly, congruency theory identifies those components of the individual's interaction with the other person which are relevant to the couple's mutual evaluation of each other. A fourth reason for the superiority of this theory is that it addresses itself to the effects of the interaction with another person on the individual's self-concept, as well as on the dyad. In Kinch's (1963) formalized statement of the symbolic interactionist perspective, changes in the self-concept were cited as an indirect cause of changes in the other person's behavior. Extrapolating beyond this approach, the theory of interpersonal congruency relates changes in the self-concept and its perception to the stability of a relationship, rendering it pertinent to a study of self-perceptions between married partners.

## Chapter 2

### THEORY OF INTERPERSONAL CONGRUENCY

The theoretical framework used in this study of the relationship between marital adjustment and spouses' perception of self-worth (or self-esteem) was Secord and Backman's (1961, 1964a, 1964b, 1965) theory of interpersonal congruency. In accordance with the basic assumptions of consistency theory, the theory of congruency postulates that an individual is responsible for maintaining stability in his/her behavior. Behavioral stability is achieved through the individual's interactions with other persons, rather than existing in his/her specific personality structure. The individual demonstrates a tendency toward congruency in his/her interaction with others in which he/she "strives to maintain interpersonal relations characterized by congruent matrices, rather than to maintain a self, habits, or traits" (Secord & Backman, 1961, p. 29). This proposed inclination toward congruent interaction would be expected to influence the relationship of a married couple. The relevancy of congruent perceptions of self-worth between spouses to their marital adjustment will be explored through a discussion of several methods of maintaining congruency.

#### Congruency in the Interpersonal System

The theory of interpersonal congruency states that an individual attempts to achieve congruency among the components of the interpersonal system in which he/she is involved. The interpersonal system,

comprising the relationship between two persons, is composed of three elements: (1) an aspect of the person's self-concept (or the self-concept as a whole); (2) the person's interpretation of his/her behavior relevant to that aspect; and (3) the person's perception of how others behave and feel toward him/her with respect to that particular aspect of his/her self-concept. An example of an individual's interpersonal system consists of the following elements: (1) the person's belief that he/she is shy; (2) the person's view of his/her behavior as shy; and (3) his/her perception that another individual regards him/her as shy. These three components are congruent since "the behaviors of the subject (S) and the other person (O) involved in the system imply definitions of self congruent with relevant aspects of S's self-concept" (Secord & Backman, 1965, p. 91). Any two components of an interpersonal system may be congruent, while at the same time a third component is either congruent with both of them or not congruent with either of them. For example, congruency exists between two components if both the subject and the other person perceive the subject as shy. However, if the subject believes that he/she behaves as if he/she is not shy, then there is incongruency in the interpersonal system between his/her self-concept and his/her behavior. The subject's actual behavior is not as important as his/her interpretation of his/her behavior, since his/her interpretation affects his/her self-concept and his/her subsequent responses to other persons more than does his/her actual behavior. Congruency may be demonstrated in several ways, depending upon which components of the interpersonal system are congruent. Congruency may be implied when the subject's self-esteem corresponds with his/her perception of his/her spouse's view of him/her,

or with his/her spouse's actual view of him/her. It is apparent from this discussion that congruency is "a perceptual-cognitive state representing the manner in which a particular individual views himself and his interaction with another person" (Secord & Backman, 1965, p. 96).

Congruency may be of two types. Cognitive congruency emphasizes the content of the self-concept, or, more specifically, the "cognitions about self and the behavior of the individual and the other person" (Secord & Backman, 1965, p. 96). In contrast, affective congruency exists when "S believes that O feels toward him as S feels toward himself, either in regard to himself as a whole or in regard to some aspect of self or behavior" (Secord & Backman, 1965, p. 96). Thus, a person who rates himself/herself highly because of his/her sensitivity, and who perceives that another person also rates him/her highly due to the presence of that trait achieves perceived affective congruency for that aspect of his/her self-concept. If, in actuality, another person does rate the subject highly as a result of that trait, then actual affective congruency exists.

Since these two types of congruency differ in their objects of study, it is not unexpected to find differences in their methods of investigating the self-concept. Cognitive congruency, which emphasizes cognitions about the self, may be demonstrated through the accurate prediction of the subject's self-concept. Thus, cognitive congruency attests to the correct impression of the subject's characteristics. Alternatively, affective congruency means that the other person's evaluation of the subject's characteristics as positive or negative agrees with the subject's self-evaluation (or the subject thinks that it does).

Before discussing the methods of maintaining congruency, a

typical congruency study will be described to illustrate the operational definitions of perceived and actual congruency. Usually, a study of congruency required the subject to complete either an adjective checklist of personality traits or a test of role perceptions three separate times, using these perspectives: self-description, perceived self-description or how the subject thinks he/she would be described by another person such as an acquaintance, and, finally, a description of the other person. The subject's description of the other person most often implied the subject's prediction of how the other person would describe himself/herself, and not the subject's own evaluation of the descriptive characteristics of the other person, as demanded by the theoretical definition of affective congruency. For example, the subject might have given the other person a low rating because he/she knew that the other person had a low level of self-esteem, even though the subject's own rating of the other person would have been higher. However, it is the subject's evaluation of the other person which is important to affective congruency, rather than his/her knowledge of the way the other person describes himself/herself, although these two factors may interact with each other.

Perceived congruency, which signified the extent to which the subject thought that the other person understood him/her, was calculated as the sum of the differences between the subject's self-description and his/her perceived self-description for each test item. The actual extent to which the other person understood the subject, as well as the subject's insight into himself/herself, was calculated as the sum of the differences between the subject's self-description and the other person's actual description of him/her for each test item. Tests of

significance, usually t-tests, were conducted on the discrepancy scores for different groups of subjects. Correlational analyses were occasionally performed to determine whether or not marital adjustment was related to cognitive congruency, or the congruency dealing with the characteristics of the self-concept. Some of the limitations associated with this procedure for measuring congruency will become evident as the studies concerning the methods of maintaining congruency are described.

#### Methods of Maintaining Congruency

Considerable correlational evidence indicates that the perceptions held by other persons about an individual agree to a great extent with the individual's self-view (Backman & Secord, 1962; Backman, Secord & Peirce, 1963; Couch, 1958; Doherty & Secord, 1971; Kemper, 1966; Manis, 1955; Mannheim, 1966; Miyamoto & Dornbusch, 1956; Quarantelli & Cooper, 1966; Reeder, Donohue & Biblarz, 1960; Rosengren, 1961). Miyamoto and Dornbusch (1956) measured 195 college students on their self-ratings for intelligence, self-confidence, physical attractiveness, and likableness, using a 5-point rating scale. The subjects comprised 10 naturally formed groups, including sororities and peer groups, with between 8 and 48 persons in each group. Each subject provided four ratings: a self-rating, a rating of how he/she thought other members of the group would rate him/her, a rating of how he/she thought most people would rate him/her, and a rating of every other member of his/her group. The groups were compared without statistical analysis. The individual's self-rating was compared with each of his/her other three ratings. Among their conclusions, Miyamoto and Dornbusch reported that subjects accorded high esteem by other persons

had higher self-esteem than those persons poorly regarded, suggesting a relationship between the subjects' self-esteem and the perceptions of them held by other persons. In addition, the study reported that the subject's perceptions of the other persons' responses were more closely related to his/her self-conception than were the actual responses of others. This finding indicates support for the relationship between an individual's self-concept and his/her perception of other persons' views of him/her. Miyamoto and Dornbusch's (1956) study provided the first strong empirical support for the interactionist tradition, by giving evidence relating to the presence of congruency between two persons.

Misperception of the other person, as reported by Miyamoto and Dornbusch, is one method by which congruency is achieved. Some of the other methods are selective interaction and selective evaluation of others. These methods may be used to attain congruent perceptions of self-worth between spouses.

#### Misperception of Self or Spouse

An individual may maintain congruency with his/her spouse by misperceiving either some of his/her own or his/her spouse's views which are inconsistent with his/her self-view. Experimental studies suggest that the individual alters his/her view of self to conform to what he/she thinks is his/her spouse's view of him/her (Deutsch & Solomon, 1959; Maehr, Mensing & Nafzger, 1962; Secord, Backman & Eachus, 1964; Sherwood, 1965; Videbeck, 1960; Weinstein & Black, 1969). In these studies the evaluations which the subject received from the other persons were manipulated. The subject's self-concept became closer to the perceived evaluations of others than to their actual evaluations.



Manis (1955) measured male undergraduates' self-ratings and their roommates' ratings of them at the beginning of a semester and after six weeks. The subjects' final self-ratings were more similar to their roommates' initial judgments of them than to their initial self-ratings. Thus, actual congruency may be achieved through a change in the subject's self-ratings, rather than through a change in his/her perception of the other person's views. However, misperception of the other person's views is more commonly studied.

Misperception has been reported when an individual perceives his/her spouse's view as more consistent with his/her self-view than it actually is in order to achieve congruency (Backman & Secord, 1962; Backman, Secord & Peirce, 1963; Doherty & Secord, 1971; Manis, 1955; Miyamoto & Dornbusch, 1956; Quarantelli & Cooper, 1966; Reeder et al., 1960). Many of these studies of perceived congruency were limited to nonstatistical comparisons (e.g., Miyamoto & Dornbusch, 1956; Quarantelli & Cooper, 1966; Reeder et al., 1960) using secondary social relationships such as peer relationships, and measuring the less significant dimensions of the self such as general personality characteristics. In a review of naturalistic studies of congruency, Shrauger and Schoeneman (1979) reported that approximately one-half of the studies cited did not show a significant correlation which would indicate perceived congruency. The majority of the remaining studies had either significant but low correlations, or ambiguous results. It is difficult to make conclusions regarding perceived congruency because comparisons among these studies are not justified by the widely different populations and attributes measured.

Studies which demonstrated congruency reported a higher corre-

lation for perceived congruency than for actual congruency (e.g., Backman & Secord, 1962; Doherty & Secord, 1971; Quarantelli & Cooper, 1966). Several reasons may be advanced as to why the individual's self-concept was closer to the perceived responses of others than it was to their actual responses. Shrauger and Schoeneman (1979) suggested the following reasons: (1) the subject may be unable to accurately perceive the other person's responses; (2) the other person's opinions may only minimally influence the subject's self-concept, particularly if the other person is not a significant individual to the subject; and (3) the subject's self-view and the other person's actual evaluation of the subject may be curvilinearly related, as found in Reese's (1961) study of children's self-concepts. Accordingly, the higher the subject's self-esteem, the higher would be the other person's evaluation of the subject until a certain level was reached. Beyond that point, which signifies a moderate level of self-esteem, it is hypothesized that, regardless of an increase in the subject's self-esteem, the other person's evaluation will decrease. Another explanation for the greater correlation associated with perceived congruency than with actual congruency is that the subject is unable to accurately perceive or report his/her self-view, perhaps, because the feedback which the individual has received from other persons was not totally honest. A fifth reason was offered by Murstein and Beck (1972), who suggested that differences in comprehension, motivation, and social desirability are greater for perceptions originating from two persons as opposed to the perception of one person. Thus, actual congruency may have greater error variance than perceived congruency. Finally, perceived congruency was demonstrated when the evaluative characteristics of the self, rather

than personality attributes, were measured (Shrauger & Schoeneman, 1979). Presumably, the individual is less able to objectively verify his/her self-worth than he/she is able to verify his/her personality characteristics. Therefore, the perception of congruency is more important to the individual than is the presence of actual congruency, particularly when the congruency concerns the evaluation of his/her self-worth. In the case of married couples, Murstein and Beck's (1972) explanation in terms of error variance for the greater correlation of perceived congruency, in comparison with actual congruency, appears to be the most parsimonious explanation.

Although equivocal, the evidence appears to support the theory of interpersonal congruency, since the individual may be striving for consistency between his/her self-evaluation and his/her perception of the other person's evaluation of him/her (Schafer, Braito & Bohlen, 1976). Within the context of marriage, it is expected that the misperception of the spouse's views as highly congruent, regardless of the veracity of the perception, is a major method of maintaining affective congruency. It is also likely that the subject misperceives his/her self-view, because it may be easier for him/her to consistently delude himself/herself about his/her own views than it is for him/her to misperceive his/her spouse's views.

#### Selective Interaction

A second method of maintaining congruency is by selective interaction in which the individual selects and interacts with those persons whose behavior "requires a minimum change from previously congruent interpersonal situations in which the person has engaged"

(Secord & Backman, 1961, p. 71). Deutsch and Solomon (1959) reported that subjects chose to continue interacting with others who most accurately perceived their task performances. Congruent interaction is associated with mutual affect which tends to perpetuate the relationship (Secord & Backman, 1961). If the theory of interpersonal congruency is correct, and an individual is striving to achieve congruency in his/her relationships, then it is likely that the individual will select as a spouse a person with whom he/she will be assured a maximum level of congruency.

#### Selective Evaluation

An individual may also achieve congruency by altering his/her evaluations of self, behavior, or the other person in a positive or negative direction. When there is congruency between the individual's self-view and the other person's actual view, or between the individual's self-view and his/her perception of the other person's view of him/her, then the individual will evaluate the other person in a positive manner. When there is incongruency, the individual's affect toward the other person decreases. An individual with chronic low self-esteem provides a special case for the principles of congruency and will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Selective evaluation has been demonstrated to operate in a sorority (Backman & Secord, 1962), between friendship pairs (Secord & Backman, 1964b), and in the choice of a new roommate (Broxton, 1963; Doherty & Secord, 1971). In the last study, 78 pairs of female roommates in a dormitory were assessed on 24 personality traits. They were retested after eight months. There was more agreement between self and

perceived self for subjects who were satisfied with their roommates than for dissatisfied subjects. Other studies, while not conducted in the context of congruency theory, are consistent with the principles of selective evaluation and selective interaction. Courtship progress was related to the individual's perception that his/her partner understood him/her (Lewis, 1973a, 1973b; Murstein, 1972, 1976). Although inductive speculation, perceived congruency may act as a filter in the attraction between two persons. If this suggestion is true, then married couples would be expected to attain a level of congruency above a minimum level.

Congruency is assumed to be a function of the importance of the other person (Secord & Backman, 1964b, p. 586). The more the other person is valued, the greater is the tendency of the subject to respond to congruent perceptions by positively evaluating the other person, which serves to perpetuate the dyad. The behaviors or attitudes of persons who are of little importance to the subject are not considered incongruent, although they may be at variance with the subject's self-concept.

Congruency is also a function of the saliency of that aspect of the self which is measured. If an insignificant aspect of the self is at variance with the subject's idea of his/her spouse's views, then incongruency is minimal. An individual may maximize congruency by increasing the value placed on the aspects of his/her self-concept which are in agreement with his/her spouse's view or his/her idea of his/her spouse's view. Similarly, the individual may devalue the incongruent aspects of his/her self-concept (Secord & Backman, 1964b, p. 586).

The theory of interpersonal congruency intimates that individuals who perceive each other accurately, and who are congruent in their

evaluations of each other, will choose to interact with each other for a long duration, demonstrating high affect for each other, which contributes to the continuation of the relationship. The theory of congruency provides a valuable tool for understanding the role of the self-concept in marital adjustment. Studies which relate congruency to marital adjustment are discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 3

### AFFECTIVE CONGRUENCY AND MARITAL ADJUSTMENT

The theory of interpersonal congruency postulates a tendency toward congruency within a relationship. In this chapter the reasons that congruency is desirable in marriage are discussed, followed by a review of the studies relating congruency to marital adjustment. The issue of similarity as a confound in congruency studies is examined, along with a discussion of the theory and empirical research implicating self-esteem as a moderator variable in the relationship between congruency and marital adjustment.

#### Congruency as Validation of Self-Worth

Congruency within an interpersonal relationship is hypothesized to be desirable for two reasons. Firstly, as Secord and Backman (1965) noted, it makes the individual's own and the other person's behavior more predictable. If the individual is able to consistently predict his/her own and the other person's behavior, then he/she is better able to interact with the other person without producing conflict. Luckey (1960b) assumed that between spouses who have high congruency,

there is more appropriate response to the other, expectations of the other are more accurate, and each partner is better able to anticipate the other's feelings, and gear his own expectations to the other. (p. 153)

Thus, congruency between spouses may be associated with better communication. O'Brien (1977) reported that married couples with high scores in the perceived congruency of role expectations were more likely to

express personal opinions and feelings than were couples with low scores. The low congruency couples exhibited more attempts to act in a directive manner and made more requests for clarification. O'Brien postulated that a feedback process operates in which an individual regularly adjusts his/her perceptions of self and spouse. The individual's consistency in responding to his/her spouse, as a consequence of congruent perceptions, enhances the predictability and desirability of the couple's marital interaction.

A second reason that congruency is preferable to incongruency is that it increases the individual's confidence in his/her self-concept by validating the appropriateness of his/her self-perceptions. Although it is not explicated in the theory of congruency, affective congruency, which constitutes the amount of agreement between an individual's self-esteem and another person's evaluation of him/her, supplies confirmation of the individual's sense of worth. McCall and Simmons (1966, p. 75) suggested that one of the most basic motivations of an individual is to acquire support<sup>1</sup> or validation for his/her identity.<sup>2</sup> Validation of the self-concept consists of more than verification; it establishes the veridicality of the individual's pattern of perceiving the world. Turner (1968) speculated that "the congruent response simultaneously

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<sup>1</sup>An individual with chronic low self-esteem may be motivated to protect his/her sense of unworthiness, thereby leading him/her to seek support for his/her particular self-concept.

