FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE: REAL–IDEAL DISCREPANCIES AND THE MARITAL WELL-BEING OF NEWLYWEDS

Ann P. Ruvolo

University of Notre Dame

Joseph Veroff

University of Michigan

———————————————— ABSTRACT ————————————————

This study examined the relationship between an individual's real–ideal discrepancy about the spouse and the marital well-being of both spouses. In the first year of the study, individuals from 153 African–American couples and 160 White couples rated their partners and their ideals for their partners on 12 characteristics. Discrepancies between ratings of the partner and ideals for the partner were negatively correlated with the Year 1 marital well-being of each spouse. Also, while controlling for the Year 1 marital well-being of both partners, wives' real–ideal discrepancies about their husbands were negatively related to the Year 2 marital well-being of both partners, but husbands' discrepancies did not predict the Year 2 marital well-being of either partner. When the separate effects of discrepancies, ratings of the partner, and ideals were examined, women's discrepancies predicted the Year 2 marital well-being of both partners, and men's ratings of their wives predicted their own Year 2 marital well-being.

KEY WORDS ● ideals ● marital well-being ● real–ideal discrepancies

Because we may all have different ideals for our spouses, one person's ideal spouse might not seem ideal to another. No matter how idiosyncratic their

ideals for their partners may be, the discrepancies between individuals'
perceptions of their partners in reality and the ideals they have for their
partners can affect both the individuals' own satisfaction with their re-
lationships and their partners' satisfaction. People may be happy with the
marriage only if they feel that their spouse lives up to their ideals for them.
Also, the partners may be happy only if they feel that their spouses are sat-
isfied with them. This paper examines how newlyweds' discrepancies re-
late to the subsequent marital satisfaction of individuals and their
partners.

Discrepancies between ideals and perceptions of the 'real' spouse may
lead to lower relationship satisfaction for the person perceiving the dis-
crepancy. Researchers have examined real–ideal discrepancies about one-
self, life in general, and one's partner. In general, larger real–ideal
discrepancies have been associated with decreased satisfaction and more
negative affect. Michalos (1986) proposed that discrepancies between what
an individual perceives and what is ideal may affect satisfaction or happi-
ness in an area; he called this 'ideal–real gap theory'. He reviewed studies
showing that real–ideal discrepancies about such diverse areas as working
environment, housing conditions, therapist behavior, rehabilitation facility
services, group leaders, and marital role behaviors predicted satisfaction
with these areas. Other researchers have examined correlates of real–ideal
discrepancies about oneself. Rogers & Dymond (1954), for example, con-
sider larger real–ideal discrepancies about the self to be a sign of lower
psychological adjustment or mental health; during the course of therapy,
individuals' real–ideal discrepancies may decrease. Higgins et al. (1985)
have found that individuals with larger real–ideal self discrepancies experi-
ence greater negative emotions. Research in the area of close relationships
has examined individuals' real–ideal discrepancies about their partners or
their relationships, and found that these discrepancies are correlated with
relationship satisfaction (Kelley & Burgoon, 1991; Murstein & Beck, 1972;
Sternberg & Barnes, 1985).

Sternberg & Barnes (1985) used social exchange theory to explain the re-
lationship between real–ideal discrepancies and relationship satisfaction.
Exchange theory suggests that satisfaction with a relationship is a function
of the rewards and costs an individual perceives having in the relationship;
high rewards and low costs are associated with high satisfaction (Thibaut &
Kelley, 1959). Exchange theory also holds that individuals evaluate their
relationships by comparing the rewards and costs they have with their com-
parison level; the comparison level is what individuals expect from a re-
lationship, the balance of rewards and costs to which they feel entitled. If
their rewards and costs fall below the comparison level, individuals are less
satisfied, and if the balance of rewards and costs meets or exceeds the com-
parison level, individuals are more satisfied. Sternberg & Barnes (1985)
suggested that the relationship between an individual's rewards and costs
and his or her comparison level is represented by the individual's real–ideal
discrepancy about the partner; when individuals have ideals that they feel
the partners do not fulfil, their outcomes are below their comparison level

and these individuals may be less satisfied than individuals whose partners fulfil their ideals.

While real–ideal discrepancies involve ideals, which are different from the expectations involved with a comparison level, the effects of unfulfilled ideals and unmet expectations (outcomes that fall below the comparison level) may be similar for two reasons. First, sometimes an individual's ideals and expectations for the partner are similar. We could argue that in some cases, individuals may fully expect their partners to fulfil their ideals; particularly in the first few months of marriage, individuals may be idealistic, and ideals and expectations may be more similar than they might be later in the marriage. Thibaut & Kelley (1959) noted that 'people facing marriage tend to develop fantastic expectations of how their partners will behave in marriage' (p. 92). Newlyweds may be entering the marriage with expectations based on the 'idealized images of marriage presented in the movies and on television' (Schwartz & Schwartz, 1986: 10). In these cases, individuals' ideals may also be their expectations for their partners. Second, even if an individual's ideals and expectations are not equivalent, the violations of each may have similar results. Michalos (1986) suggested that 'ideal–real gap' theory and 'expectation–reality gap theory' are both examples of 'gap-theoretical explanations', and that both types of discrepancies have similar effects. Even though social exchange theory does not explicitly mention unmet ideals, we could propose that individuals' comparisons of their rewards and costs with their ideals may have similar consequences as their comparisons of rewards and costs with their comparison levels. Michalos (1980) added that the evidence supporting the link between real–ideal discrepancies and satisfaction is even more consistent and strong than the evidence supporting the link between real–expectation discrepancies and satisfaction. Therefore, having large real–ideal discrepancies about the partner can have implications for an individual's marital well-being.

In addition to affecting the person's own marital well-being, the person's perceptions that the partner does not fulfil the ideals may also lead to lower ratings of marital well-being by the partner. Thus, wives' discrepancies may lead to decreased husbands' marital well-being, and husbands' discrepancies may lead to decreased wives' marital well-being. One reason for this is that people with large real–ideal discrepancies about their spouses may express negative feelings to their spouses, thereby decreasing the spouses' marital well-being. People dislike those who do not act in the desired ways, and these feelings serve as punishments for the actors. In both overt and covert ways, people display their feelings about the behavior of their spouses. Therefore, when the person feels that the spouse does not fulfil the ideals, the negative messages that the person sends add to the partner's costs in the relationship, decreasing marital satisfaction. Another reason why the discrepancy perceived by one person may lead to the decreased well-being of the partner is that when a person perceives a discrepancy about the spouse, the person may act differently toward the spouse. For example, if a wife feels that her husband does not meet her ideals, she may

perceive that she is getting too few rewards. To restore equity and avoid putting more into the relationship than she gets from it, she may reduce her input into the relationship (Walster et al., 1978); consequently, her husband receives fewer rewards, and becomes less satisfied with the relationship. Thus, her discrepancy about him may lead him to be less satisfied.

