Racial and Ethnic Variations in Marital Quality:
A Comparison of Blacks, Whites, and Mexican-Americans

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ABSTRACT

Marital quality is an important predictor of both individual well-being and union dissolution. While research has established that blacks have lower marital quality than whites, little is known about the marital quality of Hispanics. Hispanics' union formation rates and attitudes toward marriage are more similar to those of whites than blacks; however, it is unclear how marital quality and its predictors may vary among blacks, whites, and Hispanics. In this paper, I examine five dimensions of marital quality -- marital happiness, marital disagreements, marital interaction, marital problems, and marital instability -- for blacks, whites, and Mexican-Americans using data from the first wave of the National Survey of Families and Household (NSFH). Multiple mechanisms associated with marital quality are investigated, including sociodemographic factors, union characteristics, economic factors, support factors, and attitudes. Results show that the marital quality of Mexican-Americans is more similar to that of whites than that of blacks.

INTRODUCTION

Racial and ethnic differences in union formation and dissolution trends have received much attention over the past decade. Researchers have established that blacks are less likely to desire marriage (South, 1993), are less likely to get married (Cherlin, 1992) and are more likely to divorce (Cherlin, 1992). The marital behavior of Hispanics is more similar to that of whites than to that of blacks – although divorce rates differ by Hispanic group, Hispanics have high rates of marriage and more favorable attitudes toward marriage than both blacks and whites (Oropesa, 1996; but see Umana-Taylor & Fine, 2003). Although much attention has focused on these union formation and dissolution patterns and their determinants, very little research has examined differences in the characteristics of intact marriages between these demographic groups. Several researchers have established that blacks have significantly lower marital quality than whites (Adelmann et al., 1996; Broman, 1993; Oggins et al., 1993), but have not been able to explain why this difference exists. Almost no research exists that examines the marital quality of Hispanics in comparison to that of blacks and whites (Amato, Johnson, Booth & Rogers, 2003). Hispanics now constitute the largest minority group in America (United States Census Bureau, 2001). A good research base on marital quality and its antecedents for Hispanics is necessary in order to fully understand racial and ethnic variations in marital quality as well as factors which may affect marital processes and marital dissolution.

Union dynamics do affect marital dissolution patterns. It is important to examine both positive and negative aspects of a union, as they may be precursors to divorce and key to understanding why some unions endure. Further, research needs to investigate how demographic factors such as race, childhood family structure, education, gender, and premarital unions (cohabitation and prior marriages) contribute to racial and ethnic variations in the quality of a

marriage. Hispanics, and especially Mexican-Americans, have higher rates of marriage, more positive attitudes toward marriage, and lower rates of union dissolution than do blacks (Bean & Tienda, 1987; Oropesa, Lichter, & Anderson, 1994). In what Oropesa et al. (1994) term "the paradox of Mexican American nuptiality," although Hispanics have a poor economic situation, similar to that of blacks, they have marital behavior much more similar to that of whites. Research is now needed to assess where Hispanics fall in terms of marital quality.

The benefits associated with marriage have been much-publicized by researchers and policy makers alike. Married adults are less likely to have drinking problems, are less likely to engage in unhealthy behavior, and are less likely to die than those who are widowed or unmarried (Waite, 1995; Waite & Gallagher, 2000), and have higher earnings and more wealth (Waite, 1995). However, only those in *good* marriages reap these benefits; those in unhappy marriages have levels of well-being similar to the unmarried (Gove et al., 1983). High-quality marriages do translate into benefits, in terms of both spousal well-being and child well-being. For those who are married, marital quality is the most central predictor of overall satisfaction with life and a significant predictor of global happiness (Gove, Hughes, & Style, 1983; Aldous & Ganey, 1999). However, those with higher levels of marital dissatisfaction have higher rates of divorce (White & Booth, 1991). There may also be consequences of low-quality marriages in terms of child well-being. Amato and Booth (1991) find that children who grow up with unhappily married parents have lower levels of psychological, social and family well-being than children with happily married parents.

Prior research has demonstrated that a diverse array of factors affects marital quality, and marital quality may change over the duration of the marriage and may vary based on one's age, race, and life experiences (Adelmann et al., 1996; Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000; Broman,

1993). Thus, a life course perspective is an important framework for understanding racial differences in marital quality. Indeed, previous research on race differences in marital quality has found support for a life course perspective, with marital quality changing throughout the life course according to life events such as childbirth (Adelmann et al., 1996). Therefore, in this paper I will examine multiple mechanisms that may influence marital quality throughout the life course, from one's sociodemographic background prior to the marriage, to aspects of the current union, to economic situation, social support, and attitudinal factors. Further, these factors are examined not only because they may be associated with marital quality, but because they may differ based on one's race and ethnicity.

Sociodemographic Background

One's sociodemographic background, such as previous marriages (Brown & Booth, 1996), premarital cohabitation (Booth & Johnson, 1988; Thomson & Colella, 1992), and family background (Korbin & Waite, 1984; Thornton, 1991; McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988) are related to marital quality. Further, gender is also a critical demographic factor to account for when studying racial and ethnic variations in marital quality, as Broman (1993) finds that only among women is there a racial difference in marital quality.

Some research supports the relationship between a higher-order marriage and lower marital quality (Brown & Booth, 1996; but see Booth & Edwards, 1992), and between higher-order marriages and lower marital stability (Booth & Edwards, 1992). Premarital cohabitation has also been linked to lower marital quality and more unstable unions (Booth & Johnson, 1988; DeMaris & Leslie, 1984; Thomson & Colella, 1992; but see Nock, 1995 and Skinner et al., 2002). Cohabitation has become the modal experience of young adults prior to marriage

(Smock, 2000) and there is evidence for racial variations in rates of cohabitation (Manning & Smock, 1995; Raley, 1996). The structure of the family in which one was raised has also been shown to influence marital quality. Family structure and parental marital characteristics influence whether children marry as well as the stability and quality of their marriages (Amato & DeBoer, 2001; Booth & Edwards, 1989; Feng et al., 1999; Korbin & Waite, 1984). Children whose parents divorce are more likely to have disagreements with their spouses, marital problems, and marital instability (Amato & Booth, 1991). Black couples are more likely to divorce (Cherlin, 1992), which may contribute to the lower levels of marital quality previous research has established.

Union Characteristics

Marital quality is sensitive to union characteristics, including marital duration, negative spousal behavior, the presence of children in the household, the division of household labor, and negative spousal behavior, such as the abuse of drugs or alcohol. An examination of marital duration may uncover differing marital quality for blacks, whites, and Hispanics over the life course. Some research has shown that marital quality follows a U-curved shape that corresponds to the stage of the family (such as the presence and age of children), in which marital quality decreases until middle life and then increases again in later life due to decreasing responsibilities as parents and employees (Orbuch et al., 1996; Rollins & Feldman, 1970). Others refute the idea of a U-shaped curve (Vaillant & Vaillant, 1993). Negative spousal behavior, such as drinking and drug use, is also linked to lower levels of marital quality (Adelmann et al., 1996), and some research finds that married blacks are more likely than whites to report such problems (Adelmann et al., 1996; Amato & Rogers, 1997).

Marital quality is also influenced by the presence of children in a household. Marital quality decreases after the birth of children (Orbuch et al., 1996). Further, the effect of children on marital quality may differ based on whether the children are the biological children of both partners, whether they are step-children, or whether they are the biological children of neither spouse, possibly being foster children or the children of other family members or friends. There is evidence that stepchildren may have negative effects on marital quality (Coleman, Ganong, & Fine, 2000; White & Booth, 1985), as a step-parent's authority may be undefined or contentious, increasing the chance of conflict (Hobart, 1991; Pasley, Koch, & Ihinger-Tallman, 1993). As premarital childbearing is higher among blacks than whites (Teachman et al., 2000) and blacks are more likely to divorce than are whites (Bean & Tienda, 1987; Cherlin, 1992), blacks have an increased chance of having step-children present in their households. The division of household labor also has an effect on marital quality; women perform significantly more household labor than do their husbands, and this has negative consequences for marital quality (Blair & Johnson, 1992; Hochschild, 1989). Black husbands are more likely than white or Hispanic husbands to help with household labor, but their wives still perform the majority (Broman, 1991; Sanchez & Thompson, 1997; Coltrane, 2000).