<sup>2</sup>According to Maslow's (1948) conception of needs, an individual will be motivated to validate his/her self-concept to the extent that his/her basic requirements for survival have been met.



provides reassurance for both self- and other-conceptions" (p. 97).

Thus, consensual validation provides a heightened sense of effectiveness in dealing with social reality (Byrne & Clore, 1967).

Validation of the self-concept may be achieved either through objective tests, possibly assessing task performance, or through subjective comparisons of the self-concept with other persons' opinions of it. Festinger's (1957) theory of social comparison proposed that an individual compares his/her opinions and abilities with other persons' views to the extent that physical, objective means of validation are unavailable. Although some aspects of the self-concept, such as those related to task performance, may be validated objectively, an individual's self-esteem is not typically assessed using objective means. Thus, an individual must often rely on other persons to validate his/her self-esteem by providing their responses to his/her self-worth. The type of persons who are capable of gratifying the individual's sense of self-worth are most likely significant to the individual and, as such, are in limited supply. Although acquaintances have successfully completed adjective checklists of the personality traits of an individual, they may have demonstrated only a basic knowledge of the individual. An understanding of the individual's self-esteem may require a deeper level of interpretation of the individual, one which is accessible only to the individual's close friends.

Within marriage, the individual's need to validate his/her self-concept has been viewed as a process of "mutual evaluation in search of reciprocal confirmation" (Kelvin, 1977, p. 378). Besides confirming an individual's sense of self-worth, affective congruency between spouses provides information about the spouse's self-esteem, and, consequently,

may justify the individual's feelings of affection (or lack of affection) for his/her spouse. For example, if the spouse agrees with the individual's evaluation of himself/herself as a person of low worth, and if the spouse also has low self-esteem, then the presence of affective congruency means, not only that the individual's self-esteem is validated, but also that the spouse is confirmed as being an unworthy person by virtue of his/her marriage to another individual of similar low worth. By association with the individual, the spouse reveals himself/herself to be an equally unworthy person. This reasoning may also be applied to persons of high self-esteem who display affective congruency. An empirical basis for validating the preceding theoretical propositions will be provided in the forthcoming review of studies which relate affective congruency to marital adjustment.

### Literature Review

Most of the evidence on the association between marital adjustment and congruency is limited to a few studies which were conducted in the late 1950's and early 1960's. These studies consistently reported a relationship between marital adjustment and accuracy in predicting the partner's responses (Corsini, 1956a, 1956b; Dymond, 1954; Stuckert, 1963; Taylor, 1967).

The first systematic study of the interpersonal perception of self-views between marital partners was conducted by Rosalind Dymond in 1954, under the auspices of role theory. Using 15 couples well-known to her, who had been married an average of 10.4 years, she measured their responses for self and their predictions of their spouses' answers on 100 items from the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)

pertaining to interaction with others. Dymond distinguished between empathy, which she defined as the extent to which the subject accurately perceived his/her spouse as the latter perceived himself/herself, and insight, which was defined as the extent to which the subject accurately perceived himself/herself as his/her spouse perceived him/her. Empathy involved "the ability to transpose oneself into the thinking, feeling and acting of another" (Dymond, 1950, p. 344), suggesting a general quality of understanding another person's position. In contrast, insight, or actual congruency as it was termed in the present study, was regarded by Dymond (1948) as indicating the individual's understanding of his/her roles with other persons. Dymond's inference was based on her unjustified assumption that the self-concept consisted mainly of roles. Nevertheless, her study of empathy may be useful for suggesting a relationship between marital adjustment and the congruency of perceptions, since empathy involves the agreement between two persons concerning the self-concept of one of them. In addition, there may be some correspondence in the perceptual abilities measured by insight and empathy which will permit certain generalities to be made between the present research and previous studies such as Dymond's (1948) study.

Dymond (1948) reasoned that the measurement of empathy as the accurate prediction of the spouse's responses might reflect the individual's ability to predict how the test items would be marked by most people in a particular group. Therefore, she controlled for stereotyped replies by omitting those test items which were answered uniformly by more than two-thirds of the sample. Fifty-five MMPI items remained. The happily married couples predicted their spouse's replies significantly better than did the unhappily married couples. The Spearman

rank-order correlation between actual congruency and marital happiness was significant. Dymond concluded, "Married love is not blind . . . the better each partner understands the other's perceptions of himself and his world, the more satisfactory the relationship" (p. 171). The study may be criticized for its use of a questionable criterion for marital happiness. Dymond used her friends as subjects and ranked them according to their own rankings of a couple whose marriage, they felt, most closely resembled their own marriages. The couples were divided into happily and unhappily married groups on the basis of those rankings.

In response to an obvious need for methodological improvements in the investigation of congruency, Corsini's (1956b) study contained a control group of randomly paired nonspouses. Each person in 20 married student couples provided a self-description, a description of his/her spouse, a prediction of the way his/her spouse described him/her, and a prediction of the way his/her spouse described himself/herself using 50 statements in an adjective Q-sort. Criterion scores were provided by a scale for marital happiness. The positive relationship between marital happiness and actual congruency was significant when the husband's self-concept was being described, but it was not significant when the wife was the perceptual target. Since this relationship held even when the wives were predicting their random "husbands'" self-concepts, Corsini suggested that the subjects were responding to a cultural stereotype of a good husband. Indeed, the greater the conformity of the men to this stereotype, the greater the marital happiness of both the husbands and wives. Corsini interpreted the relationship between marital adjustment and a stereotyped sex role as the relevant

one, as opposed to the relationship between marital adjustment and congruency. The completion of the Q-sort four times in one test session may have confused the subject and increased his/her susceptibility to invoking a stereotype in his/her answers.

Corsini's (1956a, 1956b) results were confirmed in a comprehensive series of studies by Eleanor Luckey (1959, 1960a, 1960b, 1960c, 1961, 1964). In her 1960b study, she used 81 married couples who exhibited highly positive or highly negative scores on the Locke and Terman Scales of Marital Happiness. Her sample was homogeneous on several background variables, including the number of working wives, income, and the number of children. More than three-quarters of the subjects were college graduates. The average length of the marriages was 7.7 years. Luckey's measure of self-description was the Interpersonal Adjective Check List (ICL) (Leary, 1957; Laforge & Suzcek, 1955), which has frequently been utilized in studies of congruency.

The ICL is a measure of role perceptions and personality traits. The subject describes his/her role beliefs and expectations in terms of qualities or attitudes, rather than in terms of behaviors. The system of role descriptions on the ICL is derived from two interpersonal trends: dominance-submission and hostility-affection. There are 128 adjectives, any number of which the subject indicates as generally applicable to him/her. The adjectives are arranged into 16 sectors, each of which contains 8 items. The 16 sectors can be combined to produce octant scores. As an example of the type of role descriptions contained in the ICL, an individual might be classified as autocratic.

Luckey required each subject to complete five ICLs in terms of his/her perceptions of self, spouse, ideal self, mother, and father.

The study demonstrated that marital satisfaction was significantly related to the congruency of the husband's self-concept and his wife's perception of him, but was unrelated to the wife's self-concept and her husband's perception of her. Discounting the notion that women were more perceptive than men, based on previous studies (Notcutt & Silva, 1951; Dymond, 1953, 1954), Luckey reasoned that if the wife is to make the greater adjustment in the marriage (Burgess & Locke, 1953), then it will be to her advantage to accurately perceive her husband. When she sees her husband as he sees himself, "she is better able to make adjustments which bring more satisfaction to the marriage" (Luckey, 1960b, pp. 156-157).

Luckey's study was criticized by O'Brien (1977) for its use of the ICL with a different scoring method and purpose from that for which the ICL was intended. The ICL was designed, not as a measure of self-perception, but as a measure of personality classification. Luckey inappropriately converted multiple ICL scores into a single quadrant score, instead of into eight octant scores. Another limitation to Luckey's study was its failure to compare the subject's self-perception with his/her idea of the way his/her spouse viewed him/her (perceived congruency), although Luckey did compare the subject's self-view with the way the spouse actually rated him/her (actual congruency).

O'Brien's (1977) study eliminated several of the criticisms associated with Luckey's procedure. An appropriate scoring method for the ICL was used to assess role perceptions under these perspectives: ideal self, actual self, ideal spouse, actual spouse, and the way the subject believed his/her spouse viewed him/her. The sample consisted of 40 happily married couples who had been married an average of 10 years.

The study reported no significant difference in the degree of marital satisfaction between high congruency and low congruency couples, using both actual and perceived congruency of role perceptions. This finding is not surprising, since the couples were selected on the basis of being happily married. O'Brien, however, attributed the lack of a relationship between marital satisfaction and congruency of role perceptions to changes in the institution of marriage since Luckey's (1960b) study. A similar study (Murstein & Beck, 1972), which required subjects to complete an adjective checklist under 10 perspectives, contradictorily reported a significant relationship between marital adjustment and actual congruency when the husband's self-concept was measured. Murstein and Beck's conclusion that "middle-class marriage, despite reports to the contrary, is still husband oriented" (p. 402) may, nonetheless, have been superseded by further changes in marriage prior to O'Brien's (1977) study. The adequacy of the measurement of congruency in either study is questionable, since the subjects were required to conceptualize 5 or 10 perspectives in the course of a single test session.

Another recent study which used the ICL on a preponderantly happy group of married persons reported a significant correlation between an individual's marital adjustment and the presence of actual congruency of role perceptions with his/her spouse (Ferguson & Allen, 1978). A similar correlation was earlier reported by Kotlar (1965) between the couples' marital adjustment and the comparison of the individual's role perceptions with his/her spouse's view of the individual's role beliefs. Kotlar used 50 couples who scored the highest among 88 couples on the Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale, and 50 couples

who were referred to her by marriage counsellors. Subjects completed the ICL for the perspectives of self, mate, and ideal marital role. As expected, actual congruency between the individual's self-view and his/her spouse's view of the individual was related to the marital adjustment scores of husbands and couples, but not to the wives' marital adjustment scores.

In general, previous studies reported that marital happiness was related to the wife's perception of her husband being congruent with his self-perception (Corsini, 1956a, 1956b; Dymond, 1954; Luckey, 1960a, 1960b; Tharp, 1963). This researcher is unaware of any studies reporting a relationship between an individual's marital adjustment and the presence of congruency of the husband's perception of his wife in comparison with her self-perception. This reported sex difference in the results is difficult to interpret because, as Kotlar (1965) noted, a positive correlation between the congruency of perceptions and marital satisfaction does not provide the information necessary to determine whether the significant correlation results from marital empathy, or from some other variable, such as cultural norms.

Cultural biases provide a compelling explanation for the results of previous studies. Affective congruency between a wife's perception of her husband and his self-view may be important for marital satisfaction as a result of a social desirability factor. Perhaps, women are more motivated to accurately perceive their husbands' self-concepts (than men are motivated to perceive their wives' self-concepts), not because they make the greater adjustment in marriage, but because of a cultural bias for women to appear more emotionally perceptive than men in their relationships. In support of this notion, Santee (1972)



reported that the female's accuracy in perceiving another person increased with her degree of involvement in the relationship with that person, whereas the accuracy of the male's perception of another person decreased with his involvement with that person. Santee implied that the female may be "internally oriented for the validation of her identity" (p. 39). Accordingly, a woman's self-esteem may be as important as a man's self-esteem to the marriage, but, in contrast to a man, a woman may derive her self-validation from the marital relationship itself, as is implied by the marital role of a wife. In support of this proposition, the number and type of reference others with whom an individual validates his/her self-concept would likely distinguish men from women. Murstein (1972) concluded that women were more influential "both as predictors and confirmers of men's self-concepts than men vis-à-vis women" (p. 625).

Previous studies purporting to measure the relationship between congruency and marital satisfaction may actually have dealt with stereotyped sex roles, rather than with the individual's role perceptions. Corsini (1956b) postulated that the subjects responded to a stereotype of a good husband. A similar notion of an ideal spouse as the perspective to which the subjects responded was advanced by Kotlar (1965).

The findings reported in previous studies concerning a relationship between congruency and marital adjustment were likely confounded by cultural stereotypes of the marital roles appropriate for a husband and wife. Future research needs to minimize the influence of these cultural biases.

Other factors, while not directly relevant as explanations of the sex differences in the results, are, nonetheless, related to the

association between congruency and marital adjustment. These factors focus on the individual's attempt to validate his/her self-concept. In the interest of understanding these influences which may affect the relationship between congruency and marital adjustment, two variables--similarity of spouses' perceptions and self-esteem--will be explored.

Similarity Confounded  
With Congruency

Similarity or the assumption of similarity between spouses confounds the relationship between perceptual congruency and marital adjustment. Congruency may be enhanced by the similarity of attributes between spouses if the subject uses himself/herself as a reference point from which to perceive his/her spouse. An individual will be positively reinforced by associating with another person who is similar to him/her, since the similarity provides additional validation of the individual's attributes. Relatively few studies have attempted to resolve the issue of similarity confounded with congruency.

Touhey (1975) experimentally varied attitude similarity and perceived congruency for 12 traits among 48 pairs of college undergraduates. His study included a control group, but failed to operationally distinguish between similarity and perceived congruency of traits. Touhey reported that "congruency determines attraction in the absence of similar attitudes or in spite of the presence of dissimilar attitudes" (1975, p. 71). Attraction scores in the congruent-dissimilar attitude condition and in the incongruent-similar attitude condition were more affected by interpersonal congruency than by attitude similarity. The findings from Touhey's study are limited, since the attitude ratings were made after an unspecified "short period of time for studying the

other's attitudes" (p. 68). Since he studied impression formation, Touhey's findings may not be applicable to married couples.

Other studies which have examined similarity and congruency using married couples confirmed that accuracy in predicting the spouse's responses was not enhanced by similarity. Dymond's (1954) study found that, although happily married couples were more similar to each other than unhappily married couples, there was significantly less association between similarity and the accuracy of prediction of the test items on the MMPI in the happily married group than in the unhappily married group.<sup>3</sup> A more recent study (Newmark, Woody & Ziff, 1977) used 70 married couples, one-half of whom were psychiatric outpatients being treated for marital incompatibility; the other half scored in the upper quartile of the Locke Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (LWMAT). Newmark et al. reported an absence of any evidence that accuracy in the prediction of the spouse's response (or actual congruency) was enhanced by the similarity exhibited in the satisfied married couples. Happily married couples did not seem to benefit in terms of the congruency of their perceptions from the similarity of their responses to the MMPI.

Although the findings suggest that congruency is not necessarily confounded with similarity in married couples, further studies are

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<sup>3</sup>The greater association between similarity and congruency in unhappily married couples has not been empirically or theoretically investigated, but it may be related to the significance of the traits on which the couples are both congruent and similar. Congruency may be high because the traits on which the couples are similar are relatively insignificant to them. This may also indicate the level of interaction

needed to resolve the issue.

Self-Esteem as a Moderator  
of Congruency and Mari-  
tal Adjustment

Another variable which may influence the relationship between congruency and marital adjustment is the individual's self-esteem. The equivocal findings obtained for the relationship between marital adjustment and a comparison of the individual's self-concept with his/her spouse's view of the individual, or with the individual's idea of his/her spouse's view of him/her imply that the important variables have not been sufficiently explored (Kotlar, 1965). Self-esteem may moderate the relationship between congruency and marital adjustment because "there is less strain in relating to a self-accepting person as compared to one who believes that he has failed to meet his aspirations" (Murstein & Beck, 1972, p. 397). A person who is low in self-esteem may make "heavy interpersonal demands on the spouse to compensate for feelings of inadequacy" (Murstein & Beck, 1972, p. 397). A person with high self-esteem may be more aware of and responsive to his/her own needs and to the needs of his/her spouse. Self-esteem has been empirically investigated separately in relation to congruency and marital adjustment.

A person's self-esteem has been related to the congruency between his/her self-perceptions and his/her spouse's view of him/her. Cardillo (1971) correlated self-esteem scores from the Tennessee Self Concept Scale (TSCS) with congruency scores from the Interpersonal

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between the spouses, if they are congruent for unimportant traits.

Perception Method (IPM) developed by Laing, Phillipson, and Lee (1966). The IPM consists of 60 statements about various issues. Spouses with high congruency scores are assumed to understand each other's feelings concerning the issues mentioned in the IPM. The sample consisted of 20 couples who had received treatment for marital disorders, but who displayed a relatively normal group profile on the TSCS after their treatment. Cardillo reported a significant correlation between the individual's self-esteem and his/her understanding of his/her spouse's position. The higher the individual's level of self-esteem, the greater was his/her congruency with his/her spouse's position. The correlation between self-esteem and the realization that congruency existed was also significant, and it was higher than the correlation between self-esteem and actual congruency, as expected in a comparison of perceived congruency and actual congruency. When the individual had low self-esteem, he/she failed to realize the existence of congruency with his/her spouse. Cardillo's study suggests that congruency alone may not be as critical to a marriage, as the realization of the ability to accurately perceive the spouse's views (Thompson, 1972, p. 79). Similarly, perceived congruency, or the subject's belief in his/her spouse's ability to accurately perceive him/her, is more critical to a marriage than actual congruency. In light of Cardillo's report of a positive relationship between self-esteem and the realization of congruency, the prediction might be made that low self-esteem subjects will fail to perceive the congruency of perceptions with their spouses. More studies are necessary to clarify the relationship between self-esteem and perceived or actual congruency.

