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IN-LAWS AND MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS

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A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science  
in  
Psychology:  
Clinical/Counseling

---

by  
Trisha Marie Terry

June 2001

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by  
Trisha Marie Terry  
June 2001

Approved by:

  
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## ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship between married individuals and their mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law and marital adjustment. Participants were 33 male and 123 female married college students (mean age of 30) who responded to a questionnaire assessing perceived in-law social support, perceived dissimilarity in family values with in-laws, triangulation with in-laws, and marital adjustment. For mothers-in-law, support was positively correlated with marital adjustment, and dissimilarity in family values and triangulation was negatively correlated with marital adjustment. For fathers-in-law, dissimilarity in family values and triangulation was negatively associated with marital adjustment. Triangulation mediated the relationships between support and family values and marital adjustment for mothers-in-law but not for fathers-in-law. Triangulation also moderated the relationship between support and marital adjustment for both fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law. These findings support triangulation with in-laws as a major part of marital therapy.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Overview

Many factors influence the quality of marital relationships, such as similarities and differences between an individual and his/her spouse, parenthood, intimacy, attachment, and early childhood experiences (Belt & Abidin, 1996; Collins & Read, 1990; Crohan, 1996; Hendrick, 1981; Tseng, 1992). Additionally, in-laws also affect the quality of marital relationships (Russell & Wells, 1994; Ying, 1991). Various topics concerning in-laws have been investigated, such as how in-law problems may arise, how in-laws affect individuals at one point in time and throughout the marital lifespan, whether the most in-law problems originated from husbands' parents or wives' parents, and whether mothers-in-law or fathers-in-law are most difficult (Duvall, 1964; James, 1989; Komarovsky, 1950; Pillai, 1982; Rao, Channabasavanna, & Parthasarathy, 1984; Rhyne, 1981; Wallin, 1954).

Therapists also have found that problematic in-laws underlie many marital problems (Horsley, 1997; Meyerstein, 1996). On the other side of the argument, in-laws may not negatively affect some marital relationships. Healthy, satisfying marital relationships may be resilient to the

negative effects of problematic in-laws. The current research investigated the relations between in-laws and marital relationships. The study focuses on support by in-laws, similarity in family values, triangulation, and marital adjustment.

### When a Couple Gets Married

When a couple gets married, the couple needs to adjust to marriage and to make decisions concerning married life, specifically how the couple honors their marriage in comparison to other relationships (James, 1989). Before marriage, an individual has other important relationships such as their relationship with their parents and siblings in their family of origin (James, 1989). When an individual is not married, these relationships with parents and siblings may be given higher priority than relationships with romantic partners. When an individual gets married, the individual may believe that the marital relationship becomes the most important relationship in the individual's life. However, some married individuals still may believe that the relationship with the immediate family is more important than the relationship with the spouse. In fact, some cultures have clear rules stating that the marital relationship should not be placed before the relationship with the in-laws (Goetting, 1990). If the couple

disagrees on the importance of their relationship in comparison to other relationships, the marital relationship may be negatively affected (James, 1989).

Silverstein (1990) agreed that conflicts may arise regarding the relationship with in-laws, and these conflicts in turn, affect the marital relationship. When an individual successfully separates from his/her parents and makes his/her marital relationship his/her first priority, the individual establishes clear boundaries between the parent-child relationship and marital relationship (Silverstein, 1990). If clear boundaries exist between the parent-child relationship and the marital relationship, then a strong healthy marital relationship can exist (Silverstein, 1990). However, unclear boundaries between the parent-child relationship and marital relationship may cause conflicts and problems in a marital relationship (Silverstein, 1990).

#### Family Systems Theory and Bowen

According to Bowen (1985), an individual who has a high level of differentiation of self is able to establish clear boundaries between themselves and others including their family of origin and marital partner. Differentiation of self involves a continuum of how much or how little an individual functions on an emotional

level and intellectual level (Bowen, 1985). Thus, a person with a high level of differentiation of self mainly functions on an intellectual level and can keep emotions separate from thoughts giving him/her the ability to reason effectively (Bowen, 1985). A person with low differentiation of self mainly functions at an emotional level and does not separate emotion from thoughts leading to the inability to reason effectively (Bowen, 1985). If an individual fights with his or her spouse, a person with high differentiation of self can keep himself/herself separate from the emotion and is able to discuss the situation with his/her spouse (Bowen, 1985). However, a person with low differentiation of self cannot separate himself/herself from his/her emotions and reacts to the situation by involving another person into the marital relationship to reduce tension in the marital relationship (Bowen, 1985). This is called triangulation. Therefore, differentiation of self is clearly related to triangles and triangulation in family systems theory (Bowen, 1985).

#### Triangles and Triangulation

A triangle is the relationships among one person and another person in a dyad and a third party, and triangulation is the movement from the relationship between the two individuals in a dyad to another relationship outside of the dyad or the third party

(Bowen, 1985; James, 1989). Concerning triangles and triangulation in a marriage, the triangle is the relationships among one spouse and the other spouse in a marital relationship and one of the parents-in-law, and triangulation is the movement between the marital relationship and the parent-child relationship. If low differentiation of self exists, then triangulation is more likely to occur and is more intense than when high differentiation of self exists because the individual with low differentiation of self is unable to effectively reason and resolve the problem with his/her spouse and thus triangulates another person into the relationship to reduce tension (Bowen, 1985). For example, a married individual may be hurt by his/her spouse and involve his/her parents into the marital relationship in order to talk with someone or to receive support against his/her spouse (James, 1989). In addition, an individual may triangulate his/her parents into the marital relationship because he/she lacks intimacy in the marriage and gets this feeling of intimacy from his/her parents (James, 1989).

When situations of triangulation occur, many feelings may arise in both daughters-in-law/sons-in-law and parents-in-law such as jealousy, competition, anger, inadequacy, and exclusion (James, 1989; Silverstein,

1990). For example, the wife may feel competitive, angry, and jealous towards her mother-in-law if her mother-in-law is consuming her husband's attention and is claiming she is not a good wife to her son. Also, a wife may feel like an inadequate wife in comparison to her mother-in-law and may feel like an inadequate daughter-in-law when she is excluded from the relationship between her husband and her husband's mother.

Triangulation occurs in many different situations but may be extreme when a newborn baby is introduced into the family (Silverstein, 1990). The spouse may be excluded even more by parents-in-law because the in-laws' attention is devoted to the in-laws' own child and grandchild leaving little attention for the spouse (Silverstein, 1990). After the birth of the first child, wives are less satisfied than husbands with the treatment by in-laws (Rhyne, 1981). Additionally, wives are less satisfied than husbands with the treatment by in-laws when they have children in preschool, junior high school, and high school (Rhyne, 1981). When children become adults, wives begin to become more satisfied than husbands with treatment by in-laws (Rhyne, 1981). The absence of grown children in the home may cause triangulation to occur less frequently among in-laws, husband, and grandchildren, which may result in an increased satisfaction with treatment by

in-laws (Rhyne, 1981). Also, men's satisfaction with treatment by in-laws significantly decreases after the birth of the first child (Rhyne, 1981). This decrease in satisfaction may be explained by the exclusion of the husband from the bond between the wife and the wife's mother during the presence of a newborn baby, which would be an example of triangulation (Rhyne, 1981).

#### Most Problematic In-laws

In addition to husbands and wives experiencing dissatisfaction with in-laws at various stages of their marriage, research has been done concerning whether the husbands' parents or the wives' parents produce the most trouble for the marriage. Komarovsky (1950) originally hypothesized that wives' parents would be more problematic for the stability of the marriage than husbands' parents. Since wives have the tendency to be more attached and dependent on their parents than do husbands, this attachment and dependency between wives and wives' parents may cause problems for husbands and their marital relationships (Komarovsky, 1950).

In regards to Komarovsky's (1950) original hypothesis, Wallin (1954) found similar results and conflicting results. Wallin (1954) found support for Komarovsky's hypothesis that women are more attached and dependent on their parents than men. However, Wallin

(1954) did not find that wives' parents were more problematic than husbands' parents. In fact, Wallin (1954) found that wives disliked their mothers-in-law more than husbands disliked their mothers-in-laws, suggesting that husbands' mothers are more problematic than wives' mothers. Komarovsky (1954) explained these results by looking at the dynamics of the romantic relationship and each individual's life before marriage. Since women were more controlled by their parents than men before marriage, men are forced to date women by visiting women's homes. Therefore, future sons-in-law and their parents-in-laws have had a longer period of time to get to know each other, and in turn, may have become adapted to each other and accepted each other. On the other hand, women and their in-laws do not have the opportunity to get to know each other. Thus, in-law problems were found to involve husbands' parents more often than wives' parents.

Wallin (1954) also found that wives disliked their mothers-in-law more than their fathers-in-law, implying that mothers-in-law were more troublesome than fathers-in-law. Duvall (1964) found similar results. Duvall (1964) found that mothers-in-law were more problematic for the married couple than fathers-in-law. The most extreme complaints from sons-in-law and daughters-in-law were meddlesome, possessiveness, nagging,

indifference, and immaturity from their mothers-in-law (Duvall, 1964). In other words, mothers-in-law were most difficult than any other in-law when they meddled in the couples' life, became possessive of their children and grandchildren, nagged about their sons-in-law or daughters-in-law, and cried and complained like a child about not getting their way.

In sum, Wallin (1954) found that wives disliked their mothers-in-law more than husbands disliked their mothers-in-law. Wallin (1954) also found that wives disliked mothers-in-law more than their fathers-in-law. In addition, Duvall (1964) found that mothers-in-law caused the most problems than any other in-law. Therefore, it may be assumed that husbands' mothers produce the absolute most troubles for marriages. Also, it is possible that the most problematic relationships occur between wives and wives' mothers-in-law. This may be explained by the dynamics between two women. A mother-in-law may feel that no daughter-in-law could ever treat her son better than herself. Therefore, the mother-in-law may decide to make negative judgments about her daughter-in-law, and these judgments may create conflict between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law and in the marital relationship.