Economic Factors

Economic factors, such as income, unemployment history, current employment status, job satisfaction, and shift work are extremely important in marriage. Economic well-being is positively associated with marital interactions (Conger et al., 1990). The economic situation of blacks is especially precarious, with a poorer job market and lower educational attainment and returns to education for black men (Wilson, 1987), and the economic situation of Hispanics is

similar to that of blacks (Oropesa et al., 1994). These factors translate into a higher unemployment rate, as well as the possibility of lower job satisfaction and an increased likelihood for unstable employment or shift work. Higher income is significantly related to reports of greater marital happiness (Crohan & Veroff, 1989). For black husbands, economic factors are a significant predictor of marital quality, especially among the low-income (Clark-Nicolas & Gray-Little, 1991). A spouse's employment instability or lack of job security results in increased family conflict (Fox & Chancey, 1998). Women place importance on the economic viability of a potential mate; some have suggested that joblessness among black males significantly contributes to the lower rates of marriage for black females (Wilson, 1987; Massy & Shibuya, 1995), and employment increases the chances of ever marrying for both black men and women (Sassler & Schoen, 1999). The effect of economics on the marital quality of Hispanics may be different than the effect for blacks. While Mexican-Americans have marriage rates and attitudes regarding marriage that are similar to those of whites, their economic situation is more similar to that of blacks; the fact that their marriage rates are high despite a poor economic situation has been termed "the paradox of Mexican American nuptiality" (Oropesa, Lichter, & Anderson, 1994). Blacks are more likely to be involved in shift work and employment with less job security, and shift work and job satisfaction have been found to have a significant negative effect on marital quality (Clark-Nicolas & Gray-Little, 1991; White & Keith, 1990). Irregular work hours have many potential consequences for a marital relationship, including loss of sleep, reduction in time available to spend with one's spouse, and less involvement with family (Presser, 2000; White & Keith, 1990), and night and rotating shifts have particularly detrimental effects on marital quality (Presser, 2000). Economic factors may

be key to understanding racial and ethnic variations in marital quality, as there are significant racial and ethnic variations in these economic factors.

Social Support

Intergenerational support, often in the form of extended kin networks, is a common form of social support across all racial and ethnic groups, although blacks and Hispanics are more likely to be involved in this type of support than are whites (McDonald & Armstrong, 2001; Rothman, Gant, & Hnat, 1985; Ruggles, 1994). In one of the few studies directly assessing the difference in marital quality between blacks and whites, kin support had a significant positive effect on marital quality (Adelmann et al., 1996). However, the effects of kin support on marital quality may be better assessed if separated into financial kin support and other kin support. There is some evidence that whites are more likely to receive financial kin support than are blacks and Hispanics (Lee & Aytac, 1998), contrary to other findings that blacks are more likely to be involved in kin support in general (Ruggles, 1994). Finally, social relationships may also have an effect on marital quality. While some research finds a positive relationship between social relationships and marital quality, others find that close social relationships in which the spouse is not also involved translate into lower marital quality (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000; Lee, 1988).

Attitudinal Factors

Attitudes may affect marriage formation and marital quality. Positive attitudes toward marriage are associated with higher marriage rates (Sassler & Schoen, 1999). Black men and women are less likely to desire to marry than are whites and Hispanics, and Hispanics are more

"pronuptial" than are whites (Oropesa, 1996; South, 1993); blacks are less likely to agree with the statement "marriage is for life" than are whites (Trent & South, 1992), and perceive less benefits associated with marriage than do white men (South, 1993). Gender ideology may also affect marital quality. A wealth of literature ties the manner in which gender is enacted in families ("doing gender," as West and Zimmerman (1987) term it), often in the form of household labor, to marital quality. Thus, gender ideology and household labor may interact in their effects on spouses' marital quality. Some researchers have found evidence that blacks have more egalitarian gender ideologies than do whites (Kane, 1992; Cazenave, 1983), while other find that black men have more conservative gender ideology than either women or white men (Ransford & Miller, 1983). An examination of the relationship between gender ideology and division of household labor may be important to consider in the context of Broman's (1993) finding that only black women report lower average marital quality.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

This paper examines possible mechanisms through which marital quality may differ by race and ethnicity. Sociodemographic background factors, characteristics of the current marriage, economic factors, social support factors, and attitudes are related to both race and marital quality. Very little research exists on the influence of these factors on the marital quality of Hispanics; thus, I use factors which have been found to affect the marital quality of whites and blacks in order to gauge the effects on Hispanics' marital quality and to compare the marital quality of this ethnic group to that of whites and blacks. By applying a life course perspective to the study of racial and ethnic differences in marital quality and utilizing a diverse set of factors, I compare the factors that affect marital quality for whites, blacks, and Hispanics, and attempt to

explain any racial variations in marital quality. As prior research has shown that the marital formation and dissolution rates of Hispanics are more similar to those of whites than blacks, I expect that the marital quality of Hispanics may also more closely mirror the marital quality of whites. If so, higher levels of marital quality among Hispanics and whites as compared to blacks may explain why these groups have lower rates of union dissolution.

METHOD

Data

This study uses the 1987-1988 National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), which includes interviews with 13,007 respondents (Sweet, Bumpass, & Call, 1988). Use of NSFH data is advantageous as it contains an oversample of blacks, allows for the measurement of multiple dimensions of marital quality, and includes a sample of Mexican-Americans that is large enough to include in the analyses. Further, NSFH data provides a much larger sample size than has been previously used to assess racial differences in marital quality, and includes a diverse array of data on childhood living arrangements, union formation and dissolution history, employment patterns, and fertility.

As race is the focal independent variable in this study, analyses are limited to blacks, whites, and Mexican-Americans. Prior research on family formation and dissolution trends has established that there is variability among Hispanic groups (Oropesa, 1996), and lumping these groups together into a "Hispanic" category for analysis may confound the differential effects of different Hispanic groups. Mexican-Americans are the only Hispanic group used in this study; although the NSFH includes information on Puerto Ricans and other Hispanics, these groups were not large enough for individual analyses. The NSFH proves problematic in determining the

race of the respondent's spouse, as there are a significant number of uncompleted spousal questionnaires; therefore, any respondent whose spouse indicates being of a different race than the respondent were deleted from the sample, and those with missing data were assumed to be of the same race as the respondent and remained part of the sample. This resulted in a loss of 152 respondents who indicated they were in interracial marriages.

The initial sample was composed of 6,618 respondents, of which 805 were black, 367 were Mexican-American, and 5,446 were white. Excluding interracial couples reduced the sample size to 6,424 respondents, of which 781 are black, 325 are Mexican-American, and 5,318 are white. The one case with a missing response for age was deleted, as were the 23 with missing data for duration of the marriage. The final sample size is 6,075 respondents, of which 5,303 are white, 772 are black, and 325 are Mexican-American.

