



All Theses and Dissertations

2015-07-01

Marital Leisure Satisfaction: Investigating Comparative Skill Levels Within Marital Leisure Activities

Benjamin Dayley

Brigham Young University - Provo

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Recreation Business Commons](#)

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Dayley, Benjamin, "Marital Leisure Satisfaction: Investigating Comparative Skill Levels Within Marital Leisure Activities" (2015). *All Theses and Dissertations*. 5481.

<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/5481>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

Marital Leisure Satisfaction: Investigating Comparative
Skill Levels Within Marital Leisure Activities

Benjamin Dayley

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science

Ramon Zabriskie, Chair
Neil Lundberg
Dennis Eggett

Department of Recreation Management

Brigham Young University

July 2015

Copyright © 2015 Benjamin Dayley

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

Marital Leisure Satisfaction: Investigating Comparative Skill Levels Within Marital Leisure Activities

Benjamin Dayley
Department of Recreation Management, BYU
Master of Science

The purpose of this study was to investigate if and how comparative skill levels within marital leisure activities relate to marital satisfaction, and if gender or activity type affects that relationship, and if Flow theory could help explain a potential correlation of these leisure activity contexts. Specifically, this study examined three different comparative skill differences and similarities of couples engaging in leisure activities in three different types of leisure activities as factors in marital leisure satisfaction and ultimately Satisfaction With Married Life (SWML). Their gender and the skill-gender interactions were also included in the analysis. This study followed up on Johnson et al.'s (2006) recommendation for "more consideration ... to be given to the context of the activities themselves and the motivation behind participation" (p. 20). The sample consisted of 657 participating couples regionally reflecting the population and ethnicity across the United States. The Modified Marital Activity Profile (MMAAP) was used to measure marital leisure satisfaction. The Satisfaction with Married Life (SWML) scale was included after the MMAAP to obtain the overall satisfaction with married life score. The flow experience was measured using items from the Flow State Scale (FSS). A mixed models analysis of co-variance indicated the most common joint leisure activity of both spouses at a similar skill level, and husband is noticeably better than wife, reported significantly higher SWML scores than when the wife is noticeably better than the husband most often. Also, couples who are satisfied with their leisure participation in worse than spouse activities have significantly high SWML scores. Analysis further showed three of the four significant Flow variables had high SWML scores when experiencing Flow, whereas non-athletic activities appeared to be opposite of the other three Flow variables. These relationships were significant even when accounting for the variance explained by demographic variables of gender, age, years married, marriage history, education obtained, ethnicity, and location. Findings support existing family leisure research. This study, however, goes beyond existing research by indicating which comparative skill levels, by gender, and activity types, are positively correlated to SWML. The findings provide implications to couples who are interested in maintaining a healthy marriage, to those considering marriage, scholars, and professionals.

Keywords: marriage, couple, leisure, comparative skill levels, leisure satisfaction, marital satisfaction

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I was blessed to be surrounded by many mentors and intelligent people in this undertaking of writing a thesis. Academically, I had my committee of Ramon Zabriskie, Neil Lundberg, and Dennis Eggett, who each had their own contributions to the work as a whole. Thank you for not giving up on me and sticking with me to the end, especially you, Ramon, thank you. Socially, I had Brian Burningham to thank for his numerous proof readings, edits, and feedback. Also, Scott Mortensen “the janitor” for his insights into the results of my findings, demonstrating that life experience can be as valuable as a formal education. I also had all my family and friends to thank for letting me talk through my thoughts and for picking your brains. Personally, I have my wife, Brianna, to thank for her unwavering support from beginning to end. You were a steadying force through all the ups and downs along the way. You have helped me more than you can ever know. I love you. And spiritually, my Heavenly Father who continues to provide me with opportunities and the resources I need to make use of them. There are also countless others who played a role in this project. I could never have accomplished it alone. I thank all of you. Happy Trails.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
Marital Leisure Satisfaction: Investigating Comparative Skill Levels Within Marital Leisure Activities	
Introduction	1
Theoretical Framework	2
Review of Literature	5
Methods	13
Findings	18
Discussion and Implications	21
References	30
Appendix A: Prospectus	44
Introduction	45
Review of Literature	54
Methods	64
References	69
Appendix A-1: Instruments	74
Modified Marital Activity Profile (MMAP)	75
Satisfaction With Married Life (SWML)	93
Demographic Questions	94
Appendix B: Consent Form	96

List of Tables

Tables

1. Significant Variables from Stepwise Analysis and Satisfaction with Married Life35
2. Most Common Skill Difference Pairwise Comparison of Satisfaction With Married Life36
3. Gender Output Table (with husband and wife estimates added)37
4. Types of Activities by Skill Level Difference and Satisfaction with Married Life38
5. Flow in Outdoor Activities Similar Skill and Satisfaction with Married Life39
6. Flow in Outdoor Activities Worse than Spouse and Satisfaction with Married Life40
7. Flow in Outdoor Activities Better than Spouse and Satisfaction with Married Life41
8. Flow in Athletic Activities Similar Skills and Satisfaction with Married Life42
9. Flow in Non-athletic Activities Worse than Spouse and Satisfaction with Married Life43

Marital Leisure Satisfaction: Investigating Comparative Skill Levels Within Marital Leisure Activities

Previous research studying the benefits of marriage has shown married people as happier, living longer, having better mental and physical health, having more fulfillment, and less likely to suffer physical abuse when compared to individuals who were not married (Coombs, 1991). Given the benefits of marriage, the growth and strengthening of marriage relationships should ideally be on the rise; unfortunately, quite the opposite is happening. Andersson and Philipov (2002) reported over 20% of married couples separate or divorce within 5 years of marrying. Over the course of a lifetime, the probability of marital and cohabitating disruption is between 40-50% (Cherlin, 2010). These high divorce rates show how marriages are struggling in today's society and demonstrate the importance of studying potential factors related to stronger marriages.