### Therapy Literature on In-laws

Therapy literature also supports the idea that parents-in-law may be difficult to deal with and problematic for the marital relationship. Literature concerning marital therapy indicates that the topic of problematic in-laws enters therapy sessions often (Horsley, 1997; Meyerstein, 1996). Horsley (1997) stated, "I have seen many cases in which unresolved issues with extended families were deeply embedded in the problems that brought clients into therapy" (p. 18). Some of these unresolved issues included lack of marital approval, in-law blaming, triangulation, family of origin loyalty issues, grudges, financial resources, and confusion of roles (Horsley, 1997). Basically, all of these in-law problems or issues negatively affect the marital relationship.

### In-laws and Marital Satisfaction

In addition to in-laws causing problems and arguments in a marriage, problematic parents-in-law also may cause a decrease in marital satisfaction. Russell and Wells (1994) investigated the relationship among in-laws, the quality of marital relationships, and marital happiness. They found that the relationship with the in-laws was related to the quality of the marital relationship, and the

quality of the marital relationship was related to the happiness of the couple. Thus, the relationship with in-laws was indirectly related the happiness of married couples.

### In-laws in Different Cultures

Research concerning in-laws also has been conducted in cultures other than the United States. In a study of Chinese Americans, it was found that in-laws also negatively affected marital satisfaction (Ying, 1991). Ying (1991) found that for men married couples' agreement in relating to their in-laws was predictive of marital satisfaction. However, for women, couples that agreed on their interactions with both sets of in-laws were not predictive of marital satisfaction but approached the significance level. Ying (1991) explained that Chinese-American women may have felt the marital relationship was more important than the relationship with the in-laws, but Chinese-American men felt that how well the marriage fit into his family of origin was more important than the marital relationship itself. Ying (1991) further suggested that these results possibly indicated that the husband's relationship with his wife is secondary to his relationship with his family. If the husband is caught between his family and his wife, the husband becomes dissatisfied with his marriage. In

general, couples that agreed upon their interactions with their in-laws determined the level of marital satisfaction for men.

In addition to affecting the marital relationship, in-laws have been found to affect the individuals in a marriage. Some women in Indian cultures have been found to experience in-laws as emotionally affecting their lives in a negative way as well as negatively affecting their marital relationship (Rao et al., 1984). Women's dissatisfaction with their parents-in-law was found to be sources of anxiety for women in Indian cultures (Rao et al., 1984). If the couple was not satisfied with their marriage, women's parents-in-law would do whatever they could to make the marriage a success and demanded that the couple also try to make the marriage a success (Rao et al., 1984). When parents-in-law interfered in the marriage and made these demands on the couple, these women became dissatisfied with their in-laws and became very anxious (Rao et al., 1984).

Other research found that in-laws negatively affected Indian women in a marriage. Ill-treatment by in-laws was found to be a cause for daughters-in-law to practice and adopt prostitution as a profession in Indian cultures (Pillai, 1982). In other words, in-laws sometimes contributed to problems for daughters-in-law in Indian

cultures. Pillai (1982) further explained that the mistreatment by in-laws might have been a contributing factor of women adopting prostitution as their profession. These results also may be explained by the dynamics in an arranged marriage. In this particular study, most of the Indian women may have been in arranged marriages, and may have been expected to obey their in-laws even though it meant entering a "life of prostitution." These women may have not had any choice but to enter prostitution.

If in-laws cause so many problems for individuals and their marriages, divorce may be the ultimate result of these problems. Meyerstein (1996) stated, "One might speculate on how many divorces are the result of unresolvable in-law difficulties" (p. 469). Savaya and Cohen (1998) investigated reasons for divorce. The results of their study indicated that Israeli Arab women divorced their husbands for reasons such as physical violence by a member of the extended family and interference by the extended family. Additionally, some women indicated that the extended family directly ordered the divorce in some cases and indirectly caused the divorce by physically abusing the wives in other cases (Savaya & Cohen, 1998). Therefore, the extended family did affect the marital relationship and the power to decide whether the couple divorced or remained married.

## Research Questions and Hypotheses

The first research question and hypothesis involved the relationship between in-laws' support and marital relationships. Does support received from in-laws predict marital adjustment? Various types of support may include emotional support, socializing, practical assistance, financial assistance, and advice/guidance. If parents-in-law do not support their sons-in-law or daughters-in-law, this lack of support may cause strain on marriages. This extra strain may affect the relationship between husbands and wives. If parents-in-law support their sons-in-law/daughters-in-law, the additional resources and/or support may contribute to marital success. Therefore, it was predicted that perceived support from in-laws would be positively related to marital adjustment.

The second research question and hypothesis involved the relationship between family values and marital adjustment. Does the dissimilarity between an individuals' family values and parents-in-law's family values predict marital adjustment? If an individual has different family values than their parent-in-law's family values, then the parents-in-law may not support the marriage because the married couple will be living a life very different from what the in-laws believe marriage

should be. Parents-in-law may create conflicts for the married couple by making negative judgments concerning the married couple's way of life. Therefore, it was predicted that dissimilarity in family values between individuals' and their parents-in-law's would be negatively related to marital adjustment.

The third research question and hypothesis involved the relationship between triangulation and marital adjustment. Is triangulation related to marital adjustment? When an individual triangulates his/her parent into the marital relationship, the individual may disregard, ignore, or disagree with the spouse's feelings concerning the individual's parents. If the individual disagrees with his/her spouse's feelings and agrees with his/her parents, conflicts may arise in the marital relationship because the spouse may feel like he/she does not matter to the individual. Rather, the spouse is more concerned about his/her parents than the marriage. As a result, marital adjustment problems may exist because of the process of triangulation among an individual, individual's spouse, and individual's in-laws. Therefore, it was predicted that triangulation would be negatively related to marital adjustment.

The fourth and fifth research questions and hypotheses involved the relationship among family values,

support from parents-in-law, triangulation, and marital adjustment. These are mediation hypotheses with triangulation expected to be a mediator of the relationship between in-laws' support and marital adjustment and between value dissimilarity and marital adjustment. Do family values and support from in-laws affect triangulation, and in turn, does triangulation affect marital adjustment? If parents-in-law support their son-in-law/daughter-in-law, there also would be less of a chance for conflict and triangulation to occur between son-in-law/daughter-in-law and parents-in-law. When triangulation is less likely to occur, less strain is placed on the marriage and less marital adjustment problems occur. Therefore, it was predicted that high levels of support from in-laws would predict low levels of triangulation, and low levels of triangulation would predict high levels of marital adjustment.

The fifth hypothesis is that high levels of dissimilarity between individuals' family values and their parents-in-law's family values would predict high levels of triangulation, and high levels of triangulation would predict low levels of marital adjustment. Differences in family values with in-laws should increase the probability of conflict between individuals and their in-laws, and this conflict may provide the opportunity for

triangulation to occur. Consequently, triangulation should reduce marital adjustment.

Additionally, the researcher also examined triangulation as a moderator of the relationship between support from in-laws/dissimilarity in family values with in-laws and marital adjustment. A moderator effect was examined for the following two reasons: a variable may be a moderator instead of a mediator (Baron & Kenny, 1986) and Holmbeck (1997) claims that mediators also can be moderators simultaneously. In this case, the effect of mothers-in-law's and fathers-in-law's support or differences in family values on marital adjustment would depend on the level of triangulation.

## CHAPTER TWO

### METHODS

#### Participants

Participants consisted of 33 males and 123 females from various undergraduate Psychology courses and the psychology Department's Bulletin Board at California State University, San Bernardino. The requirements to participate in the study included the following: participants had to be at least eighteen-years-old, in a heterosexual marriage, have a living mother-in-law and father-in-law from their current marriage, and not presently living with parents or in-laws. The mean age of the participants was 30, and the mean length of marriage was 71 months. Approximately 53 % of the sample reported an income level of \$34,999 or less. The ethnicity of the sample included 63.7% European American/Caucasian, 16.6% Latino, 10.2% African American, 6.4% Asian American, 6% American Indian, and 1.3% other. Approximately 63% of the sample lived in a different town but less than an hour away from their mothers-in-law, and 60 % of the sample also lived in a different town but less than an hour away from their fathers-in-law. In addition, 49 % of the sample reported seeing their mothers-in-law at least 7 to 12 times per year, and 47.8% of the sample reported seeing their fathers-in-law at least 4 to 6 times per year.

Participants were treated in accordance with the ethical principles of the American Psychological Association (APA, 1992).

### Measures

The first page of the survey consisted of the informed consent form (See Appendix A). Questions regarding participants' background information followed the consent form. The background information concerned ethnicity, religion, gender, age, marital status, length of marriage, number of children, marital status of parents-in-law, the number of times the participant visits with their in-laws in an average year, and county and state in which the participant and in-laws presently live (See Appendix B). The survey also consisted of questionnaires concerning the participants' perception of social support received from mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law, participants' family values, participants' perceptions of parent-in-laws' family values, triangulation with mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law, and marital adjustment.

#### Support from In-laws

Vaux, Riedel, and Stewarts' (1987) Social Support Behaviors Scale (SS-B) assesses whether a possible social support provider such as family and/or friends would give different types of support if needed in certain

situations. For this study, the possible social support providers were mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law. Sample items included: "Would loan me a car if I needed one," "Would give me advice about what to do," and "Would listen if I needed to talk about my feelings." For this study, the SS-B scale's responses were changed in order to assess mothers-in-law' and fathers-in-law' possible supportive behaviors separately. Using a 5-point Likert scale, responses ranged from 1 = "Would not do this" to 5 = "Would certainly do this." The 45-item SS-B consisted of the following five subscales: emotional support (11 items), socializing (6 items), practical assistance (8 items), financial assistance (8 items), and advice/guidance (12 items). According to Vaux et al. (1987), Cronbach's alpha for each subscale was .82 or higher and excellent content validity and excellent internal validity can be found. For mothers-in-law for this study, Cronbach's alpha was .98 with item-total correlations ranging from .21 to .82. For fathers-in-law for this study, Cronbach's alpha was .98 with item-total correlations ranging from .30 to .83. See Appendix C for the support from in-laws measure.