<center>Measures</center>

Dependent Variable – Marital Quality

Five separate dimensions of marital quality are used as the dependent variables. *Marital happiness* is the response to a single question asking how happy the respondent is overall with the marital relationship, and is a scale from one to seven, with one indicating very unhappy and seven indicating very happy. *Marital interaction* is the response to a question asking how often the couple spent time alone in the past month, with one indicating never and four indicating about once a week. *Marital disagreements* is a scale, composed of the answers to a set of five items asking how often the couple disagrees over five various subjects: household tasks, money, spending time together, sex, and the in-laws. Each item is coded from one to six, with one being never and six being almost every day, and responses to the five items are then

added together to form a scale, higher values indicating more disagreements, with reasonably high reliability ($\alpha = 0.752$). *Marital problems* is a scale composed of the answers to three separate items, the first asking how often disagreements are discussed calmly (which is then reverse coded), the second asking how often the couple argues heatedly or shouts, and the third asking how often fights result in hitting or throwing things at one another. Each is coded on a scale of one to five, with one being never and five being always, and the responses to the three items are added together to form a scale, with higher numbers indicating more problems. The reliability for the scale is acceptable ($\alpha = 0.534$). Finally, the measure of *marital instability* is the response to a single item asking what the respondent feels the chances are that he or she will eventually separate from or divorce his or her spouse, and is coded from one to five, with one representing very low and five representing very high chances.

Primary Independent Variable – Race

As this paper is an investigation into the difference in marital quality between blacks and whites, the sample will be limited to couples reporting their race as non-Hispanic black, non-Hispanic white, and Mexican-American. Respondents who failed to indicate their race are excluded from this study. Interracial couples may prove problematic for the purposes of this study, as they may face different social pressures than couples of the same race, and these pressures may affect their marital quality. Since interracial couples make up a very small proportion of overall couples, and since it is unclear whether their marital quality mirrors that of white couples, black couples, or is distinctly different, they will be eliminated for the purpose of the study. Race is coded as three dichotomous variables, *white, black*, and *Mexican-American*.

Independent Variables

The first set of variables included in the analysis are sociodemographic background factors. The variable *higher-order marriage* is a dummy variable indicating the respondent is not in his or her first marriage, with missing values are coded as the respondent being in his or her first marriage. *Premarital cohabitation* is a dichotomous variable coded one if the respondent cohabited with his or her spouse prior to marriage, with missing values are coded as the couple having not cohabited premaritally. *Biological parents not married* is a dichotomous variable indicating that the respondent's biological parents were not married for the duration of the time from the respondent's birth until age 19 (or until he or she left home), with missing data coded as the biological parents being married. Three control variables, which may all have implications for marital quality, are included with the sociodemographic background factors in all analyses. *Female* is a dummy variable for the respondent's sex, coded one if the respondent is female. *Education* is the number of years of education, a variable already constructed in the NSFH data set, which takes into account education started but not finished. For those cases with missing values for education, the mean value for education by race and gender is imputed.

The second set of variables included in the analysis represent characteristics of the current union. *Marital duration* is the number of years the couple has been married; for those with values of zero (situations in which the interview presumably was conducted in the same month as the marriage began), one month was imputed. *Age married* is the age at which the respondent reports being married; those few people who reported being married at thirteen years or younger (including several people who reported extreme values) are coded as being married at age 14. There are four mutually-exclusive dummy variables indicating whether there are children present in the household. *Biological children* indicates that the biological children of

both spouses are the only children present in the household. *Step-children* indicates that there are children in the household who are the biological children of only one spouse. *Other children* is a dummy variable indicating that there are children that are not the biological offspring of either spouse present in the household. Finally, *no children* indicates that there are no children present in the household, and is used as the reference category in analyses. Those with missing responses are coded as not having children in the household. *Husband's household labor* is the proportion of total household labor that the husband performs. This value is derived by dividing male respondent reports of their own household labor or female respondent's reports of their husband's household labor hours by the total number of hours the respondent reports himself or herself and his or her spouse engaging in household chores. As some respondents reported values up to 350 hours per week (or 50 hours per day) spent in household labor, responses higher than the 95th percentile, 75 hours per week, are coded to that value. Also, there are a significant number of missing values to these questions. For those who did not report the number of hours they spent doing household tasks but indicated "don't know" or "some time spent," the mean for their gender and race is imputed, as these answers seem to indicate the respondent likely engaged in these activities. For those who did not answer the question or who indicated "inapplicable," zero hours were imputed for the missing value. This method, as well as coding to the top 95th percentile of hours spent in household labor, was used by Spitze and Ward (1995). Finally, the variable *substance abuse* indicates whether either spouse (as reported by the respondent) has a problem with drugs and/or alcohol, and missing values are coded as no substance abuse problem.

Economic factors are the third set of variables included in the analysis. *Income* is the log of the couple's total income. A one was added to each reported household income value so that all incomes could be logged, including those respondents who reported zero income. As there is

evidence of a fairly substantial difference in income between whites and blacks (Teachman et al.,

2000) and there are 737 cases with missing data for income in the NSFH, the mean logged

income by race and gender is imputed for those with missing data. *Wife's proportion of income*

is the proportion of the total household income that results from the wife's earnings.

Unemployment in the recent past may affect current marital quality; *past unemployment* is a

dummy variable coded one if the respondent has been unemployed during the past year, and

missing values are coded as having not been unemployed in the past year. Current employment

status is measured by a set of dummy variables which take into account the hours respondents

reported working at a first job as well as a second job; *full-time* indicates that the respondent is

working thirty hours or more per week, *part-time* indicates the respondent works at least one

hour a week, but less than thirty hours, *unemployment* indicates the respondent is not currently

working but has looked for work in the past four weeks, and *not working* indicates the

respondent is not working, but is also not looking for work, including respondents such as

retirees and homemakers. Missing values are coded as not working. Full-time work is used as

the reference category. *Job satisfaction* is conceptualized as the response to the statement, "The

job I do is one of the most satisfying parts of my life." The responses are a scale from one to

five with one being strongly agree and five being strongly disagree, and are then reverse coded

so that higher scores indicate more job satisfaction, and the mean by race is imputed for all

missing values. The *irregular work* variable is a scale of four items indicating whether the

respondent's hours of work vary, days of work vary, whether the work schedule alternates

between shifts, and whether the respondent's job required him or her to be away overnight more

than 24 times in the past year (an average of more than two nights per month). A response of yes

to each of these four questions was coded as one, and the answers to the four items were then

added together to form a scale, with higher scores representing an increasingly irregular work schedule.

The fourth set of variables represents social and intergenerational support networks. Kin support is divided into two separate categories, as there is evidence that blacks and whites are involved in and receive differing types of kin support. *Financial kin support* is a dummy variable indicating that the respondent has received a gift or loan of $200 or more from friends or relatives not living in the household, with missing values coded as the respondent not receiving financial kin support. *Other kin support* is coded as a scale from zero to five designed to measure how much kin support the respondent is receiving with babysitting or child care; transportation; repairs; work around the house; or advice, encouragement, or moral support from any relative over the past month. Responses of yes are coded as one and responses of no coded as zero for each item, and the responses to each item are added together to measure the amount of other kin support the respondent is receiving. Any missing responses are coded as not receiving support. The *social relationships* variable is a scale composed of the answer to four questions asking how often the respondent spends a social evening with relatives, a neighbor, the people he or she works with, and friends who live outside his or her neighborhood. The responses to each question range from zero to four, with zero being never and four being several times a week. The responses to each question were added, with the total ranging from zero to sixteen. The mean score for each item by race is imputed for any missing values.

The final set of variables represents attitudinal factors. The *negative attitude toward marriage* variable is the response to the statement, "It's better for a person to get married than to go through life being single." Responses were scaled from one to five, one being strongly agree and five being strongly disagree, such that higher values would reflect a less supportive attitude

toward the importance of marriage, and the mean by race is imputed for any missing values. The *individuality* variable is used in effort to tap the respondent's individuality from his or her spouse. This variable is measured as the response to the statement, "In a successful marriage, the partners must have the freedom to do what they want individually." Responses range from one to five, with one being strongly agree and five being strongly disagree, and were reverse coded so that higher scores reflect more individualistic attitudes; the mean according to race is imputed for any missing values. Finally, *gender ideology* is a scale composed of the responses to three statements. The first statement, that preschool children are likely to suffer if their mother is employed, is coded on a scale from one to five, with one being strongly agree and five being strongly disagree. The other two items ask whether the respondent approves or disapproves of: (1), mothers who work full-time when their youngest child is less than five years old and, (2), mothers who work part-time when their youngest child is less than five years old. These items are coded on a scale of one to seven, with one being strongly approve and seven being strongly disapprove. In re-coding these items, the latter two items were first reverse coded so that higher scores represented more egalitarian gender role attitudes. As they are measured on differing scales, the three items were then standardized before being added together to form the gender ideology scale. Higher scores on this scale reflect more liberal gender role attitudes, and the mean for the respondent's gender and race are imputed for any missing values. The reliability of the scale is acceptable ($\alpha = 0.780$).