An individual's discrepancy about the partner may also affect the partner if the partner is affected by the individual's negative feelings about the discrepancy. Hatfield et al. (1992) suggest that individuals may experience each other's emotions through the process of emotional contagion; those in close relationships should be especially attuned to each other and more likely to experience emotional contagion. Levinson & Gottman (1983) found that the affect felt by spouses is often linked, and that negative affect from problem areas in the couple's life is especially likely to be reciprocated. If one partner has negative affect caused by the perception of a real–ideal discrepancy about the spouse, the spouse may be affected and experience negative affect as well.

In these ways, perceptions of real–ideal discrepancies may lead to lowered satisfaction for both the person perceiving the violation and for the partner. Discrepancies may cause decreased rewards for both partners, which, as social exchange theory would predict, would lead to lowered satisfaction. Also, negative affect caused by the discrepancy can be experienced by both partners.

We suggest that although discrepancies may be important to both women and men in the short term, over time wives' discrepancies will be better predictors of each person's marital well-being than husbands' discrepancies will be. Kelley & Burgoon (1991) suggest that women's views are more influential because women are more focused on relationships than men are. Women have higher complexity of cognitions related to relationships than men do (Martin, 1991). Also, women have more vivid memories of relationship incidents and report reminiscing about these incidents more than men do (Ross & Holmberg, 1992). For these reasons, women may develop stronger and clearer relationship ideals than men do, and might spend more time thinking about the relationship. Therefore, wives' discrepancies are likely to have a greater impact on their relationship satisfaction than men's discrepancies have on men's satisfaction.

In addition, women's discrepancies may have a strong effect on their partners. Women typically have more responsibility for the expressive roles in the relationship, guiding the interpersonal interactions and influencing the emotional climate between spouses (Parsons, 1955); within marriage, women typically fulfill the role of 'emotional specialist', and women's experiences before marriage prepare them to value this role and to be skilled in it (Wood et al., 1989). Also, women are more likely to initiate communication about problems or relationship issues (Kelley et al., 1978) and to disclose their feelings (Murstein & Adler, 1995), so when they perceive a discrepancy they may tell their husbands, which may influence their husbands' satisfaction. Because it is part of a woman's traditional role to focus on these feelings and to communicate them to her partner, women's dis-

crepancies and their feelings about them may be more likely to affect their husbands than husbands' discrepancies would affect the wives. This pattern was found by Fincham & Bradbury (1989), who showed that women's attributions predicted husbands' relationship satisfaction, but husbands' attributions did not predict wives' relationship satisfaction. Similarly, Sillars (1985) found that women's cognitions regarding blame predicted husbands' relationship quality. For these reasons, wives' discrepancies can be expected to be more strongly related to the later marital well-being of both partners than husbands' discrepancies will be.

Previous research has demonstrated that there is a link between certain types of real–ideal discrepancies and the concurrent relationship satisfaction of one or both partners (Kelley & Burgoon, 1991; Murstein & Beck, 1972; Sternberg & Barnes, 1985).

Murstein & Beck (1972), for example, conducted a cross-sectional study involving 60 young, middle- and upper middle-class married couples; many of the couples had one partner who was a graduate student. Each person rated his or her spouse on a 20-item adjective checklist (Norman, 1963) and also used the adjectives to make ratings of the 'ideal spouse'. Wives' and husbands' real–ideal discrepancies about their partners were each negatively correlated with the marital satisfaction of both partners.

Similarly, in a cross-sectional study of 24 undergraduate and graduate student dating couples, Sternberg & Barnes (1985) had each individual complete Rubin's (1970) love and liking scales, and the Levinger et al. (1977) scale of interpersonal involvement. Each person completed these measures a second time, rating how he or she 'would wish to feel about an ideal other'. They also completed an 8-item scale of relationship quality, which included items assessing satisfaction, communication, closeness, love, success of the relationship, predicted duration of the relationship, and the extent to which each person's needs are being met. Grouping men and women together, they found that individuals' discrepancies about liking, loving, and involvement were negatively correlated with relationship quality.

In Kelley & Burgoon's (1991) study of real–ideal discrepancies about communication, 206 married couples served as respondents; most of the couples were from a Sunday school. Initially, the respondents rated their satisfaction with the relationship. After a delay of 1–8 weeks, each wife first rated 'how a husband should behave' and 'how my husband does behave' with respect to various communication behaviors, and each husband rated 'how a wife should behave' and 'how my wife does behave'. In most areas of communication, respondents' discrepancies about their partners predicted the respondents' own relationship satisfaction. In addition, the husband's discrepancy about the wife's non-composure during communication (being frustrated, distracted, and not relaxed) predicted the wife's satisfaction, and the wife's discrepancy about whether the husband treats her as an equal during conversations predicted the husband's satisfaction.

Although these studies (Kelley & Burgoon, 1991; Murstein & Beck, 1972; Sternberg & Barnes, 1985) demonstrate a relationship between