The correlation between marital leisure satisfaction and marriage satisfaction has already been established through previous research (Johnson, Zabriskie, & Hill, 2006; Orthner, 1975; Orthner, 1998; Ward, Barney, Lundberg, & Zabriskie, 2014; Zabriskie, 2000). The question of what contributes to marital leisure satisfaction, however, is still in its infancy of being investigated. Johnson et al. recommended "more consideration needs to be given to the context of the activities themselves and the motivation behind participation" (p. 87). Flow theory reinforces the exploration of comparative skill levels between husband and wife because it scrutinizes the balance between the skill required to accomplish an activity and the challenge of the activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), which potentially impacts how much leisure satisfaction the married couples attain from their marital leisure experiences. Flow theory suggests a stronger positive correlation between couple leisure satisfaction and marital satisfaction when

both individuals in the marriage are at similar skill levels as opposed to divergent skill levels. If we are able to identify factors related to higher couple leisure satisfaction then we would be able to provide clear, empirically based behavioral direction to couples interested in improving overall marital satisfaction. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine relationships between comparative skill levels within marital leisure activities and marital satisfaction among married couples.

Theoretical Framework

Factors that have been correlated with stronger marriages include personality traits, stress, aggression (Lavner, & Bradbury, 2010), and leisure (Johnson et al., 2006). An influential framework in marital leisure research was Orthner's (1975) Joint Couple Leisure Model. In this model, couple leisure was divided into one of three categories: (a) individual, (b) parallel, (c) and joint. The element that differentiated the leisure activities into one of the three categories was how much the activity itself promoted interaction between the couple. Higher interacting activities (joint activities) were more strongly correlated to marital satisfaction than activities that didn't inherently promote interaction (parallel activities) or activities the couples participated in apart from each other (individual activities) (Holman & Epperson, 1984; Orthner & Mancini, 1990; Orthner & Mancini, 1991). This framework was also implemented in Australia (Palisi, 1984), England (Bell, 1975), and Korea (Ahn, 1982) and produced consistent findings in each of these countries. Orthner and Mancini (1990) affirmed the relationship between joint leisure and marital satisfaction by saying, "There does not appear to be any recent study that fails to find an association" (p. 127). Thus it was concluded that couples who participate in joint leisure activities had higher levels of marital satisfaction than those who didn't engage in similar activities together (Holman & Epperson; Orthner & Mancini).

Orthner's (1975) Joint Couple Leisure Model established a consistent line of marital leisure research and laid the groundwork to study couple leisure through a clear, conceptual framework with testable hypotheses; however, the measurements of leisure in the model were limited (Johnson et al., 2006). Johnson et al. reported that simply measuring the hours of leisure together was not the best representative factor correlated to marital satisfaction; marital satisfaction was better attributed to other factors. Johnson et al. concluded "it was not the level or amount of couple leisure involvement or the satisfaction with the amount of time spent together, but the satisfaction with the couple leisure that contributed to marital satisfaction" (p. 16). In other words, the aspect of being satisfied with couple leisure contributed to marital satisfaction, whereas the amount of couple leisure or even satisfaction with time spent together was not significantly correlated. Johnson et al. (2006) demonstrated leisure satisfaction to be a better indicator of marital satisfaction than simply the amount of time spent doing an activity together.

Johnson et al.'s study (2006) carried leisure research another step forward; however, it can be further built upon through asking what specific factors contribute to marital leisure satisfaction. Or in other words, what makes leisure satisfying for a married couple? Johnson et al. recommended "more consideration needs to be given to the context of the activities themselves and the motivation behind participation" (p. 87). Some examples of activity contexts, or motivation behind participation, could be spouses participating out of obligation, how the leisure activity is chosen, or comparative skill levels between the husband and wife. Of all the different starting points, comparative skill levels was chosen because of Flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Flow is a euphoric experience a person has when the skill required to do an activity and the challenge of the activity balance out, and therefore would suggest a

stronger positive correlation between joint couple leisure and marital satisfaction when both individuals in the marriage are at similar skill levels as opposed to divergent skill levels.

The study of if and how comparative skill levels within marital leisure activities relate to marital leisure satisfaction is important in terms of addressing the next logical question pertinent to marital leisure research. It also pursues Johnson et al.'s (2006) recommendation to give "more consideration ... to the context of the activities themselves and the motivation behind participation" (p. 87). Discovering specific factors that affect marital leisure satisfaction provides practical application to the correlation already established between marital leisure satisfaction and marital satisfaction (Johnson et al.; Orthner, 1975; Zabriskie, 2000).

These findings could also do more than further marital leisure research. The practical application of specific factors that affect marital leisure satisfaction and ultimately marital satisfaction enables this line of research to be implemented within individual marriage relationships. This was especially relevant because high divorce and separation rates demonstrate how marriages are struggling in today's society, thus indicating the importance of studying potential factors to strengthen marriages (Anderson & Philipov, 2002; Cherlin, 2010). The findings of the study could potentially be used to increase marital satisfaction and decrease marital disruption. The findings are also likely to have practical value to all couples who are interested in maintaining a positive, healthy marriage and even to those considering marriage.

Overall, previous studies have established the correlation between marital leisure satisfaction and satisfaction with married life, but the specific factors contributing to marital leisure satisfaction remain largely unidentified. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine various comparative skill differences and similarities of couples engaging in leisure

activities, by activity type, and the skill-gender interaction as factors in marital leisure satisfaction and ultimately marital satisfaction.

Review of Literature

Several benefits of marriage have been found through multiple studies (Carrère, Buehlman, Gottman, Coan, & Ruckstuhl, 2000; Coombs, 1991; Kim & McKenry 2002). Coombs reviewed over 130 studies, which covered various well-being indices, and found “married men and women are generally happier and less stressed than the unmarried” (p. 97). Those married tended to be happier, live longer, and were less likely to suffer physical abuse when compared to individuals who were not married (Coombs). A sample from the National Survey of Families and Households confirmed married couples have been shown to have higher levels of psychological well-being than their unmarried, and even cohabitating, counterparts (Kim & McKenry). Carrère et al. even found married couples were physically healthier than unmarried couples.

The benefits underline the importance of marriage and ensure continued success of marital relationships. Marriage rates are not on the rise and existing marriages are struggling to succeed. Anderson and Philipov (2002) reported over 20% of married couples separate or divorce within 5 years of marrying. Over the course of a lifetime, the probability of marital and cohabitating disruption is between 40-50% (Cherlin, 2010). These high separation and divorce rates emphasize the importance of studying potential factors to strengthen marriages. This study aims to examine a specific factor potentially contributing to marital satisfaction.