Plan of Analysis

The data are analyzed in several steps to determine whether the hypotheses are supported. First, bivariate analyses test for significant racial differences in the means for all dependent and independent variables. Regression analysis follows, using ordinary least squares (OLS)

regression, in which marital quality is regressed on the independent variables in several different models. All analyses use the individual weight available in the NSFH to correct for oversampling and ensure that the results are nationally representative.

The first model regresses marital quality on race (using white as the reference category) to test for racial differences in marital quality. The second model includes sociodemographic background factors. The third model adds characteristics of the marital union, while the fourth model examines economic factors. The fifth and sixth models are comprised of the social support variables and attitudinal variables, respectively. Although whites will be used as the contrast category, separate analyses (not shown) switch the contrast category to blacks so that significant differences between blacks and Mexican-Americans can be assessed; any significant differences between these groups are reported in the results section and indicated in the results tables. Finally, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was used to test for multicollinearity in all of the regression analyses (results not shown). All VIF values are less than eight; therefore, collinearity does not appear to be a problem.

RESULTS

Bivariate Analysis

Means and standard deviations of all variables are shown in Table 1. With regards to marital quality, Table 1 shows that, compared to whites, blacks have significantly lower levels of marital happiness and marital interaction, on average, and significantly higher levels of marital disagreements, problems, and instability, while Mexican-Americans report significantly lower marital interaction and significantly lower marital problems than whites. When comparing Mexican-Americans to blacks, Mexican-Americans have significantly higher average marital

happiness, significantly lower average marital problems, and significantly lower average marital instability.

There are significant black-white differences for only two of the sociodemographic background variables; blacks have significantly less education, on average, and blacks are significantly less likely to have grown up in households with married biological parents. While Mexican-Americans also have significantly lower education than whites, they are significantly different from their white counterparts in other respects: they are significantly less likely to be in a higher-order marriage and are significantly less likely to have cohabited premaritally. When comparing the sociodemographic background of Mexican-Americans with blacks, Table 1 shows that Mexican-Americans have significantly less education, and are significantly less likely to be in a higher-order marriage, to have cohabited prior to marriage, and to have biological parents who are not married than are blacks.

Turing to union characteristics, blacks are significantly less likely than whites to have no children in their households, and significantly more likely to have biological children or other children in their households. Further, black husbands perform a significantly greater proportion of the household labor than do white husbands. Mexican-Americans have significantly lower marital durations and were married at significantly younger ages, on average, than whites. Mexican-Americans are also significantly less likely than whites to have no children in their households, and significantly more likely than whites to have biological children or other children in their households. When comparing the union characteristics of Mexican-Americans to blacks, Table 1 shows that Mexican-Americans married at significantly younger ages, on average, are significantly less likely to have no children or step-children in their households, and are significantly more likely to have only biological children in their households.

Several economic factors vary significantly by race. As compared to whites, blacks have significantly lower average income, have significantly higher proportions of household income contributed by the wife, are significantly more likely to be employed full-time or to be unemployed, and are significantly less likely to work irregular job hours, to work part-time or to not be working. These differences are likely the result of higher female labor force participation among black women, who are more likely to work full-time and less likely to have part-time jobs than are their white counterparts. Mexican-Americans differ economically from whites in many ways; Mexican-Americans have significantly lower average income, significantly lower proportions of income contributed by the wife, are significantly more likely to have experienced unemployment in the past year or to be currently unemployed, are significantly less likely to be employed part-time or to have irregular working hours, and have significantly higher levels of job satisfaction, on average. Further, in comparison to blacks, Mexican-Americans have significantly lower income, have significantly lower proportions of household income contributed by the wife, are significantly more likely to have experienced past unemployment or to not be working, are significantly less likely to be employed full-time or to have irregular work hours, and have significantly higher average job satisfaction.

Among the social support variables, there are significant black-white differences only in financial kin support, with blacks being significantly less likely to receive financial kin support. Mexican-Americans are also significantly less likely than whites to receive financial kin support, but have significantly higher average social relationships. There are no significant differences between blacks and Mexican-Americans in the social support variables.

With regards to attitudinal differences, blacks report significantly lower individualistic orientations toward marriage and significantly more liberal work-related gender ideologies, on

average, than their white counterparts. Mexican-Americans have significantly lower negative

attitudes toward marriage and individuality in marriage, on average, and significantly less liberal

average gender ideology than whites. Mexican-Americans also have significantly lower negative

attitudes toward marriage and significantly less liberal gender ideology, on average, than blacks.

Multivariate Analysis

The regression of marital happiness on the selected variables is shown in Table 2. The

first model shows that there is not a significant racial difference in marital happiness between

Mexican-Americans and whites, but that blacks have significantly lower marital happiness than

both Mexican-Americans and whites. The addition of the sociodemographic background

variables in Model 2 shows that both higher levels of education and premarital cohabitation

result in significantly lower levels of marital quality. Model 3 demonstrates that the presence of

biological children or other children as well as substance abuse problems have significant

negative effects for marital quality. The addition of the sociodemographic and union

characteristic variables in Models 2 and 3 do not account for the racial differences in marital

quality; blacks still have significantly lower marital happiness than do whites or Mexican-

Americans, while there is not a significant difference between Mexican-Americans and whites.

Model 4 shows that several economic variables have significant effects on marital happiness;

increases in income, increases in the wife's proportion of the total household income, and

irregular work hours all result in significantly lower levels of marital happiness, on average,

while higher levels of job satisfaction and not working result in significantly higher average

levels of marital happiness. In Model 5, social relationships are significantly and positively

related to marital happiness. In the sixth model, both a negative and an individualistic attitude

toward marriage are significant predictors of lower marital happiness. The racial differences in marital happiness remain even after the addition of the economic variables in Model 4, the social support variables in Model 5, and the attitudinal variables in Model 6. Even after the inclusion of all the predictors in the full model, blacks have significantly lower levels of marital happiness than whites and Mexican-Americans, while there are not significant differences between Mexican-Americans and whites.

Table 3 shows the regression of marital interaction on selected variables. Model 1 shows that there is a significant racial difference in marital interaction, such that both Mexican-Americans and blacks have significantly lower levels of marital interaction, on average, than do whites. Model 2 shows a significant positive effect for several variables; being in a higher-order marriage results in significantly higher levels of marital interaction, on average, while premarital cohabitation and biological parents having not been married results in significantly lower levels of marital interaction. After the addition of the sociodemographic variables in Model 2, Mexican-Americans and blacks still have significantly lower levels of marital interaction, on average, than do whites. All of the union characteristic variables in Model 3 are significant. Increased duration of the union and increased age at marriage are predictive of significantly higher marital interaction, while substance abuse and the presence of biological children, step-children, and other children in the household are all predictive of significantly lower levels of marital interaction, on average. Further, after controlling for union characteristics, higher education and being female become significant predictors of greater marital interaction, while being in a higher-order marriage is no longer a significant predictor of marital interaction. After controlling for the union characteristics in Model 3, Mexican-Americans no longer have significantly different levels of marital interaction than do whites; however, Mexican-Americans

have significantly higher levels of marital interaction than blacks, while blacks have significantly lower levels of marital interaction than whites. Controlling for the age at which one married, the presence of biological children, and the presence of stepchildren appears to explain the race difference in marital interaction between Mexican-Americans and whites, as Mexican-Americans are more likely to marry at younger ages and are more likely to have biological children and step-children in their households than are whites.