real–ideal discrepancies and marital well-being, several interesting questions remain, and will be addressed by the present study. First, because all three studies used discrepancies to predict *concurrent* marital well-being, they are not as strong a test of the relationship between discrepancies and marital well-being as if discrepancies were used to predict *later* marital well-being. Cross-sectional research can demonstrate an association between the two variables, but demonstrating that discrepancies predict subsequent marital well-being while controlling for concurrent marital well-being provides evidence that discrepancies predict a change in marital well-being. An important question is whether there is a long-term relationship between discrepancies and marital well-being. Longitudinal analyses can address this question and can provide more information about possible causal relationships between the two variables by demonstrating that one variable precedes the other. Second, because many of the respondents were university students or Sunday-school students, it is difficult to know whether an association between discrepancies and relationship–quality would exist in a more representative group of couples, or whether it only holds for those individuals who have the time and inclination to think about abstract ideals. Third, one study (Sternberg & Barnes, 1985) measured discrepancies and marital well-being in similar domains (e.g. some discrepancies involved real vs ideal ratings of love, etc., and marital well-being measures included items on love, whether the partner meets the individual's ideals, etc.). These discrepancies may simply act as another measure of relationship satisfaction, rather than as a separate construct that predicts relationship satisfaction, thus artificially inflating the magnitude of the correlations (Fincham & Bradbury, 1987). Another study measured discrepancies in the specific area of communication and intimacy behaviors directed to the respondent (Kelley & Burgoon, 1991). Fourth, in all of these studies, ideals are assessed by asking individuals to rate a generalized, ideal person, rather than by asking them to specify what their ideals are for the current partner. For married couples, general visions of a hypothetical ideal partner may be less important than the perception of what one's own spouse should ideally be like. Fifth, these studies use the real–ideal discrepancy score approach. While this approach best captures the intent of these studies, there are some ambiguities inherent in the interpretation of results involving discrepancy scores. This is because significant results could be due to a relationship between the dependent variable and the discrepancy variable itself, or by a relationship between the dependent variable and either the real or the ideal component of the discrepancy variable (Cohen & Cohen, 1983).

The present study extended the existing literature by examining the association between discrepancies and marital well-being, while avoiding the problems mentioned previously and addressing several unresolved issues.

Before examining the relationship of real–ideal discrepancies and subsequent marital well-being, it was necessary to examine the relationship between discrepancies and concurrent marital well-being. The first aim of the study was to replicate previous research by examining the relationship be-

tween real–ideal discrepancies and relationship quality within the first year of marriage. An important feature of this study is that it included a sample of both African-American couples and White couples from a large metropolitan county, so we can determine whether the same results are obtained with this more representative group. Because it is important to measure discrepancies in an area that is as different as possible from that assessed in the measure of relationship satisfaction, respondents rated their partners with regard to general personal characteristics rather than about areas more directly connected with marital well-being (such as feelings about the partner). Also, this study asked people to rate what their current spouses would ideally be like.

The second, and more important, aim was to further extend previous research by providing a longitudinal test of this relationship. The study examined the relationship between discrepancies measured in the first year of marriage and marital well-being in the second year, controlling for initial marital well-being. The main hypotheses were that women with larger real–ideal discrepancies about their husbands' personal characteristics would later be less satisfied with the relationship, and that their husbands would also be less satisfied with the relationship. It was also predicted that men's discrepancies would have a relationship with men's marital well-being, but for the reasons mentioned above, it was less likely. The third aim was to see whether the relationship between discrepancies and subsequent marital well-being is similar or different for African-American and White couples. By examining whether or not there are race differences in the results, we are following the reasoning of Glenn & Weaver (1981), who said: 'we had no *a priori* reasons for expecting significant Black–White differences in the relationships, but previous research on attitudes, feelings, and family characteristics has so often found interactions with race that it is always advisable to look for such interactions' (p. 162).

The fourth aim was to examine the interpretation of the real–ideal discrepancy results in more detail. This paper used the real–ideal discrepancy approach employed both in the close relationship studies it extends (Kelley & Burgoon, 1991; Murstein & Beck, 1972; Sternberg & Barnes, 1985) and in studies of the self-concept (Higgins et al., 1985; Rogers & Dymond, 1954). For this study, what was most interesting is that some aspect of individuals' perceptions of the partner, whether it is the real–ideal discrepancy itself or some component of the discrepancy, relates to subsequent marital well-being. However, we could examine these relationships in more detail and discover whether it is the discrepancy variable itself that predicts marital well-being or whether marital well-being can be predicted merely by the individual's rating of the partner or ideals for the partner. Thus, an additional aim of this study was to explore the separate effects that individuals' real–ideal discrepancies about their partners, their real ratings of their partners, and their ideals for their partners have on marital well-being. Analyses were also conducted to test whether these effects were similar or different for African-Americans and Whites.

Method

The data were drawn from the first and second waves of the First Years of Marriage study, a longitudinal study of newlywed couples from Detroit and its suburbs (Veroff et al., 1995).

The respondents were selected from among all eligible couples applying for marriage licenses in Wayne County, Michigan, from April to June, 1986. A couple was eligible if neither partner had been married previously, the wife was less than 36 years old, and the spouses were both African-American or both White. A random sample of White couples was taken from this pool; because there were fewer African-American couples in the pool, each eligible African-American couple was included in the initial sample. Eighty percent of contacted individuals agreed to participate. Since individuals' responses were only included in the dataset if both members of the couple participated, the Year 1 dataset was based on 66 percent of the couples contacted. In the first year of the study, 373 couples were interviewed, of whom 199 couples were African-American and 174 couples were White.

Respondents who were still together in the second year participated in the second interview. By the second year, 168 (84.4%) of the African-American couples were still together, and 15 (7.5%) were divorced or separated. Of the White couples, 162 (93.1%) were still together in the second year, and 5 (2.9%) were divorced or separated. Because 16 (8%) of the African-American couples and 7 (4%) of the White couples could not be contacted, their marital status in the second year is unknown. (More information about the sample can be found in Veroff et al., 1995.) The analyses in this study are based on the responses of the 313 couples (153 African-American, 160 White) who were still married in Year 2 and had no missing data on any of the variables used in this study.

In the first wave of the study, each spouse was interviewed separately by a female interviewer of his or her race, approximately 5–8 months after the wedding. These interviews were structured face-to-face interviews with closed-ended and open-ended questions on topics including communication, conflict, feelings about the relationship, ideals, and self-perceptions. In the second wave, each person was interviewed by telephone; these interviews were conducted approximately 1 year after the couple's first interview.

During the first wave of the study, respondents were asked to use 10-point rating scales (1 = not at all like that, 10 = a lot like that) to rate their spouses with regard to 12 personal characteristics (i.e. stubborn, can be trusted, easy-going, bossy, gentle, moody, impatient, likes to argue, considerate, selfish, ambitious, and cooperative). We chose these characteristics from among a larger list of characteristics nominated by married couples as being important to them, and by members of the research team after they examined sources in the areas of self-concept research and personality psychology. We pilot-tested the larger list of characteristics with a sample of newlyweds. For the final set of 12 characteristics we aimed for a broad range of characteristics rather than ones that overlapped, because we wanted to assess individuals' overall views of their partners rather than their views about particular domains. Second, we wanted a balance of positive and negative characteristics. Third, the characteristics had to apply relatively equally to both sexes. Fourth, characteristics had to be familiar to respondents and easy to read, so that respondents would have no trouble using them. Fifth, because the time with the respondents was limited, the list had to be as short as possible while still representing a broad range of characteristics.