Marital satisfaction

Marital satisfaction is one of the most commonly studied facets of marital research (Ward, Lundberg, Zabriskie, & Barrett, 2009). This may be because of its relation to the

perpetuation of marriage and to better quality of life (Peleg, 2008). Peleg defined marital satisfaction as “the degree to which spouses perceive their partners meet their needs and desires” (p. 389). Similarly, Ward et al. defined it as “an individual’s emotional state of being content with the interactions, experiences, and expectations of his or her married life” (p. 415). Both definitions demonstrate a level of emotional content concerning spousal interaction. Because marital satisfaction has been found to be the central component of individual and family well-being (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000), the continued examination of factors producing marital satisfaction was advised (Carrère et al., 2000).

Leisure and Marital Satisfaction

Leisure satisfaction is directly correlated to marital satisfaction as well as family life in general, which has been shown in multiple recent studies (Agate, Zabriskie, Agate, & Poff, 2009; Johnson, Zabriskie, & Hill, 2006; Poff, Zabriskie, & Townsend, 2010; Zabriske & McCormick, 2003). This correlation was evidenced through findings from Zabriske and McCormick (2003). They stated “satisfaction with leisure, rather than other life domains is the foremost determinate of life satisfaction or mental well-being. In other words, leisure plays a substantial role in an individual’s life satisfaction and quality of life” (Zabriske & McCormick, p. 164).

During the last several decades, academia has made progress in leisure research on marital and family life satisfaction (Hawks, 1991). Studies dealing specifically with concerns related to recreation and the family first appeared in periodical literature around 1930. The decade from 1930-1940 was during the great depression so it may be why the studies were commonly interested in how socioeconomic status impacted family leisure choices and locations. The studies from this decade used nonrandom convenient samples, no statistical analysis, and were atheoretical. The next decade from 1940-1949 continued to study how socioeconomic

status impacted leisure, but also covered other leisure topics such as individual versus family social participation, and the relation between childhood and adult leisure activities. Theoretical frameworks were beginning to appear, though still in their infancy, and more complex statistical methods to analyze data were being employed. This decade was limited by no new data collection techniques and no clear description of the target population, thus limiting the validity and generalizability of the results. The following decade, 1950-1959, provided the first relevant research specific to couple leisure. Benson (1952) reanalyzed existing data to test if mutual leisure interests within the couple were related to marital adjustment. Benson did not establish a relationship between the numerical total of common leisure interests and marital adjustment, and concluded it was unclear whether leisure interests were actual causes or just concomitants of marital accord. The couple leisure articles from 1960-1969 were noteworthy because they began to look at attitudes about couple leisure instead of just types and amounts of couple leisure activities (Hawks). The random sampling used in these studies also demonstrated more advanced data collection techniques. 1975 was a focal year in couple leisure research through Orthner's differentiation of joint, parallel, and individual leisure which instituted the Joint Couple Leisure Model (Orthner, 1975; Orthner & Mancini, 1990; Orthner & Mancini, 1991).

Joint Couple Leisure Model. Orthner's Joint Couple Leisure Model (1975) was discussed extensively in this study because it provided a clear conceptual framework with testable hypotheses while controlling for confounding variables. The Joint Couple Leisure Model divided couple activities into three categories: (a) individual, (b) parallel, and (c) joint. Individual leisure was pursued without the spouse or other partner in the relationship; parallel activities were done conjointly with the other partner but the activity did not, by nature, facilitate communication; and joint activities were similar to parallel with the addition of communication

being present and part of the activity. Research found individual leisure was negatively related to marital satisfaction, whereas both parallel and joint leisure were positively related to marital satisfaction; joint more so (Orthner & Mancini, 1990, Orthner & Mancini, 1991). A strength of this theoretical framework comes from it being tested in different countries with a wide range of target populations and producing similar results each time (Ahn, 1982; Palisi, 1984). Orthner and Mancini (1990) affirmed the relationship between joint leisure and marital satisfaction by saying “there does not appear to be any recent study that fails to find an association” (p. 127). It is apparent from this statement the consistent and prevalent relationship between joint leisure and marital satisfaction. Some weaknesses preventing the framework from continued use were the ambiguity of defining parallel and joint activities separate from each other and simply measuring time spent doing activities instead of satisfaction with the activities or other explanatory variables (Johnson et al., 2006). Current leisure research continues to forge ahead in defining couple leisure and its correlation with marital and family life satisfaction. A current line of supporting research dealing specifically with couples and family is the Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning (Zabriskie, 2000).

Core and balance. In this model, two basic categories of family leisure were identified: (a) core and (b) balance. Core family leisure is reflected through involvement in everyday, low-cost, generally home-based activities. Balance family leisure is reflected through involvement in more out-of-the-ordinary and novel activities like skiing, camping, and cruises. Balance activities require families to negotiate and adapt to new input that is different from everyday life. Core activities led to closeness and familiarity; balance activities promoted development and negotiation. Where a family fits into the model was assessed through the Family Leisure Activity Profile (FLAP). Core activities help facilitate communication and develop family roles

in order to have more successful balance activities, and balance activities facilitate negotiation and flexibility needed for family transitions and change (Zabriskie, 2001). This model has been further expounded upon and used to study couples specifically as opposed to families (Ward et al., 2014). Ward et al. found core activities explained the variance in marital satisfaction, but before that could happen there had to be participation in both core and balance activities. Furthermore, the amount of leisure satisfaction didn't predict marital satisfaction as well as satisfaction with couple leisure involvement. The Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning has successfully demonstrated the relationship between leisure satisfaction and marital and family life satisfaction, but the factors contributing to couple leisure satisfaction remained largely unidentified.