Surprisingly, none of the economic variables added in Model 4 are significant predictors of marital interaction; after controlling for these variables, however, Mexican-Americans no longer have significantly different levels of marital interaction than do blacks. The only racial differences that remain are black-white differences in marital interaction. The addition of the economic variables in Model 5 reveals a significant positive effect for social relationships, but none of the attitudinal variables added in Model 6 are significant. Further, none of the predictors added in Model 5 or 6 explain the racial difference in marital interaction between blacks and whites. Even after the all predictors are included in the full model, blacks have significantly lower levels of marital interaction, on average, than do whites, while Mexican-Americans do not have significantly different levels of marital interaction than either blacks or whites. Racial differences in marital interaction between Mexican-Americans and whites appear to be a function of sociodemographic factors and union characteristics, as this race difference in marital interaction no longer exists after accounting for these factors.

The regression of marital disagreements on selected variables is shown in Table 4. Again, Model 1 shows a race difference, such that blacks report, on average, significantly higher levels of marital disagreements than do whites; however, there is no significant racial difference in marital disagreement between Mexican-Americans and whites or among Mexican-Americans

and blacks. With the addition of the sociodemographic variables in Model 2, however, both Mexican-Americans and blacks have significantly higher levels of marital disagreements, on average, than do whites. Of the sociodemographic variables added in this model, increased education and premarital cohabitation are associated with significantly higher marital disagreements, while being in a higher-order marriage is associated with significantly lower marital disagreements, on average. The addition of the marital characteristics in Model 3 results in a change in the effect of race and ethnicity on marital disagreements; being Mexican-American is now predictive of significantly lower levels of marital disagreements than blacks. Blacks continue to have significantly higher levels of marital disagreements than whites, while there are no significant differences in marital disagreements between Mexican-Americans and whites. Of the union characteristics added, substance abuse and the presence of biological children are significant positive predictors of marital disagreements, while the age at which one is married and the duration of the union are significant negative predictors of marital disagreements. Specifically, controlling for age at marriage and the presence of biological children in the household seem to explain the racial difference in marital disagreements between Mexican-Americans and whites, as bivariate analyses show that Mexican-Americans marry at significantly lower ages and are significantly more likely to have biological children in the household than are whites.

Model 4 shows significant effects for only two of the economic variables; past unemployment is a significant positive predictor of marital disagreements, while job satisfaction is a significant negative predictor of disagreements. All of the social support variables in Model 5 are significant, with social relationships as well as the receipt of either kin support or other types of support being significant predictors of higher levels of marital disagreement. Finally, in

Model 6, having a negative attitude toward marriage is predictive of more disagreements, while a more liberal gender ideology is predictive of fewer disagreements. The addition the variables in Models 4, 5, and 6 do not explain the racial and ethnic differences in marital disagreements; Mexican-Americans have significantly lower levels of marital disagreements than do blacks, while blacks have significantly higher levels of marital disagreements than do whites.

Table 5 shows the results for the regression of marital problems on selected variables. Model 1 shows that there are significant racial differences in marital problems, such that Mexican-Americans report significantly lower levels of marital problems, on average, than do whites or blacks, while blacks report, on average, significantly higher levels of marital problems than do whites. However, with the addition of the sociodemographic background factors in Model 2, the race difference between blacks and whites is explained. Being female, having cohabited before marriage, and having biological parents who were not married are all significant predictors of greater marital problems, while being in a higher-order marriage is a significant predictor of lower marital problems. As results of bivariate analysis reveal significant differences in biological parents not being married, the explanation of the black-white difference in marital problems is attributable to this variable. The racial difference in marital problems persists for Mexican-Americans, who have significantly lower levels of marital problems than both blacks and whites.

The addition of the union characteristics in Model 3 shows significant negative effects for marital duration and age married, and significant positive effects for substance abuse and the presence of biological children or other children in the household. None of the economic variables in Model 4 are significant predictors of marital problems. In Model 5, social relationships are predictive of significantly lower levels of marital problems, on average, while

Model 6 shows that more liberal gender ideology is significantly related to higher levels of marital problems, on average. None of the variables added in Models 3, 4, 5, or 6 explain the ethnic difference in marital problems. Even after controlling for all variables in the full model, Mexican-Americans have significantly lower levels of marital problems, on average, than do whites or blacks.

The results for the regression of marital instability on the selected variables are shown in Table 6. Model 1 shows a significant racial difference in marital instability, such that Mexican-Americans report, on average, significantly lower levels of marital instability than blacks, while blacks report, on average, significantly higher marital instability than do whites. Among the variables added in Model 2, education, being in a higher-order marriage, premarital cohabitation, and biological parents not being married are significantly positively related to marital instability. The variables in Model 2 do not explain the racial and ethnic differences in marital instability. Model 3 shows that duration of the marriage and a greater age at marriage are significant negative predictors of marital instability, while the presence of biological children in the household and substance abuse are significant positive predictors of marital instability. After controlling for the union characteristics in Model 3, blacks still have significantly higher levels of marital instability, on average, than do Mexican-Americans or whites; however, now Mexican-Americans also have significantly lower levels of marital instability, on average, than do whites. Of the economic variables in Model 4, past unemployment, irregular work hours, and larger proportions of the household income due to the wife's income are all significantly positively related to marital instability. After controlling for these variables, blacks continue to have significantly higher marital instability than do Mexican-Americans or whites, but there is no longer a significant difference in marital instability between Mexican-Americans and whites.

None of the social support variables in Model 5 are significant predictors of marital instability, while Model 6 shows significant effects for only two of the attitudinal variables. A negative attitude as well as an individualistic attitude toward marriage is significantly related to reports of higher marital instability. Even after the including all predictors in the full model, blacks have significantly lower levels of marital instability, on average, than Mexican-Americans and whites.

The results of regression analysis reveal racial differences over all five of the dimensions of marital quality. When comparing Mexican-Americans with blacks, Mexican-Americans have significantly higher levels of marital happiness and significantly lower levels of marital problems, and instability, on average; when controlling for all variables in the full model, these differences cannot be explained, and Mexican-Americans also have significantly lower levels of marital disagreements, on average, than do blacks. When comparing Mexican-Americans and whites, Mexican-Americans have significantly lower levels of marital interaction and marital problems; however, controlling for sociodemographic factors and union characteristics explains the difference in marital interaction. The only remaining difference in marital quality between these two groups is that Mexican-Americans have significantly lower levels of marital problems, on average, than do their white counterparts. When comparing blacks with whites, blacks have significantly lower levels of marital happiness and interaction, and significantly higher levels of marital disagreements, problems, and instability, on average, than do whites. When controlling for all variables in the full model, only racial differences in marital problems are able to be explained; thus, significant black-white differences in marital happiness, interaction, disagreements, and instability persist.

DISCUSSION

This paper has examined racial and ethnic variations in five different components of marital quality: marital happiness, interaction, disagreements, problems, and instability. It has also attempted to account for racial differences in marital quality by considering multiple mechanisms that may contribute to any differences. Results of bivariate analyses show that, when compared to whites, Mexican-American spouses have significantly lower average marital interaction and marital problems. When compared to blacks, Mexican-Americans report significantly higher average marital happiness and significantly lower average marital problems and instability. In comparison to whites, black spouses have significantly lower average marital happiness and interaction and significantly higher average marital disagreements, marital problems, and marital instability.

Regressing each of the five dimensions of marital quality on race finds significant racial differences across each dimension. After accounting for factors that are related to marital quality and race, including sociodemographic background factors, union characteristics, economic factors, attitudes, and social relationships, the marital quality of Mexican-Americans differs from that of whites only with respect to marital problems, with Mexican-Americans having significantly lower levels of marital problems, on average, than their white counterparts. Further, Mexican-Americans have significantly higher levels of marital happiness and significantly lower levels of marital disagreements, problems, and instability than blacks, on average; blacks have significantly lower levels of marital happiness and interaction and significantly higher levels of marital disagreements and instability, on average, than do whites.