Independent of the studies linking self-esteem with the

congruency of self-perceptions are studies which relate self-esteem to marital adjustment. McCahan (1973) reported a positive linear relationship between self-esteem and marital adjustment for happily married couples. However, unhappily married couples demonstrated a curvilinear relationship in which extremely high or low self-esteem scores were associated with lower scores for marital adjustment. Several other studies reported a positive relationship between self-esteem and marital adjustment (Eastman, 1958; Luckey, 1959, 1960a, 1960b; Murstein & Beck, 1972). Similarly, a recent study of 150 college couples (Hall & Valine, 1977) reported a significant positive correlation for both males and females between marital adjustment and self-esteem scores, using the LWMAT and the TSCS, respectively. The evidence supports a relationship between self-esteem and marital adjustment.

It appears from previous research that an individual's self-esteem is not only related to his/her marital adjustment, but also to his/her congruency with his/her spouse. Although it would be fallacious to conclude that self-esteem is necessarily associated with the relationship between congruency and marital adjustment, it seems reasonable to consider self-esteem as a factor in that relationship.

The theory of interpersonal congruency predicts that an individual, regardless of whether he/she has high or low self-esteem, will give a positive evaluation to a person with whom he/she has congruent perceptions. Thus, in the case of a person with chronic low self-esteem, a negative evaluation from another person would be congruent; hence congruency theory predicts that affect toward the other person would increase. Paradoxically, a positive evaluation would be incongruent with the individual's feelings of low self-esteem, and would

result in negative affect toward the evaluator. (A positive evaluation would not negate the subject's feelings of low self-worth as long as other persons continued to validate his/her feelings of low self-esteem. Likewise, a negative evaluation would not negate a subject's high self-esteem if other persons provided him/her with positive evaluations.)

The predictions of interpersonal congruency theory conflict with those of self-enhancement theory, which are based on the suggestion that individuals strive for positive self-esteem, rather than for consistency between their self-views and others' views of them. "The tendency to think well of oneself may complicate predictions from consistency theories, since it appears to be independent of trends toward consistency" (Smith, 1968, p. 372). Self-enhancement theory postulates that, in the case of an individual with low self-esteem, a negative evaluation conflicts with the individual's tendency toward improving his/her self-esteem. Thus, the individual decreases his/her liking for the evaluator.

The tendency toward congruency differs from the tendency toward self-enhancement in the type of attributes which it confirms. Congruency may involve the confirmation of socially undesirable attributes; whereas positive evaluation involves the attribution of socially desirable characteristics (Lewis, 1972). A friend's recognition of an individual's fault may imply to the individual either that the friend likes him/her in spite of the fault, or that he/she does not regard the fault as serious (Wylie, 1978, p. 518). In either case, congruency includes the confirmation of the individual's negative features.

There is only minimal empirical support for the congruency prediction that low self-esteem persons will like a person who rejects

them, more than they will like a person who approves of them (Harvey, 1962; Harvey, Kelley & Shapiro, 1957; Secord & Backman, 1965). The majority of the studies supported the self-enhancement position (Jones, 1973; Wylie, 1978), particularly when affective responses, rather than cognitive responses, were assessed (Shrauger, 1975). Wylie's (1978) review of studies of self-enhancement and cognitive consistency concluded that there was

no clear support for the idea that dissonance operates alone or against self-enhancing tendencies to affect the attraction ratings given to positive and negative evaluators by subjects having low self-regard. (p. 504)

A revised view of the congruency principle is suggested to accommodate those individuals having chronic low self-esteem. The evidence for a relationship between congruency and the positive evaluation of another person is "most conclusive when a positive self concept is validated by a positive evaluation; negative evaluations that are congruent do not always produce liking" (Secord & Backman, 1964b, p. 217). Furthermore, Rosenberg's (1979) assessment of the issue concluded that

the question of whether self-esteem or self-consistency is the more powerful motive may thus not be a very meaningful one, since this may depend on whether we are speaking of the self as a whole or in terms of its specific components, whether the particular component is central or peripheral to the self-concept, and so on. (p. 62)

If the subject perceives that the other person's evaluation applies to the components of the self beyond the immediate task, the other's evaluation may be congruent with the immediately relevant aspects of self, "but in some instances as incongruent with certain other aspects of self to which it is relevant" (Secord & Backman, 1965, p. 101, emphasis added). For example, a negative evaluation of an individual's



introversion might also affect his/her concept of his/her popularity. The question of relatedness among the aspects of the self-concept (which may be controlled when the overall self-esteem is studied) may be particularly important to low self-esteem subjects, since they may experience more of a halo effect from other persons' evaluations of them, than do high self-esteem subjects. Thus, the individual's self-esteem may interact with secondary variables to influence the relationship between congruency with another person's views and the evaluation of that person. Contrary to Rosenberg's advice to ignore the issue of congruency theory versus self-enhancement theory, it appears that the relationship between congruency and the evaluation of another person will only be fully understood when self-esteem is considered as a meaningful variable in that relationship. Predictions for high and low self-esteem subjects on the relationship between congruency and marital adjustment will be based on a logical analysis of the individual's self-esteem as a moderator of that relationship.

Implicit in the condition of an individual with chronic low self-esteem is his/her tendency to avoid self-enhancement. Thus, by default, the tendency toward congruency is assumed to be stronger than the conflicting tendency toward self-enhancement. The predictions to be made for low self-esteem subjects assume that the theory of congruency is correct.

The consequences of self-esteem as a moderator of the relationship between congruency and marital adjustment are twofold. Firstly, the individual's self-esteem may moderate his/her necessity to accept the other person's evaluation of him/her (Wylie, 1978, pp. 474-475). An individual with low self-esteem may more readily accept another person's

evaluation of him/her, than does an individual with high self-esteem, since the latter may have other persons who provide him/her with evaluations of his/her worth. Thus, the importance of any one person's evaluation would be diminished for a high self-esteem subject, but would be increased for a low self-esteem subject.

A second consequence of self-esteem as a moderator of the relationship between congruency and marital adjustment, concerns the individual's alternatives to positively or negatively evaluating the other person (Wylie, 1978, pp. 474-475). An individual with chronic low self-esteem may be dependent on a person with whom he/she has congruent views, since that person fulfills the individual's need for validation of his/her sense of unworthiness. The low self-esteem individual demonstrates his/her congruency with the other person in his/her continued relationship with him/her. At low levels of self-esteem, congruency may not necessarily result in an increase in the individual's positive feelings toward the other person. Thus, a person who is low in self-esteem, and who is accurately perceived by his/her spouse, may have lower marital adjustment than a person with high self-esteem who has a similar degree of congruency with his/her spouse. Additional justification for this prediction is offered through a consideration of the individual's perspective on his/her marital adjustment. An individual with low self-esteem evaluates himself/herself negatively; hence, he/she is not expected to evaluate highly any relationship of which he/she is an integral part. In conclusion, low self-esteem subjects may have ambivalent feelings toward their spouses, and may produce low scores for marital adjustment; however, they may demonstrate moderate levels of congruency, arising from the length of their relationships.

The opposing predictions for high self-esteem subjects who show congruency with their spouses' perceptions correspond with the theory of interpersonal congruency, which postulates that congruent perceptions will tend to increase the individuals' feelings of affection for each other. These responses will tend to perpetuate the marriages.

Congruency theory provides the conceptual framework for understanding the relationship between congruency and marital adjustment in the case of high self-esteem persons. However, an understanding of that same relationship between congruency and marital adjustment for low self-esteem individuals depends upon which of two contradictory theories--congruency theory or self-enhancement theory--is believed.

#### Summary

Congruency is thought to be desirable in a relationship by providing validation of an individual's self-worth. Previous studies reported that actual congruency was related to marital adjustment (Kotlar, 1965; Luckey, 1960b; Preston, Peltz, Mudd & Froscher, 1952; Taylor, 1967), especially when the husband's self-concept was perceived correctly by his wife. These studies may have measured a cultural stereotype of a husband, rather than the individual's self-perceptions. The relationship between congruency and marital adjustment is further confounded by the similarity of views between spouses, since similarity is positively reinforcing and provides a basis on which to judge another person. Self-esteem is another variable of interest, as a moderator of the relationship between congruency and marital adjustment, based on theoretical implications arising from the conflict between the tendency toward self-enhancement and the tendency toward congruency.

## Chapter 4

### RATIONALE FOR METHODOLOGY

The present study was created in response to a need for methodological improvements in the investigation of the relationship between marital adjustment and the congruency of self- and spouse-perceptions. This approach to interspousal agreement of perceptions was more conducive to empirical testing and theoretical justification, than was the approach used in past studies. A number of deviations from previous studies were utilized in the present research.

Firstly, affective congruency was theoretically defined as the agreement between an individual's self-esteem and either his/her spouse's evaluation of his/her worth, or the individual's perception of his/her spouse's evaluation of his/her worth. In using this definition, a significant dimension of the self-concept, the self-esteem, was tapped. Consequently, the presence of affective congruency was logically assumed to validate the individual's feelings of self-worth. In contrast to this measurement of congruency using perceptions of self-esteem, previous studies measured congruency using personality traits or role beliefs, which may not be as crucial to the individual's self-worth.

Self-esteem levels may fluctuate, requiring that a couple who display high affective concordance in their perceptions continually adjust their perceptions of themselves and each other. Contrarily, the couple's personality attributes and role expectations may be more

stable; as a result, the measurement of congruency using these attributes may require a less intimate knowledge of the spouse's present condition.

Another advantage to the inclusion of the self-esteem in the definition of affective congruency was a reduction in the influence of similarity between the spouses as a confounding variable. Congruency existing between an individual's self-worth and his/her spouse's view of his/her worth was assumed to be less likely to be confounded by similar levels of self-esteem between the spouses. In contrast, the congruency between the role perceptions of the individual and his/her spouse was presumed to be confounded with the similarity of the couple's role beliefs, since the couple's relationship may be based upon their similar role expectations. It follows that an individual might be inclined to use his/her own role beliefs as a reference point from which to provide his/her partner's perspective, since he/she would ensure the similarity between his/her role perceptions and those which he/she ascribed to his/her partner. In comparison, dissimilar levels of self-esteem between spouses may be less threatening to the couple's marriage. Furthermore, it seems unlikely that an individual would view his/her spouse as similar to himself/herself for all of the diversified aspects of the self-esteem measured by the self-esteem questionnaire in this study.

Another confound which the present study sought to minimize by measuring congruency using self-esteem, rather than role perceptions, was the influence of cultural norms on the subjects' responses. The cultural bias toward particular role stereotypes may be more specifically defined for test items describing individual behaviors, than is

the bias toward overall high self-esteem. The present study measured the individual's self-esteem under only three perspectives, (self-view, perceived self-view, and view of the spouse), omitting the normative perspectives of ideal self and ideal spouse, which might have predisposed the subject to respond in terms of a role stereotype, rather than in terms of his/her self-perceptions. The remaining problem of the self-enhancement bias was resolved by an awareness that the individual's self-esteem incorporates his/her desire to appear positive around other persons. As an essential component of the individual's self-esteem, the bias toward high self-worth needs to be retained as one of the influences on affective congruency which occur naturally in a relationship.

An adequate measurement of the individual's self-esteem was provided by a 100-item test. Response set and fatigue were minimized by limiting the number of perspectives under which the subject completed the self-esteem test, and by using a significant time lapse between the subject's initial self-esteem perspective and his/her perception of his/her spouse's view. Newmark et al. (1977) allowed subjects 48 hours between their self-descriptions and their descriptions of their spouses, but the researchers did not ensure that the subjects actually maintained this time lapse between their descriptions.

A second deviation of the present study from previous research was the measurement of actual congruency using the subject's positive or negative evaluation of his/her spouse, rather than using a neutral description of the spouse's characteristics. By operationally defining actual congruency using an evaluative component of the self-concept, the present study attempted to provide a more sensitive and accurate

study of the principles of congruency theory.

Thirdly, a broad scope to the present research was achieved through the measurement of perceived congruency, in addition to the measurement of actual congruency. Since perceived congruency implies that the subject believes that he/she is understood by his/her spouse, the subject may obtain confirmation of his/her self-esteem.

Other methodological features unique to the present study concern the use of regressed difference scores in the measurement of congruency, as well as the use of a multivariate regression analysis of the data. Details of the statistical procedures are discussed in the sixth chapter.

A fifth advantage to the present methodology was provided in the use of married couples as subjects, to ensure the significance of the individuals to each other. Kemper's (1966) study of the self-concept as a function of significant others reported that a group of men ranked a husband's wife as his most important source of self-concept in a list of significant others. As Tagiuri and Petrullo (1958, p. 329) argued, "The two-person group is without a doubt the most crucial of all human situations." However, relatively speaking, the dyad has received little empirical investigation in nonexperimental studies of congruency. The intimate nature of the dyad is consistent with the focus of the present study on affective congruency, since an intimate relationship between two persons contributes to their abilities to perceive each other's feelings toward himself/herself. Also, the long term nature of some dyads affords an opportunity for congruency to be a significant factor in the partners' happiness in the relationship. Schafer et al. (1976, p. 58) added that the dyad was "a natural unit to examine the referent

nature of self." Within the dyad, the individual's self-concept may change as a reflection of the other person's views. This occurrence may be particularly true of the marital dyad. Thus, marriage provides a natural setting in which to examine the relationship between happiness and the congruency of the individual's self-concept with his/her belief about his/her partner's evaluation of him/her.

Finally, previous research was concerned with the differences between groups in their levels of congruency; however, the present study focused on the individual's level of congruency in relation to his/her marital adjustment.

The methodological features of the present study attempted to ensure that the study would enhance the understanding of affective congruency. In view of the lack of generalizability of previous research, owing to the diversity of the attributes measured, the present study was undertaken as exploratory research. The purpose of the study was to explore interpersonal congruency and self-concept validation between spouses, using the individual's self-esteem as a moderator variable. It was hoped that some aspects of the couple's interaction which may be associated with the relationship between marital adjustment and self-concept validation would be identified. The purpose of the study was operationalized in a set of hypotheses.

The first hypothesis predicted a significant positive relationship between actual affective congruency and marital adjustment. Actual affective congruency was defined as the difference in ratings between the individual's self-esteem and his/her spouse's rating of him/her. A large difference signified low congruency. Operationally, this hypothesis predicted that an individual whose self-esteem agreed



with his/her spouse's evaluation of him/her would have higher marital adjustment than an individual whose self-esteem disagreed with his/her spouse's evaluation of him/her. The theory of interpersonal congruency postulates that an individual strives to achieve actual congruency between his/her self-perception and another person's perception of him/her. Since actual congruency is highly valued, it was predicted that an individual would positively evaluate a spouse who provided him/her with congruent perceptions, resulting in an increase in the individual's marital adjustment.

The second hypothesis dealt with the individual's perception of his/her spouse's views, rather than with his/her spouse's actual views, as in the case of actual congruency. It was predicted that a significant positive relationship existed between perceived affective congruency and marital adjustment. Perceived affective congruency was defined as the difference in ratings between the individual's self-esteem and his/her perception of his/her spouse's view of him/her. Perceived congruency was perfect when there was no difference between the two variables. This hypothesis implies that an individual who believed that his/her spouse perceived him/her in the same way that he/she perceived himself/herself would have higher adjustment in his/her marriage, than would an individual who did not think that his/her spouse had congruent perceptions with him/her.

The third hypothesis predicted that the relationship between marital adjustment and perceived congruency would be greater than the relationship between marital adjustment and actual congruency. The rationale for this hypothesis was provided by the results of previous research, and by the notion that interperceptions have more sources of

variability than do intraperceptions.

The preceding hypotheses were predicted to apply to married couples, particularly when the husband's self-concept was being perceived, as reported in previous studies (Corsini, 1956a, 1956b; Luckey, 1959, 1960).

A fourth hypothesis stated that self-esteem moderates the relationship between perceived or actual congruency and marital adjustment. Both high and low self-esteem individuals may show high affective congruency with their spouses, as a consequence of the duration of their marriages. While both high and low self-esteem individuals may be aware of the needs of their spouses, (evident in their high levels of congruency), high self-esteem may be a prerequisite to responding to the needs of other persons. High self-esteem individuals may understand and respond to their spouses' needs as a function of their affective congruency, contributing to their high levels of marital adjustment. Thus, high self-esteem persons were predicted to demonstrate a positive relationship between marital adjustment and perceived or actual congruency.

A different prediction was made for low self-esteem subjects. It was hypothesized that a negative relationship existed between marital adjustment and affective congruency for low self-esteem subjects. Persons with low levels of self-esteem may be aware of their spouses' needs, but may be incapable of responding appropriately to them, because of their own high level of needs. Low self-esteem subjects who share congruent perceptions with their spouses may not necessarily show high levels of marital adjustment. This assumption may be true whether or not the spouses have high self-esteem, or share the individuals'

feelings of low self-worth. In low self-esteem subjects, congruency indicates that the spouse agrees, (or the individual thinks that his/her spouse agrees), with his/her low self-evaluation. The spouse's negative evaluation of the individual confirms the individual's self-esteem, and may sustain the couple's relationship by reinforcing the spouses' dependency on each other. Nevertheless, a negative evaluation will likely be disliked. Consequently, high affective congruency in low self-esteem subjects may be associated with low levels of marital adjustment. On the other hand, low affective congruency in low self-esteem subjects indicates that the spouse disagrees, (or the individual thinks that his/her spouse disagrees), with his/her negative self-evaluation. In this situation, incongruency was expected to be associated with levels of marital adjustment which would be relatively higher than the levels of marital adjustment found in low self-esteem subjects who shared congruent perceptions with their spouses. The lack of empirical studies relating congruency to marital adjustment in low self-esteem subjects restricts the predictions for low self-esteem subjects to conjecture based on the principles of congruency. The present study attempted only to demonstrate covariation between marital adjustment and the presence of actual or perceived affective congruency, as it was moderated by self-esteem.