Limitations of Past Research

The Joint Couple Leisure Model (Orthner, 1975) and the Core and Balance Model (Zabriskie, 2001) demonstrated the positive correlation between couples doing activities together and marital satisfaction; however, the measurements of marital leisure in the Joint Couple Leisure model was limited to time measurements only (Johnson et al., 2006). Johnson et al. discovered simply measuring time spent together was not the best representative factor correlated to marital satisfaction, rather it was attributed to other factors. Johnson et al. concluded "it was not the level or amount of couple leisure involvement or the satisfaction with the amount of time spent together, but the satisfaction with the couple leisure that contributed to marital satisfaction" (p. 16). In other words, time and even satisfaction with amount of time were not significantly correlated to marital satisfaction. Measuring couple leisure satisfaction has been shown to be a better indicator of marital life satisfaction than simply measuring couple leisure participation (Johnson et al.; Ward et al., 2014). If quality of marital leisure is a better indicator of marital life

satisfaction, then the next logical step would be to find out what contributes toward dyadic leisure satisfaction in marriages.

The Next Step

The foundational groundwork to study couple leisure was laid by Orthner (1975) through establishing the correlation between marital leisure participation and marital satisfaction. This correlation has been confirmed by multiple subsequent studies (Crawford, Houts, Huston, & George, 2002; Herridge, Shaw, & Mannell, 2003; Holman & Epperson, 1984; Orthner & Mancini, 1991; Zabriskie, 2001). This foundation has recently evolved through Johnson et al. (2006) by demonstrating couple leisure satisfaction to be a better indicator of marital satisfaction than simply the amount or time spent doing leisure activities together. Johnson et al.'s study can be further augmented through asking what specific factors contribute to marital leisure satisfaction. Or in other words, what makes dyadic leisure satisfying for a married couple? Johnson et al. recommended "more consideration ... be given to the context of the activities themselves and the motivation behind participation" (p. 20). Some examples of activity contexts, or motivation behind participation, could be spouses participating out of obligation, how the marital leisure activity is chosen, or comparative skill levels between the husband and wife. Of all the different starting points that would work equally well to test potential factors that correlate to marital leisure satisfaction, comparative skill levels was chosen because of the way they are illustrated in Flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Flow theory. Flow is an experience a person has when his skills meet the required challenge (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). If the challenge is disproportionately higher than the participant's skill level, the participant experiences anxiety. On the other hand, if the challenge is considerably lower than the skill level of the participant, the participant experiences boredom.

When skill and challenge balance out, flow is possible. Flow is described and measured according to nine dimensions: (1) challenge-skill balance, (2) action-awareness merging, (3) clear goals, (4) unambiguous feedback, (5) concentration on task-at-hand, (6) sense of control, (7) loss of self-consciousness, (8) transformation of time, and (9) autotelic experience (Csikszentmihalyi; Jackson, & Marsh, 1996). Flow is commonly associated with sports, but it can also apply to any activity in which a skill base must rise to meet the required challenge. Flow can be enjoyed by any level of athlete (Jackson, & Marsh). Experts have compiled numerous studies in diverse disciplines using Flow theory (Bakker, 2005; Beard & Hoy, 2010; Chen, Chen, & Tung, 2010; Graham, 2008; Vallerand, Genevieve, Elliot, Dumais, Demers, & Rousseau, 2008). Though flow is commonly measured and discussed in a sports setting, it can also happen at work, school, leisure, and/or everyday life situations (Graham). Whether it is in sport or some other activity, the best performances have been found to be associated with flow (Jackson, & Marsh).

One interesting study looked at couples' everyday life experiences and flow (Graham, 2008). Graham hypothesized "when couples engage in exciting and activating conjoint activities, they feel connected with their partners and more satisfied with their relationships" (p. 679). The results supported the hypothesis and suggested "the level of activation experienced during an activity was positively related to experience-level relationship quality" (p. 679). Graham found "couples assigned to exciting activities report greater relationship quality than couples assigned to activities that are simply pleasant" (p. 679). Therefore, the type of activities these married couples did together may have influenced their flow experience and their satisfaction with their joint leisure experience, and ultimately their married life satisfaction.

Flow theory points out all leisure experiences do not have the same correlation. Experiences that promote flow have a stronger correlation between leisure satisfaction and marital satisfaction. Flow theory, however, has not been evaluated while considering comparative skill levels within a marriage relationship. According to the skill-challenge balance of flow, if one partner is notably more skilled than the other, the challenge would be considerably lower than the skill level obtained and boredom would be experienced. At the same time, the partner with less skill would experience anxiety because the challenge is disproportionately higher than the obtained skill level. A couple with distinctly different skill levels would theoretically not experience flow together. Therefore, it was proposed that participating in joint couple leisure activities at similar skill levels would have a stronger positive correlation between marital leisure satisfaction and ultimately marital satisfaction than joint couple leisure activities at different skill levels.

To enhance the positive effects of marriage through studying couple leisure, researchers have made great progress concerning leisure research in the past 70 years (Hawks, 1991), specifically couple leisure satisfaction and its relationship to marital satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2006). Numerous studies have examined the correlation between marital leisure satisfaction and satisfaction with married life such as examining the relationship to spouse support and congruence of commitment among runners (Baldwin, Ellis, & Baldwin, 1999), women's leisure within heterosexual romantic relationships (Herridge et al., 2003), leisure activity patterns and marital satisfaction (Holman, & Jacquart, 1988), the contribution of couple leisure involvement, leisure time, leisure satisfaction to marital satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2006), leisure activity patterns and marital satisfaction over the marital career (Othner, 1975), shared activities and marital satisfaction (Ahlstrom, Lundberg, Zabriskie, Eggett, & Lindsay, 2012; Reissman, Aron,

& Bergen, 1993), and predicting relationship satisfaction from couples' use of leisure time (Smith, Snyder, Trull, & Monsma, 1988). These studies have helped establish the correlation between marital leisure satisfaction and marital satisfaction, but the specific factors contributing to marital leisure satisfaction remain largely unstudied. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate if and how comparative skill levels within marital leisure activities relate to marital leisure satisfaction, and if gender or activity type affects that relationship. Specifically, this study examined the various comparative skill differences and similarities of couples engaging in leisure activities, their gender, and the skill-gender interactions as factors in marital leisure satisfaction and ultimately marital satisfaction. Additionally, these factors were tested for their relationship with marital leisure satisfaction between three main categories of activity types: (a) athletic, (b) non-athletic, and (c) outdoor activities.