#### Family Values

The family values scale is a measure that assesses an individual's traditional family values. The author

devised the 14-item family values scale for this study using different questions from various measures (Amato, 1988; Bird, Bird, & Scruggs, 1984; Byrne, 1971; Levinson, & Huffman, 1955; Martin & Martin, 1984). For this study, the family values scale was used to assess the level of disagreement between participants' family values and participants' perceptions of mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law's family values. The focus of the questions were issues concerning having children, disciplining of children, wives' roles, mothers' roles, husbands' roles, and fathers' roles in a marriage. Sample items included "Life can be satisfying without children," "Mothers should be full-time homemakers," and "Divorce is never acceptable." Responses ranged from 1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 7 = "Strongly Agree." Responses for all of the items were summed for participants, for mothers-in-law, and for fathers-in-law. Mothers-in-law's scores and fathers-in-law's scores were subtracted from participants' scores resulting in an absolute value. Thus, the direction of difference was not considered. Two value dissimilarity scores were calculated: one value dissimilarity score for participants and mothers-in-law, and another value dissimilarity score for participants and fathers-in-law. High scores indicated high levels of dissimilarity, and low scores indicated low levels of dissimilarity. All

items were retained. For mothers-in-law in this study, Cronbach's alpha was .81 with item-total correlations ranging from .24 to .54. For fathers-in-law in this study, Cronbach's alpha was .77 with item-total correlations ranging from .18 to .51. See Appendix D for the Dissimilarity in Values measure.

### Triangulation

The triangulation measure assessed the extent to which participants perceived their spouses as favoring or supporting their parents rather than themselves. The author devised the 18-item triangulation measure using various concepts and examples from articles concerning triangulation (Duvall, 1964; Horsley, 1997; James, 1989; Komarovsky, 1950; Komarovsky, 1954; Meyerstein, 1996; Silverstein, 1990). For this study, the triangulation measure was used to assess the level of triangulation among participants, participants' spouses, and mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law. The focus of the questions was issues concerning whether the participant's spouse would support and/or agree with the participant about different in-law issues in a marriage. Separate assessments of triangulation for fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law were conducted. Sample items included the following: "If you were having a disagreement/argument with your in-law, do you think that your spouse would take

his/her parents' side no matter what the argument was about?;" "If you thought that your in-law was treating you with disrespect, do you think that your spouse would say something to him/her?;" and "During holidays, does your spouse agree with your thoughts and opinions concerning time spent with your in-law?." Responses ranged from 5 = "Definitely Yes" to 1 = "Definitely No." All items were retained. High scores indicated high levels of triangulation. For mothers-in-law in this study, Cronbach's alpha was .87 with item-total correlations ranging from .31 to .65. For fathers-in-law in this study, Cronbach's alpha was .87 and item-total correlations ranged from .23 to .71. See Appendix E for the Triangulation measure.

#### Marital Adjustment

Spanier's Dyadic Adjustment Scale (1976) assesses the level of adjustment in a marriage. The questions were asked in the form of Likert scales with varying response options. Sample items included: "Do you ever regret you are married?" and "Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?." Within the various types of questions, the subscales included the following: dyadic consensus (13 items), dyadic cohesion (5 items), affectional expression (4 items), and dyadic satisfaction (10 items). The Dyadic Consensus subscale assesses

individuals' agreement with their spouses on various topics such as beliefs and attitudes. The dyadic cohesion subscale assesses the emotional connection between participants and their marital partners. The affectional expression subscale assesses the physical expression of love between participants and their marital partners. The dyadic satisfaction subscale assesses individuals' level of marital satisfaction or happiness with his/her marriage. For questions 1 to 15, the responses ranged from 5 = "Always Agree" to 0 = "Always Disagree." For questions 16 to 22, the responses ranged from 0 = "All the time" to 5 = "Never." For question 23, the response ranged from 4 = "Every Day" to 0 = "Never." For question 24, the response ranged from 4 = "All of Them" to 0 = "None of Them." For questions 25 to 28, the responses ranged from 0 = "Never" to 5 = "More Often." For questions 29 and 30, responses included "Yes" and "No." For question 31, the response ranged from 0 = "Extremely Unhappy" to 6 = "Perfect." For question 32, the participant was asked to put an "X" by the statement that best describes his/her feelings concerning the future of his/her marital relationship. High scores indicated high levels of marital adjustment and low scores indicated low levels of marital adjustment. According to Spanier (1976), Cronbach's alpha for the entire scale was .96. In

addition, Spanier (1976) found good content, criterion-related and construct validity. Spanier's (1976) Dyadic Adjustment Scale also has been commonly used to assess marital adjustment. For this study, Cronbach's alpha for the entire scale was .94 with item-total correlations ranging from .31 to .76. See Appendix F for the marital adjustment measure.

### Procedure

The questionnaires were distributed through various undergraduate psychology courses and the Psychology Department's Research Bulletin Board at California State University, San Bernardino. Participants were asked to return the questionnaire to the researcher or the Peer Advising Center. When participants returned the questionnaire, they were given a debriefing statement and an extra credit slip (See Appendix G).

### Plan of Analysis

First, it was predicted that the degree of perceived support from in-laws would be positively associated with marital adjustment. Second, the dissimilarities between participant's family values and their perception of their parents-in-law's family values would be negatively correlated with marital adjustment. Third, it was predicted that triangulation would be negatively

correlated with marital adjustment. For all three of these hypotheses, the researcher utilized Pearson Bivariate correlation to analyze the data. Additionally, data with mothers-in-laws and fathers-in-law were analyzed separately for the first three hypotheses.

For the mediation hypotheses, it was predicted that high levels of support from in-laws would predict low levels of triangulation, and low levels of triangulation would predict high levels of marital adjustment. Thus, triangulation would be the mediator between perceived support from in-laws and marital adjustment. To test this hypothesis, the researcher utilized regression analysis. According to Baron & Kenny (1986), three separate equations or steps are used to test for mediation. First, triangulation is regressed on perceived support from in-laws. Second, marital adjustment is regressed on support from in-laws. Third, marital adjustment is regressed on both support from in-laws and triangulation. If the effect of support from in-laws on marital adjustment is reduced in the third equation by controlling for triangulation compared to the direct effect of support from in-laws on marital adjustment, then a mediator effect would be demonstrated. If these preconditions for a mediator effect are found, the part regression coefficient in the third equation is compared to zero to determine if

the regression coefficient is no longer significant (Bobko, 1995). If the score is not significantly different from zero, then a mediator effect is demonstrated. If the score is significantly different from zero, then mediation is incomplete. Thus, mediation requires that the independent variable be significantly related to the mediator, the mediator to the dependent variable, and the independent variable to the dependent variable. Further, the independent variable's effect on the dependent variable should be eliminated when the effect of the mediator is controlled for. Separate analyses were performed for mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law.

In the fifth hypothesis, high levels of dissimilarity between individuals' family values and parents-in-law's family values would predict high levels of triangulation, and high levels of triangulation would predict low levels of marital adjustment. Thus, triangulation would be the mediator between marital adjustment and value dissimilarity between participants and in-laws' family values. To test this hypothesis, the researcher utilized regression analysis similar to that outlined for the social support effect. Separate analyses were performed for mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law.

A moderator effect was examined for the following two reasons. In contrast to a mediator effect, a moderator effect can occur when the predictor is unrelated to the moderator (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Further, Holmbeck (1997) claimed that some variables can be both a mediator and a moderator simultaneously. Therefore, triangulation was examined as a moderator of the relationship between dissimilarity in family values/support from in-laws and marital adjustment. For the analyses of a moderator effect, regression equations were performed in which the independent variables (social support or value dissimilarity) and the moderator (triangulation) were entered first followed in the second step by the interaction term of the centered independent variable and centered triangulation to predict level of marital adjustment. As recommended by Aiken and West (as cited in Holmbeck, 1997), the scores for triangulation, dissimilarity in family values, and support from in-laws were centered, which means that the scores were subtracted from the sample mean forming new scores to test for the interaction term. First, the effects for support from in-laws/dissimilarity in values on marital adjustment were examined. Then, the interaction term with support from in-laws or dissimilarity in values and triangulation on marital adjustment was examined. If a significant

interaction term was found, then the independent variables (support from in-laws) and triangulation were dichotomized at the median to interpret the interaction. In this analysis, the means for each combination were compared with a t-test for equality of means.

In summary, six correlational analyses were performed for the first three hypotheses, three for mothers-in-law and three for fathers-in-law. For the fourth and fifth hypotheses, two mediational tests were performed for mothers-in-law and two for fathers-in-law, one for in-law support and the other for value dissimilarity. Additionally, two moderation tests were performed for mothers-in-law and two for fathers-in-law, one for in-law support and the other for value dissimilarity.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESULTS

#### Using Total Scores for Results

For this study, the total score for both the social support measure and the marital adjustment measure were used to report the findings. Since the marital adjustment subscales were highly correlated with the marital adjustment total score ranging from .76 to .93, the marital adjustment total score was used to report the findings. Additionally, the social support subscales were highly correlated with the total social support scale for mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law. For mothers-in-law, the correlations ranged from .89 to .95. For fathers-in-law, the correlations between the support subscales and the support total score ranged from .88 to .94. Therefore, the total social support scale was used.

#### Correlational Findings

It was predicted that the degree of perceived support from in-laws would be positively associated with marital adjustment. Support from mothers-in-law was positively correlated with marital adjustment,  $r(156) = .29$ ,  $p < .001$ . However, no significant correlation was found between support from fathers-in-law and marital adjustment,  $r(156) = .04$ ,  $p = .661$ .