Several significant correlations were predicted, including the relationships between self-esteem and marital adjustment, between self-esteem and perceived congruency, and between self-esteem and actual congruency. These correlations were reported in previous studies. Perceived congruency was expected to correlate highly with actual congruency, since some correspondence of views was likely after two

years of marriage. Husbands and wives were predicted to correlate highly on the measures of marital adjustment, self-esteem, perceived congruency, and actual congruency. The basis for this prediction was the relationship previously reported between the similarity of attributes for two persons and their attraction to each other.

The duration of the couple's marriage was predicted to be significantly related to marital adjustment, perceived congruency, and actual congruency. Therefore, marital duration was included as a dummy variable in the multiple regression analysis. Intuitively, the length of a marriage is assumed to be related to marital adjustment, within reasonable limits. However, studies have reported opposite findings, citing a negative relationship between marital adjustment and the duration of the marriage, depending upon the length of the marriage (Blood & Wolfe, 1965; Pineo, 1961). The postulated relationship between marital duration and the congruency of self-perceptions derives from the assumption that a couple who have spent more time together will have had more opportunities for self-disclosure, increasing the likelihood that they will demonstrate congruency in their evaluations of each other. This same reason applies to the expectation that spouses will demonstrate a level of congruency above a minimum level.

The method which was used to test these hypotheses is described in the following chapter.

## Chapter 5

### METHOD

Descriptions will be given of the subjects, the questionnaires, and the procedures employed in the present study.

#### Subjects

Sixty married couples, who had been married at least 2 years, but not more than 8 years, participated in the study. The average length of marriage was 3.6 years with a standard deviation of 1.7 years. Subjects ranged in age from 20 to 34 years with a mean age of 25.4 years. The sample was homogeneous with respect to income and educational level. Couples were solicited as volunteers in September, 1980 through letters hand-delivered to the Student Family Housing Complex at the University of Calgary. The complex, located on campus, consisted of 250 townhouse rental suites for families in which one or both persons was a student. The letter (see Appendix A) was followed by door-to-door solicitation the next day. Notices were also placed on the community bulletin boards. Subjects were offered payment of \$3.00 each, but only six couples accepted the money. The results of the study were described in a letter sent to each couple in February, 1981.

#### Questionnaires

##### Background Information

Background questions (see Appendix B) were included to provide

demographic information about the subjects. Questions pertaining to the subject's personal relationships as well as to his/her perception of his/her parents' marriage were designed to reveal areas of interaction which might be relevant to marital adjustment.

Tennessee Self Concept Scale  
(TSCS)

The Tennessee Self Concept Scale (Fitts, 1964, 1965) consists of 100 self-descriptive statements to which the subject responds on a 5-point scale ranging from "completely false" to "completely true." The questionnaire is a measure of the subject's overall level of self-esteem. Ten items constitute a self-criticism or lie score. The self-concept is viewed from both internal and external frames of reference. The internal components of the self consist of identity (what the individual is), self-satisfaction (how the individual feels about himself/herself), and behavior (how an individual acts). The external frame of reference for self-description is comprised of the following categories: physical self, moral-ethical self, personal self, family self, and social self. Scores on all 90 items across all 8 areas of the self-concept are summed to produce a total score, which reflects the general level of self-esteem. High scores represent high levels of self-esteem, and low scores indicate low self-esteem. The use of different instructions for the TSCS elicited three measures: the subject's self-esteem, the subject's perception of the way his/her spouse evaluated him/her, and the subject's evaluation of his/her spouse.

### Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS)

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976) consists of 32 items, most of which are answered on a 6-point scale for frequency. The DAS is a measure of marital adjustment which has been demonstrated to be superior to the Locke Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale (Hunt, 1978). Marital adjustment is conceptually defined on the DAS by the degree of consensus, cohesion, expression of affection, and satisfaction in the relationship. Dyadic consensus refers to the amount of agreement between the partners on important issues. Dyadic cohesion indicates the frequency with which partners engage in positive interaction with each other, such as talking together. Affectional expression measures the frequency with which partners openly express affection for each other. The last component, dyadic satisfaction, examines the person's desire to remain in the relationship in view of the frequency of conflict with his/her partner. A relationship is considered adjusted to the extent that the couple exhibits consensus, cohesion, affectional expression, and satisfaction in their relationship.

### Self and Partner Survey

The self and partner survey consists of 37 questions about the individual and his/her relationship with his/her partner. The subject responds to the questions on a 5-point scale. The survey (see Appendix C) was developed by the author to explore areas of the self-concept pertinent to social interaction, using specific examples of daily life which may be related to accurate perception between the individuals.

### Procedure

Four couples were seated at a table in a quiet university room. The subjects were placed apart from their spouses so as to ensure the privacy of each person. The subjects were assured that their responses were confidential. They were given a general description of the study, and informed that the purpose of the study was to gain further understanding of some psychological factors in marriage. Each subject signed a consent form (see Appendix D). A female researcher was present for testing on one-half of the sample, while a male research assistant tested the other half to counterbalance the effects of sex of the experimenter.

After being given the questionnaires, the subjects were told to read the instructions (see Appendix E) and then to complete the questions on background information. They were told to take as much time as they needed for the tests. The subjects were not allowed to communicate with each other during the procedure. Next, the subjects were told to complete the TSCS by responding to the statements "as if you were describing yourself." The subjects' responses to the TSCS under these initial instructions provided a measure of their self-esteem. The completion of the background questionnaire and the TSCS took approximately 20 minutes. The subjects were then asked to return to the same room within 1 week for the second part of the study. The mean length of time between test sessions was 3.4 days. The subjects were told not to discuss either the questions or their answers on the TSCS or the background questions with anyone.

During the second test session, the subjects were asked to



complete the TSCS again, under two different sets of instructions (see Appendix F). The subjects completed the TSCS by responding to the statements "as if you were describing your partner." These responses provided a measure of the subjects' evaluations of their spouses. The partners' responses were used to give a measure of the subjects' self-concepts as they were actually seen by their partners. This measure was called the partner's actual view, to signify the way the partner actually viewed the subject's self-concept.

During this same test session, the subjects completed the TSCS a third time, by responding to the statements "as you think your partner would if he/she were describing you." Subjects' responses under these instructions provided a measure of the subjects' perceptions of the ways in which their spouses viewed them. This measure was labelled the perceived view, to signify the way the subject perceived his/her partner's view of him/her.

Perceived affective congruency was operationally defined as the difference between the subject's total score on the TSCS under the initial instructions and the subject's total score on the TSCS under the third set of instructions. This difference score constitutes the discrepancy between the subject's self-esteem score and his/her score for the perceived view. Actual affective congruency was operationally defined as the difference between the subject's total score on the TSCS under the initial instructions and the subject's total score on the TSCS under the second set of instructions. The difference score represents the discrepancy between the subject's self-esteem score and his/her partner's actual view score.

The completion of the TSCS under these two sets of instructions

took about 40 minutes. The subjects then completed the DAS, which was followed by a brief coffee break. Next, the subjects completed the self and partner survey. The total time for the second test session was approximately 70 minutes. The subjects were individually questioned about their reactions to the study. None of the subjects indicated that he/she would refuse to participate in further studies of this type. All of the subjects described their participation as a positive experience. Furthermore, the subjects stated that they had understood prior to their involvement in the study that they would be asked questions of a personal nature. The subjects claimed not to have discussed with anyone in the break between test sessions the questions in the study. Finally, none of the subjects indicated any undue difficulty in completing the TSCS under the three sets of instructions. Subjects later received by mail a written description of the study, including the overall results. The letter informed the subjects of an opportunity to discuss any questions pertaining to their marital happiness with counsellors at the Student Counselling Services on campus.

## Chapter 6

### RESULTS

The methods of analyzing the data included preliminary analyses to determine the nature of the data, followed by a multiple linear regression analysis, which assessed the contributions of self-esteem, perceived congruency, and actual congruency to the prediction of an individual's marital adjustment. Data obtained from the self and partner survey were reduced in a factor analysis to significant factor scores which were included in another multiple regression analysis of marital adjustment. Finally, product-moment correlations between the main variables were performed to compare the present findings with the results of previous research.

#### Preliminary Analyses

Prior to the major regression analysis, the data were analyzed in the following ways: (1) the frequencies of the demographic characteristics of the subjects were tabulated, (2) measures of actual and perceived congruency were derived, (3) the use of couple or individual scores in further analyses was considered, and (4) the frequency distributions of the predictor variables were examined to ensure that the statistical assumptions had been met.

#### Demographic Characteristics of the Subjects

Frequency analyses were performed on the nominal data from the

background questionnaire to provide demographic information about the subjects. Characteristics of the subjects are described in Table 1. The majority of the subjects were married for the first time, having experienced one other serious relationship which had lasted about 6 months. Most of the subjects had cohabited with their spouse for a minimum of 6 weeks. Over one-third of the subjects did not have children. Among the subjects who were parents, the mean number of children was 1.0. Most of the subjects were students (65.8 percent), compared with subjects who were employed (20.0 percent), or who were housepersons (14.2 percent). The students were predominantly male, comprising 42.5 percent of the males, compared with 23.3 percent of the females, as shown in Table 2. The frequencies for education, income, religion, and length of cohabitation are shown in Table 3. Many of the subjects were attending or had attended graduate school (42.5 percent of the sample), with an additional 47.5 percent having graduated from college or having attended some college. The average income of the subjects was between \$5,000 and \$10,000. Most of the subjects were Protestant.

#### Measures of Actual and Perceived Congruency

Actual congruency was defined as the estimated true difference score between the spouse's actual view of the subject and the subject's self-esteem. Perceived congruency was defined as the estimated true difference score between the subject's perception of his/her spouse's view of him/her and the subject's self-esteem. The estimated true difference score is that score which would be obtained if there were no errors of measurement. It is the score which would be produced if a

Table 1  
Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and Ranges  
for Background Variables

Background variables	$\bar{X}$	Range	$\overline{SD}$
Duration of marriage (months)	43.60	24 - 96	20.24
Age (years)	25.44	20 - 34	3.26
Number of times married	1.05	1 - 2	.19
Number of previous relationships	1.39	0 - 5	.93
Length of most recent relationship (months)	6.04	0 - 36	6.05
Number of children	.90	0 - 3	.86
Age of first child (months)	13.94	1 - 36	8.32
Age of second child (months)	42.20	20 - 60	5.41
Age of third child (months)	26.97	0 - 60	4.96

Table 2  
Frequency Breakdown of Males and  
Females by Occupation

Sex		Occupation		
		Student	Employed	Houseperson
Male	<u>n</u>	51	9	0
	Total %	42.5	7.5	0.0
Female	<u>n</u>	28	15	17
	Total %	23.3	12.5	14.2
Total	<u>n</u>	79	24	17
	Total %	65.8	20.0	14.2

Table 3  
Frequencies for Cohabitation, Educational  
Level, Income, and Religion

Variables	<u>n</u>	Relative frequencies
Cohabitation		
None	17	14.2
< 6 weeks	11	9.2
6 weeks - 6 months	28	23.3
6 months - 1 year	38	31.7
> 1 year	26	21.7
Educational level		
High school graduate	6	5.0
Business school	6	5.0
Some college	34	28.3
College graduate	23	19.2
Some graduate school	51	42.5
Income		
< \$5,000	16	13.3
\$5,000-\$10,000	95	79.2
\$10,000-\$14,000	9	7.5
Religion		
Protestant	78	65.0
Catholic	21	17.5
Jewish	12	10.0
None	9	7.5

number of independent observations were made of the subject's performance. An estimated true difference score of zero would indicate total agreement or total congruency between the perceptions being compared. In contrast, the raw difference score, which uses fallible or obtained scores, is given by  $d = X_f - X_i$ , where  $X_f$  represents the final score and  $X_i$  represents the initial score. The final score indicates the spouse's actual view of the subject in the case of actual congruency, or the subject's perception of his/her spouse's view in the case of perceived congruency. The initial score is the subject's level of self-esteem. The raw difference score is highly unreliable and is negatively correlated with its initial score (Cronbach, 1958; Cronbach & Furby, 1970; Harris, 1963; Lord, 1958; McNemar, 1958). Other problems associated with the use of raw difference scores, which are discussed in Appendix G, led to the use of the estimated true difference score. The reliability of the estimated true difference score is greater than that of the raw difference score when the reliabilities or variances of the final and initial scores are not equal (Linn & Slinde, 1977).

Formulas for estimating the true difference score. The estimated true difference score was represented by  $d_t = X_f - X'_f$ , where  $X'_f$  was the estimated true final score predicted from the observed initial score using the linear regression of the final on the initial scores. It eliminated that part of the regression which was produced by measurement errors. The equation for obtaining the estimated true final score,  $X'_f$ , was provided by McNemar (1969, p. 178):

$$X'_f = r_{xx} X_i + M_f - r_{xx} M_i ,$$

where  $M_f$ , representing the mean of the final scores, and  $M_i$ , repre-



senting the mean of the initial scores, were assumed to be equal. The reliability coefficient,  $r_{xx}$ , represents an estimate of the correlation between the initial and final scores when there are no differences other than measurement errors. The formula for obtaining the estimated true final score may also be expressed in deviation units as  $x'_f = r_{xx} x_i$ , where  $x_i$  represents the difference of the mean from a raw score, or  $X - \bar{X}$ . The reliability coefficient of the initial test, or  $r_{xx}$ , was obtained by using McNemar's (1969, p. 170) formula:

$$(sd)^2 (1 - r_{xx}) = (SD)^2 (1 - R_{xx}) ,$$

where  $sd$ , representing the standard deviation of the self-esteem scores, was equal to 22.595;  $SD$ , representing the standard deviation of the unrestricted range, was equal to 30.70, according to the test publisher; and  $R_{xx}$ , representing the reliability of the unrestricted range, was equal to .92, according to the test publisher. The reliability of the unrestricted range was significant at the 1 percent level ( $df = 654$ ). The data obtained in the present study yielded a significant reliability coefficient of .852 ( $df = 117$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Fisher's (1925/1958, pp. 197-201)  $z$  transformation was used to test the significance of the reliability coefficients because the distribution of the coefficients is not normal for high correlations.

Reliability coefficient of the difference scores. Further evidence of the reliability of the difference score was provided by the reliability coefficient of the adjusted difference score itself. It was assumed that the error of measurement variance of the sample was the same as the error of measurement variance of the standardization group. The formula for the reliability coefficient of the adjusted difference

score, obtained from McNemar (1969, p. 175), was as follows:

$$r_{dd} = \frac{r_{xx} S_x^2 + r_{yy} S_y^2 - 2r_{xy} S_x S_y}{S_x^2 + S_y^2 - 2r_{xy} S_x S_y},$$

where  $r_{xx}$  represents the correlation between two measures of the same thing (or the reliability of the first test);  $r_{yy}$  is the reliability of the second test;  $r_{xy}$  is the correlation between the two measures;  $S_x$  is the standard deviation of the initial scores; and  $S_y$  is the standard deviation of the final scores. High reliabilities were obtained for the difference scores for both perceived and actual congruency ( $\underline{r} = .77$  and  $\underline{r} = .89$ , respectively;  $\underline{df} = 118$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The high average reliabilities of the initial and final scores, and the low correlation between them contribute to the high reliability of the adjusted difference scores (Linn & Slinde, 1977; Wylie, 1974, p. 92).

Standard errors of measurement of the difference scores. A difference score needs to be interpreted not only in terms of its reliability coefficient, but, also, in light of its standard error of measurement, which represents the variability due to chance errors. The standard error of measurement of the difference score was obtained by using McNemar's (1969, p. 174) formula:

$$S_{e_d} = \sqrt{S_{e_x}^2 + S_{e_y}^2} = \sqrt{S_x^2 (1 - r_{xx}) + S_y^2 (1 - r_{yy})},$$

where  $S_{e_x}$  is the standard error of measurement of the initial scores, and  $S_{e_y}$  is the standard error of measurement of the final scores. The standard errors of measurement of the difference scores were equal to 20.762 for perceived congruency and 17.713 for actual congruency. The

standard errors of measurement of the difference scores were small relative to the difference scores themselves ( $\bar{X} = 50.083$  for perceived congruency and  $\bar{X} = 47.975$  for actual congruency), lending support to the notion of the dependability of the difference scores.

Correlation between the difference score and the initial score.

A negative correlation between the difference score and the self-esteem score is produced in part by the attenuating effect of the unreliability of the differences scores on the correlation between the initial and final scores, and also by whatever factors contribute to real differences between the testing for initial scores and the testing for final scores (McNemar, 1969, pp. 177-178). The practical implication of this negative correlation is that subjects who have low initial scores (low self-esteem scores) are biased toward large positive difference scores. The correlation of the estimated true difference score with its adjusted initial score was achieved using this formula (McNemar, 1969, p. 178):

$$r_{aig} = \frac{r_{if}S_f - r_{xx}S_i}{S_f^2 + r_{xx}^2S_i^2 - 2r_{if}r_{xx}S_iS_f},$$

where  $r_{if}$  is the correlation of the initial and final raw scores,

$r_{xx}$  is the estimate of  $r_{if}$  under the condition of no difference,

$S_f$  is the standard deviation of the final scores, and

$S_i$  is the standard deviation of the initial scores.

In this study, the correlation between the actual congruency difference score and self-esteem was significant ( $r_{aig} = -.27$ ,  $df = 117$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Thus, the greater is the discrepancy score (or the incongruency between perceptions), the lower is the individual's self-esteem score.