Methods

The broader focus of this study was to identify factors related to higher couple leisure satisfaction and ultimately marital satisfaction between husband and wife who have been married for less than six years and have no children. This study is pursuing Johnson et al.'s (2006) recommendation to give "more consideration ... to the context of the activities themselves and the motivation behind participation" (p. 87). Discovering specific factors that affect marital leisure satisfaction provides practical application to the correlation already established between marital leisure satisfaction and marital satisfaction (Johnson et al.; Orthner, 1975; Zabriskie, 2000). Additionally, gender and different activity types were included in the analysis when scrutinizing comparative skill levels within the marital leisure activities. The specific different activity types were athletic, non-athletic, and outdoor activities. The conduct of the study

includes the following organizational steps: (a) identifying study sample; (b) instrumentation; (c) data collection procedures, and (d) data analysis.

Study Sample

Respondents consisted of 609 couples residing in the United States. Forty-eight of the fifty states were represented. The two states without respondents were Rhode Island and Alaska. The majority of respondents were 26-30 years old (31%) and the median age was 31-35. Seventy-five percent reported never having been divorced. Majority of respondents were Caucasian (75%), with minority ethnicities represented by Hispanic (8%), African American (10%), and Other (7%). The median income as a couple was \$50,000-\$59,000. Seventy-five percent were from Urban/Suburban cities (more than 50,000 residents). Majority of respondents had Bachelor's Degrees (35%) with Associate's Degrees being the median. Forty-one percent had been unemployed in the past twelve months, and of those unemployed, forty-one percent had been unemployed for twelve of the past twelve months.

The sample for this study was married couples who have been married less than six years. When examining the amount of leisure time spent together as a married couple throughout the marriage career, Orthner (1975) found married couples spent the most leisure time together in the first five years of their marriage. Some benefits of sampling this specific population are these couples may spend large portions of leisure time together, may have more time and financial resources for joint leisure, and joint couple leisure may be more of a focus during this time of their lives overall. Participants for this study were recruited through SSI, an online survey sampling company that draws subjects from a multi-source Internet panel of millions of households worldwide. The married couples surveyed by the online database were not a random sample.

Instrumentation

The Modified Marital Activity Profile (MMAP) was used to measure marital leisure satisfaction (see Appendix A-1). The MMAP is a modification from the Marital Activity Profile (MAP) (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003). It was modified to differentiate between three sets of skill differences in three different types of activities. The three different skill differences were 1) noticeably better than spouse, 2) spouse noticeably better, and 3) similar skill levels. The three different activity types were 1) athletic, 2) non-athletic, and 3) outdoor. The MMAP used six items to measure involvement and satisfaction in teaching an activity (first two items), being taught an activity (third and fourth items) and participating at similar skill levels (fifth and sixth items). The respondents were specifically asked if they participate in the activity with their spouse. If participants answered yes, then they reported the frequency and duration of participation. These two scores were multiplied together to obtain a total involvement score. The total involvement scores from all three sections (teaching, being taught, and similar skill level) were summed for a comprehensive marital leisure involvement score. Additionally, marital leisure satisfaction was evaluated using a Likert scale, allowing respondents to score their level of satisfaction between 1 (very dissatisfied) and 5 (very satisfied). The MAP has an acceptable reliability, $r = .78$ for total leisure involvement, in psychometric tests. The content and construct validities of the MAP also fall within acceptable ranges (Zabriskie & Freeman, 2004).

Nine statements from the Flow State Scale (FSS) were repeated in each of the nine items of the MMAP (see Appendix A-1). The FSS was created by Jackson and Marsh (1996) based on past research, qualitative analysis, and finally quantitative testing. This scale was used to measure Flow in each of the different skill level and activity types. There are four items used in

the original FSS to measure each of the nine dimensions of Flow, totaling 36 items. Due to length considerations for the total questionnaire, one item was selected out of each group of four. Each item was selected according to which one performed the best when being tested for validity and reliability (Jackson & Marsh, 1996). These nine items were statements about thoughts and feelings the respondent experienced during the different activities and comparative skill levels. An example statement from the FSS was, “My abilities matched the challenge of the situation.” Each statement was answered on a Likert scale of strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree as it pertained to the statement. These nine statements from the FSS were repeated in each of the nine items of the MMAP.

The Satisfaction with Married Life (SWML) scale is included after the MMAP to obtain the overall satisfaction with married life score (Ward et al., 2009) (see Appendix A-1). The SWML has five items allowing the respondent to rate his or her agreement toward satisfaction statements on a Likert scale between 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree). Acceptable evidence of reliability and validity for the SWML has been reported among large national samples, including a Cronbach’s alpha at .958 (Ward et al.).

Demographic questions such as gender, age, years married, marriage history, education obtained, ethnicity, and location (see Appendix A-1), were asked in order to describe the sample and find the best fit of demographics for the mixed models analysis of co-variance.

Data Collection Procedures

An online questionnaire, designed using Qualtrics software, was used to collect data, beginning September 2013. Responses were distributed and collected through Survey Sampling International (SSI) until over 600 usable samples of participating couples reflecting the State population and ethnicity across the United States were collected. 953 total responses were

collected, and 609 of those responses were usable. This enabled even the smallest group of comparative skill levels to be tested for statistical significance.

To be considered in the sample, couples had to be married fewer than six years. Confidentiality was assured using a consent disclosure included at the beginning of the Qualtrics survey. By completing the questionnaire, the participant consented to be involved in the study (see Appendix B). Once couples responded, the data was cleaned and examined.

Data Analysis

Normality of the data was checked and unusable data points, such as outliers and incomplete responses, were filtered out. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze demographics of the sample. The demographic questions were gender, current age, years married, if they have ever been divorced, ethnicity, city and state in which they currently reside, approximate population of place of residence, highest obtained level of education, combined annual income as a couple, if they have been unemployed in the past 12 months, and if so, then for how many months.

The data were analyzed using SAS 9.3 software. A mixed models analysis of co-variance was computed. In this model the dependent variable was married life satisfaction and the independent variables were the various comparative skill differences and similarities of the couple engaging in leisure activities, their gender, and the skill-gender interactions. The dependent variable was tested for its relationship with the independent variables between three main categories of activity types: (a) athletic, (b) non-athletic, and (c) outdoor activities. Furthermore, couples were used as blocks in the analysis. All independent variables were tested at the 0.05 alpha level. Non-significant effects were eliminated from the statistical model using

all possible models and selecting the model with the lowest Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC).