In addition, it also was predicted that differences between participants' family values and their perception of their parents-in-laws' family values would be negatively correlated with marital adjustment. Marital adjustment was negatively correlated with dissimilarity in family values between participants and their mothers-in-law,  $r(156) = -.23$ ,  $p = .004$ . Marital adjustment also was negatively correlated with dissimilarity in family values between participants and their fathers-in-law,  $r(156) = -.170$ ,  $p = .033$ .

Additionally, it was predicted that triangulation would be negatively correlated with marital adjustment. Triangulation was negatively correlated with marital adjustment for mothers-in-law,  $r(156) = -.49$ ,  $p < .001$ , and for fathers-in-law,  $r(156) = -.46$ ,  $p < .001$ .

#### Mediation

For the fourth mediation hypothesis, it was predicted that high levels of social support from in-laws would predict low levels of triangulation, and low levels of triangulation would predict high levels of marital adjustment. Thus, triangulation would be the mediator between perceived support from in-laws and marital adjustment. First, high levels of social support from mothers-in-law predicted low levels of triangulation,  $t(155) = -3.06$ ,  $\beta = -.289$ ,  $p < .001$ . Second, high levels

of perceived social support from mothers-in-law significantly predicted high levels of marital adjustment,  $t(155) = 3.76$ ,  $\beta = .289$ ,  $p < .001$ . Last, marital adjustment was regressed on both support from mothers-in-law and triangulation. When controlling for support, low levels of triangulation predicted high levels of marital adjustment,  $t(155) = -6.37$ ,  $\beta = -.45$ ,  $p < .001$ . When controlling for triangulation, support from mothers-in-law predicted marital adjustment,  $t(154) = 2.57$ ,  $\beta = .176$ ,  $p = .011$ . A mediation effect was demonstrated because support from mothers-in-law on marital adjustment was reduced in the third equation in comparison to the direct effect of support from in-laws on marital adjustment, from  $\beta = .289$  to  $\beta = .176$ . Since there was a decrease in the effect when triangulation was controlled for, triangulation served as a mediator between support from mothers-in-law and marital adjustment. In addition, the effect when triangulation was controlled for was significantly different from zero,  $t(154) = 2.22$ ,  $p < .05$  (Bobko, 1995). Therefore, there was both a small direct effect and mediator effect between support from mothers-in-law and marital adjustment with triangulation as the mediator. See figure 1 for a diagram of triangulation with mothers-in-law as a mediator of the

relationship between mothers-in-law's social support and marital adjustment.

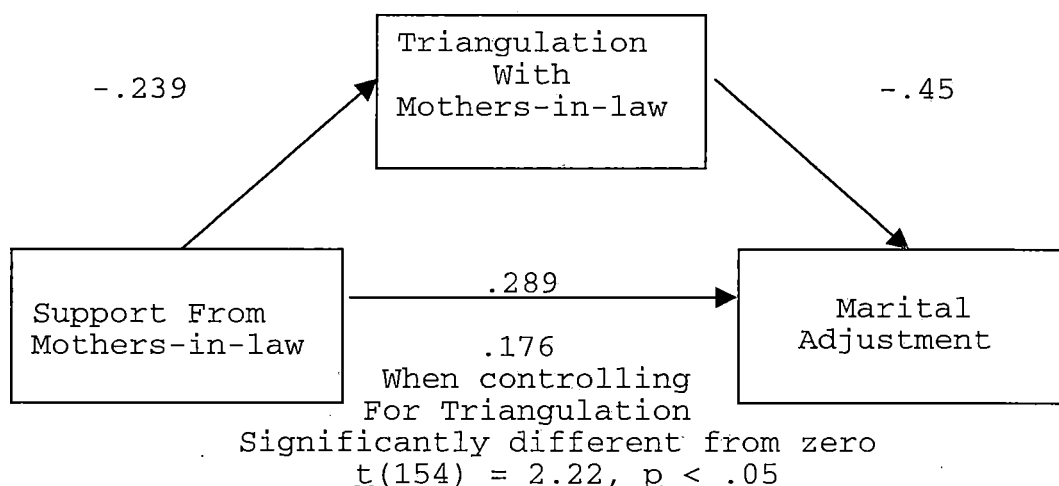


Figure 1. Triangulation as a Mediator Between Support from Mothers-in-law and Marital Adjustment

In addition to mothers-in-law, the fourth mediation hypothesis also was examined for fathers-in-law. It was predicted that high levels of support from in-laws would predict low levels of triangulation, and low levels of triangulation would predict high levels of marital adjustment. Thus, triangulation would be the mediator between perceived support from fathers-in-law and marital adjustment. First, high levels of social support from fathers-in-law failed to predict low levels of triangulation,  $t(155) = -1.37, \beta = -.110, p = .172$ . Second, high levels of social support from fathers-in-law did not predict high levels of marital adjustment,

$t(155) = .44, \beta = .035, p = .661$ . Lastly, marital adjustment was regressed on both support from fathers-in-law and triangulation. When controlling for support, low levels of triangulation significantly predicted high levels of marital adjustment,  $t(155) = -6.51, \beta = -.467, p < .001$ . Since support from fathers-in-law did not predict triangulation and marital adjustment, a mediator effect was not demonstrated.

For the fifth hypothesis, the effect of dissimilarity in values between individuals' family values and parents-in-law's family values on marital adjustment should be mediated by triangulation. Therefore, it was predicted that high levels of dissimilarity in family values between participants and in-laws would predict high levels of triangulation, and high levels of triangulation would predict low levels of marital adjustment. Value dissimilarity between participants and mothers-in-law predicted high levels of triangulation,  $t(155) = 2.08, \beta = .165, p = .039$ . Second, value dissimilarity between participants and mothers-in-law predicted low levels of marital adjustment,  $t(155) = -2.95, \beta = -.231, p = .004$ . Marital adjustment was regressed on both triangulation and dissimilarity between participants' family values and mothers-in-law' family values. When controlling for

dissimilarity in family values, high levels of triangulation predicted low levels of marital adjustment,  $t(155) = -6.69$ ,  $\beta = -.468$ ,  $p < .001$ . When triangulation with mothers-in-law was controlled, value dissimilarity between participants and mothers-in-law predicted marital adjustment,  $t(154) = -2.19$ ,  $\beta = -.151$ ,  $p = .030$ . A small mediator effect was demonstrated because significant results were found for each equation and the effect of value dissimilarity on marital adjustment was reduced slightly when triangulation was controlled, from  $\beta = -.231$  to  $\beta = -.151$ . In addition, the effect when triangulation was controlled was not significantly different from zero,  $t(154) = 1.92$ ,  $p > .05$  (Bobko, 1995). Therefore, there was a mediator effect between support from mothers-in-law and marital adjustment with triangulation as the mediator (See Figure 2).

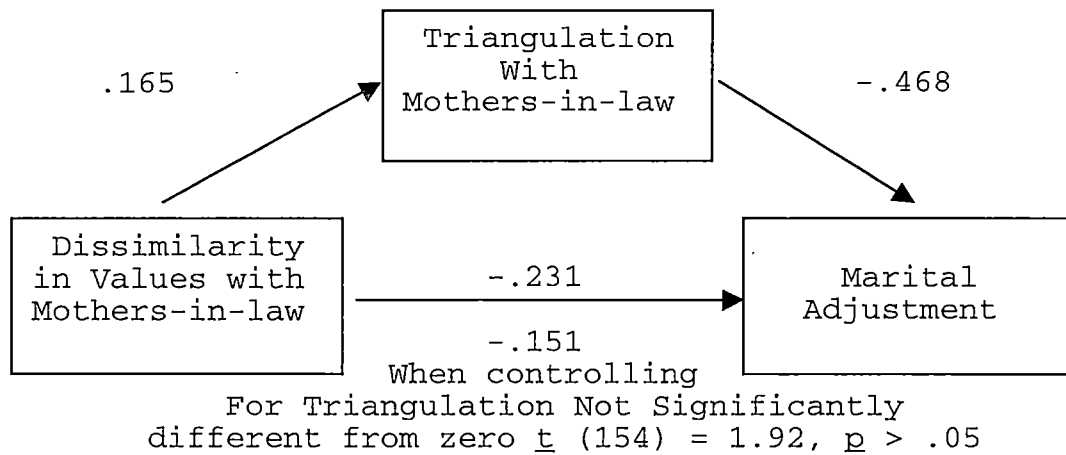


Figure 2. Triangulation as a Mediator Between  
Dissimilarity in Family Values with Mothers-in-law  
and Marital Adjustment.

In addition to mothers-in-law, the fifth hypothesis predicted that triangulation would mediate the relationship between dissimilarity in family values with fathers-in-law and marital adjustment. It was predicted that value dissimilarity with fathers-in-law would predict high levels of triangulation and high levels of triangulation would predict low levels of marital adjustment. First, the value dissimilarity between participants and fathers-in-law did not predict triangulation,  $t(155) = 1.63, \beta = .130, p = .106$ . Second, value dissimilarities between participants and fathers-in-law predicted marital adjustment,  $t(155) = -2.15, \beta = -.170, p = .033$ . Since dissimilarity in values between participants and participants'

fathers-in-law did not predict triangulation, a mediator effect was not demonstrated.

In summary, mediation effects were found for mothers-in-law but not for fathers-in-law. For mothers-in-law, triangulation mediated both the relationship between social support and marital adjustment and between value dissimilarity and marital adjustment. The effect between support from mothers-in-law and marital adjustment was slightly reduced when triangulation was controlled. Thus, both a mediator and direct effect were still demonstrated. Additionally, the effect between value dissimilarity with mothers-in-law and marital adjustment was eliminated when triangulation was controlled. Thus, only a mediator effect, and not a direct effect, was demonstrated.