Conversely, the greater is the congruency of perceptions, the higher is the individual's self-esteem. The correlation between the perceived congruency difference score and self-esteem was also significant ( $r_{a-ig} = -.25$ ,  $df = 118$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

All of the major analyses were conducted using adjusted difference scores as the measures of congruency.<sup>4</sup> The results using raw difference scores were essentially the same results as those produced using adjusted difference scores; hence, the former results were not reported.

#### Husband and Wife Analyses

Pearson product-moment correlations were performed separately on the data for husbands and wives. The prediction that the correlation between marital adjustment and perceived congruency would be greater when the husband's self-esteem was perceived, than when the wife's self-esteem was used as the object of perception was not confirmed. The correlations are shown in Table 4. Neither the husband's nor the wife's marital adjustment was significantly related to the husband's perceived or actual congruency. Instead, the wife's marital adjustment depended to a significant degree upon both her perception of congruency with her husband, and the actual congruency between her self-view and her husband's view of her ( $r = .345$  and  $r = .271$ , respectively;  $df = 58$ ,

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<sup>4</sup>The congruency difference scores actually reflect the amount of incongruency. Since congruency and incongruency were defined as opposites on the same continuum, subsequent analyses converted negative correlation coefficients involving incongruency into positive correlation coefficients involving the opposite, or congruency.

Table 4

Correlations Between Marital Adjustment and  
Predictor Variables for Husbands and Wives

Predictor variables	Husband's marital adjust- ment	Wife's marital adjust- ment
Husband's		
Self-esteem	.192	.202
Perceived congruency	-.002	.069
Actual congruency	-.006	.044
Wife's		
Self-esteem	.408**	.386**
Perceived congruency	.211	.346**
Actual congruency	-.209*	.271*

Note.  $n = 60$

\*  
 $p < .05$

\*\*  
 $p < .01$

$p < .05$ ). The husband's marital adjustment depended upon the presence of actual congruency between his wife's self-esteem and his evaluation of her ( $r = -.209$ ,  $df = 58$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The marital adjustment scores for both the husband and wife were significantly correlated with the wife's self-esteem ( $r = .408$  and  $r = .386$ , respectively;  $df = 58$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The prediction that a husband and wife would correlate highly on self-esteem scores and marital adjustment scores was confirmed. As indicated in Table 5, the Pearson product-moment correlation between husbands and wives for self-esteem was significant at the 5 percent level ( $r = .281$ ,  $df = 58$ ). The correlation between the husband's marital adjustment and his wife's marital adjustment was also significant ( $r = .749$ ,  $df = 58$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The predicted correlations between husbands' and wives' scores on perceived congruency and actual congruency were not significant.

The nonsignificant correlations between husbands and wives on perceived and actual congruency suggest that husbands and wives are dissimilar for those variables. This finding argues against the use of a combined husband and wife score in further analyses, since such a score might conceal important differences in magnitude on the particular variables between the marital partners. Also, a couple difference score in combination with a congruency difference score would reduce the multiple correlation coefficient and increase the error term in the regression analysis, which will be used to determine the relationships between marital adjustment and each of the following variables: perceived congruency, actual congruency, and self-esteem. Theoretically, the individual's perception of his/her marriage is the most relevant variable in the comparison of his/her perception of his/her

Table 5  
Intercorrelations of Predictor Variables  
for Husbands and Wives

Husband's scores	Wife's scores		
	(S)	(P)	(A)
Self-esteem (S)	.281 <sup>*</sup>	.223	.125
Perceived congruency (P)	.215	.218	.164
Actual congruency (A)	.198	.269	.186

Note.  $n = 60$

<sup>\*</sup>  
 $p < .05$

spouse's view with his/her own self-esteem. The focus is on the individual's perspective concerning his/her self-perceptions and his/her marriage. An average couple score is contradictory to this conceptual framework. In light of these arguments, all subsequent analyses were performed on individual scores.

Another alternative approach to the use of individual scores in the analyses was also rejected. The regression analyses were conducted on the individual scores, using sex as a dummy variable, rather than on the separate marital adjustment scores of husbands and wives. The reason for this decision was that the assumptions of the regression analyses were better met when the larger sample of individual scores was used.

#### Sociometric Indices

Means, standard deviations, ranges, skewness, and kurtosis are displayed in Table 6 for scores on the following variables: marital adjustment, self-esteem, perceived congruency, actual congruency, and duration of the marriage. The obtained mean for marital adjustment ( $\bar{X} = 120.67$ ) was significantly higher than the norm reported for married couples using the DAS ( $\bar{X} = 100.00$ ). Similarly, the mean for self-esteem scores ( $\bar{X} = 363.40$ ) was higher than the norm for self-esteem reported for college students on the TSCS ( $\bar{X} = 347$ ). The obtained mean for self-esteem was closer to the mean for "personality-integrated" subjects ( $\bar{X} = 376$ ). The scores on the lie scale of the TSCS were all within the acceptable range.

The relationship between marital adjustment and each of the predictor variables is depicted in a correlation matrix shown in



Table 6  
Sociometric Indices for Marital Adjustment  
and the Predictor Variables

Measure	$\bar{X}$	<u>SD</u>	Range	Skewness	Kurtosis
Marital adjustment	120.67	15.00	78 - 142	-.92	.28
Self-esteem	363.40	22.58	300 - 404	-.48	-.40
Perceived congruency	50.08	17.24	12 - 86	.20	-.76
Actual Congruency	47.98	18.73	.6 - 85	-.05	-.72
Duration of marriage (months)	43.60	20.24	24 - 96	.11	.51

Note. n = 120

Table 7. The results of the males and females were combined, since they were highly similar. There were significant positive relationships between self-esteem and marital adjustment ( $\underline{r} = .299$ ,  $\underline{df} = 118$ ,  $\underline{p} < .01$ ), as predicted, as well as between perceived congruency and marital adjustment ( $\underline{r} = .178$ ,  $\underline{df} = 118$ ,  $\underline{p} < .05$ ), and between actual congruency and perceived congruency ( $\underline{r} = .262$ ,  $\underline{df} = 118$ ,  $\underline{p} < .01$ ). The hypothesized relationship between marital adjustment and actual congruency was not confirmed ( $\underline{r} = .049$ ,  $\underline{df} = 118$ ,  $\underline{p} > .05$ ). The predicted relationships between duration and marital adjustment, between duration and perceived congruency, and between duration and actual congruency were not significant.

#### Multiple Regression Analyses

A multiple linear regression analysis was chosen to assess the relationship between marital adjustment and the predictor variables. The multidetermined nature of marital adjustment demands a multivariate method of analysis; hence, multiple regression analysis using correlated variables was selected. An alternative method of analysis, the factorial design on an analysis of variance, was not considered appropriate with correlated variables (McNemar, 1969, p. 449). Indeed, Cohen (1968) noted the superiority of the multiple regression technique to the analysis of variance when the study involved nominal or ordinal variables and correlated variables. The use of variables which were characteristics of persons was a relevant consideration, since McNemar (1969) concluded that the factorial design approach was inferior to multiple regression "as a method for testing the statistical significance of factors that are characteristics of individuals" (p. 453). Multiple

Table 7  
Correlation Matrix of Scores on Marital  
Adjustment and the Predictor Variables

	M	S	P	A	D
Marital adjustment (M)		.299**	.178*	.049	.122
Self-esteem (S)			.168	.066	-.161*
Perceived congruency (P)				.262**	.076
Actual congruency (A)					-.036
Duration (D)					

Note.  $n = 120$

\*  
 $p < .05$

\*\*  
 $p < .01$

regression analysis utilizes a combination of continuous and categorical variables, in contrast with other procedures, such as discriminant function analysis. Another advantage of multiple regression analysis was its emphasis on the contribution of each variable to the prediction equation, while permitting several variables to be included. Finally, multiple regression analysis gave an index of the effectiveness of the equation for predicting marital adjustment.

Forward (stepwise) inclusion was selected for the analysis because no causal relationships among the predictor variables were specified. The order of the predictor variables to be entered into the regression equation was determined by the respective contribution of each variable to the explained variance. The first variable chosen for entry had the largest squared partial correlation with marital adjustment. The statistical parameters used in deciding which variables were to be included were a minimum  $F$  value significant at the 1 percent level, and a minimum tolerance level of 5 percent. Tolerance is the proportion of the variance of marital adjustment not explained by the independent variables already entered into the regression equation.

#### Multiple Regression Analysis With Congruency Difference Scores

The use of difference scores as measures of congruency in the multiple regression analysis makes the  $F$ -test more sensitive to violations of the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variances. An examination of the plot of the residuals against the predicted final scores,  $Y'$ s, did not indicate a lack of linearity. The degree of heterogeneity of the variances was not significant ( $F_{\max} = 1.718$ ,

$df = 3, 119, p > .05$ ).

A stepwise multiple linear regression analysis was conducted using the following predictor variables: self-esteem, perceived congruency, actual congruency, duration of the marriage, and sex of the subject as a dummy variable. It was predicted that there would be a significant positive linear relationship between marital adjustment and perceived congruency, and between marital adjustment and actual congruency. Both of these relationships were predicted to be moderated by the subject's level of self-esteem. Results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis, as shown in Table 8, indicate that the overall regression equation was significant ( $F = 5.848, df = 3, 116, p < .01$ ). The multiple correlation was .362 with a standard error of estimate of 14.159. In order of importance, self-esteem, duration of the marriage, and perceived congruency were identified as the best combination of variables for predicting marital adjustment. However, only self-esteem had a significant relationship with the criterion variable, accounting for approximately 9 percent of the variance in the marital adjustment scores. A total of 13 percent of the variance in the marital adjustment scores was accounted for when all three variables were operating jointly in the regression equation. The beta weights are shown in Table 8. The regression equation using the beta weights for self-esteem, duration, and perceived congruency was as follows:

$$Y' = 36.703 + .306X_1 + .162X_2 + .114X_3 .$$

A cross-validation check of the data was made using McNemar's procedure (1969, p. 209), in which a second sample of subjects serves as a basis for deriving a new set of regression weights and a correlation

Table 8  
Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis on Marital  
Adjustment Using Congruency Scores

Vector	Multiple regression analysis			
	<u>R</u>	<u>R</u> <sup>2</sup>	Beta	<u>F</u>
I Self-esteem <sup>a</sup>	.299	.089	.306	11.750**
II Duration <sup>a</sup>	.345	.119	.162	3.380
III Perceived congruency <sup>a</sup>	.362	.131	.114	1.670
Overall regression equation <sup>b</sup>	.362	.131		5.848**

Note. n = 120

<sup>a</sup>Degrees of freedom are 1 and 116.

<sup>b</sup>Degrees of freedom are 3 and 116.

\*\*  
p < .01

coefficient for the selected predictors. Other methods of cross-validation typically apply the regression equation from the first sample to the second sample, which biases the estimates, since the predictors with high beta weights were chosen in the first regression analysis. The regression equation and the coefficient of determination, or the squared correlation coefficient, were obtained from a second regression analysis, which was conducted on a random sample of 60 subjects selected from the original sample of 120 subjects. The obtained multiple correlation coefficient was corrected for shrinkage by using McNemar's (1969, p. 205) formula, due to the small sample size relative to the number of predictors.

The results of the cross-validation are shown in Table 9. The multiple correlation coefficient of .457 was significant at the 5 percent level ( $F = 2.859$ ,  $df = 5, 54$ ), but not at the 1 percent level, as in the original regression equation. Nevertheless, the finding implies support for the reliability of the original equation. The cross-validation analysis produced a standard error of estimate of 10.325. As in the original equation which used 120 subjects, self-esteem was a significant predictor variable ( $F = 4.821$ ,  $df = 1, 54$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

#### Multiple Regression Analysis Using Components of the Difference Scores

The controversial nature of difference scores, whether or not they are corrected for unreliability, suggests the need for another stepwise multiple regression analysis, which would replace the congruency difference scores with scores for the partner's actual view, and

Table 9  
Cross-Validation Test on Regression Analysis  
Using Congruency Scores

Vector	Multiple regression analysis			
	<u>R</u>	<u>R</u> <sup>2</sup>	Beta	<u>F</u>
I Perceived congruency <sup>a</sup>	.304	.092	.223	2.801
II Self-esteem <sup>a</sup>	.378	.143	.250	4.821*
III Duration <sup>a</sup>	.446	.198	.248	3.888
IV Sex <sup>a</sup>	.454	.206	-.107	.686
V Actual congruency <sup>a</sup>	.457	.209	.065	.219
Overall regression equation <sup>b</sup>	.457	.209		2.859*

Note. n = 60

<sup>a</sup>Degrees of freedom are equal to 1 and 54.

<sup>b</sup>Degrees of freedom are equal to 5 and 54.

\*  
p < .05



the scores for the subject's perception of his/her partner's views. Cronbach and Furby (1970) suggested this procedure as an alternative to the use of difference scores. They argued that complex relationships may be revealed when the two variables, which comprise the difference score, appear separately in the analysis. Wylie (1968, p. 759) pointed out that this technique discloses the amount of variance contributed by each component of the difference score to the variance in scores on the dual index. Forward (stepwise) inclusion was utilized, since no causal relationships among the variables were hypothesized.

The correlation between the partner's actual view and the subject's idea of that view was predictably high ( $r = .690$ ,  $df = 118$ ,  $p < .05$ ). However, the correlation was higher than the correlation reported between actual and perceived congruency ( $r = .262$ ,  $df = 118$ ,  $p < .01$ ), as would be expected when difference scores are compared with non-difference scores. The significant correlations between self-esteem and actual view ( $r = .74$ ,  $df = 118$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and between self-esteem and perceived view ( $r = .79$ ,  $df = 118$ ,  $p < .05$ ), indicate a problem of multicollinearity in the multiple regression analysis.

The results of the multiple regression analysis using the components of the difference scores, as shown in Table 10, were significant ( $F = 6.941$ ,  $df = 2, 117$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The multiple correlation coefficient was .326, with a standard error of estimate of 14.302. Neither of the obtained beta weights was significant. The assumption of homogeneity of the variances was not confirmed ( $F_{\max} = 1.903$ ,  $df = 2, 119$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

A cross-validation test of the regression analysis was significant, as shown in Table 11. A significant multiple correlation

Table 10

Stepwise Regression Analysis on Marital Adjustment  
Using Components of the Difference Scores

Vector	Multiple regression analysis			
	<u>R</u>	<u>R</u> <sup>2</sup>	Beta	<u>F</u>
I Partner's perceived view <sup>a</sup>	.316	.100	.213	2.192
II Self-esteem <sup>a</sup>	.326	.106	.130	.822
Overall regression equation <sup>b</sup>	.326	.106		6.941 <sup>**</sup>

Note. n = 120

<sup>a</sup>Degrees of freedom are 1 and 117.

<sup>b</sup>Degrees of freedom are 2 and 117.

<sup>\*\*</sup>  
p < .01

Table 11

Cross-Validation Test on Regression Analysis  
Using Components of the Difference Scores

Vector	Multiple regression analysis			
	<u>R</u>	<u>R</u> <sup>2</sup>	Beta	<u>F</u>
I Partner's perceived view <sup>a</sup>	.372	.138	.472	4.643*
II Self-esteem <sup>a</sup>	.378	.143	-.121	.306
Overall regression equation <sup>b</sup>	.378	.143		4.747*

Note. n = 60

<sup>a</sup>Degrees of freedom are 1 and 57.

<sup>b</sup>Degrees of freedom are 2 and 57.

\*  
p < .05

coefficient of .378, with a standard error of estimate of 18.998, was obtained. The regression analysis, although not significant at the 1 percent level, compares favorably with the original equation ( $F = 4.747$ ,  $df = 2, 57$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The significant variable was the partner's perceived view ( $F = 4.643$ ,  $df = 1, 57$ ,  $p < .05$ ), which accounted for approximately 14 percent of the variance in marital adjustment.

The regression analysis using congruency difference scores produced significant results, compared with the nonsignificant findings obtained when the components of the difference scores were included as variables. An individual's perception of his/her spouse's view appears to be a less important variable in predicting his/her marital adjustment, than is the discrepancy between the individual's self-view compared with his/her idea of his/her partner's view. The importance of this discrepancy may be reflected in the individual's level of self-esteem.

#### Factor Analysis of Self and Partner Survey Data

Scores from the self and partner survey and the background questionnaire were factor analyzed using a principal components analysis (Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner & Bent, 1975), to produce a reduced set of uncorrelated variables. The principal components model makes no assumptions about the underlying structure of the variables. It assumes that all variance is important, and extracts as many components or factors as there are variables in the matrix. Principal components analysis derives new variables which are linear combinations of the original variables, to maximally discriminate among the subjects. A

phi-coefficient matrix of scores from the 36-item self and partner survey and the 17-item background questionnaire, with unities in the main diagonal, was significant ( $\chi^2 = 84$ ,  $df = 1378$ ,  $p < .001$ ), using Bartlett's (1950) test. The matrix represents a significant deviation from a random correlation matrix. A set of initial factors was orthogonally rotated using Kaiser's (1958) normalized varimax rotation to provide the primary factor structure for interpretation. Varimax rotation produces a simplification of the factors, rather than of the variables. Extraction was stopped when all the interpretable factors with eigenvalues greater than or equal to 1.00 were obtained. Thus, only factors accounting for at least the amount of the total variance of a single variable were treated as significant.