Findings

The study was designed to test three hypotheses: (1) if there is a relationship between comparative skill levels and Satisfaction With Married Life (SWML), (2) if there is a relationship between gender, or gender interacting with comparative skill levels, and SWML, and (3) if there is a relationship between types of activities and SWML based on comparative skill levels, gender, or skill-gender interaction. Flow questions were also included to get an idea if the respondent experienced a flow-type state for each activity type by skill level difference. Findings from the mixed models analysis of co-variance indicated ten variables significantly correlated to SWML. Four variables pertained to leisure satisfaction, four were Flow questions, one was a demographic question, and one was a question asking which activity type was most common in their marital leisure (see Table 1).

Comparative Skill Levels

A pairwise comparison of the Most Common Skill Difference (MCSD) best provided the answer to the first hypothesis: the relationship between comparative skill levels and SWML (see Table 2). When the couple's most common comparative skill level participation was husband better than wife, they scored significantly higher on SWML than those who most often participated in activities in which the wife was better than the husband ($t = 2.73$, $Adj p = 0.0177$, $df = 583$, $StdErr = 0.4646$). Similarly, couples who most commonly participated in activities at similar skill levels also scored significantly higher on the SWML than when it was most common for the wife to be better than the husband ($t = 2.87$, $Adj p = 0.0117$, $df = 583$, $StdErr = 0.4365$). There was no significant difference between husband better than wife and similar skill as the MCSD and SWML ($t = 0.05$, $Adj p = 0.9989$, $df = 583$, $StdErr = 0.3390$).

Gender

Husbands averaged higher SWML scores on every single category, regardless of participation, skill level, or activity type (see Table 3). The average difference, all variables included, was 0.58183, or just over .58 on a 35 point possible scale, which made the average difference just over 1% higher.

Types of Activities by Skill Difference

All three activity types: (1) Athletic, (2) Non-athletic, and (3) Outdoor activities in which the respondent considered themselves noticeably worse than their spouse were found to be significant to SWML (see Table 4). The only other activity type to show significance to SWML was outdoor activities when the respondent considered themselves at a similar skill level to their spouse ($t = 2.46$, $Probt = 0.0143$, $Estimate = 0.5189$, $StdErr = 0.2111$). Non-athletic activities at a similar skill level was approaching significance to SWML ($t = 1.78$, $Probt = 0.0763$, $Estimate = 0.3339$, $StdErr = 0.1880$). All four significant activity types by skill level difference had a positive effect on SWML (see Table 4).

Flow

Flow wasn't one of the hypothesized questions; however, Flow questions were included to potentially explain why leisure activity variables may have been significant to SWML. Four activity types by skill level difference were significantly correlated to SWML and one was suggestive. Outdoor activities were significantly correlated to SWML in two of the three skill level differences: outdoor activities similar skills (see Table 5), and outdoor activities worse than spouse (see Table 6). Outdoor activities better than spouse was suggestive (see Table 7). The other two significantly correlated Flow variables to SWML were athletic activities at a similar

skill level, (see Table 8), and non-athletic activities in which the respondent considered themselves noticeably worse than their spouse (see Table 9).

The four significantly correlated Flow variables to SWML provided three different significant pairwise comparisons as it relates to SWML. Couples who reported not participating in outdoor activities at a similar skill level scored significantly higher on SWML than the couples who participated and provided neutral responses to the Flow state questions ($t = 4.32$, $Adj p = 0.0001$, $df = 583$, $StdErr = 1.8384$). Outdoor activities at a similar skill level in which the couples agreed with the Flow state questions was also significantly higher than couples who provided neutral responses ($t = 3.27$, $Adj p = 0.0063$, $df = 583$, $StdErr = 0.5305$). Outdoor activities in which the respondent was noticeably worse than the spouse and agreed with the Flow state questions was significantly higher than those who provided neutral responses ($t = 2.77$, $Adj p = 0.0292$, $df = 583$, $StdErr = 0.4198$). Outdoor activities with the respondent noticeably better than the spouse was a suggestive variable but none of the pairwise comparisons were found to be significant (see Table 7). Athletic activities at a similar skill level was a significant variable but none of the pairwise comparisons were found to be significant; however, the couples who agreed with the Flow state questions scored suggestively higher with SWML than those who disagreed with the Flow state questions ($t = 2.55$, $Adj p = 0.0540$, $df = 583$, $StdErr = 1.8793$). Non-athletic activities with the respondent noticeably worse than the spouse had three significant pairwise comparisons. The couples who disagreed with the Flow state questions also had significantly higher SWML scores than (a) the couples who didn't participate ($t = 2.91$, $Adj p = 0.0193$, $df = 583$, $StdErr = 1.4663$), (b) the couples who reported neutral scores ($t = 2.63$, $Adj p = 0.0431$, $df = 583$, $StdErr = 1.4706$), and (c) the couples who agreed with the Flow state questions ($t = 2.92$, $Adj p = 0.0189$, $df = 583$, $StdErr = 0.4056$).

Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to investigate if and how comparative skill levels within marital leisure activities relate to Satisfaction With Married Life (SWML), if gender or activity type affects that relationship, and if Flow could help explain a potential correlation of these leisure activity circumstances to SWML. Specifically, this study examined various comparative skill differences and similarities of couples engaging in leisure activities, their gender, and the skill-gender interactions as factors in marital life satisfaction. Additionally, these factors were tested for their relationship with SWML between three main categories of activity types: (a) athletic, (b) non-athletic, and (c) outdoor activities. There were several key findings from this study. First, results indicated higher SWML scores for couples who most often participate in activities together at similar skill levels, and even husband better than wife, than the couples who most often do activities together with the wife better than the husband. Second, husbands reported significantly higher SWML scores than the wives, regardless of participation, skill level, or activity type. Third, participating in activities in which the respondent considered themselves noticeably worse than their spouse was significantly correlated to SWML, regardless of activity type. Fourth, the flow variables significantly correlated to SWML appeared to correspond to the leisure satisfaction variables significantly correlated to SWML.