#### Moderation

In addition to testing for mediation, triangulation also was examined as a moderator. It was predicted that triangulation would moderate the relationship between dissimilarity in family values/support from in-laws and marital adjustment. A hierarchical regression analysis was performed with support from mothers-in-law and triangulation entered first and the interaction term between centered social support from mothers-in-law and centered triangulation with mothers-in-law entered on the

second step. At the first step, mother-in-law support and triangulation with mothers-in-law was significant,  $R^2 = .275$ ,  $F(2, 154) = 29.16$ ,  $p < .001$ . There was a significant effect for triangulation with mothers-in-law on marital adjustment,  $t(154) = -6.37$ ,  $\beta = -.450$ ,  $p = .001$ . There also was a significant effect for support from mothers-in-law on marital adjustment,  $t(154) = 2.57$ ,  $\beta = .181$ ,  $p = .011$ . At the second step when the interaction was entered, the  $R^2$  Change was significant,  $R^2$  Change = .028,  $F(1, 153) = 6.05$ ,  $p = .015$ ,  $t = -2.46$ ,  $\beta = -.178$ . Therefore, triangulation moderated the relationship between support from mothers-in-law and marital adjustment. In order to understand the moderator effects and interpret the interaction term, support from in-laws was dichotomized at the median and triangulation was split into three levels, because dichotomization of triangulation did not result in a significant interaction to mirror the regression analysis. Using analysis of variance, the interaction was examined to determine how the effect of the social support from in-laws on marital adjustment was moderated by triangulation. In this analysis, differences between high and low support were examined for each level of triangulation. The means for groups were compared with a t-test for equality of means. When triangulation with mothers-in-law was high,

participants with high support from mothers-in-law reported higher levels of marital adjustment than when support from mothers-in-law was low,  $t(48) = -3.06$ ,  $p = .004$ . When triangulation with mothers-in-law was moderate, participants with high support from mothers-in-law reported higher levels of marital adjustment than participants with low support from mothers-in-law,  $t(50) = -2.18$ ,  $p = .034$ . However, when triangulation was low, participants with low support and high support from mothers-in-law did not differ in terms of marital adjustment,  $t(52) = -.83$ ,  $p = .409$ . In summary, when triangulation was at high or moderate levels with mothers-in-law, the level of support seemed to make more of a difference in terms of marital adjustment than when triangulation was low. See Table 1 for interaction means. In addition, Figure 3 presents a diagram of triangulation as a moderator of the relationship between in-law social support and marital adjustment.

Table 1

Marital Adjustment Means for the Interaction of  
Triangulation and Social Support from In-laws

Triangulation	Father-in-law Support		Mother-in-law Support	
	High	Low	High	Low
High	104.33 <sub>a</sub>	109.76 <sub>a</sub>	118.05 <sub>a</sub>	98.31 <sub>c</sub>
Moderate	123.77 <sub>a</sub>	111.14 <sub>c</sub>	122.73 <sub>a</sub>	113.47 <sub>b</sub>
Low	127.84 <sub>a</sub>	123.87 <sub>a</sub>	126.76 <sub>a</sub>	123.50 <sub>a</sub>

Note: Means in the same row that have a subscript of a and b differ at  $p < .05$  in t-test for Equality of Means significant difference test. Means in the same row that have a subscript of a and c differ at  $p < .01$  in the t-test for Equality of Means significant difference test.

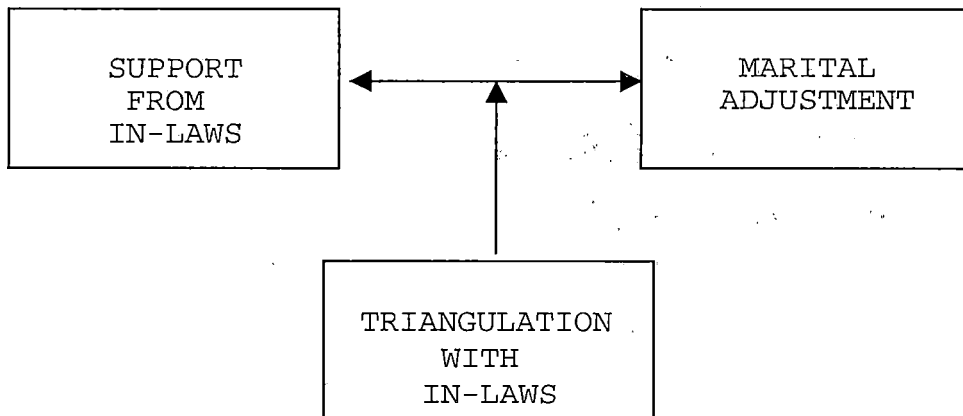


Figure 3. Triangulation as a Moderator Between Support from In-laws and Marital Adjustment.

A similar hierarchical analysis for fathers-in-law was performed. At the first step, support from fathers-in-law and triangulation with fathers-in-law was significant,  $R^2 = .217$ ,  $F(2,154) = 21.33$ ,  $p < .001$ . For fathers-in-law, there was a significant effect for triangulation with fathers-in-law on marital adjustment,  $t(154) = -6.51$ ,  $\beta = -.467$ ,  $p = .001$ . There was not an effect for support from fathers-in-law on marital adjustment,  $t(154) = -.223$ ,  $\beta = -.016$ ,  $p = .824$ . At the second step, when the interaction was entered, the  $R^2$  Change was significant,  $R^2 = .038$ ,  $F(1,153) = 7.90$ ,  $p = .006$ ,  $t = 2.81$ ,  $\beta = .197$ . Therefore, triangulation with fathers-in-law appeared to moderate the relationship between support from fathers-in-law and marital adjustment. Support from fathers-in-law was dichotomized

at the median and triangulation was trichotomized into three levels, because dichotomization of triangulation did not result in a significant interaction to mirror the regression analysis. Using analysis of variance, the interaction was examined to determine how the effect of social support from fathers-in-laws on marital adjustment was moderated by triangulation with fathers-in-law. In this analysis, the difference between means of high and low social support from fathers-in-law were examined for each level of triangulation using a t-test for equality of means. When triangulation with fathers-in-law was high, participants with high support and low support from fathers-in-law did not differ in terms of marital adjustment,  $t(51) = .82$ ,  $p = .415$ . When triangulation with fathers-in-law was moderate, participants with high support from fathers-in-law reported higher levels of marital adjustment than participants with low support from fathers-in-law,  $t(48) = -2.64$ ,  $p = .011$ . When triangulation was low, participants with low support and high support from fathers-in-law did not differ in terms of marital adjustment,  $t(51) = -1.24$ ,  $p = .221$ . In summary, only when triangulation was at moderate levels with fathers-in-law did the level of social support from fathers-in-law make a significant difference in terms of marital adjustment (see Table 1).

In addition to support from in-laws, a moderator effect also was examined for the relationship among dissimilarity in family values, triangulation, and marital adjustment. Using hierarchical regression, for mothers-in-law, there was a significant effect for triangulation on marital adjustment,  $t(154) = -6.69$ ,  $\beta = -.468$ ,  $p = .001$ . There also was a significant effect for dissimilarity in values on marital adjustment,  $t(154) = -2.19$ ,  $\beta = -.153$ ,  $p = .030$ . There was not a significant interaction of dissimilarity in family values and triangulation on marital adjustment,  $t(153) = 1.80$ ,  $\beta = .131$ ,  $p = .074$ . Therefore, triangulation did not moderate the relationship between dissimilarity in family values with mothers-in-law and marital adjustment (see Table 1).

For fathers-in-law, there was not a significant effect for dissimilarity in values on marital adjustment,  $t(154) = -1.57$ ,  $\beta = -.112$ ,  $p = .119$ . In addition, there was a significant effect for triangulation with fathers-in-law on marital adjustment,  $t(154) = -6.32$ ,  $\beta = -.451$ ,  $p < .001$ . Last, there was not a significant interaction term of value differences with fathers-in-law and triangulation with fathers-in-law on marital adjustment,  $t(153) = .35$ ,  $\beta = .027$ ,  $p = .725$ . Therefore,

triangulation did not moderate the relationship between dissimilarity in family values with fathers-in-law and marital adjustment (see Table 1).

#### Additional Findings

Using repeated measures ANOVAs, differences between perceptions of mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law were examined. Regarding triangulation, mothers-in-law had higher triangulation scores than fathers-in-law,  $F(1, 155) = 11.62$ ,  $p = .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .061$  ( $M$  for mothers-in-law = 39.29;  $M$  for fathers-in-law = 38.15). Mothers-in-law were perceived as more supportive than fathers-in-law,  $F(1, 155) = 4.36$ ,  $p = .039$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .027$  ( $M$  for mothers-in-law = 157.56;  $M$  for fathers-in-law = 164.58). Additionally, a larger value dissimilarity was found for fathers-in-law than mothers-in-law,  $F(1, 155) = 37.48$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .194$  ( $M$  for fathers-in-law = 27.59;  $M$  for mothers-in-law = 23.37).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DISCUSSION

#### Possible Reasons For Correlation Findings

It was originally hypothesized that support from in-laws would be positively related to marital adjustment. This hypothesis was supported for mothers-in-law. Marital couples may be less stressed when they have support from mothers-in-law. Marital couples are supported by and assisted by their mothers-in-law, and this support may have helped the success of marriages. Although mothers-in-law's support was related to marital adjustment, fathers-in-law's support was not related to marital adjustment. Therefore, mothers-in-law's support may have meant more in terms of marital adjustment than fathers-in-law's support probably because fathers-in-law may not be expected to be involved in their children's lives as much as mothers-in-law.