The factor analysis resulted in four significant factors. The factors were named by the items which loaded highly on them. The factors included a sex-roles factor, a communication factor, a child-rearing factor, and a parental influence factor. The rotated factor solutions, along with the eigenvalues and percentages of total variance obtained before rotation are shown in Table 12. The amount of variance accounted for by the first factor, the sex-roles factor, was approximately 31 percent. The significant salient items of the four factors are depicted in Table 13. The first factor, sex-roles, loads highly on items related to sex-stereotyped chores, such as cleaning, cooking, washing, and shopping. Further examination of the response frequencies of those items revealed a sex difference. Items dealing with cooking, cleaning, shopping, and washing, (represented as items 25a, 25b, 25c, and 25e, respectively, on the self and partner survey), were predominantly the responsibility of the wife; whereas handling finances,

Table 12  
 Varimax Rotated Factor Matrix of Items From  
 the Survey and Background Questions

Item number	Factors and labels			
	I	II	III	IV
	Sex- roles	Communi- cation	Child- rearing	Parental model
Self and partner survey				
1	-14	-11	-02	-03
2	-02	29	07	12
3	14	-06	-05	10
4	03	52	00	13
5	03	68	00	-10
6	03	-07	-07	-06
7	-08	-58	04	-12
8	-02	52	02	-12
9	10	74	02	-10
10	-11	-46	-11	04
11	00	-05	15	02
12	-08	-13	-04	-09
13	07	03	03	-02
14	09	-49	01	06
15	05	68	04	03
16	-15	39	-12	14
17	20	-19	04	-17
18	21	-03	14	-15
19	-23	42	-15	-09
20	-18	-05	03	-08
21	41	-01	01	-13
22	-03	23	-11	-06
23	-36	34	-13	08
24	12	40	-10	11
25a	77	05	-01	-05
25b	78	00	-06	-06
25c	74	09	-09	07
25d	-09	-06	00	28
25e	76	-02	-02	-03
25f	31	15	-60	-02
25g	-64	02	-02	06
25h	19	11	09	05
25i	00	17	10	25
25j	-64	00	-10	00
25k	-65	08	-04	01
25l	-64	05	06	-08

Table 12 (continued)

Item number	Factors and labels			
	I	II	III	IV
	Sex- roles	Communi- cation	Child- rearing	Parental model
Background questionnaire				
2	26	07	84	08
4	36	-05	12	-13
10	-02	02	16	02
11	14	16	-13	-01
12i	-10	22	-04	13
13i	04	05	05	89
13ii	02	02	-20	-76
13iii	05	16	-01	80
14	-05	-12	32	-17
15	-04	-06	-23	13
16	-06	-07	22	23
19ii	03	08	37	14
22i	04	-05	95	02
22ii	06	00	56	-02
22ii	10	-04	77	10
22ii	02	31	51	-01
Eigenvalues (unrotated)	5.25	4.02	3.86	2.45
Percentages of total variance (unrotated)	30.8	23.6	22.7	14.4

Note.  $n = 120$

Note. Decimal points have been omitted.

Table 13  
Salient Items on Four Orthogonal Factors From  
the Survey and Background Questions

Factor:	I <sup>a</sup>	II <sup>b</sup>	III <sup>c</sup>	IV <sup>d</sup>
Label:	Sex-roles	Communication	Childrearing	Parental model
cleaning	.78	supportive .74	number of children .95	parents' marriage .89
cooking	.77	compatible .68	age .84	remarriage .80
washing	.76	closeness .68	age of second child .77	parents' separation -.76
shopping	.74	mental health .52	age of first child .56	
making major decisions	-.65	talking -.58	age of third child .52	
making purchases	-.64	violence .49		
initiating sex	-.64	critical -.46		
handling finances	-.64	degree of control .42		
settling arguments	.41	career .40		

Note. All items are significant at the 5 percent level.

<sup>a</sup>Loadings on Factor I represent the following items on the self and partner survey: 25b, 25a, 25e, 25c, 25k, 25j, 25l, 25g, and 2l.

<sup>b</sup>Loadings on Factor II represent the following items on the self and partner survey: 9, 15, 5, 4, 7, 14, 10, 19, and 24.

<sup>c</sup>Loadings on Factor III represent the following items on the background questionnaire: 22i, 2, 22ii, 22ii, and 22ii.

<sup>d</sup>Loadings on Factor IV represent the following items on the background questionnaire: 13i, 13iii, and 13ii.



making major decisions about purchases, and initiating sexual intercourse (represented on the self and partner survey as items 25g, 25j, and 25l, respectively) were primarily handled by the husband, or shared equally between the husband and wife. The second factor represents the communication between the husband and wife, accounting for approximately 24 percent of the variance in marital adjustment scores. The items representing this factor are 9, 15, 5, and 7, on the self and partner survey. The third factor was indicated by high loadings on the background items relating to childrearing (including items 22i, 2, and 22ii on the background questionnaire). The fourth factor represents the influence of the parents' marriage on the subject's expectations for happiness. The fourth factor was represented by items 13i, 13ii, and 13iii on the background questionnaire.

The results of the factor analysis were related to marital adjustment. Factor scores were obtained using the complete estimation method by which the loadings on each factor of the full set of variables are utilized to obtain the best estimate of the given factor for each subject. The factor scores are composite indices which represent the theoretical dimensions associated with their respective factors.

Multiple regression analysis of factor scores. The four factor scores obtained from the factor analysis were included with self-esteem, actual congruency, perceived congruency, duration, and sex of the subject in a multiple linear regression analysis. The forward (step-wise) solution was used for selecting among the predictor variables. The purpose of the analysis was to determine whether any of the variables measured by the self and partner survey were significantly related

to marital adjustment. The factor scores representing sex roles and communication were highly correlated with the duration of the marriage ( $r = .838$ ,  $df = 118$ ,  $p < .05$ ), which may suggest a problem of multicollinearity, and may also indicate the unreliability of the regression coefficients. However, the assumptions of the regression analysis were satisfactorily met ( $F_{\max} = 2.241$ ,  $df = 7, 119$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The results of the analysis are shown in Table 14. The multiple correlation coefficient was .393, with a standard error of estimate of .498. The overall regression equation was significant at the 1 percent level ( $F = 2.923$ ,  $df = 7, 112$ ). Self-esteem, the sex-roles factor score, and sex of the subject achieved significance as predictor variables in the regression equation.

A cross-validation check on the results was performed. As shown in Table 15, the multiple correlation coefficient was slightly greater in the validation analysis (.419 compared with .393), having a standard error of estimate of .563. The overall regression equation was not significant ( $F = 2.119$ ,  $df = 7, 52$ ,  $p < .05$ ). However, the same three predictor variables that were significant in the original regression analysis were also significant in the validation analysis, although the regression equation itself was not significant in the validation check. This finding places the validity of the original regression equation in doubt, since the cross-validation analysis did not verify the validity of the initial regression analysis.

Pearson product-moment correlations on survey data. The items indicated in Table 16 were significantly correlated with marital adjustment. Negative correlations were obtained between marital

Table 14  
Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis on  
Marital Adjustment Using Factor Scores

Vector	Multiple regression analysis			
	<u>R</u>	<u>R</u> <sup>2</sup>	Beta	<u>F</u>
I Self-esteem <sup>a</sup>	.250	.063	.255	8.121 <sup>**</sup>
II Sex-roles factor score <sup>a</sup>	.318	.101	.386	8.997 <sup>**</sup>
III Sex of subject <sup>a</sup>	.364	.132	.265	4.332 <sup>*</sup>
IV Communication factor score <sup>a</sup>	.388	.150	.196	1.345
V Perceived congruency <sup>a</sup>	.389	.151	.044	.220
VI Actual congruency <sup>a</sup>	.391	.153	-.049	.270
VII Duration of marriage <sup>a</sup>	.393	.154	-.078	.213
Overall regression equation <sup>b</sup>	.393	.154		2.923 <sup>**</sup>

Note. n = 120

<sup>a</sup> Degrees of freedom are equal to 1 and 112.

<sup>b</sup> Degrees of freedom are equal to 7 and 112.

<sup>\*</sup> p < .05

<sup>\*\*</sup> p < .01

Table 15  
Cross-Validation Test on Regression Analysis  
Using Factor Scores

Vector	Multiple regression analysis			
	<u>R</u>	<u>R</u> <sup>2</sup>	Beta	<u>F</u>
I Self-esteem <sup>a</sup>	.312	.097	.325	8.068**
II Sex-roles factor score <sup>a</sup>	.343	.118	.295	9.026**
III Sex of subject <sup>a</sup>	.354	.125	.282	8.558**
IV Communication factor score <sup>a</sup>	.394	.155	.166	1.694
V Perceived congruency <sup>a</sup>	.401	.161	.160	3.551
VI Actual congruency <sup>a</sup>	.411	.169	.044	.144
VII Duration of marriage <sup>a</sup>	.419	.176	.031	.023
Overall regression equation <sup>b</sup>	.419	.176		2.119

Note. n = 60

<sup>a</sup>Degrees of freedom are equal to 1 and 52.

<sup>b</sup>Degrees of freedom are equal to 7 and 52.

\*\*  
p < .01

Table 16  
Product-Moment Correlations Between Marital  
Adjustment and Survey Items

Self and partner survey items	<u>r</u>	<u>r</u> <sup>2</sup>
lack of closeness (5)	-.575*	.330
lack of compat- ibility (15)	-.530*	.281
lack of support (9)	-.503*	.253
talking to partner (7)	.418*	.175
prefer friends to partner (8)	-.400*	.160
subject's mental health (4)	-.394*	.155
career priority (24)	-.323*	.107

Note. n = 120

Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate  
the item numbers on the self and partner survey.

\*  
p < .05

adjustment scores and items 5, 15, and 9 on the self and partner survey, representing a lack of closeness, a lack of compatibility, and a lack of support between partners. These three items are among those items which loaded highly on the communication factor. Although the individual items were significantly related to marital adjustment, when combined into a communication factor score, a significant relationship with marital adjustment was no longer obtained. Perhaps, factors and items are intercorrelated. If so, the correlation between the factor scores and other variables might account for the reduced regression coefficients of the multiple regression analysis (as shown in Table 14). There may be considerable overlap in the content being tested when the items are combined into factors, to the extent that each factor accounts for relatively little variability in marital adjustment scores.

## Chapter 7

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to learn whether the presence of actual or perceived understanding between an individual and his/her spouse concerning the evaluation of the individual's worth was relevant to the individual's marital adjustment, especially in the case of an individual with high self-esteem. A brief synopsis of the results is preliminary to the conclusions regarding the relationship between marital adjustment and the affective congruency of self-perceptions between spouses. The theoretical implications of the conclusions are followed by proposals for further research on the subject of affective congruency.

#### Conclusions and Theoretical Implications

##### Congruency, Self-Esteem, and Marital Adjustment

The first hypothesis, which predicted a significant positive relationship between marital adjustment and actual congruency, was not supported. This result is inconsistent with previous reports of significant correlations between marital adjustment and actual congruency (e.g., Dymond, 1954; Ferguson & Allen, 1978; Kotlar, 1965). The present study measured whether the spouse esteemed the subject to the same degree to which the subject esteemed himself/herself. In contrast, previous research measured actual congruency in terms of whether or not the spouse could correctly state the subject's views, rather than in

terms of the spouse's own views. In addition, past studies measured the subject's beliefs about his/her role in the marriage, rather than his/her beliefs about his/her self-worth. The way in which these two distinctions between the present study and previous research may have contributed to the nonsignificant results in this study concerns the saliency of the spouse's views about the subject's worth.

An individual may continually revise his/her idea of the characteristics comprising his/her spouse's self-concept, including his/her value judgments of the spouse's characteristics. An individual may display positive or negative feelings toward specific characteristics of his/her partner more frequently than toward his/her partner's overall self-concept. One reason for this assumption is that it is easier for the individual to discuss with his/her partner one or two of the partner's characteristics than the partner's entire self-concept. (Additionally, the partner may be more receptive to such a limited discussion.) If the assumption is true, then the measurement of actual congruency in the present study, using an overall evaluation of the spouse, may be less relevant to a marital relationship. Marriage may not provide the appropriate context for the appraisal of a person's value, which is implicit in the theoretical definition of affective congruency, since the individual may assume by his/her marriage that his/her spouse has already accepted him/her. Thus, actual congruency, or the agreement between spouses on their evaluation of the individual's worth, may be less relevant than other variables to the couple's marital adjustment, providing an explanation for the lack of a significant relationship between actual congruency and marital adjustment.

Another reason for the unexpected results may involve the



presence of high congruency in some areas of the self-concept, and low congruency in other areas, thereby cancelling the congruency effect. Since an individual has positive or negative feelings about specific aspects of his/her partner's self-concept, it may be fruitful to investigate affective congruency by measuring the individual's evaluation of the particular characteristics of his/her spouse.

The measurement of actual congruency, or the agreement between the individual's self-esteem and his/her spouse's overall evaluation of him/her, neglected the other components of the interpersonal system, namely, the individual's interpretation of his/her own and his/her spouse's behavior. Congruency may exist between the individual's self-concept and his/her interpretation of his/her spouse's view, based on his/her spouse's behavior toward him/her, while, at the same time, these two components are incongruent with the individual's interpretation of the consistency between his/her own behavior and his/her self-concept. For example, an individual who has a high level of self-esteem may believe that his/her spouse's behavior indicates that his/her spouse has a similar level of esteem for him/her, yet, the individual believes that his/her own behavior, (specifically, an aspect of his/her behavior), suggests low self-esteem, which is contradictory to his/her high level of self-worth. One reason that actual congruency was not significantly related to marital adjustment may be that congruency existed in the behavioral component of the interpersonal system, though not in the component of the system assessed by the self-esteem questionnaire. When congruency exists in the behavioral component of the interpersonal system, the spouse may interpret the individual's behavior in a way which is consistent with the individual's self-esteem.

Furthermore, it appears reasonable that partners may choose to ignore low congruency in some areas of their interaction, particularly if there is high congruency in other areas, such as in their behavioral interaction.

Another factor which may be responsible for the lack of a significant relationship between marital adjustment and actual congruency is the amount of congruency which the individual shares with persons other than his/her spouse. The importance of congruency to a relationship is a function of the number of other congruent interpersonal systems (Secord & Backman, 1961, p. 24). An individual who has many congruent relationships receives validation of his/her self-concept from many sources; thus, the congruency present in any one relationship is less essential to his/her confirmation of self-worth. The importance of actual congruency in a marriage may depend upon the number of other persons with whom the partners have congruent interactions for those aspects of their self-concepts.

Finally, the measurement of actual congruency may be misleading. If the individual lacks insight into his/her self-concept, then his/her self-description may not be accurate. The discrepancy between his/her self-description and his/her spouse's description of him/her will be more reflective of the individual's lack of self-awareness, than of the spouse's misunderstanding of him/her. The high scores obtained in the present study for actual congruency reveal a lack of agreement between partners, suggesting either that the individuals lack self-awareness, or that their spouses misperceive them. Given the extensive nature of the self-esteem questionnaire, either of these explanations is plausible.

Misperception may occur between spouses when they differ in their standards of evaluation. An individual may produce a self-evaluation which he/she judges to be relatively high, but which is low from his/her spouse's standpoint. Thus, the subjective nature of the individual's evaluation leads to misperception. However, it is the individual's perspective which is vital to a study of self-perceptions.

The possibility of misperception between spouses depends upon the type of information which they are requested to produce. Actual congruency may involve the measurement of a person's direct knowledge of his/her partner, or of his/her ability to draw inferences about his/her partner (Gage & Cronbach, 1955, pp. 411-412). If the subject's answers on the self-esteem questionnaire required that he/she interpret his/her spouse's self-concept, then the possibility of misperception would be greater, than if the test measured the subject's direct knowledge of his/her spouse. However, the problem of individual variation was reduced in the present study by measuring the individual's self-evaluation and his/her spouse's evaluation of his/her worth, since the type of skills required in these evaluations were thought to be similar across subjects. Another problem concerns the subject's reliance upon an implicit personality theory to describe his/her partner (Passini & Norman, 1966). However, the subject may typically perceive his/her partner in terms of certain characteristics which are associated with each other.

The evidence suggesting a nonsignificant relationship between marital adjustment and actual congruency requires further empirical confirmation. The measurement of actual congruency using the discrepancy between a person's self-esteem and his/her partner's evaluation of

his/her overall worth does not appear to be a successful approach to investigating the complex relationship which is presumed to exist between congruency and marital adjustment. Some other approach to the measurement of actual congruency appears to be necessary.

The second hypothesis correctly predicted that high marital adjustment would be present in individuals who believed that their spouses evaluated them at the same level at which they evaluated themselves. The results offer support for the theory of interpersonal congruency, which postulates that perceived congruency leads to positive feelings toward the other person, contributing to the individual's satisfaction in the relationship. Presumably, the individual receives validation of his/her self-concept when he/she thinks that his/her spouse rates him/her at the same level at which the individual rates himself/herself. The person's belief about his/her spouse's rating may influence how he/she reacts to his/her spouse, regardless of the accuracy of the belief. Thus, the individual's perception of the situation may be more important than the actual situation, as far as his/her marital adjustment is concerned.

The finding that perceived congruency accounted for only 3 percent of the variance in marital adjustment may be attributed to an explanation previously mentioned in relation to the nonsignificant association between marital adjustment and actual congruency. The subject's perception that his/her partner rates his/her worth at the same level at which the subject rates himself/herself may not be particularly relevant to the subject's marital adjustment, since marriage itself may imply that the spouse accepts the subject.