The ratings of the spouses were marked by the respondents out of view of the interviewers. Then they rated how they would ideally like their partners to be on each characteristic. We stressed to the respondents that they should rate how they would ideally like their partners to be, whether or not the partners are like that now. The discrepancy indices were created from these ratings.

The first index represents the magnitude of the discrepancy between how a wife perceives her husband to be and how she would ideally like him to be. For each characteristic, the wife's Year 1 rating of how she would ideally like her husband to be was subtracted from her rating of how he really is. The absolute value of each difference was taken, and the values for the 12 adjectives were added together. The absolute value was used because of the assumption that it is not possible to be 'better' than the ideal, and that therefore a discrepancy between real and ideal ratings reflects a perceived shortcoming. A high value on this variable indicates that there is a big discrepancy between a wife's perceptions of and ideals for her husband. A low value means that there is little difference between how a wife sees her husband and how she would ideally like him to be. The range of possible scores is from 0 to 108.

The indices are parallel for men and women. A corresponding index for husbands' discrepancies about their wives was created, and involves the difference between a husband's perceptions of his wife and his ideals for her. Therefore, there are two indices, one for the husband and one for the wife; each represents the person's discrepancies about the spouse on the set of 12 personal characteristics.

An index of how each person perceives the spouse to *really* be was created from the ratings of the spouse on the 12 personal characteristics. We expected half of the characteristics to be perceived as positive and half as negative, and did a factor analysis to confirm which should be reversed. The characteristics were factor analyzed to determine which should be reversed. All of the characteristics loaded on the same factor (all loadings were higher than .40); the ones with positive loadings can be called the positive characteristics (can be trusted, easy-going, gentle, considerate, ambitious, and cooperative), and the ones that loaded negatively can be called the negative characteristics (stubborn, bossy, moody, impatient, likes to argue, selfish). The individual's rating of the partner on each of the positive characteristics was added to the reversed ratings on the negative characteristics to create a single measure of how positively the individual rates the spouse. A high value indicates highly positive ratings of the partner (i.e. the individual rates the partner as high on the positive characteristics and low on the negative ones). The possible range of scores is from 12 to 120.

In a similar way, we created an index of how high the individual's ideals for the partner are. Factor analyses yielded a single factor, with some characteristics loading positively (can be trusted, easy-going, gentle, considerate, ambitious, and cooperative) and some loading negatively (stubborn, bossy, moody, impatient, likes to argue, selfish). The individual's ratings of the ideals for the positive words was added to the reversed ratings of the ideals for the negative words. The range of possible scores is from 12 to 120. A high value indicates that the individual has high ideals for the partner.

During the first year, individuals' marital well-being was assessed with an index of 5 items (Crohan & Veroff, 1989). The items involved ratings of happiness and satisfaction with the marriage, the certainty of still being married in 5 years, the stability of the marriage, and how often the individual considered

leaving the spouse. In Year 1, Cronbach's alphas for the measure were .81 for wives and .83 for husbands. Marital well-being was assessed again in Year 2 (alphas were .88 for wives and .88 for husbands).

To replicate previous research, bivariate correlations between Year 1 marital well-being and real–ideal discrepancies were calculated. Differences in the correlation of an individual's discrepancies and one's own Year 1 marital well-being and the correlation of an individual's discrepancies and the partner's Year 1 marital well-being were tested with the Wilks' lambda statistic obtained through simple regression analyses. Race differences in the cross-sectional analyses were also examined.

To examine the long-term relationship of discrepancies and marital well-being, the second set of analyses were multiple regressions using wives' Year 2 marital well-being and husbands' Year 2 marital well-being as dependent variables. (Because data drawn from two members of a couple are not statistically independent, separate analyses were used to predict wives' marital well-being and husbands' marital well-being. In other words, analyzing data from husbands and wives simultaneously would violate the regression assumption of independent observations (Cohen & Cohen, 1983).) For the first two analyses, the predictor variables were the wives' Year 1 real–ideal discrepancy about the husbands, wives' Year 1 marital well-being, and husbands' Year 1 marital well-being. For the second two analyses, the predictor variables were the husbands' Year 1 real–ideal discrepancies about their wives, wives' Year 1 marital well-being, and husbands' Year 1 marital well-being.

The third set of analyses were multiple regressions testing for the potential moderating effects of race. All variables were standardized, and product terms were created to represent the interactions between race and real–ideal discrepancies and between race and Year 1 marital well-being (Cohen, 1978). Because husbands' and wives' Year 1 marital well-being were included as covariates, it was also necessary to control for any possible interactions of the covariates with the moderator variable, race (Hull et al., 1992). For this reason, product terms representing the interaction of Year 1 marital well-being and race were included. The predictor variables and the components of the product terms were standardized in order to reduce multicollinearity problems between the product terms and the predictor variables used to create them (Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Jaccard et al., 1990). Because all variables were standardized prior to analysis, the unstandardized regression coefficients are presented (Jaccard et al., 1990).

The fourth set of analyses were multiple regressions examining the separate effects of real–ideal discrepancies, real ratings, and ideal ratings in predicting Year 2 marital well-being. For the first group of analyses, the predictor variables were wives' Year 1 real–ideal discrepancies about their husbands, the index of their Year 1 real ratings, and the index of their Year 1 ideals, along with the Year 1 marital well-being of each partner. The second group of analyses used husbands' real–ideal discrepancies, reals and ideals, with each partner's Year 1 marital well-being. The purpose of these analyses was to examine whether any relationship found between these real–ideal discrepancies and the dependent variable merely reflects a relationship between the dependent variable and the components of the discrepancy score. In other words, these analyses test whether real–ideal discrepancies have independent effects beyond what the real index or ideal index alone could predict. These analyses were repeated while testing for interactions with race.