Comparative Skill Levels

The couples were asked what category of skill level difference was most common when they participated in leisure together. The couples whom most often participated in leisure at similar skill levels had significantly higher SWML scores than those who participated in activities with the wife better most often. Husband better than wife most often also had significantly higher SWML scores than the couples with the wife better most often. There was

no significant difference between husband better than wife and similar skills as the most common skill level difference and SWML. Though there was no significant difference between the husband being noticeable better than wife and similar skill levels as the most common leisure activity, a higher percentage of couples participated in similar skill level activities than the other two options combined. Sixty percent of couples participated in activities at a similar skill level most often, whereas twenty-eight percent participated in husband noticeably better than wife most often, and only twelve percent of couples reported the wife noticeably better than the husband most often. Findings supported Flow theory with both spouses at similar skill levels being the Most Common Skill Difference (MCSD). Flow is a euphoric experience a person has when the skill required to do an activity and the challenge of the activity balance out, and therefore would suggest a stronger positive correlation between joint couple leisure and SWML when both individuals in the marriage are at similar skill levels as opposed to divergent skill levels (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

An outcome not theorized was husband noticeably better than wife having significantly higher SMWL scores than wife noticeably better than husband. When couples participate in marital leisure activities together at different skill levels, it appears that the husband being better most often is the better of the two options in terms of SWML. Could this be because husbands expect to be better than, or similarly skilled, to their wives when participating in joint marital leisure and it decreases overall SWML when they are not? Or could it be because husbands don't advertise being better than their wives at the activities they love doing together, whereas when the wife is better most often, the husband hears about it, thus affecting SWML? Though the finding appears to be clear, the reason behind it is still vague and warrants further research.

Gender

Husbands reported higher SWML scores in every variable tested, regardless of participation, skill level, or activity type. The differences in SWML between husband and wife were consistent enough to be statistically significant; however, the differences were small and don't appear to provide practical significance. The sample size was large enough and the difference consistent enough that it did prove statistically significant, but statistical significant doesn't always equate to clinical, or practical, significance. For example, a hypothetical protein drink company wanted to demonstrate their drink enabling weight lifters to significantly increase the amount of weight a person can lift. Such a finding could influence weightlifters to drink their protein drink; however, if the amount of significantly increased weight for each subject averaged one pound, it wouldn't carry the same influence. This hypothetical protein drink example illustrates the difference between clinical significance and practical significance. If everyone were lifting more on average, the statistical program could find it statistically significant, even if the difference was so small it lost its practical significance, because being able to lift one more pound wouldn't be enough of a difference to influence most weight lifters. Coming back to the current study, Husbands averaged higher SWML scores on every single category, regardless of participation, skill level, or activity type, thus providing the statistical significance; however, the average difference was only 0.58183 on a 35 point possible scale, which made the average difference just over one-percent higher. Though the clinical significance may be promising and could potentially lead to future research possibilities, the husband being an average one-percent more satisfied than his wife doesn't appear to be significant on a practical level.

Though there is no practical significance, the consistency is still interesting and suggests husbands are simply slightly more satisfied with their marriages, regardless of the circumstances,

than the wives. These findings are consistent with previous research. Jackson, Miller, Oka, and Henry (2014) conducted a meta analysis to test the assumption that men experience higher marital satisfaction than women. Their results indicated “statistically significant yet very small gender differences in marital satisfaction between wives and husbands, with wives slightly less satisfied than husbands” (p. 105). Ultimately, Jackson et al. (2014) also came to the conclusion that the statistical significant difference between husband and wife had no practical significance.

Types of Activities by Skill Difference

The skill level difference in which respondents were noticeably worse than their spouse, but still experienced leisure satisfaction, were significantly correlated to higher marital satisfaction scores in all three activity types: (1) Athletic, (2) Non-athletic, and (3) Outdoor. This was not a hypothesized finding, but may make sense using the concept of Compassionate Love (CL) tested by Reis, Maniaci, and Rogge (2013). CL is a concern for the others’ well-being in a relationship (Reis et al.). Reis et al. “found clear evidence that acts of CL contributed to both spouses daily marital satisfaction” (p. 651). The couples who are satisfied with their leisure participation in worse-than-spouse activities could be putting their spouse first in the relationship, thus correlating to higher SWML scores. It would be interesting to study how couples who are satisfied with participating in worse-than-spouse activities correlates to CL.

The only other skill level difference significantly related to any activity type was when the respondent considered themselves at a similar skill level to their spouse in outdoor activities. This finding was hypothesized through Flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). According to Flow theory, if the challenge is disproportionately higher than the participant’s skill level, the participant experiences anxiety. On the other hand, if the challenge is considerably lower than the skill level of the participant, the participant experiences boredom. When skill and challenge

balance out, flow is possible. It is interesting; however, only outdoor activities at similar skill levels were significantly correlated to SWML. Flow theory would suggest all activity types at a similar skill level would be significant. Further study should investigate possible reasons why only outdoor activities at a similar skill level was significant.

Flow

The Flow measurements significantly correlated to SWML were 1) outdoor activities worse than spouse, 2) outdoor activities at similar skills, 3) athletic activities at similar skills, and 4) non-athletic activities worse than spouse. It is interesting the significant flow variables appeared to correspond to the significant leisure satisfaction variables. Three of the four significant Flow variables had significantly higher SWML scores when experiencing Flow. These findings support a previous Flow study conducted by Graham (2008). Graham hypothesized “when couples engage in exciting and activating conjoint activities, they feel connected with their partners and more satisfied with their relationships” (p. 679). Graham’s results supported the hypothesis and suggested “the level of activation experienced during an activity was positively related to experience-level relationship quality” (p. 679). Graham found “couples assigned to exciting activities report greater relationship quality than couples assigned to activities that are simply pleasant” (p. 679). Therefore, the married couples doing activities more apt to provide Flow experiences together, in both Graham’s study and the current study, appeared to have a positive influence on their married life satisfaction.