The third hypothesis, which stated that the relationship between

marital adjustment and perceived congruency would be significantly greater than the corresponding relationship between marital adjustment and actual congruency, received partial confirmation, since only the former relationship was significant. Intuitively, the individual's belief that his/her partner shares his/her perspective is assumed to be more important to his/her marital adjustment, than is the individual's actual congruency with his/her spouse's view, since the individual responds to his/her spouse on the basis of his/her perceptions, irrespective of the accuracy of those perceptions.

The fourth hypothesis, which predicted that self-esteem moderates the relationship between perceived or actual congruency and marital adjustment, was not supported. The multiple regression analysis was significant, although self-esteem was the only significant predictor of marital adjustment, accounting for 9 percent of the variance. Second and Backman's theory of congruency is ambivalent about the relationship between congruency with another person and liking that person for chronic low self-esteem subjects. The theory postulates only that the relationship between congruency and the positive evaluation of another person is most pronounced when a high self-esteem subject receives a congruent evaluation. In the present study, self-esteem did not moderate the relationship between congruency and marital adjustment, partly due to the lack of a large correlation between the two variables. Contrary to previous reasoning, low self-esteem persons may require less congruency with their spouses, since self-esteem may be a more dominant motivator, one which overrides the influence of congruency. The significance of self-esteem in the regression analysis supports this idea of self-esteem as a more significant factor than congruency in the

individual's marital adjustment.

The question remains as to why the congruency of perceptions between marital partners is a nonsignificant factor in the marital adjustment of low self-esteem persons. In other words, why does the congruency apparently fail to satisfy the low self-esteem persons' needs for self-validation. One explanation is that individual differences may be operating. A person who receives a congruent response may react negatively if he/she feels unable to continue to live up to what he/she thinks are his/her spouse's expectations of him/her. In such a case, it would be to the individual's advantage to believe that his/her spouse rated him/her at a relatively low level. Conversely, another person may want his/her spouse to rate him/her higher than his/her self-rating, possibly as reassurance of the spouse's recognition of the person's worth. In both of these situations, the person who thinks that his/her spouse agrees with his/her self-evaluation may be dissatisfied, although there is perceived congruency. Extrapolating from the theory of interpersonal congruency in light of the obtained data, it is suggested that the importance of affective congruency to marital adjustment may depend upon the person's need to elevate or reduce his/her self-esteem in relation to congruency with his/her partner.

Two out of the four major hypotheses of the present study were confirmed. An attempt was made to reconcile the obtained data with the significant results reported in previous studies. Even using a comparable statistic, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, a significant relationship was not produced between actual congruency and marital adjustment. However, the significant correlations between perceived congruency and marital adjustment, and between

self-esteem and marital adjustment, were compatible with previous findings. When affective congruency was operationally measured according to its theoretical definition, the significant relationship previously reported between congruency and marital adjustment was negated. Given the disparate methodology of the congruency studies, the validity of a comparison between the present findings and the results of previous studies is of dubious value. The data obtained from the correlational analyses of the present study were compatible, in most instances, with the results of the multiple regression analysis which served as the main statistical procedure in this study. Since the multiple regression analysis offered a more rigorous test of the hypotheses, its results assume precedence over the correlational data. Further evidence on the relationship between affective congruency and marital adjustment is needed to confirm the conclusions of the present study.

#### Components of the Difference Scores

The multiple regression equation, which included among its predictor variables, the separate components of the congruency scores, was significant; but, since neither of the beta weights was significant, its validity is highly questionable.

A Pearson product-moment correlational analysis on the individual's rating of his/her spouse, and on his/her belief about his/her spouse's rating of him/her, produced similar results to those obtained using the difference scores. The individual's self-esteem was significantly correlated with both his/her belief about his/her partner's rating of him/her and his/her spouse's actual rating of him/her. The

higher was the individual's level of self-esteem, the higher was the level at which he/she thought his/her partner viewed him/her. The two components of the congruency scores, the individual's belief about his/her spouse's rating of him/her and the spouse's actual rating of him/her, may approximate the individual's level of self-esteem. However, since the correlations between these components and self-esteem were low, they were not deemed to be a threat to the validity of the difference scores. Other significant positive correlations included those between the individual's marital adjustment and his/her belief about his/her spouse's rating of him/her, and between the individual's marital adjustment and his/her spouse's actual rating of him/her. There appears to be a logical premise underlying these correlations, which states that an individual will be happier if he/she is rated highly. However, a causal relationship was not assumed in the study.

The correlation coefficients were higher when the difference scores were divided into their components, compared with the correlation coefficients obtained by using the differences scores themselves as the measures of congruency. Nevertheless, the results of the analyses using the components of the difference scores confirmed the tendencies observed when the difference scores themselves were used, with two exceptions. Firstly, there was a nonsignificant relationship between actual congruency and the individual's marital adjustment, compared with a significant relationship obtained when his/her spouse's actual rating of him/her was substituted for actual congruency. Since the concepts measured in these two relationships are different, it is not unreasonable that the results are different. Secondly, the significant regression equation using self-esteem as a predictor variable was not



replicated when the components of the difference scores were used. Since the spouse's rating of the subject, and the subject's belief about the spouse's rating, may provide almost identical information to the subject's self-esteem level, the variables were likely intercorrelated, resulting in the nonsignificant beta weights when the two components of the difference scores were used. In recommending the use of the components of a difference score, Cronbach and Furby (1970) recognized the need to rephrase the original question formulated in the study. Accordingly, the original hypothesis concerning the relationship between affective congruency and marital adjustment was not adequately studied by using the individual's belief about his/her spouse's view, and his/her spouse's actual view, in place of the discrepancy scores.

#### Results of Husbands and Wives

Correlational analyses performed on the husbands' and wives' scores suggested several factors to be considered in measuring the relationship between congruency and marital adjustment. The hypothesis which predicted that when the husband's self-esteem was the same as the rating given to him by his wife, both the husband and his wife would have higher marital adjustment, was not confirmed. The nonsignificant relationship contrasts with Corsini's (1956b) significant findings. Unexpectedly, the present study obtained a significant relationship between the wife's marital adjustment and the congruency between her self-esteem and her husband's rating of her worth. This result is consistent with Kotlar's (1965) report that as the wife's marital adjustment improves, her congruency of perceptions with her spouse also increases. A significant negative correlation was achieved in the

present study between the husband's marital adjustment and the comparison of his wife's self-esteem with his rating of her worth. Thus, the husband's evaluation of his wife as congruent with her self-evaluation was critical to his marital adjustment, although it was associated with a lower marital adjustment score. The congruency between the wife's self-esteem and her husband's rating of her worth was also critical to the wife's marital adjustment.

The results obtained for perceived congruency resemble those obtained for actual congruency. A significant relationship was obtained between the wife's marital adjustment and the congruency between her self-esteem and her belief about her spouse's view of her worth. However, the wife's perception of congruency with her husband was not significantly related to his marital adjustment. When the agreement between the partners concerned the husband's self-esteem, the relationship between perceived congruency and marital adjustment for either the husband or the wife was not significant. On the other hand, the congruency of perceptions dealing with the wife's self-esteem was relevant to both partner's marital adjustment, unlike the congruency of perceptions concerning the husband's self-esteem.

The data obtained were the reverse of the results reported during the late 1950's and early 1960's. One explanation is that the previous studies investigated a different dimension of the self-concept; thus they are not comparable with the present findings. The question is raised as to why the congruency between the spouse's rating (or the individual's perception of his/her spouse's rating) and the individual's self-esteem was only relevant to the marital adjustment of either spouse when the wife's self-esteem was perceived, but not when the husband's

self-esteem was perceived. The individual's marital adjustment was significantly related to the actual agreement, or the perception of an agreement, between the husband's rating of his wife and her self-esteem, but not between the wife's rating of her husband and his self-esteem. Previous studies argued that the wife's perception of her husband's self-concept allowed her to make adjustments in her behavior which contributed to her marital happiness, as well as to her husband's marital happiness. Although substantial changes in the institution of marriage have occurred, it seems unlikely that it is now the husband who makes the major adjustments in the marriage, for which he requires congruency with his wife's self-esteem.

Another explanation for the sex difference in the results is that the husband and wife may differ in the sources of validation for their self-esteem. The wife's self-esteem may be intimately tied to her marital relationship, unlike her husband's self-esteem, which may be validated from sources outside the marriage, such as peers. If the wife derives her sense of worth mainly from the success of her marriage, then it may be to the husband's advantage if his wife thinks that he evaluates her at the same level at which she evaluates herself. The importance of the wife's self-esteem to her marriage was implied by the significant relationship between her self-esteem and both her marital adjustment and her husband's marital adjustment. In contrast, the relationship between the husband's self-esteem and his marital adjustment was not significant, suggesting that his feelings of self-worth may be less intimately connected with his marital adjustment, than were his wife's feelings of self-worth. In support of this notion, the husband may display high self-esteem in the presence of low marital

adjustment. The findings obtained in the present study support the contention that the wife's self-esteem was more crucial than her husband's self-esteem to the marital adjustment of each of them. If the wife derives her self-esteem from her marriage, then her sense of self-worth may be confounded with her marital adjustment, accounting for the sex bias in the results.

Given the preceding argument that the husband relies less on his spouse for his self-validation than does his wife, a perplexing question arises: Why was the husband's marital adjustment significantly related to his wife's self-esteem? Is it not equally important to a woman that she validate her husband's self-esteem? The answer may rest in the causal relationship between self-esteem and marital adjustment. Marital adjustment may be a precedent for self-esteem in women, but it may be unrelated to self-esteem in men. For example, a husband's high level of marital adjustment may lead to an increase in his wife's self-esteem, since she may derive her feelings of self-worth partly from the success of her marriage. However, a wife's marital adjustment is unlikely to result in a change in her husband's self-esteem, at least according to this explanation of the results.

The relationship between affective congruency and the individual's marital adjustment appears to be related to the wife's self-esteem as the object of perception. The hypothesized relationships between the husband's self-esteem and actual or perceived congruency with either the husband's or the wife's self-esteem were not significant. Neither was the relationship between the wife's self-esteem and the presence of actual or perceived congruency, using the perceptions about either the husband or the wife. Self-esteem did not appear to be confounded with

affective congruency in the present study.

The sex difference in the results, using the congruency of the wife's self-esteem and both partners' marital adjustment scores, may also be attributed to the wife's perspective when answering the self-esteem questionnaire. If her responses were compatible with her idea of a socially desirable role for a wife, she may have been using a cultural stereotype of a good wife. Invoking such a stereotype might account for the relationship between the husband's marital adjustment and the congruency between his wife's self-esteem and his evaluation of her, (or her belief about his evaluation of her). However, the lack of similarity among the wives' responses suggests the unlikelihood of the use of a cultural stereotype.

The final and most parsimonious explanation of the difference in the results between husbands and wives suggests that the wife may be more concerned with understanding and developing her self-concept, than her husband is in understanding his self-concept. However, the husband may recognize the importance of his wife's awareness of her self-concept to her happiness, and, subsequently, he displays his understanding or congruency in terms of her self-worth. Under these conditions, both the husband and wife may have high marital adjustment. The husband may place a low priority on his wife's evaluation of him, unless it is highly discrepant with his self-evaluation, since he may have several other sources for validating his self-esteem. If these speculations are true, then the husband's marital adjustment will likely not be related to the congruency of perceptions dealing with his self-esteem. Inter-spousal congruency concerning the wife's self-esteem may be relevant to both partners' marital adjustment scores, because the congruency may be

relevant to the wife's perspective in her interactions with her husband.

The similarity between husbands and their wives on marital adjustment and self-esteem was expected. Levinger and Breedlove (1945) also found a significant relationship between the marital adjustment scores of husbands and wives. Similarly, spouses were similar on their levels of self-esteem, a reasonable finding, considering that individuals who are dissimilar in self-esteem may have difficulty in relating to each other. The correlations between the husbands' scores and their wives' scores for perceived and actual congruency were not significant. It may be advantageous for some future study to investigate the direction of the differences between husbands and wives in their need for congruency.

#### Duration, Congruency, and Marital Adjustment

Marital duration was not significantly related to actual congruency, perceived congruency, or marital adjustment. A previous study by Drewery and Rae (1969), using couples who had been married an average of 9.4 years, reported a significant relationship between the length of the marriage and actual congruency between the husband's self-concept and his wife's description of his self-concept. One reason for the lack of significance in the findings of the present study may be its emphasis on the person's evaluation of his/her partner, rather than on his/her description of his/her spouse. An evaluation may be relatively stable, in comparison with a description of the partner's characteristics (although the opposite was initially predicted). Another possibility is that the subject evaluated his/her partner on the self-esteem questionnaire, using as a reference point his/her basic

acceptance of the partner. In this situation, the evaluative rating would not actually involve an estimation of the partner's worth, but, instead, an estimation of the individual's acceptance of his/her partner.

The lack of a significant relationship between marital duration and marital adjustment may be a consequence of the particular characteristics of the sample, including the orientation of the subjects toward a highly structured academic program, which may cause them to divert their energies away from their marital relationship. The mean length of the marriages was generally shorter than the mean length of the marriages in other studies (e.g., Blood & Wolfe, 1965) which found a negative relationship between marital duration and marital adjustment. A review article by Hicks and Platt (1970) concluded that marital satisfaction tended to decrease in the early stages of marriage before the children entered school.

#### Self and Partner Survey

The significant multiple regression analysis using self-esteem, the sex-roles factor, and the individual's gender as predictor variables accounted for 15 percent of the variability in marital adjustment. However, since the cross-validation analysis was not significant, the results may not be reliable.

A negative correlation indicates that as the marital adjustment scores increased, so did the amount of communication, closeness, support, and compatibility which the individual believed that he/she shared with his/her spouse. Communication appears to be a positive feature of marital adjustment, perhaps by encouraging the development

of intimacy and trust in the relationship.

Individual items loading highly on the communication factor were significantly related to marital adjustment; but, when they were combined to form the communication factor, they were no longer significantly related to marital adjustment. An overlap of content between the items may reduce the amount of variability in the marital adjustment scores which is accounted for by the factors. Individual items may be more discriminating than factors in accounting for the variance in marital adjustment scores. It seems reasonable that a subject may find it easier to evaluate his/her partner using a single statement confined to one topic, since several statements, all of which are related to the same topic, may result in a cognitive dissonance effect in which the subject responds inconsistently, to avoid giving his/her partner a negative evaluation. Also, a single statement which describes a specific behavior may provide a concrete example of the subject's feelings for his/her partner.

The self and partner survey also produced a sex-roles factor, which was significantly related to marital adjustment. The partner's behavioral manifestations of his/her particular viewpoint may have more meaning to the individual on a daily basis, than the verbal expressions of that same viewpoint. The delegation of responsibility for chores which are sex-stereotyped, including cooking and cleaning, appears to be important to the marital adjustment of both the husband and wife. The traditional role assigned to the wife, involving responsibility for cooking, cleaning, and shopping, seems to be related to her marital satisfaction, as well as to her husband's satisfaction. One explanation may be that the wife's self-esteem is tied to her



feeling of success as a wife, although she may profess feminist leanings toward equality in her marital relationship. Perhaps, marital adjustment should be investigated in terms of the congruency of behaviors, since the individual's perspective of his/her partner's worth may best be expressed in his/her behavior with his/her partner. The lack of reliability and validity data for the self and partner survey limits its value to suggestions for the areas of further study.

### Summary of the Conclusions

The main conclusions of the study were that perceived congruency between an individual's self-esteem and his/her belief about his/her spouse's view of him/her was related to his/her marital adjustment, and that the individual's self-esteem was a significant variable in his/her marital adjustment. Some support was received for the theory of interpersonal congruency, which suggested that congruency between a person's self-concept and his/her belief about his/her partner's point of view was desirable in a relationship. However, persons with high self-esteem who shared congruent or positive evaluations with their partners did not necessarily have high levels of marital adjustment. It is possible that people differ in their interpretations of positive evaluations of their levels of self-worth. Some individuals may need to believe that their spouses rate them at a level higher than they would rate themselves. In addition, people may differ in terms of the importance which they attach to other persons' evaluations. These conclusions about affective congruency must be qualified by the lack of generalizability of the results, and by the questionable validity of the congruency measures.

The results are generalizable to married student couples who are

high in self-esteem and who are relatively well-adjusted in their marriages, since the sample was skewed in those directions. Secord and Backman (1964a) argued that congruency pertains primarily to the extreme ends of the distribution of a need. Thus, the higher levels of self-esteem present in the sample should have been conducive to a significant congruency effect. Paradoxically, the absence of a significant relationship between actual congruency and marital adjustment may be due to the lack of variability of the sample. As high self-esteem individuals, the subjects may have interpreted the congruent evaluations from their partners as unsolicited approval, investing congruency with a negative feeling toward the other person.

The subjects were young, well-educated graduate students and their spouses who resided in a sheltered university community. The pursuit of an academic degree provided a source of gratification for the students' self-concepts. The nonstudent spouses may have obtained support for their self-concepts from persons other than their spouses. The critical question may be whether or not the congruency of self-perceptions represented a substantial need in these high self-esteem subjects. The subjects appeared to be in the appropriate category for being concerned about their self-esteem, since their basic needs for survival had been met. Yet, congruent perceptions with their spouses were not important to their levels of marital adjustment. Perhaps, the presence of incongruency in other areas of the couple's perceptions negates the effect of congruent evaluations of self-worth.

A more likely possibility is that the stresses on the subjects, including poor finances, limited time, and the pressures of university life, assumed greater importance to the subjects than did validation of

their self-concepts. Thus, the basic strains of daily living assumed greater priority over self-validation.