Additionally, it was hypothesized that dissimilarity in family values with in-laws would be negatively associated with marital adjustment. This hypothesis was supported for both mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law. These results may be explained by the sociological theory of mate selection and the results of mate selection and marital satisfaction studies (Antill, 1983; Chambers,

Christiansen, & Kunz, 1983; Collins & Read, 1990; Heaton & Pratt, 1990; Houts, Robins, & Huston, 1996; Tseng, 1992; Nock, 1992). The sociological theory claims that individuals choose partners similar to themselves (Chambers et al., 1983; Houts et al., 1996; Nock, 1992). Mate selection and marital satisfaction studies have found that these individuals who choose similar partners to themselves seem to be more satisfied in their relationships than individuals who choose partners that are dissimilar to themselves (Antill, 1983; Collins & Read, 1990; Heaton & Pratt, 1990; Tseng, 1992). Based upon the sociological theory and mate selection and marital satisfaction literature, participants in this study may have sought out partners that have similar values as themselves, are satisfied with their marital relationships due to their similarities, and their partners' parents may have these same values because children may have the same values as their parents. Participants' selection of their spouse and the similarities between participants and their spouses may be the actual cause of highly adjusted marriages rather than the similarity in values between participants and their in-laws.

In addition, triangulation with mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law were negatively related to marital

adjustment as hypothesized. Triangulation is when an individual vacillates between the marital relationship and the parent-child relationship (Bowen, 1985; James, 1989). Some examples of triangulation include the following. The individual supports his/her parent more than his/her partner in the face of in-law difficulties (James, 1989). The individual involves his/her parent into marital conflicts/marital relationship (Bowen, 1985; James, 1989). The individual aligns with his/her parent against the partner (James, 1989). The individual distances himself/herself from his/her partner by spending more time with his/her parent than with his/her partner (James, 1989). When considering the examples of triangulation and the results of this study, it appears that individuals were more satisfied with their marital relationships when in-laws were not allowed to interfere in their marital relationships than when in-laws were allowed to interfere in their marital relationships. Characteristics of a satisfying marriage are when an individual feels supported by his/her spouse, has an intimate/close relationship with his/her spouse, and overcomes disagreements in his/her marriage (Spanier, 1976). If triangulation occurs, these characteristics of a satisfying marriage are more likely to be absent. Thus, triangulation would negatively affect marital adjustment/satisfaction.

## Mediation

In addition, triangulation with mothers-in-law served as a mediator of the relationship between dissimilarity in family values with mothers-in-law and marital adjustment as expected. In other words, triangulation explained why there was a relationship between dissimilarity in family values with mothers-in-law and marital adjustment. If an individual had different family values from his/her mother-in-law, the mother-in-law probably would not approve of the daughter-in-law or son-in-law and the way the marital couple lived. Therefore, the mother-in-law may have been inclined to make her opinions known, and these opinions may have been allowed to interfere in the marital relationship through triangulation among husband, wife, and mother-in-law negatively affecting the marital relationship. Thus, triangulation would explain why dissimilarity in values with mothers-in-law negatively affected individuals' marital adjustment and/or satisfaction.

It also was found that triangulation was a mediator of the relationship between support from mothers-in-law and marital adjustment. In other words, triangulation explained why there was a relationship between support from mothers-in-law and marital adjustment. If a mother-in-law did not support her daughter-in-law or

son-in-law, then the mother-in-law may have not approved of her daughter-in-law/son-in-law or may have not relieved stress with support. When a couple allowed this lack of approval and stress to interfere in the marriage through triangulation, the marital relationship was negatively affected.

In addition, support had a significant effect on marital adjustment even when triangulation was controlled for. Therefore, there was a direct effect of support on marital adjustment as well as a mediator effect. This direct effect may be explained by how support alone without triangulation still may be a stress reliever for the marital couple. Therefore, this relief of stress may contribute to the success of marriages.

#### Using Mediation to Explain Moderation with Support from Mothers-in-law

Using this finding that triangulation is a mediator of the relationship between support from mothers-in-law and marital adjustment, triangulation as a moderator of support from mothers-in-law and marital adjustment is explained. Triangulation as a moderator determined the relationship between support from mothers-in-law and marital adjustment. When triangulation was high or moderate, support from mothers-in-law made more of a difference in terms of marital adjustment than when

triangulation was low. If a mother-in-law was allowed to interfere in the marital relationship through triangulation, then the mother-in-law was allowed to manipulate or negatively affect the marital relationship through her support or approval of the daughter-in-law or son-in-law. This is consistent with how triangulation is an explanation or mediator of the relationship between support and marital adjustment. If this mediator effect were combined with the moderator effect, then the level of triangulation would determine how much the mother-in-law's level of support would negatively affect the marital relationship. Thus, if a mother-in-law was allowed to interfere in the marital relationship at high or moderate levels (high or moderate triangulation) the mother-in-law's support would be able to negatively affect the marital relationship more than a mother-in-law who was not allowed to interfere in the marital relationship (low triangulation).

#### Possible Reason for Different Findings with Mothers-in-law and Fathers-in-law

As previously mentioned, support from mothers-in-law significantly affected the marital relationship. However fathers-in-law' support did not affect the marital relationship. Mothers-in-law also had higher triangulation scores than fathers-in-law. In addition, it

was found that triangulation with mothers-in-law was a mediator of the relationship between dissimilarity in values/support and marital adjustment, but triangulation with fathers-in-law did not mediate the relationship between values/support and marital adjustment. Based upon these results, it seems as if mothers-in-law were more important in terms of marital adjustment than fathers-in-law. In fact, Duvall (1964) and Wallin (1954) found similar findings. Duvall (1964) found that mothers-in-law were more problematic than fathers-in-law. Wallin (1954) found that wives disliked mothers-in-law more than fathers-in-law. The results in the current study, Duvall's (1964) study, and Wallin (1954) study may be explained by the idea that mothers have been the center of their children's lives for many years. Although fathers have become more involved in their children's lives in the recent years, mothers still seem to have a larger effect on their children's lives than fathers.

#### Moderation and Fathers-in-law

In addition to mothers-in-law, triangulation served as a moderator between support from fathers-in-law and marital adjustment. Although triangulation did not mediate the relationship between social support from fathers-in-law and marital adjustment, triangulation moderated the relationship between social support from

fathers-in-law and marital adjustment. When triangulation with fathers-in-law was moderate, the level of support made more of a difference in terms of marital adjustment than when triangulation with fathers-in-law was high or low. This finding is a little surprising in that moderate triangulation but not high or low triangulation affected the relationship between support and marital adjustment. This finding may be explained by the expected role of fathers-in-law in this society. Fathers-in-law may not be expected to have any role in this society. If fathers-in-law were triangulated into the marital relationship at high levels, then the participants may have not cared about support because the triangulation or involvement was so aversive. If fathers-in-law were under-involved, then the marital couple/participants may have not paid much attention to fathers-in-law because they really were not supposed to have any role. However, when fathers-in-law were triangulated into the marriage at moderate levels, then participants may have felt that fathers-in-law were not so aversive that support did not matter and fathers-in-law were being noticed instead of not being noticed. If participants recognized this involvement at moderate levels, then participants may have felt that social support made a significant difference in terms of affecting their marital relationship.

### Further Analyses

Further analyses were done on the data involving differences between mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law. First, it was found that participants perceived mothers-in-law as more supportive than fathers-in-law. This finding may be explained by mothers' expected role in society. Mothers may be expected to be warm and supportive with their children. Further, participants perceived mothers-in-law as triangulating more in marital relationships than fathers-in-law. This finding also may be explained by mother's/mothers-in-law's expected role in society. Mothers or mothers-in-law may be expected to be involved in their children's lives more than fathers or fathers-in-law. As a result, mothers-in-law triangulate more into the marital relationship than fathers-in-law. In addition, fathers' societal role may be an explanation of why participants perceived fathers-in-law as having more value differences from themselves than value differences with mothers-in-law. Fathers may be expected to be the strong one in the family with strong opinions and participants may have been able to identify their fathers-in-law's opinions or values easier than mothers-in-law's family values.

## Triangulation Findings and Therapy

Through all of these findings regarding triangulation, triangulation with in-laws seemed to be a major component of marital adjustment. Meyerstein (1996) and Horsley (1997) both believe in-law issues arise in therapy and in-laws sometimes should be involved in the therapeutic process to reduce in-law difficulties. The findings of this study support therapists' view that in-law problems do arise in therapy and maybe in-laws should become involved in the therapeutic process depending on the availability of in-laws and couples' individual situations (Meyerstein, 1996; Horsley, 1997). In fact, therapists may want to educate married couples and their in-laws about triangulation and how it affects marital adjustment. In addition, a goal for couples in marital therapy may be to support each other and join as one dyad in the face of conflict with in-laws. Another goal for marital therapy may be to establish boundaries between the marital relationship and the relationship with the parents. Therapists and their clients may want to discuss ways to balance and satisfy the need to be close to parents, spouse, and children simultaneously. Therapists also may want to teach couples how to express their feelings regarding in-laws in order to increase communication and intimacy within the marriage.

### Marital Satisfaction

In addition, the results of this study support Ying's (1991) and Russell and Wells (1994) findings. Ying found that a male's perception of how him and his wife agree on relations with their in-laws affect marital satisfaction. Russell and Wells (1994) found in-laws indirectly affect happiness of couples. Therefore, this study, Ying (1991) and Russell and Wells (1994) all agree that in-laws can affect marital relationships.

### Limitations of the Study

In addition, there are some limitations of the present study. First, participants may have overestimated their level of marital adjustment in order to be perceived by the researcher in a positive way. However, Spanier's (1976) Marital Adjustment scale has been used for 20 years and has extensive reliability and validity data. Second, participants may have perceived their marriages very differently from their spouses and how their spouses view the others' in-laws. For example, one spouse may see his/her in-laws as caring and loving and the other spouse may see his/her in-laws as problematic. Additionally, one spouse may be very satisfied and adjusted in his/her marriage and the other spouse may be very unsatisfied and not well-adjusted in the marriage. These discrepancies between husbands' perceptions and wives' perceptions were

not examined and should be. Third, there were far fewer men than women in the sample and gender differences were unable to be obtained. Fourth, since participants were required to have a living mother-in-law and father-in-law, the age range of the participants and the length of marriages were limited because most individuals 40 and older with many years of marriage probably had only one living in-law. Therefore, relationships with in-laws were not examined for different cohorts with different lengths of marriage. Last, the author devised the triangulation measure and family values measure involving in-laws, and there has not been validity and reliability data obtained independently of the present study.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

Due to these limitations, changes in the current study may be appropriate for future research. For example, it may be desirable to assess independently both the husband and his in-laws and the wife and her in-laws. If a large sample of men and their spouses were obtained, these relationships could have been assessed and gender differences could have been assessed. A larger sample of older individuals also may have allowed the differences in cohorts to be examined in relation to how in-laws' affect marital adjustment. In addition, further research may be

desirable regarding the reliability and validity of the triangulation measure and family values measure.