From the results of these analyses, it appears that the marital quality of Mexican-Americans is more like that of whites than that of blacks. In fact, while there are no significant

differences between Mexican-Americans and whites in four of the five dimensions of marital quality, Mexican-Americans report significantly lower levels of marital problems, on average, than do whites. Meanwhile, blacks appear to have lower overall marital quality than either whites or Mexican-Americans, as they have significantly lower marital happiness and significantly higher marital disagreements and marital instability than both Mexican-Americans and whites, significantly lower levels of marital interaction than whites, and significantly higher levels of marital problems than Mexican-Americans.

Turning to the predictors of marital quality, it appears that sociodemographic background factors and union characteristics are particularly salient in understanding racial and ethnic differences in marital quality. Sociodemographic factors explain the black-white difference in marital problems, and after controlling for sociodemographic factors in the regression of marital disagreements, a significant difference between whites and Mexican-Americans emerges. Further, union characteristics explain the difference between whites and Mexican-Americans in marital interaction and marital disagreements, and controlling for union characteristics reveals a significant difference in marital interaction and marital disagreements between blacks and Mexican-Americans.

Certain individual predictors also emerged as very important factors to consider in examining marital quality. Of the sociodemographic factors, premarital cohabitation is a significant predictor of each dimension of marital quality, and biological parents not being married is a significant predictor of marital interaction, problems, and instability. Of the union characteristics, the presence of biological children in the household and substance abuse are both very important; both are significant predictors of each of the five dimensions of marital quality. The age at which one marries and the duration of one's marriage are also significant predictors of

each dimension of marital quality with the exception of marital happiness. Of the support and attitudinal factors, social support emerged as a significant predictor of marital happiness, interaction, disagreements, and problems.

Especially interesting is the limited importance of economic factors in predicting marital quality. While controlling for economic factors explains the significant difference between whites and Mexican-Americans in marital instability and the difference between blacks and Mexican-Americans in marital interaction, *none* of the individual economic factors are significant predictors of marital interaction or marital problems. Further, neither income, unemployment, nor being employed part-time are significant predictors of marital happiness, interaction, disagreements, problems or instability in the full models. These results are consistent with Oropesa et al.'s concept of the paradox of Mexican-American nuptiality; although the bivariate results show that Mexican-Americans do have a poorer economic situation than both blacks and whites, with significantly lower household income, significantly higher rates of past unemployment, significantly lower rates of current full-time employment, they have levels of marital quality much more similar to (and even better than) whites.

It is also important to note that the five components of marital quality are quite distinct. Whereas several union characteristics are significant predictors of marital happiness, no sociodemographic background factor is a significant predictor of marital happiness in the full model. However, in predicting marital instability, many of the sociodemographic background factors are significant. While none of the social support factors is significantly related to marital instability, all are significant predictors of marital disagreements. While only three of the seven union characteristics are significant predictors of marital happiness, all are significant predictors of marital interaction. Thus, in examining a multiple-component model of marital quality, it is

important to account for multiple mechanisms which may influence distinct aspects of marital quality quite differently.

There are several limitations of this study. Some of the variables may not adequately measure the factors they are used to conceptualize. For instance, because the NSFH does not ask all respondents to specify their work schedule, the irregular work variable includes only those involved in *rotating* shifts, not those involved in standard night or weekend shifts. Further, the social support variable does not differentiate between social outings with others in which the spouse was included and social interactions in which the spouse was not involved, which may confound the results. This study also uses a family background measure which does not differentiate whether the respondent's parents are divorced or never-married, and does not differentiate between those whose parents remarried and those who continued to live with a single parent; further, the NSFH does not include a measure of parental marital quality. Including factors such as these may have provided for a greater understanding of how family background is associated with racial differences in marital quality. Models could be more parsimonious by removing economic factors, as these had little or no significance across all dimensions of marital quality. Finally, this study is cross-sectional and thus the observed racial differences in marital quality may be partially a result of selection.

Future research on racial and ethnic differences in marital quality could benefit from the use of couple-level data. I have used data only from one spouse, but certainly the experience of both spouses could have important implications for marital quality. Subsequent studies should also consider other racial and ethnic groups, as almost no research has compared the marital quality of blacks and whites with other Hispanic groups or with Asian-Americans.

Results of this paper show that the marital quality of Mexican-Americans is quite similar to that of whites, with no significant differences in marital happiness, interaction, disagreements, or instability between the groups; further, Mexican-Americans even had significantly lower levels of marital problems, on average, than did whites. Meanwhile, blacks had significantly lower marital happiness and significantly higher marital disagreements, problems, and instability, on average, than did Mexican-Americans, and lower marital happiness and interaction and higher marital disagreements, problems, and instability, on average, than did whites. These results are consistent with Oropesa et al.'s (1994) idea of the paradox of Mexican-American nuptiality; although Mexican-Americans have an economic situation more similar to that of blacks, their levels of marital quality appear more similar to those of whites. This research is also consistent with the literature that shows that Mexican-Americans have more positive attitudes toward marriage than whites and blacks, and have rates of union formation and dissolution similar to that of whites. It is possible that, because the marital quality of Mexican-Americans is similar to that of whites, they therefore have union dissolution rates similar to those of whites, whereas the lower levels of marital quality experienced by blacks have implications for their higher rates of marital dissolution. Further research should examine racial and ethnic variations in marital quality to determine if these differences are predictive of racial and ethnic differences in marital dissolution.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of All Variables

	Hispanics Mean	S.D.	Blacks Mean	S.D.	Whites Mean	S.D.	Total Sample Mean	S.D.
Dependent Variables								
Marital Happiness	6.10 ^^^	3.80	5.74 ***	3.89	5.99	4.69	5.97	4.57
Marital Interaction	4.71 ***	4.71	4.71 ***	4.14	5.02	4.82	4.98	4.75
Marital Disagreements	8.91	14.15	9.25 ***	12.04	8.58	12.29	8.64	12.37
Marital Problems	5.31 * ^^^	5.06	5.87 **	5.37	5.69	5.99	5.69	5.89
Marital Instability	1.29 ^^^	1.84	1.53 ***	2.36	1.31	2.35	1.32	2.34
Independent Variables								
Female	0.50	1.51	0.47	1.34	0.50	1.76	0.50	1.71
Education	9.11 *** ^^^	12.28	11.78 ***	9.09	13.01	10.40	12.76	10.72
Higher-order Marriage	0.11 *** ^^^	0.97	0.22	1.12	0.20	1.40	0.19	1.35
Premarital Cohabitation	0.16 ** ^^^	1.12	0.24 ***	1.15	0.17	1.33	0.18	1.30
Biological Parents Not Married	0.29 ^^^	1.38	0.46 ***	1.34	0.25	1.52	0.27	1.51
Marital Duration	16.38 *	38.30	18.10	38.36	21.32	54.70	20.88	52.43
Age Married	23.52 *** ^^^	21.99	26.29	23.83	25.15	29.19	25.17	28.31
No Children in Household	0.25 *** ^^^	1.30	0.38 ***	1.30	0.51	1.76	0.49	1.71
Only Biological Children in Household	0.59 *** ^^^	1.49	0.41 **	1.32	0.40	1.72	0.40	1.67
Stepkids in Household	0.07 ^	0.79	0.10	0.81	0.05	0.80	0.06	0.80
Other kids in Household	0.11 **	0.95	0.11 ***	0.84	0.04	0.68	0.05	0.72
Husband's Proportion of HH Labor	0.31	0.75	0.33 *	0.64	0.30	0.76	0.31	0.75
Substance Abuse	0.03	0.54	0.04	0.50	0.04	0.66	0.04	0.64
Income	19024.77 *** ^^^	47162.39	27825.23 ***	70946.9	37051.63	161354.3	35642.85	149976.1
Wife's Proportion of Household Income	0.27 * ^^^	0.99	0.40 ***	0.94	0.31	1.21	0.32	1.17
Past Unemployment	0.13 ** ^	1.03	0.08	0.75	0.08	0.95	0.08	0.93
Employed Full-time	0.59 ^	1.49	0.63 ***	1.29	0.55	1.76	0.55	1.70
Employed Part-time	0.03 ***	0.53	0.04 ***	0.55	0.09	1.00	0.08	0.94
Unemployed	0.05 *	0.67	0.03 *	0.49	0.02	0.43	0.02	0.46
Not Working	0.33 ^	1.43	0.29 **	1.22	0.35	1.68	0.35	1.62
Job Satisfaction	3.65 *** ^^^	2.49	3.39	2.51	3.40	3.08	3.40	2.99
Irregular Working Hours	0.21 *** ^^	2.15	0.37 *	2.31	0.43	3.26	0.42	3.12
Financial Kin Support	0.14 ***	1.06	0.14 ***	0.94	0.25	1.53	0.24	1.46
Other Kin Support	1.07	4.56	0.98	3.49	1.04	4.45	1.04	4.35
Social Relationships	6.24 *	10.16	5.72	8.67	5.55	9.17	5.59	9.17
Negative Attitude Toward Marriage	2.12 *** ^^^	2.89	2.50	2.73	2.44	3.69	2.43	3.56
Individuality in Marriage	3.55 ***	3.26	3.46 ***	2.90	3.73	3.46	3.70	3.39
Work-Related Gender Ideology	9.11 *** ^^^	11.32	10.99 ***	10.62	10.02	13.73	10.06	13.32