The nature of the sample means that it is not known whether congruency applies well to the more central parts of the distribution of self-esteem. Congruency needs to be demonstrated at representative points along the range of intended generalization.

A second limitation on the conclusions concerns the validity of the measures of actual and perceived congruency. The validity depends upon the consistency with which the individual responded to the statements on the self-esteem questionnaire under each of the perspectives.

A final limitation on the conclusions deals with the criterion variable. Marital adjustment may be confounded with the individual's self-esteem, since the individual's evaluation of his/her marriage may imply an evaluation of himself/herself as a participant in the marriage. Mangus (1957, pp. 256-257) noted that "the integrative quality of a marriage is reflected in the degree of congruence between . . . the way a spouse views himself as compared to the way he is seen by his partner."<sup>5</sup> Further compounding the problem is a social desirability bias toward high marital satisfaction. If women are more susceptible to

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<sup>5</sup>The measurement of marital adjustment in the present study included a score for dyadic consensus. On first glance, there appears to be a confound between dyadic consensus, as a subscale on the DAS, and affective congruency. However, the correlation coefficients between dyadic consensus with perceived and actual congruency were not significant.

this bias, then a sex difference in the results concerning the relationship between congruency and marital adjustment is understandable.

However, Murstein and Beck's (1972) study, which partialled out marital conventionalization, or the social desirability bias, did not report an appreciable decrease in the significant correlation between marital adjustment and congruency, suggesting that the effect of the social desirability factor is minimal. Another problem associated with the criterion is its variable definition across studies, although researchers have argued that distinctions in the definitions of marital adjustment are vital (Hicks & Platt, 1970; Spanier, 1976). The conclusions of the present study were not confirmed by previous research, but this may be a consequence of the emphasis of the present study on a different aspect of the self-concept, as well as on a different approach to the measurement of marital adjustment.

#### Ramifications of the Conclusions

Although the results of the study were not highly supportive of the hypotheses, if further support is garnered from other studies, a practical implication would concern marriage counselling. An emphasis could be placed on the areas of the self-concept in which spouses demonstrate incongruency (Taylor, 1967). The purpose would be to alter the type of interaction between the partners, so that, eventually, their self-concepts would be validated through the couple's interaction (Johnsen, 1968). Presumably, when a person is made aware of the ways in which he/she misperceives his/her partner's views, the person will alter his/her perceptions, and, subsequently, be able to respond more appropriately to his/her spouse. The intention would not be to reveal the

perceptions of each spouse, but rather to indicate the areas in which the spouses perceived a lack of congruency with each other.

The consequences of the individual's awareness of the ways in which he/she misunderstands other persons are not limited to improved consistency in responding to others, but may also extend to the individual's self-perceptions. The individual may strive for greater consistency between his/her self-concept and the way he/she interprets his/her own behavior. This may lead to greater consistency in the individual's interactions with other persons. An understanding of the impact which congruency with another person has on the individual's positive feelings toward that person may initiate communication, not only between the two persons, but also within the individual. The individual may develop more insight into his/her self-concept, which may reinforce his/her consistency of behavior. Another consequence may be that the individual will examine the reasons that congruency with a particular person is important to him/her. The conditions under which incongruency becomes important may provide information about the areas of the self-concept which are significant to the individual in his/her interpersonal relations, as well as in defining the type of relationship which the individual has with the other person.

The individual's preoccupation with understanding and enhancing his/her self-concept is a characteristic of modern society. A partner who is believed to encourage and support the individual's self-concept will be highly valued. Since the individual's rating of his/her spouse's worth was not synonymous with his/her support for the spouse's self-concept, a direct measurement of the latter may be useful in further studies. The congruency existing between the methods by which

the individual communicates his/her support for his/her partner's self-concept, and the spouse's perception of those methods, provides an area for potential investigation.

The importance of the conclusions of the present study may be evident in the individual's understanding of his/her relationships with congruent other persons, and also in an awareness of the complexity of the individual's self-concept and his/her responses to other persons' perceptions of his/her self-concept.

#### Directions for Future Research

A study of the congruency of the self-perceptions between two persons is one approach to examining the self-concept as a significant dimension of a relationship. The complexity of the relationship may be defined by a multiple regression analysis of interpersonal congruency in combination with other relevant predictor variables.

Future research may require a more direct approach in its focus on affective congruency. For example, the subject might be asked to rate on a semantic differential scale his/her feelings about what he/she thinks is his/her spouse's evaluation of him/her. The subject might then be questioned as to whether he/she wanted his/her spouse to rate him/her at a level higher or lower than the subject's self-rating. Open-ended questions might reveal the reasons for the subject's responses, as well as some aspects of the couple's marital interaction which may be salient to their congruency.

Another important topic for consideration in future studies is the behavioral expression of congruency, particularly the consistency between behaviors and verbal statements. The individual may interpret

his/her partner's behavior as evidence of his/her partner's evaluation of him/her. A list of behaviors might be ranked on the methods which the individual uses to understand his/her partner's evaluation of him/her.

The process of congruency might be investigated in long-term relationships in the hope of understanding the causal factors involved in congruency. Perhaps, more importantly, the limits of congruency within a relationship might be conceptualized. For example, divorced couples might be used as subjects to determine whether congruency exists in the presence of low marital adjustment, and, if so, the reasons for this occurrence. (Perhaps, the couples lack the motive to modify their incongruent behaviors.) Other sources of congruent interactions, including friends and acquaintances, might be contrasted with divorced couples, in terms of the relationship between congruency and happiness in the dyad. This approach to understanding congruency might reveal congruency to be a variable strongly associated with the initial attraction between two persons, rather than as a factor in the couple's happiness in an established relationship. Accordingly, a recent review of the literature on interpersonal attraction suggested that "the more promising approaches emphasize . . . the congruency between self-perception and other's perception of self" (Huston & Levinger, 1978, p. 142).

As the individual's relationship with another person changes, there may be a corresponding change in the couple's affective congruency, such that the individual misperceives the other person's point of view. Congruency might be studied as an indicator of the changes which occur in a relationship.

Finally, since people appear to place a high priority on self-awareness and self-understanding, the presence of congruency between self-perceptions and the perceived view of other persons may be relevant to some aspects of a dyad, although not necessarily to the couple's happiness. Further studies might seek to define the ways in which congruency is relevant to a relationship, particularly for individuals with average levels of self-esteem and marital adjustment. The importance of congruency in further research studies will be, as it is destined to remain for the individual in his/her own relationships, a matter of perspective.



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APPENDIX A

LETTER TO SUBJECTS



The University of Calgary

2500 University Drive N.W.  
Calgary, Alberta, Canada  
T2N 1N4

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY  
TELEPHONE: (403) 284-5562

September 23, 1980

Dear Student,

A marital study is being conducted by the Psychology Department of the University of Calgary. We need married couples between the ages of 20 and 35 who have been married at least 2 years to participate in a psychological study of relationships.

The study uses a questionnaire which asks you to describe yourself, your partner, and your relationship. It will be completed on campus and, although not time-consuming, it is thought-provoking. Your answers may be of value for your own understanding of your relationship with your partner. By participating in this study, you will help to further the understanding of marriage.

Your answers are confidential. All data will be reported only in group form. A summary of the results of the study will be made available to you near the end of the fall term.

The success of this research depends upon your good will. If a high percentage of persons participate, then we can have confidence in the results. This is an opportunity for you to contribute to scientific research. Your willingness to participate would be greatly appreciated.

If you are interested in knowing more about the project, please see Linda Reiffer, Research Coordinator, in Room 211E, second floor of the Arts Building or call 284-6468 (or 265-1496 after 6 p.m.).

Thank you.

Yours very truly,

Linda I. Reiffer  
Research Coordinator

## BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE

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## APPENDIX B (continued)

In questions 13, 14, and 15, the word "parents" refers to the man who acted as your father (including stepfather, uncle, etc.) and the woman who acted as your mother (including stepmother, aunt, etc.).

13. (i) Up to age 16, what was the status of your parents' marriage?
- \_\_\_\_\_ marriage still intact  
\_\_\_\_\_ separated  
\_\_\_\_\_ divorced  
\_\_\_\_\_ one parent widowed  
\_\_\_\_\_ both parents deceased
- (ii) If divorced or separated, how old were you at the time of their separation? \_\_\_\_\_
- (iii) If divorced or widowed, did the parent you lived with remarry before you were age 16? \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no
14. Up to age 16, to what extent did you think your parents were happy together?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5  
very very  
unhappy happy
15. In your opinion, how good or bad was your parents' marriage as a model or example of marriage?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5  
very very  
good bad
16. How many times have you been married? \_\_\_\_\_
17. How long have you been married to your partner? (State in years and months.)  
\_\_\_\_\_
18. How long had you been dating your partner before you married him/her? (State in years and months.)  
\_\_\_\_\_
19. (i) Did you live with your partner before your marriage? \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no  
(ii) If yes, for how long did you live with him/her before marriage? \_\_\_\_\_
20. Consider your previous relationships. Before you married your partner, in how many other relationships which you consider serious had you been involved? \_\_\_\_\_
21. How long did each of these other relationships last?
- \_\_\_\_\_ most recent relationship  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2nd most recent relationship  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3rd most recent relationship  
\_\_\_\_\_ 4th most recent relationship
22. (i) How many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_  
(ii) If you have children, what are their ages? \_\_\_\_\_

## SELF AND PARTNER SURVEY

1. What is the state of your partner's physical health?

2. What is the state of your partner's mental health?

3. How would you rate your own physical health?

4. How would you rate your own mental health?

5. Are you becoming closer to your partner?

6. Has your impression of your partner changed since the beginning of your relationship?

7. Do you talk over personal problems with your partner?

8. Do you prefer to discuss your personal problems with your partner or your friends?

9. If you discussed a personal problem with your partner, how often would he/she be supportive?

10. If you discussed a personal problem with your partner, how often would he/she use it as an opportunity to find fault with you?

11. If a misunderstanding arises between you and your partner, do you try to put it out of your mind by actively concentrating on something else?

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## APPENDIX C (continued)

12. If a misunderstanding arose between you and your partner, would you try to forget about the problem by using drugs or alcohol?

always frequently occasionally rarely never

13. If a misunderstanding arose between you and your partner would you attempt to cope by praying or meditating?

always frequently occasionally rarely never

14. Is physical violence a problem in your relationship?

always frequently occasionally rarely never

15. Have you and your partner become more compatible since the start of your relationship?

much more compatible about the same or no change much less

16. Is your husband as masculine as you would like him to be? or  
Is your wife as feminine as you would like her to be?

totally satisfied somewhat satisfied and somewhat dissatisfied totally dissatisfied

17. How often do you feel pressure to behave according to your partner's expectations?

always frequently occasionally rarely never

18. How often do you feel pressure from other persons to behave according to their expectations?

always frequently occasionally rarely never

19. How much control do you feel that you have over the important events in your life?

complete control some control no control

20. How often do you feel that you have control over the important events in your life?

always frequently about half the time rarely never

21. How do you and your partner settle arguments?

partner makes all major decisions both of us have an equal say I make all major decisions

22. Do you feel reasonably satisfied with the total income you and your partner have?

totally satisfied totally dissatisfied

## APPENDIX C (continued)

23. Do you feel that you have adequate access to money for which you do not have to account to your partner?

definitely                      undecided,                      definitely  
yes                      or both yes and no                      no

24. Do you think that you can gain more satisfaction in life from your marriage than from your career?

marriage is much                      marriage and a                      a career is much  
more important than                      career are about                      more important than  
a career                      equally important                      marriage

25. Using the following scale, indicate how the responsibilities listed below are divided between you and your partner.

1	2	3	4	5
I have all of the responsibility	I have most of the responsi- bility	Equally divided	Partner has most of the responsi- bility	Partner has all of the responsibility

6- not applicable

(a) cooking	1	2	3	4	5	6
(b) cleaning, housework	1	2	3	4	5	6
(c) grocery, household shopping	1	2	3	4	5	6
(d) car and home maintenance	1	2	3	4	5	6
(e) laundry	1	2	3	4	5	6
(f) disciplining of children	1	2	3	4	5	6
(g) handling finances	1	2	3	4	5	6
(n) caring for pets	1	2	3	4	5	6
(i) gardening	1	2	3	4	5	6
(j) making major purchases	1	2	3	4	5	6
(k) making major decisions (how to invest money; planning vacations)	1	2	3	4	5	6
(l) deciding when to have sex	1	2	3	4	5	6

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM

I certify that I have read the description of the study and willingly consent to be a subject in it. I understand that all of my responses are confidential and will be released to no one.

I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

Signature of Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX E

### INSTRUCTIONS TO SUBJECTS FOR FIRST TEST SESSION

This is a study of relationships between couples. You will be asked some questions about your general background and then given a questionnaire to complete at home. This questionnaire asks whether different statements describe you. This first part of the study will take about twenty minutes.

The next part of the study asks some specific questions about how you feel about your partner, and the way you think he/she feels about you.

Some of the questions require a little time to think about your answers. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers. Your answers are completely CONFIDENTIAL and will be revealed to NO ONE, INCLUDING YOUR PARTNER.

Please attempt to answer every question as honestly as possible. If you leave any questions unanswered, a complete understanding cannot be gained of what makes some couples happy in their relationship. Also, your answers to each question will be of value for understanding your own relationship with your partner.

If you have any questions, please ask the researcher. Thank you for your participation.

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#### TASK # 1

The first questionnaire is the Tennessee Self Concept Scale. Follow the instructions in the booklet. Do not discuss your answers with anyone.

The next part of the study will be described to you when you meet again with the researcher.

## APPENDIX F

### INSTRUCTIONS TO SUBJECTS FOR SECOND TEST SESSION

#### TASK # 2

This second part of the study uses the Tennessee Self Concept Scale again.

- (a) Follow the same instructions EXCEPT respond to the statements as if you were describing your partner.
- (b) Using the same questionnaire again, answer the statements in the booklet as you think your partner would if he/she were describing YOU.

## APPENDIX G

### DIFFERENCE SCORES

The use of a difference score to define a construct, such as actual or perceived congruency, is controversial. The problems involved in using a difference score derive from its properties as a dyadic and global index (Cronbach, 1958, pp. 356-357).

As a dyadic index which "describes the combined actions of two or more persons" (Sears, 1951, p. 479), the difference score has several limitations. Firstly, a nondyadic or linear hypothesis may offer a more parsimonious description of the events (Cronbach, 1958, p. 357). Secondly, the analysis of a dyadic score may result in artifacts. The subject's self-rating tends to correlate positively with the evaluative rating which he/she assigns to another person (Wylie, 1974, p. 308). Positive findings may be an artifact of this tendency. In addition, the comparison of a difference score (or, in the present study, a measure of congruency) with a variable which contributed to it (such as self-esteem) or to another difference score which is based in part on the same data may produce a spurious negative correlation (Cronbach, 1958, p. 358; Linn & Slinde, 1977), since the same errors of measurement present in both the initial and the final score are being correlated (Lord, 1963, p. 33). Furthermore, the low reliability of the difference score has the effect of attenuating this negative correlation (Linn & Slinde, 1977). A third problem in using a summed dyadic score is that it may conceal information about the direction of the differences for a

particular test item (Cronbach, 1958, p. 360). Finally, a difference score assumes an interval level of measurement. Thorndike (1966) noted that the violation of this assumption is critical, since a difference score taken from one part of the scale range is more likely to be inflated by chance factors than the raw difference score from another part of the range (Wylie, 1974, p. 305). The dyadic score leads to problems of a statistical nature which are compounded when the difference score is also global.

Problems of interpreting the meaning of the results originate with a global index, which compresses many aspects of a characteristic into a single index. Cronbach (1958, p. 361) noted that the results obtained in a study may be interpreted as general effects attributable to the content of the entire test, when in fact one or two prominent dimensions of the test account for the results. Another problem of a global composite is that significant relationships may be overlooked when a relevant trait is combined with less relevant traits, or when different traits are related to the criterion in opposite ways, since their effects will cancel each other. Although many problems are associated with the difference score, Cronbach (1958, p. 366) defended its use when the theoretical formulation renders it an appropriate test of the hypothesis.

The theoretical rationale for using difference scores in the present study as the measures of actual and perceived congruency was explained by Wylie (1974). She argued that the discrepancy in actual congruency between the subject's self-description and his/her partner's actual report of him/her was not experienced by and reportable by the subject (p. 89). Since the perceptions of two persons are involved,

it seems intuitively appropriate to use a difference score. In contrast, the measurement of perceived congruency involves the discrepancy between the subject's self-description and his/her perception of his/her partner's view. Since both perceptions originate in one person, perceived congruency involves a difference between two points in the phenomenal field of the individual (Wylie, 1974, p. 89). The individual directly experiences this discrepancy and directly reacts to it, leading Wylie (1974, p. 89) to propose asking the subject to provide a direct report of the magnitude of the discrepancy. Although feasible, a test for measuring the subject's perception of the discrepancy from his/her spouse's view might be difficult for the subject to answer, since he/she may normally react to his/her spouse at an unconscious level (at least for some traits). By forcing the subject to interpret his/her perceptions about his/her spouse, a bias toward low discrepancies may be introduced. Since the subject presumably experiences the discrepancy as a difference, there is theoretical justification to operationalize it as a subtractive score (Wylie, 1974, p. 91). The present study measured both perceived and actual congruency using difference scores to provide consistent measures for comparison. The difference score appears to offer a reasonable approach to understanding the discrepancy of perceptions, as long as its limitations are carefully considered when the results are interpreted.