In addition to changes to the study, there may be another interesting topic based on this study to examine. For example, it might be interesting to look at the differences between interracial marital couples and intra-racial marital couples in terms of these same concepts of support from in-laws, dissimilarity in family values with in-laws, triangulation with in-laws, and marital adjustment. It may be hypothesized that triangulation would be more prominent in interracial couples than intra-racial couples. It also is possible that there is less support from in-laws in interracial marriages than in intra-racial marriages.

#### Final Thoughts

Most individuals who are married have some type of in-law difficulty and sometimes these in-law difficulties negatively affect the marital relationship. Through the findings of the study, in-laws can affect the marital relationship. Further, triangulation seriously impacts the marital relationship. Thus, it may be important to address and involve in-law problems into marital therapy and the therapeutic process. For example, a therapist may want to examine how the marital couple reacts to in-laws such as how they support each other when dealing with

in-laws and how the couple allows in-laws to interfere in the marital relationship. In addition, therapists may want to use the marital adjustment scale and the triangulation scale to assess couples in marital therapy. In general, in-laws play a major role in marriages. Therefore, we, as professionals and individuals, should pay attention to the role of in-laws in our marital relationships and our clients' marital relationships.

APPENDIX A:  
INFORMED CONSENT

## **In-laws and Marriage Study**

### Informed Consent

This study is conducted by Trisha Terry, for her Master's Thesis, under the supervision of Dr. Gloria Cowan in the Psychology Department at California State University, San Bernardino. The purpose of this study is to investigate your relationship with your in-laws and your relationship with your spouse. **In order to participate in this study, you must be at least 18 years old, in a heterosexual marriage, have a living mother-in-law and father-in-law from your current marriage, and not presently living with your parents or in-laws.** Participation will involve completing background questions and questions regarding your in-laws, your marriage, and yourself. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this study. Your participation in this study will take approximately one hour. Should you be interested in extra credit units for participating in this study, completing the questionnaire is worth 3 extra credit units.

This study has been approved by the CSUSB's Psychology Department Human Subjects Review Board.

Dr. Cowan can be reached at (909) 880-5575 or in JB-557 on the CSUSB campus if you have any questions regarding this study.

Please read the following points before indicating that you are willing to participate.

1. The study has been explained to me and I understand the explanation that has been given and that my participation will involve.
2. I understand that I am free to choose not to participate in this study without penalty, free to discontinue my participation in this study at any time and am free to choose not to answer any questions that make me uncomfortable. Of course, we hope you will choose to answer all questions, as they are useful to the results of the study. Questionnaires that are only partially completed will not contribute to the analysis of the findings.
3. I understand that my responses will remain anonymous, but that group results of this study will be made available to me at my request.
4. I understand that, at my request, I can receive additional explanation of this study after my participation is completed.

Please do not put your name on the questionnaire.

Please place a check or "x" in the space provided below to acknowledge that you are at least 18-years-old and have read and understand the statements above. Also, by marking the space below you have given your consent to participate voluntarily in this study.

Please check here: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX B:  
DEMOGRAPHICS

### Demographics

**Directions:** When answering these questions, please refer to yourself.

1. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ male \_\_\_\_\_ female
2. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your current marital status?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Single  
\_\_\_\_\_ Married  
\_\_\_\_\_ Widowed  
\_\_\_\_\_ Divorced
4. What is your yearly income? (optional)  
\_\_\_\_\_ under \$15,000                      \_\_\_\_\_ \$45,000-\$54,999  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$15,000-\$24,999                  \_\_\_\_\_ \$55,000-\$64,999  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$25,000-\$34,999                  \_\_\_\_\_ \$65,000-\$74,999  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$35,000-\$44,999                  \_\_\_\_\_ over \$75,000
5. What is your highest level of education completed?  
\_\_\_\_\_ eighth grade or less  
\_\_\_\_\_ some high school  
\_\_\_\_\_ high school diploma  
\_\_\_\_\_ some college-no degree  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2 yr. college- A.A. degree  
\_\_\_\_\_ 4 yr. college-B.A/ B.S. degree  
\_\_\_\_\_ M.A. or M.S. degree  
\_\_\_\_\_ Degree of M.D., J.D., Ph.D., or D.D.S.
6. How do you usually describe your ethnic background?  
\_\_\_\_\_ American Indian  
\_\_\_\_\_ Asian-Pacific Islander  
\_\_\_\_\_ Black/African American  
\_\_\_\_\_ Caucasian/ White/ European American  
\_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic/Latino  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify \_\_\_\_\_)
7. How long have you been married?  
\_\_\_\_\_ months
8. Do you have any children?  
\_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no

9. If yes, please indicate how many.

\_\_\_\_\_

10. How far away do you live from your mother-in-law?

- \_\_\_\_\_ same town
- \_\_\_\_\_ different town, same state less than 1 hr. away
- \_\_\_\_\_ different town, same state more than 1 hr. away
- \_\_\_\_\_ different state
- \_\_\_\_\_ different country

11. How far away do you live from your father-in-law?

- \_\_\_\_\_ same town
- \_\_\_\_\_ different town, same state less than 1 hr. away
- \_\_\_\_\_ different town, same state more than 1 hr. away
- \_\_\_\_\_ different state
- \_\_\_\_\_ different country

12. How often do you see your mother-in-law in an average year?

- \_\_\_\_\_ 0 times per year
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1-3 times per year
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4-6 times per year
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7-12 times per year
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13-24 times per year
- \_\_\_\_\_ once a week
- \_\_\_\_\_ more than once a week

13. How often do you see your father-in-law in an average year?

- \_\_\_\_\_ 0 times per year
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1-3 times per year
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4-6 times per year
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7-12 times per year
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13-24 times per year
- \_\_\_\_\_ once a week
- \_\_\_\_\_ more than once a week

14. What is your parents-in-law's marital status?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Single
- \_\_\_\_\_ Married
- \_\_\_\_\_ Widowed
- \_\_\_\_\_ Divorced

APPENDIX C:  
SUPPORT FROM IN-LAWS

### Support from in-laws

**Directions:** People help each other out in a lot of different ways. Suppose you had some kind of problem, how likely would your mother-in-law and father-in-law help you out in each of these specific ways listed below. We realize you may rarely need this kind of help, but if you did would your mother-in-law and father-in-law help in the ways indicated. Try to base your answers on your past experience with these people. Use the scale below, and indicate one number under mother-in-law and one number under father-in-law.

would not do this 1	probably would not do this 2	I do not know 3	probably would do this 4	certainly would do this 5
---------------------------	------------------------------------	-----------------------	--------------------------------	---------------------------------

Mother-in-law

Father-in-law

- |       |       |   |
|-------|-------|---|
| _____ | _____ | 1. Would suggest doing something, just to take my mind off my problems. |
| _____ | _____ | 2. Would visit with me, or invite me over.                              |
| _____ | _____ | 3. Would comfort me if I was upset.                                     |
| _____ | _____ | 4. Would give me a ride if I needed one.                                |
| _____ | _____ | 5. Would have lunch or dinner with me.                                  |
| _____ | _____ | 6. Would look after my belongings (house, pets, etc.) for a while.      |
| _____ | _____ | 7. Would loan me a car if I needed one.                                 |
| _____ | _____ | 8. Would joke around or suggest doing something to cheer me up.         |
| _____ | _____ | 9. Would go to a movie or concert with me.                              |
| _____ | _____ | 10. Would suggest how I could find out more about a situation.          |

<b>would not do this</b>	<b>probably would not do this</b>	<b>I do not know</b>	<b>probably would do this</b>	<b>certainly would do this</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

Mother-in-law

Father-in-law

- |       |       |  |
|-------|-------|--|
| _____ | _____ | 11. Would help me out with a move or other big chore.            |
| _____ | _____ | 12. Would listen if I needed to talk about my feelings.          |
| _____ | _____ | 13. Would have a good time with me.                              |
| _____ | _____ | 14. Would pay for my lunch if I was broke                        |
| _____ | _____ | 15. Would suggest a way I might do something.                    |
| _____ | _____ | 16. Would give me encouragement to do something difficult.       |
| _____ | _____ | 17. Would give me advice about what to do.                       |
| _____ | _____ | 18. Would chat with me.  |
| _____ | _____ | 19. Would help me figure out what I wanted to do.                |
| _____ | _____ | 20. Would show me that they understood how I was feeling.        |
| _____ | _____ | 21. Would buy me a drink if I was short of money.                |
| _____ | _____ | 22. Would help me decide what to do.                             |
| _____ | _____ | 23. Would give me a hug, or otherwise show me I was cared about. |
| _____ | _____ | 24. Would call me just to see how I was doing.                   |
| _____ | _____ | 25. Would help me figure out what was going on.                  |

would not do this 1	probably would not do this 2	I do not know 3	probably would do this 4	certainly would do this 5
<u>Mother-in-law</u>	<u>Father-in-law</u>			
_____	_____		26. Would help me out with some necessary purchase.	
_____	_____		27. Would not pass judgment on me.	
_____	_____		28. Would tell me who to talk to for help.	
_____	_____		29. Would loan me money for an indefinite period.	
_____	_____		30. Would be sympathetic if I was upset.	
_____	_____		31. Would stick by me in a crunch.	
_____	_____		32. Would buy me clothes if I was short of money.	
_____	_____		33. Would tell me about the available choices and options.	
_____	_____		34. Would loan me tools, equipment, or appliances if I needed them.	
_____	_____		35. Would give me reasons why I should or should not do something.	
_____	_____		36. Would show affection for me.	
_____	_____		37. Would show me how to do something I didn't know how to do.	
_____	_____		38. Would bring me little presents of things I needed.	
_____	_____		39. Would tell me the best way to get something done.	
_____	_____		40. Would talk to other people, to arrange something for me.	