Results

Table 1 shows the means for the real–ideal discrepancies, Year 1 marital well-being, Year 2 marital well-being, ratings of real partners and ideals for partners. These descriptive statistics are based on the responses of the 313 couples who participated in both waves of the study and had no missing data on any of the variables used in the study. Paired *t*-tests indicate that in the first year of marriage, wives' marital well-being and husbands' marital well-being are not significantly different: $t(1,312) = .92$, $p < .36$. In Year 2, however, husbands have higher marital well-being than their wives do: $t(1,312) = 2.34$, $p < .02$. Men's real–ideal discrepancies about their wives are marginally higher than their wives' discrepancies about them: $t(1,312) = 1.87$, $p < .06$. Wives rate their husbands more positively than husbands rate their wives: $t(1,312) = 4.00$, $p < .0001$. Wives' ideals are also higher than husbands' ideals: $t(1,312) = 3.53$, $p < .0005$.

TABLE 1
Means and standard deviations (in parentheses) for real–ideal discrepancies, Year 1 marital well-being, and Year 2 marital well-being for wives and husbands

	Wives		Husbands	
	M	SD	*M*	SD
Year 1 real–ideal discrepancy about spouse	27.19	(15.05)	29.09	(14.15)
Year 1 marital well-being	3.69	(.42)	3.71	(.41)
Year 2 marital well-being	3.59	(.54)	3.66	(.45)
Year 1 ratings of real spouse	87.59	(16.32)	83.14	(15.14)
Year 1 ratings of ideal spouse	109.79	(11.70)	106.75	(11.89)

As shown in Table 2, all correlations between and among Year 1 and Year 2 marital well-being are positive, and there is a positive correlation between husbands' and wives' discrepancies. Similarly, husbands' and wives' real ratings are positively correlated, as are their ideals.

Included in Table 2 are the bivariate correlations of the Year 1 *real–ideal discrepancies held by each partner and the Year 1 marital well-being* of each partner. Consistent with previous research, there are negative correlations between each partner's real–ideal discrepancy and both partners' marital well-being in the first year of marriage.

Wilks' lambda was computed (within simple regressions) to test the difference of the correlations between wives' discrepancies and women's Year 1 marital well-being (i.e. $r = -.52$) vs wives' discrepancies and men's Year 1 marital well-being ($r = -.36$). Women's real–ideal discrepancies are related more strongly to women's marital well-being than to men's marital well-being (Wilks' lambda $= .97$, $F(1,311) = 9.75$, $p < .002$). Similarly, the men's real–ideal discrepancy index is more strongly related to men's Year 1 marital well-being ($r = -.29$) than to women's Year 1 marital well-being ($r = -.16$; Wilks' lambda $= .98$, $F(1,311) = 5.75$, $p < .02$).

Race differences were tested through multiple regression, with discrepancy, race, and the product of discrepancy and race as predictors. There are no significant race differences in the strength of the cross-sectional relationships between real–ideal discrepancies and the marital well-being of either partner.

TABLE 2
Correlations between real–ideal discrepancies, Year 1 marital well-being, and Year 2 marital well-being for wives and husbands

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Wives' Year 1 discrepancy about husbands	—								
2. Husbands' Year 1 discrepancy about wives	.25***	—							
3. Wives' Year 1 marital well-being	-.52***	-.16**	—						
4. Husbands' Year 1 marital well-being	-.36***	-.29***	.53***	—					
5. Wives' Year 2 marital well-being	-.38***	-.18**	.53***	.39***	—				
6. Husbands' Year 2 marital well-being	-.38***	-.21***	.34***	.41***	.52***	—			
7. Wives' ratings of real husbands	-.85***	-.21***	.49***	.32***	.30***	.32***	—		
8. Husbands' ratings of real wives	-.21***	-.78***	.15**	.27***	.18**	.26***	.22***	—	
9. Wives' ratings of ideal husbands	-.03	-.01	.05	.04	-.03	.07	.36***	.11	—
10. Husbands' ratings of ideal wives	-.07	-.12*	.10	.02	.06	.06	.06	.14*	.29***

$* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001.$

TABLE 3
Multiple regression analyses predicting wives' and husbands' Year 2 marital well-being

Year 1 variables	Wives' Year 2 well-being			Husbands' Year 2 well-being		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Wives' marital well-being	.493	.079	.39***	.055	.069	.05
Husbands' marital well-being	.190	.074	.14*	.316	.065	.29***
Wives real–ideal discrepancy about husbands	−.005	.002	−.13*	−.007	.002	−.25***
R^2			.31***			.23***
F			45.83			30.79
Wives' marital well-being	.567	.072	.44***	.176	.064	.17**
Husbands' marital well-being	.183	.076	.14*	.315	.068	.29***
Husbands' real–ideal discrepancy about wives	−.003	.002	−.07	−.003	.002	−.10†
R^2			.30***			.20***
F			44.30			25.00

Note. Variables were entered simultaneously.
B = unstandardized regression coefficient
β = standardized regression coefficient
N = 313
†$p < .053$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

The next analyses test whether *discrepancies relate to marital well-being over the long term*. To test whether real–ideal discrepancies predict subsequent marital well-being above what can be predicted by initial marital well-being, multiple regression analyses were performed using wives' Year 2 marital well-being and husbands' Year 2 marital well-being as the dependent variables. The predictor variables were the Year 1 marital well-being of each partner, and one partner's real–ideal discrepancy about the other.

An examination of the values for the Year 1 marital well-being variables (included as control variables) shows that wives' Year 1 marital well-being predicts wives' Year 2 marital well-being, and husbands' Year 1 marital well-being predicts their own Year 2 marital well-being (see Table 3). Husbands' Year 1 marital well-being is also a significant predictor of wives' Year 2 marital well-being. In the equation using husbands' discrepancies to predict husbands' Year 2 marital well-being, wives' Year 1 marital well-being significantly predicts husbands' Year 2 marital well-being, probably because wives' Year 1 discrepancy, a variable that overlaps with wives' Year 1 marital well-being, is not included in the model. In the equation using wives' discrepancies to predict husbands' Year 2 marital well-being, wives' Year 1 marital well-being is not a significant predictor, probably due to this overlap.

More important, and as hypothesized, wives' real–ideal discrepancies significantly predict the Year 2 marital well-being of both wives and husbands. Wives' larger discrepancies are associated with lower marital well-being for both hus-

bands and wives. Similarly, husbands' real–ideal discrepancies approach significance ($p < .053$) in predicting husbands' Year 2 marital well-being in the context of the other predictor variables.