Significantly different from whites: *p < 0.05   **p < 0.01   ***p < 0.001

Significantly different from blacks: ^p < 0.05   ^^p < 0.01   ^^^p < 0.001

Table 2. Regression of Marital Happiness on Selected Variables

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Race/Ethnicity						
Black	-0.249 ***	-0.244 ***	-0.204 **	-0.192 **	-0.202 **	-0.207 **
Mexican-American	0.111 ^^^	0.045 ^^	0.147 ^^	0.119 ^^	0.096 ^^	0.065 ^
Sociodemographic Factors						
Female		-0.036	-0.001	-0.064	-0.063	-0.019
Education		-0.016 **	-0.008	-0.005	-0.005	-0.002
Higher-order Marriage		-0.030	-0.058	-0.036	-0.038	-0.041
Premarital Cohabitation		-0.183 ***	-0.101 *	-0.102 *	-0.103 *	-0.086
Bio. Parents Not Married		-0.057	-0.048	-0.052	-0.048	-0.045
Union Characteristics						
Marital Duration (Years)			0.001	-0.003	-0.002	-0.003
Age Married			0.001	-0.002	-0.002	-0.003
Bio. Kids in Household			-0.250 ***	-0.262 ***	-0.250 ***	-0.251 ***
Stepkids in Household			-0.101	-0.105	-0.088	-0.089
Other kids in Household			-0.328 ***	-0.331 ***	-0.304 ***	-0.296 ***
Husband's Household Labor			0.119	0.161 *	0.147	0.158
Substance Abuse			-0.894 ***	-0.878 ***	-0.871 ***	-0.875 ***
Economic Factors						
Income				-0.013 *	-0.013 *	-0.012
Wife's Proportion of Income				-0.119 *	-0.119 *	-0.099
Past Unemployment				-0.068	-0.069	-0.056
Employed Part-time				0.108	0.107	0.092
Unemployed				0.010	0.012	-0.014
Not Working				0.108 *	0.112 *	0.101 *
Job Satisfaction				0.046 *	0.041 *	0.040 *
Irregular Work Time				-0.049 *	-0.051 *	-0.050 *
Support Factors						
Financial Kin Support					-0.013	-0.012
Other Kin Support					-0.017	-0.017
Social Relationships					0.028 ***	0.028 ***
Attitudinal Factors						
Neg. Attitude Toward Marriage						-0.084 ***
Individuality in Marriage						-0.047 **
Work-Related Gender Ideology						-0.003
Intercept	5.985 ***	6.258 ***	6.209 ***	6.321 ***	6.172 ***	6.552 ***
F	8.24 ***	6.71 ***	15.31 ***	11.27 ***	10.74 ***	10.84 ***
R^2	0.003	0.008	0.034	0.039	0.042	0.048

Significant predictor of happiness (whites as reference category): *$p < 0.05$ **$p < 0.01$ ***$p < 0.001$
Significantly different from blacks: ^$p < 0.05$ ^^$p < 0.01$ ^^^$p < 0.001$

Table 3. Regression of Marital Interaction on Selected Variables

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Race/Ethnicity						
Black	-0.313 ***	-0.267 ***	-0.133 *	-0.136 *	-0.144 *	-0.144 *
Mexican-American	-0.313 ***	-0.303 **	0.077 ^	0.062	0.032	0.024
Sociodemographic Factors						
Female		-0.020	0.079 *	0.066	0.058	0.071
Education		0.000	0.029 ***	0.031 ***	0.028 ***	0.029 ***
Higher-order Marriage		0.141 **	-0.017	-0.008	-0.006	-0.007
Premarital Cohabitation		-0.368 ***	-0.083	-0.089	-0.094	-0.090
Bio. Parents Not Married		-0.121 **	-0.100 **	-0.102 **	-0.090 *	-0.089 *
Union Characteristics						
Marital Duration (Years)			0.009 ***	0.008 ***	0.010 ***	0.010 ***
Age Married			0.013 ***	0.011 ***	0.013 ***	0.013 ***
Bio. Kids in Household			-0.763 ***	-0.761 ***	-0.749 ***	-0.749 ***
Stepkids in Household			-0.555 ***	-0.550 ***	-0.525 ***	-0.525 ***
Other kids in Household			-0.796 ***	-0.790 ***	-0.749 ***	-0.746 ***
Husband's Household Labor			0.224 **	0.218 **	0.189 *	0.192 *
Substance Abuse			-0.584 ***	-0.574 ***	-0.580 ***	-0.581 ***
Economic Factors						
Income				-0.004	-0.004	-0.004
Wife's Proportion of Income				0.061	0.058	0.064
Past Unemployment				0.006	0.005	0.009
Employed Part-time				0.078	0.072	0.069
Unemployed				0.003	-0.002	-0.010
Not Working				0.038	0.039	0.036
Job Satisfaction				0.032	0.024	0.023
Irregular Work Time				-0.032	-0.037	-0.037
Support Factors						
Financial Kin Support					0.045	0.046
Other Kin Support					0.006	0.006
Social Relationships					0.051 ***	0.051 ***
Attitudinal Factors						
Neg. Attitude Toward Marriage						-0.025
Individuality in Marriage						-0.006
Work-Related Gender Ideology						-0.001
Intercept	5.020 ***	5.101 ***	4.449 ***	4.422 ***	4.074 ***	4.165 ***
F	15.77 ***	15.36 ***	69.34 ***	44.56 ***	42.39 ***	37.93 ***
R^2	0.005	0.017	0.136	0.137	0.143	0.147

Significant predictor of interaction (whites as reference category): *$p < 0.05$ **$p < 0.01$ ***$p < 0.001$
Significantly different from blacks: ^$p < 0.05$ ^^$p < 0.01$ ^^^$p < 0.001$