<b>would not do this</b>	<b>probably would not do this</b>	<b>I do not know</b>	<b>probably would do this</b>	<b>certainly would do this</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

Mother-in-law

Father-in-law

_____	_____	41. Would loan me money and want to “forget about it.”
-------	-------	--

_____	_____	42. Would tell me what to do.
-------	-------	-------------------------------

_____	_____	43. Would offer me a place to stay for awhile.
-------	-------	--

_____	_____	44. Would help me think about a problem.
-------	-------	--

_____	_____	45. Would loan me a fairly large sum of money (say the equivalent of a month’s rent or mortgage).
-------	-------	---

APPENDIX D:  
FAMILY VALUES

### **Family Values**

**Directions:** Please indicate how much YOU personally agree or disagree with each of the following statements using the scale below. Then indicate how much you perceive your mother-in-law and father-in-law to agree or disagree with each of the following statements using the scale below.

<b>Strongly Disagree 1</b>	<b>Moderately Disagree 2</b>	<b>Slightly Disagree 3</b>	<b>I Do Not Know 4</b>	<b>Slightly Agree 5</b>	<b>Moderately Agree 6</b>	<b>Strongly Agree 7</b>
<u>Me</u>	<u>Mother-in-law</u>	<u>Father-in-law</u>				
_____	_____	_____				1. Having a baby before marriage is acceptable.
_____	_____	_____				2. Living together before marriage is acceptable.
_____	_____	_____				3. Men and women should not marry if they are from different social classes.
_____	_____	_____				4. Divorce is never acceptable.
_____	_____	_____				5. Life can be satisfying without children.
_____	_____	_____				6. Childcare should be shared between fathers and mothers.
_____	_____	_____				7. Mothers should be full-time homemakers.
_____	_____	_____				8. Husbands' careers should come first before wives' careers.
_____	_____	_____				9. Parents should use strict discipline with their children.

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Moderately Disagree</b>	<b>Slightly Disagree</b>	<b>I Do Not Know</b>	<b>Slightly Agree</b>	<b>Moderately Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>

Me

Mother-in-law

Father-in-law

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Wives should obey their husbands.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

11. Fathers should put their families before their careers.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

12. Fathers' most important role is being the primary breadwinner.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

13. Husbands and wives should have the same religious beliefs.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

14. Husbands and wives should make important decisions together.

APPENDIX E:  
TRIANGULATION

## Support From Your Spouse

**Directions:** Please, indicate how you believe your spouse would respond in the following situations with both your mother-in-law and father-in-law. If you have not experienced these situations, indicate how you think your spouse would respond. Use the scale below, and indicate one number under mother-in-law and one number under father-in-law.

Definitely No 1	Probably No 2	I Do Not Know 3	Probably Yes 4	Definitely Yes 5
<u>Mother-in-law</u>	<u>Father-in-law</u>			
_____	_____	1. If you were having a disagreement/argument with your in-law, do you think that your spouse would take his/her parent's side no matter what the argument was about?		
_____	_____	2. If you thought that your in-law was interfering with your parenting, do you think that your spouse would support your parenting decisions?		
_____	_____	3. If you thought that your in-law was treating you with disrespect, do you think that your spouse would support your feelings?		
_____	_____	4. If your in-law did not support your marriage, do you think that you and your spouse both would agree not to let him/her interfere in your marital relationship?		
_____	_____	5. If you thought that your in-law was treating you with disrespect, do you think that your spouse would say something to him/her?		
_____	_____	6. During holidays, does your spouse agree with your thoughts and opinions concerning time spent with your in-law?		

<b>Definitely</b>	<b>Probably</b>	<b>I Do Not</b>	<b>Probably</b>	<b>Definitely</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Know</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

Mother-in-law

Father-in-law

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. If your spouse decided to go to his/her parent's house alone instead of spending the day with you, would you feel excluded from the relationship between your spouse and his/her parent?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. If your spouse decided to go to his/her parent's house alone instead of spending the day with you, would you feel jealous of your in-law?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. If you and your spouse had a terrible argument, would your spouse let his/her parent say the marriage was a mistake?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. If you and your spouse had a disagreement, would your spouse let your in-law become a part of the disagreement?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

11. If you and your in-law did not have a good relationship, would your spouse demand respect from his/her parent for you?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

12. If you and your spouse had an argument and your in-law made negative comments concerning your behavior, would your spouse tell him/her to stay out of it?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

13. If you and your spouse had a terrible argument, do you think that your spouse would go to his/her parent's house instead of working through the argument with you?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

14. If you thought your parent-in-law was nagging you, do you think your spouse would agree with you?

<b>Definitely</b>	<b>Probably</b>	<b>I Do Not</b>	<b>Probably</b>	<b>Definitely</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Know</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

Mother-in-law

Father-in-law

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

15. If you thought your parent-in-law was indifferent with you, do you think your spouse would be concerned and support your opinion?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

16. If you thought that your parent-in-law was possessive and overprotective of your spouse, do you think your spouse would support your opinion?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

17. If you thought that your parent-in-law was competing with you for your spouse's attention, would your spouse take your concerns seriously?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

18. If you thought that your parent-in-law was taking precious time away from you and your spouse and possibly the children, would your spouse care enough to make more time for you and possibly your children?

APPENDIX F:  
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
PARTICIPANT AND PARTNER

### **Relationship Between Participant and Partner**

**Directions:** Most individuals have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

<b>Always Agree</b>	<b>Almost Always Agree</b>	<b>Occa- sionally Disagree</b>	<b>Fre- quently Disagree</b>	<b>Almost Always Disagree</b>	<b>Always Disagree</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Handling family finances
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Matters of recreation
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Religious matters
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Demonstrations of affection
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Friends
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Sex relations
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Philosophy of life
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Ways of dealing with parents or in-laws
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Aims, goals, and things believed important
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Amount of time spent together
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Making major decisions
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Household tasks
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Leisure time interests and activities
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Career decisions

**Directions:** Please choose one number that indicates how often each question/each situation occurs.

All of the time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occa- sionally	Rarely	Never
0	1	2	3	4	5

\_\_\_\_\_ 16. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?

\_\_\_\_\_ 17. How often do you or your mate leave the house after a fight?

\_\_\_\_\_ 18. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?

\_\_\_\_\_ 19. Do you confide in your mate?

\_\_\_\_\_ 20. Do you ever regret that you married?

\_\_\_\_\_ 21. How often do you and your partner quarrel?

\_\_\_\_\_ 22. How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves?"

---

**Directions:** Please circle the number that indicates how often you kiss your mate.

Every Day	Almost Every Day	Occa- sionally	Rarely	Never
4	3	2	1	0

\_\_\_\_\_ 23. Do you kiss your mate?

---

**Directions:** Please circle the number that indicates the best response for the following question regarding outside interests that you and your mate engage in together.

<b>All of Them</b>	<b>Most of Them</b>	<b>Some of Them</b>	<b>Very Few of Them</b>	<b>None of Them</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

\_\_\_\_\_ 24. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?

---

**Directions:** How often would you say the following events occur between you and your mate?

<b>Never</b>	<b>Less than Once a Month</b>	<b>Once or Twice a Month</b>	<b>Once or Twice a Week</b>	<b>Once a Day</b>	<b>More Often</b>
<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

\_\_\_\_\_ 25. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas

\_\_\_\_\_ 26. Laugh together

\_\_\_\_\_ 27. Calmly discuss something

\_\_\_\_\_ 28. Work together on a project

---

**Directions:** These are some things about which couples sometimes agree and sometimes disagree. Indicate if either item below caused differences of opinions or were problems in your relationship during the past few weeks. Check **yes** or **no**.

<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
------------	-----------

\_\_\_\_\_ 29. Being too tired for sex.

\_\_\_\_\_ 30. Not showing love

---

**Directions:** The numbers below represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, “happy,” represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please circle the number that best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

<b>Extremely Unhappy</b>	<b>Fairly Unhappy</b>	<b>A Little Unhappy</b>	<b>Happy</b>	<b>Very Happy</b>	<b>Extremely Happy</b>	<b>Perfect</b>
<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>

---

**Directions:** Please put an “X” by the statement that best answers the question for your situation.

32. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship?

\_\_\_\_\_ I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and would go to almost any length to see that it does.

\_\_\_\_\_ I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do all I can to see that it does.

\_\_\_\_\_ I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do my fair share to see that it does.

\_\_\_\_\_ It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I can’t do much more than I am doing now to help it succeed.

\_\_\_\_\_ It would be nice if it succeeded, but I refuse to do any more than I am doing now to keep the relationship going.

\_\_\_\_\_ My relationship can never succeed, and there is no more that I can do to keep the relationship going.

APPENDIX G:  
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

**In-laws and Marriage Study**  
Debriefing Statement

We thank you for your willingness to participate in this survey. The questions assess your relationship with your in-laws, specifically disagreements with your in-laws and support received from your in-laws. The questions also assess your marital relationship and whether or not your partner is supportive of you. We hope to better understand the relationship between in-laws and marital relationships. If the questions in this study raise feelings that are uncomfortable to you and you would like to discuss them with a counselor, you may contact the California State University, San Bernardino Counseling Center at (909) 880-5040 if you are a Cal State student.

You may obtain the group results of this study at the completion of the study from Dr. Gloria Cowan at (909) 880-5575. The study will be completed at the end of the Spring Quarter 2001. If you would like more information about this study prior to its completion you may contact Dr. Cowan at any time.

Additionally, please do not discuss the nature of this study with anyone because that individual may be a potential participant.

Once again, thank you for your participation.

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