As with the cross-sectional analysis, we tested whether wives' discrepancies are equally strong predictors of wives' own Year 2 marital well-being and husbands' Year 2 marital well-being. Although the standardized regression coefficients appear to differ ($-.13$ vs $-.25$), the Wilks' lambda statistic reveals that this difference is not statistically significant (Wilks' lambda = .99, $F(1,309) =$ 1.89, $p < .17$). Similarly, the coefficients for men's discrepancies ($-.07$ vs $-.10$) do not differ either (Wilks' lambda = 1.0, $F(1,309) = .11, p < .74$).

To determine whether the relationship between discrepancies and marital well-being differs for African-American couples and White couples, other analyses included product terms representing the interaction of race with discrepancies and Year 1 marital well-being. In predicting wives' Year 2 marital well-being, there are no significant interactions. Similarly, there are no significant interactions in predicting husbands' Year 2 marital well-being.

To determine whether real–ideal discrepancies predict marital well-being above and beyond what could be predicted from individuals' real ratings or ideals for the partner, the next set of regression analyses used all three of these variables as predictors, along with each partner's marital well-being. When

TABLE 4
Multiple regressions predicting Year 2 marital well-being from real–ideal discrepancies, real ratings, and ideals

Year 1 variables	Wives' Year 2 well-being			Husbands' Year 2 well-being		
	B	SE *B*	β	*B*	SE *B*	β
Wives' marital well-being	.511	.079	.40***	.062	.069	.06
Husbands' marital well-being	.186	.074	.14*	.311	.065	.29***
Wives' real–ideal discrepancy about husbands	−.010	.004	−.26*	−.010	.003	−.34**
Wives' real ratings of husbands	−.006	.004	−.17	−.003	.003	−.12
Wives' ideals for husbands	−.000	.003	−.00	.003	.002	.08
R^2			.32***			.23***
F			28.37			18.81
Wives' marital well-being	.566	.073	.44***	.180	.064	.17**
Husbands' marital well-being	.181	.077	.14*	.306	.067	.28***
Husbands' real–ideal discrepancy about wives	−.001	.004	−.03	.003	.003	.11
Husbands' real ratings of wives	.002	.003	.05	.008	.003	.26*
Husbands' ideals for wives	.000	.003	.00	−.002	.002	−.06
R^2			.30***			.21***
F			26.54			16.73

Note. Variables were entered simultaneously.
B = unstandardized regression coefficients
β = standardized regression coefficients
$N = 313$. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

using wives' variables to predict marital well-being, wives' real–ideal discrepancy is a significant predictor of the Year 2 marital well-being of each partner (see Table 4), which is the same result found in the original analyses. Wives' real and ideal ratings do not significantly predict the marital well-being of either partner. When using husbands' variables to predict marital well-being, husbands' real–ideal discrepancies do not predict the Year 2 marital well-being of their wives, which is the same result as in the original analyses. Neither do husbands' discrepancies predict husbands' own Year 2 marital well-being, although in the original analyses this relationship approached significance. However, husbands' real ratings do predict men's Year 2 marital well-being, though not women's. Husbands' ideals are not significant predictors of the marital well-being of either partner.

To determine whether these results are similar for African-American and White couples, the analyses with discrepancies, reals, and ideals were repeated with the inclusion of interaction terms involving race. There were no significant interactions in this expanded model.

Discussion

The aims of this study were both to replicate and to extend previous research involving real–ideal discrepancies and relationship quality. The results supported these aims. This study extended previous research by providing a stronger test of the relationship between real–ideal discrepancies and marital well-being, as well as by examining race as a potential moderator of the relationship. It was stronger, first, because discrepancies were used to predict later marital well-being while controlling for the initial marital well-being of both partners, allowing us to examine the long-term relationship between these variables. Also, a more diverse sample was used, enabling us to examine whether the results generalize to broader groups. In addition, it assessed individuals' discrepancies about general personal characteristics rather than discrepancies about behaviors or feelings less removed from marital well-being. This is advantageous because it is less likely that discrepancies simply serve as another measure of marital well-being.

The results of both the cross-sectional analyses and the longitudinal analyses supported the hypotheses. The cross-sectional results provide a comparison with previous research. Consistent with results found in previous studies (Kelley & Burgoon, 1991; Murstein & Beck, 1972; Sternberg & Barnes, 1985), individuals' real–ideal discrepancies were correlated with the first-year marital well-being of both partners. For both women and men, when individuals have large real–ideal discrepancies about their partners, both spouses have lower marital well-being. This pattern is consistent with predictions based on real–ideal discrepancy theory (Higgins et al., 1985; Michalos, 1986; Rogers & Dymond, 1954), and with research involving real–ideal discrepancies in marriage (Kelley & Burgoon, 1991; Sternberg & Barnes, 1985).

These results are also consistent with similar research on discrepancies

between an individual's perceptions and expectations for a partner
(Michalos, 1986), research which suggests that if a partner does not fulfil
the spouse's expectations, the spouse will become dissatisfied (Tharp,
1963). Studies examining general relationship functioning (Epstein &
Eidelson, 1981) and the transition to parenthood (Hackel & Ruble, 1992)
have found that violated expectations are associated with decreased re-
lationship satisfaction. Especially in the newlywed period, individuals may
have a rosy view of marriage and high ideals for their partners (Kelley &
Thibaut, 1959). To the extent that couples begin their marriages with opti-
mism and have ideals which they expect their partners to fulfil, perceiving
that spouses violate these ideals will cause lowered satisfaction. As
Michalos (1986) noted, real–ideal discrepancies and real–expectation dis-
crepancies both are specific types of 'gap–theoretical explanations'; there-
fore, unmet ideals and violated expectations may have similar
consequences.

Examining the results of the first longitudinal analyses, there is support
for the hypothesis that wives' real–ideal discrepancies predict the subse-
quent marital well-being of both partners. Controlling for the Year 1 mari-
tal well-being of each partner, wives' real–ideal discrepancies are a
significant predictor of both wives' Year 2 marital well-being and husbands'
Year 2 marital well-being; larger discrepancies are associated with lower
Year 2 marital well-being. After controlling for Year 1 marital well-being,
however, husbands' real–ideal discrepancies are not a significant predictor
of wives' Year 2 marital well-being, although they are very close to signifi-
cance in predicting husbands' well-being.