Table 4. Regression of Marital Disagreements on Selected Variables

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Race/Ethnicity						
Black	0.669 ***	0.656 ***	0.401 *	0.402 *	0.423 *	0.447 **
Mexican-American	0.326	0.699 **	-0.282 ^	-0.226 ^	-0.229 ^	-0.209 ^
Sociodemographic Factors						
Female		-0.019	-0.299 **	-0.271 **	-0.338 ***	-0.344 ***
Education		0.101 ***	-0.002	0.009	-0.001	-0.002
Higher-order Marriage		-0.532 ***	-0.007	-0.008	0.013	0.016
Premarital Cohabitation		1.585 ***	0.447 ***	0.418 ***	0.406 **	0.415 **
Bio. Parents Not Married		0.199	0.127	0.109	0.156	0.150
Union Characteristics						
Marital Duration (Years)			-0.071 ***	-0.072 ***	-0.064 ***	-0.063 ***
Age Married			-0.079 ***	-0.080 ***	-0.071 ***	-0.070 ***
Bio. Kids in Household			0.619 ***	0.622 ***	0.587 ***	0.586 ***
Stepkids in Household			0.158	0.142	0.155	0.150
Other kids in Household			0.292	0.340	0.350	0.341
Husband's Household Labor			0.243	0.212	0.176	0.197
Substance Abuse			2.291 ***	2.241 ***	2.153 ***	2.146 ***
Economic Factors						
Income				-0.020	-0.019	-0.020
Wife's Proportion of Income				0.131	0.095	0.131
Past Unemployment				0.351 *	0.368 *	0.364 *
Employed Part-time				0.072	0.039	0.029
Unemployed				0.334	0.292	0.309
Not Working				0.021	-0.010	-0.030
Job Satisfaction				-0.128 **	-0.127 *	-0.123 *
Irregular Work Time				0.090	0.082	0.082
Support Factors						
Financial Kin Support					0.304 **	0.295 **
Other Kin Support					0.222 ***	0.224 ***
Social Relationships					0.058 ***	0.061 ***
Attitudinal Factors						
Neg. Attitude Toward Marriage						0.142 **
Individuality in Marriage						0.034
Work-Related Gender Ideology						-0.032 **
Intercept	8.582 ***	7.043 ***	11.705 ***	12.088 ***	11.244 ***	11.049 ***
F	7.41 ***	34.94 ***	81.85 ***	53.13 ***	49.98 ***	45.28 ***
R^2	0.003	0.040	0.164	0.166	0.176	0.178

Significant predictor of disagreements (whites as reference category): *$p < 0.05$ **$p < 0.01$ ***$p < 0.001$
Significantly different from blacks: ^$p < 0.05$ ^^$p < 0.01$ ^^^$p < 0.001$

Table 5. Regression of Marital Problems on Selected Variables

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Race/Ethnicity						
Black	0.179 *	0.129	0.098	0.094	0.109	0.095
Mexican-American	-0.378 **^^^	-0.381 **^^^	-0.529 ***^^^	-0.517 ***^^^	-0.491 ***^^^	-0.476 ***^^^
Sociodemographic Factors						
Female		0.198 ***	0.103 *	0.129 *	0.135 **	0.103
Education		0.003	-0.010	-0.008	-0.009	-0.011
Higher-order Marriage		-0.174 **	0.034	0.034	0.033	0.033
Premarital Cohabitation		0.469 ***	0.301 ***	0.291 ***	0.284 ***	0.271 ***
Bio. Parents Not Married		0.146 **	0.126 *	0.123 *	0.118 *	0.117 *
Union Characteristics						
Marital Duration (Years)			-0.008 ***	-0.008 ***	-0.009 ***	-0.008 ***
Age Married			-0.020 ***	-0.021 ***	-0.022 ***	-0.021 ***
Bio. Kids in Household			0.177 **	0.182 **	0.176 **	0.177 **
Stepkids in Household			0.011	0.011	0.002	0.002
Other kids in Household			0.303 **	0.315 **	0.289 **	0.283 **
Husband's Household Labor			-0.160	-0.179	-0.170	-0.182
Substance Abuse			1.124 ***	1.122 ***	1.126 ***	1.130 ***
Economic Factors						
Income				-0.011	-0.010	-0.011
Wife's Proportion of Income				0.059	0.062	0.037
Past Unemployment				0.082	0.080	0.073
Employed Part-time				-0.025	-0.021	-0.009
Unemployed				-0.229	-0.226	-0.205
Not Working				-0.052	-0.054	-0.037
Job Satisfaction				-0.021	-0.017	-0.016
Irregular Work Time				0.017	0.019	0.019
Support Factors						
Financial Kin Support					0.076	0.077
Other Kin Support					-0.017	-0.018
Social Relationships					-0.028 ***	-0.028 ***
Attitudinal Factors						
Neg. Attitude Toward Marriage						0.022
Individuality in Marriage						-0.009
Work-Related Gender Ideology						0.014 *
Intercept	5.690 ***	5.468 ***	6.269 ***	6.419 ***	6.606 ***	6.467 ***
F	7.77 ***	15.64 ***	22.05 ***	14.44 ***	13.32 ***	12.14 ***
R^2	0.003	0.019	0.051	0.052	0.054	0.055

Significant predictor of problems (whites as reference category):   *$p < 0.05$ **$p < 0.01$ ***$p < 0.001$
Significantly different from blacks: ^$p < 0.05$ ^^$p < 0.01$ ^^^$p < 0.001$

Table 6. Regression of Marital Instability on Selected Variables

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Race/Ethnicity						
Black	0.220 ***	0.198 ***	0.168 ***	0.162 ***	0.162 ***	0.164 ***
Mexican-American	-0.023 ^^^	0.013 ^^^	-0.091 *^^^	-0.083 ^^^	-0.083 ^^^	-0.066 ^^^
Sociodemographic Factors						
Female		0.008	-0.020	0.010	0.012	-0.012
Education		0.008 **	-0.003	-0.003	-0.003	-0.005
Higher-order Marriage		0.048 *	0.078 **	0.072 *	0.071 *	0.073 *
Premarital Cohabitation		0.257 ***	0.131 ***	0.127 ***	0.127 ***	0.117 ***
Bio. Parents Not Married		0.061 **	0.051 *	0.050 *	0.048 *	0.046 *
Union Characteristics						
Marital Duration (Years)			-0.007 ***	-0.006 ***	-0.006 ***	-0.006 ***
Age Married			-0.007 ***	-0.006 ***	-0.006 ***	-0.006 ***
Bio. Kids in Household			0.068 **	0.075 **	0.076 ***	0.077 ***
Stepkids in Household			0.032	0.033	0.033	0.033
Other kids in Household			0.065	0.073	0.072	0.067
Husband's Household Labor			0.051	0.028	0.030	0.024
Substance Abuse			0.521 ***	0.513 ***	0.516 ***	0.518 ***
Economic Factors						
Income				0.001	0.001	0.000
Wife's Proportion of Income				0.069 *	0.070 *	0.060 *
Past Unemployment				0.085 *	0.085 *	0.077 *
Employed Part-time				-0.062	-0.061	-0.053
Unemployed				0.012	0.013	0.028
Not Working				-0.040	-0.039	-0.033
Job Satisfaction				-0.014	-0.014	-0.014
Irregular Work Time				0.022 *	0.022 *	0.022 *
Support Factors						
Financial Kin Support					-0.007	-0.008
Other Kin Support					-0.007	-0.007
Social Relationships					-0.002	-0.002
Attitudinal Factors						
Neg. Attitude Toward Marriage						0.044 ***
Individuality in Marriage						0.026 **
Work-Related Gender Ideology						0.002
Intercept	1.310 ***	1.135 ***	1.560 ***	1.530 ***	1.558 ***	1.353 ***
F	20.71 ***	29.23 ***	38.02 ***	25.33 ***	22.35 ***	21.44 ***
R^2	0.007	0.034	0.085	0.089	0.089	0.095

Significant predictor of instability (whites as reference category):   *$p < 0.05$ **$p < 0.01$ ***$p < 0.001$
Significantly different from blacks: ^$p < 0.05$ ^^$p < 0.01$ ^^^$p < 0.001$

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