The results involving wives' discrepancies about their husbands provide
evidence that wives' real–ideal discrepancies can be useful predictors of the
future relationship satisfaction of both partners (and that to some extent,
husbands' discrepancies can be as well). Wives' views were significant pre-
dictors even after controlling for the initial marital well-being of both part-
ners, and even though the discrepancies involved ideals about general
personal characteristics. So, the results suggest that wives' real–ideal dis-
crepancies do not simply act as another measure of relationship satisfac-
tion, but as separate variables that predict subsequent marital well-being.

For both women and men, there was a relationship between an individ-
ual's discrepancy and his or her own marital well-being. When we exam-
ined the relationship between the individual's discrepancy and the
partner's marital well-being, however, sex differences emerged. As ex-
pected, wives' discrepancies were good predictors of husbands' subsequent
marital well-being even though husbands' discrepancies did not predict
wives' subsequent marital well-being. This is similar to results found by
Kelley & Burgoon (1991) that, in the area of communication and intimacy
behaviors, women's discrepancies were more strongly related to the current
relationship satisfaction of both partners than were men's views. This pat-
tern of results is consistent with the idea that because men usually spend
less time in the expressive roles in the relationship (Parsons, 1955; Wood et
al., 1989), think about relationships less (Martin, 1991; Ross & Holmberg,

1992), and are less likely to discuss their feelings and to bring up problems (Kelley et al., 1978; Murstein & Adler, 1995), men's discrepancies are less likely to have an impact on their wives. These results are also consistent with research showing that women's cognitions predict husbands' relationship satisfaction, but that husbands' cognitions do not predict women's relationship satisfaction (Fincham & Bradbury, 1989; Sillars, 1985). It is possible that husbands' discrepancies are not significant in predicting wives' Year 2 marital well-being after controlling for initial marital well-being because ideals in the area of personality characteristics are not as important to the husbands. Also, even if the husband does consider it important that his wife meet his ideals in this area, maybe he does not communicate to her that he feels she violates his ideals (Kelley et al., 1978; Murstein & Adler, 1995), so his discrepancies do not have a chance to affect her. Husbands' Year 1 marital well-being does predict wives' Year 2 marital well-being, so there is a relationship of one of the husbands' variables to the marital well-being of their wives; but beyond this, husbands' real–ideal discrepancies are not independent predictors of wives' Year 2 marital well-being.

The analyses (both cross-sectional and longitudinal) examining potential interactions of real–ideal discrepancies and race extend previous research by showing that on the whole, similar relationships hold for African-American and White couples. For wives and husbands, there are no significant interactions between discrepancies and race. As Glenn & Weaver (1981) noted, it is important to discover whether results are similar or different for African-Americans and Whites.

The fourth set of analyses, those including real and ideal indices, show that for wives the utility of the real–ideal discrepancy variable as a predictor is not due merely to individuals' real ratings or ideal ratings alone. Wives' discrepancies themselves are important; the significant discrepancy results are not due to the real rating component of the discrepancy variable, but to the difference between the wives' real and ideal ratings of their husbands. This relates to the exchange theory ideas about the importance of an individual's comparison level — a wife's comparison between what she has and what she feels entitled to predicts her subsequent marital well-being (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Also, wives' results may reflect the fact that women do not uniformly want their husbands to be rated with the maximum score on the positive characteristics or the minimum score on the negative characteristics; achieving the most extreme rating on these characteristics may not be the individual's ideal. Therefore, perceiving husbands to score highly on the positivity index would not be a good predictor of relationship quality, but perceiving a match between the wives' perceptions and ideals would be. These results raise no doubts about the way that discrepancy score results have been interpreted in this and previous research.

When using men's real, ideal and discrepancy variables simultaneously to predict marital well-being, an interesting result emerged. Husbands' real ratings of their wives predicted men's subsequent marital well-being in the context of other predictors, and husbands' real–ideal discrepancies were no longer significant. This result is inconsistent with what would be predicted

by previous real–ideal discrepancy research (Kelley & Burgoon, 1991; Murstein & Beck, 1972; Sternberg & Barnes, 1985). For men, the real–ideal discrepancy itself is not responsible for the effect; but one component of the discrepancy, the real rating, is. This suggests that for husbands, rewards and costs themselves are important, rather than whether the outcomes exceed their comparison level. Perceiving that their wives have many positive characteristics may be rewarding and perceiving that their wives have many negative characteristics may be a cost, affecting marital well-being regardless of husbands' ideals. In other words, regardless of what a husband's ideals are, having a spouse who is trustworthy, considerate, and cooperative is rewarding, and having a spouse who is selfish or impatient may not be. We can speculate about why the real index was an important predictor for husbands, rather than the real–ideal discrepancy variable. Perhaps it is because, as mentioned earlier, men are typically less focused on relationships than women are, and have fewer experiences focused on preparing them for marriage (Wood et al., 1989). Therefore, men may be less likely to have well-elaborated ideals or to spend time thinking about ideals, even though they may think about the qualities of the partner and the relationship that they are currently engaged in. There may be circumstances in which there are sex differences in the relative importance of different social exchange variables (i.e. rewards, costs, comparison level, etc.). More research is needed to explore these possibilities. The results underscore the importance of ruling out other explanations, such as the effect of real ratings alone, when conducting research on the effect of real–ideal discrepancies.

   This paper demonstrates that wives' real–ideal discrepancies do predict the subsequent marital well-being of both partners and that husbands' real ratings predict their own marital well-being. Future research should also investigate whether real–ideal discrepancies would have a stronger long-term relationship with marital well-being if the discrepancies were assessed in different areas. It is possible that husbands' real–ideal discrepancies, not just their real ratings, are related to their subsequent marital well-being, but that we did not observe this because we did not measure discrepancies in areas in which they have ideals that they care about and consider important. The important areas may be different for husbands and wives, African-Americans and Whites, or for people of different ages and experiences. Alternatively, for some groups, real–ideal discrepancies may not be important in any area.

   The results of this study may be useful for predicting which couples will experience a decrease in marital well-being, couples for whom the honeymoon glow will soon end. The study is also a first step toward the goal of identifying possible causal relationships between real–ideal discrepancies and marital well-being. Another goal is to examine moderators of this relationship. One study (Ruvolo & Veroff, 1994) found that wives' discrepancies are more strongly related to wives' subsequent marital well-being for employed wives than for wives who are not employed outside the home, and that husbands' discrepancies are more strongly related to wives' marital well-being for non-employed wives than for employed wives. In ad-

dition, research currently in progress is examining potential moderators, such as whether the partner believes that the spouse can change, whether the spouse compensates for the discrepancy in other ways, whether the partners live up to their ideals for themselves, and whether the individual expects the ideals actually to be fulfilled.

Feeling that the partner fulfils the ideal, especially for newlyweds, may be a strongly held expectation, and may be associated with high satisfaction with the marriage. Many newlyweds are content with their partners. An individual who feels that the partner does not measure up to expectations, however, may over time come to feel that the marriage is not for better, but for worse.

REFERENCES

Cohen, J. (1978) 'Partialed Products *are* Interactions; Partialed Powers *are* Curve Components', *Psychological Bulletin* 85: 858–66.

Cohen, J. & Cohen, P. (1983) *Applied Multiple Regression/Correlation Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences.* Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Crohan, S.E. & Veroff, J. (1989) 'Dimensions of Marital Well-Being among White and Black Newlyweds', *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 51: 373–83.

Epstein, N. & Eidelson, R.J. (1981) 'Unrealistic Beliefs of Clinical Couples: Their Relationship to Expectations, Goals and Satisfaction', *American Journal of Family Therapy* 9: 13–22.

Fincham, F.D. & Bradbury, T.N. (1987) 'The Assessment of Marital Quality: A Reevaluation', *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 49: 797–809.

Fincham, F.D. & Bradbury, T.N. (1989) 'The Impact of Attributions in Marriage: An Individual Difference Analysis', *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 6: 69–85.

Glenn, N.D. & Weaver, C.N. (1981) 'The Contribution of Marital Happiness to Global Happiness', *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 81: 161–8.

Hackel, L.S. & Ruble, D.N. (1992) 'Changes in the Marital Relationship after the First Baby is Born: Predicting the Impact of Expectancy Disconfirmation', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 62: 944–57.

Hatfield, E., Cacioppo, J.T. & Rapson, R.L. (1992) 'Primitive Emotional Contagion', in M.S. Clark (ed.) *Emotion and Social Behavior.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Higgins, E.T., Klein, R. & Strauman, T. (1985) 'Self-Concept Discrepancy Theory: A Psychological Model for Distinguishing among Different Aspects of Depression and Anxiety', *Social Cognition* 3: 51–76.

Hull, J.G., Tedlie, J.C. & Lehn, D.A. (1992) 'Moderator Variables in Personality Research: The Problem of Controlling for Plausible Alternatives', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 18: 115–17.

Jaccard, J., Turisi, R. & Wan, C.K. (1990) *Interaction Effects in Multiple Regression.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Kelley, D.L. & Burgoon, J.K. (1991) 'Understanding Marital Satisfaction and Couple Type as Functions of Relational Expectations', *Human Communication Research* 18: 40–69.

Kelley, H.H., Cunningham, J.D., Grisham, J.A., Lefebvre, L.M., Sink, C.R. & Yablon, G. (1978) 'Sex Differences in Comments Made During Conflict within Close Heterosexual Pairs', *Sex Roles* 4: 473–91.

Levinger, G., Rands, M. & Talaber, R. (1977) *The Assessment of Involvement and Rewardingness in Close and Casual Pair Relationships, National Science Foundation Technical Report.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

Levinson, R.W. & Gottman, J.M. (1983) 'Marital Interaction: Physiological Linkage and Affective Exchange', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 45: 587–97.

Martin, R.W. (1991) 'Examining Personal Relationship Thinking: The Relational Cognition Complexity Instrument', *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 8: 467–80.

Michalos, A.C. (1980) 'Satisfaction and Happiness', *Social Indicators Research* 8: 385–422.

Michalos, A.C. (1986) 'Job Satisfaction, Marital Satisfaction, and the Quality of Life: A Review and a Preview', in F.M. Andrews (ed.) *Research on the Quality of Life.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Murstein, B.I. & Adler, E.R. (1995) 'Gender Differences in Power and Self-Disclosure in Dating and Married Couples', *Personal Relationships* 2: 199–209.

Murstein, B.I. & Beck, G.D. (1972) 'Person Perception, Marriage Adjustment, and Social Desirability', *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 39: 396–403.

Norman, W.T. (1963) 'Toward an Adequate Taxonomy of Personality Attributes: Replicated Factor Structure in Peer Nomination Personality Ratings', *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 66: 574–83.

Parsons, T. (1955) 'Family Structure and the Socialization of the Child', in T. Parsons & R.F. Bales (eds) *Family, Socialization and Interaction Process.* Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Rogers, C.R. & Dymond, R.F. (eds) (1954) *Psychotherapy and Personality Change: Co-ordinated Research Studies in the Client-centered Approach.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Ross, M. & Holmberg, D. (1992) 'Are Wives' Memories for Events in Relationships More Vivid than their Husbands' Memories?', *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 9: 585–604.

Rubin, Z. (1970) 'Measurement of Romantic Love', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 16: 265–73.

Ruvolo, A.P. & Veroff, J. (1994) 'Wives' Employment Status as a Moderator of the Effects of Real–Ideal Discrepancies on Marital Well-Being', unpublished manuscript, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana.

Schwartz, R. & Schwartz, L.J. (1986) *Becoming a Couple.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Sillars, A.L. (1985) 'Interpersonal Perception in Relationships', in W. Ickes (ed.) *Compatible and Incompatible Relationships.* New York: Springer-Verlag.

Sternberg, R.J. & Barnes, M.L. (1985) 'Real and Ideal Others in Romantic Relationships: Is Four a Crowd?', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 49: 1586–608.

Tharp, R.G. (1963) 'Psychological Patterning in Marriage', *Psychological Bulletin* 60: 97–117.

Thibaut, J.W. & Kelley, H.H. (1959) *The Social Psychology of Groups.* New York: Wiley.

Veroff, J., Douvan, E. & Hatchett, S. (1995) *Marital Instability: A Social and Behavioral Study of the Early Years.* Westport, CT: Praeger.

Walster, E., Walster, G.W. & Berscheid, E. (1978) *Equity: Theory and Research.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Wood, W., Rhodes, N. & Whelan, M. (1989) 'Sex Differences in Positive Well-Being: A Consideration of Emotional Style and Marital Status', *Psychological Bulletin* 106: 249–64.