In the findings, the potential anomaly with Flow theory is the Flow variable of non-athletic activities when the respondent considered themselves worse than their spouse. This Flow variable appeared to be opposite of the other three Flow variables significantly correlated to SWML, because the respondents who reported the opposite of experiencing Flow in this

situation were significantly correlated to higher SWML scores. According to the skill-challenge balance of Flow, if one partner is notably more skilled than the other, the challenge would be considerably lower than the skill level obtained and boredom would be experienced. At the same time, the partner with less skill would experience anxiety because the challenge is disproportionately higher than the obtained skill level. Why would non-athletic activities be different than athletic and outdoor activities when it comes to Flow? A possible explanation could be non-athletic activities are typically less competitive and less threatening. Athletic activities like swimming, cycling, and sports are naturally competitive and easier to have a direct person-to-person comparison. Outdoor activities like hiking, rock climbing, and scuba diving may not have the same person versus person competitiveness, but can be threatening with higher perceived risk and real chances of injuries and death. Non-athletic activities like music, art, and cooking potentially enable the spouse to experience the opposite of Flow and still enjoy the activity, because they may not feel the need to perform at a certain level for the spouse to have fun and to safely participate in the activity. Further study is warranted to address this potential anomaly.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study adds to the existing leisure literature by following up on Johnson et al.'s (2006) recommendation for "more consideration ...to be given to the context of the activities themselves and the motivation behind participation" (p. 20). Or in other words, what makes dyadic leisure satisfying for a married couple? This study provided findings indicating which comparative skill levels, by gender and activity types, are positively correlated to SWML. It also provided some new and interesting findings concerning the context and potential motivation behind participation for these activities. Specifically, (1) results indicated higher SWML scores

for couples who most often participate in activities together at similar skill levels, and even husband better than wife, than the couples who most often do activities together with the wife better than the husband, (2) couples who were satisfied with their leisure participation in worse-than-spouse activities had significantly high SWML scores, and (3) three of the four significant Flow variables had high SWML scores when experiencing Flow, whereas non-athletic activities appeared to be opposite of the other three Flow variables.

A particularly important finding in this study is being satisfied with joint leisure when worse than the spouse, regardless of activity type. This was an unexpected, but interesting, finding with a lot of potential for future research. The finding was interesting because it first appeared counter-intuitive that the respondent being worse than their spouse would have the most significantly correlated activity types to SWML. Both spouses being at a similar skill level was hypothesized to have the most significantly correlated variables because both their skills would meet the required challenge (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Though worse-than-spouse initially appeared to be counter-intuitive, within the context of Compassionate Love (CL), it seems completely logical (Reis et al., 2013). If the couples who were satisfied with their leisure participation in worse-than-spouse activities meant they were putting their spouse first in the relationship, higher SWML scores could be a logical conclusion. CL theory presents interesting dynamics within the context of marital leisure satisfaction research. When participating as a couple, there may tend to be less focus on performing at one's highest level, and may be more about the experience together as a couple. For example, an avid bike rider slowing down from his preferred speed to ride with his wife, who is slower, could demonstrate this dynamic that CL introduces. This study began to explore the possible marital leisure satisfaction variable of comparative skill levels, and this initial exploration brought to light other interesting marital

leisure satisfaction factors that comparative skill levels brings out. Marital leisure is more than just doing things together; there are lots of dynamics that go into it. Marital leisure research could benefit through incorporating the concept of CL into future studies.

Flow theory helped to correctly hypothesize and explain the significant leisure satisfaction variables; however, the potential anomaly of non-athletic activities with the respondent noticeably worse than spouse appeared to have the opposite effect. Future research in this specific circumstance of joint marital leisure may reveal further depth and insight into both Flow theory and leisure studies as a whole.

Limitations, however, must be recognized in the current study. First, the online data collection method was delivered to a large, nationally reflective group; however, the group was not a random sample. Also, online data collection inherently excludes certain populations from the study, such as those without computer access. Future research should consider incorporating random sampling techniques and examining different data collection methods.

Second, the environment in which the couples completed the survey was not controlled; therefore, other social factors may have influenced the survey responses. For example, they were told through instructions to complete the survey independently, but whether the couples completed the online questionnaire together or independently could not be controlled or measured. Significant variables from the study may merely reflect high levels of collaboration between the couples. Implementation of other data collection methodologies could mitigate errors common in online data in regards to legitimacy of scores.

Third, the difference between the activity types of athletic, non-athletic, and outdoor activities were not clearly defined. Examples were given of each activity type to help the respondents be in the correct frame of mind, but not every respondent was likely to have the

same specific activity in mind when answering the questions. Studying a specific athletic, non-athletic, or outdoor activity may help focus in on leisure satisfaction within each activity type and its influence on SWML. Some possible examples could be tennis for athletic, cooking for non-athletic, and camping for outdoor activities.

The question of which specific factors contribute to marital leisure satisfaction is still in its infancy of being dissected. While this study begins to investigate these factors by effectively employing a mixed models analysis of co-variance to explain which comparative skill levels, by gender, and activity types, are positively correlated to SWML, couple leisure researchers should continue to break down these factors and their influence on couple leisure satisfaction. For example, when the respondent is worse than their spouse, it could be worthwhile to study specific activities within said context and the correlation with leisure satisfaction to marital satisfaction. Therefore, continued research examining specific comparative skill levels, by gender, and activity types is recommended.

References

- Ahlstrom, M., Lundberg, N. R., Zabriskie, R., Eggett, D., & Lindsay, G. B. (2012). Me, my spouse, and my avatar. *Journal of Leisure Research, 44*(1), 1-22.
- Ahn, D. H. (1982). *A study of the relation between leisure activity patterns and marital satisfaction of urban housewives*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Sookmyung Women's University, Korea.
- Andersson, G., & Philipov, D. (2002). Life-table representations of family dynamics in Sweden, Hungary, and 14 other FSS countries: A project of descriptions of demographic behavior. *Demographic Research, 7*(4), 67-69.
- Agate, J., Zabriskie, R., Agate, S., & Poff, R. (2009). Family leisure satisfaction and satisfaction with family life. *Journal of Leisure Research, 41*(2), 205-223.
- Bakker, A. B. (2005). Flow among music teachers and their students: The crossover of peak experiences. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 66*, 26-44.
- Baldwin, J. H., Ellis, G. D., & Baldwin, B. M. (1999). Marital satisfaction: An examination of its relationship to spouse support and congruence of commitment among runners. *Leisure Sciences, 21*, 117-131.
- Beard, K. S., & Hoy, W. K. (2010). The nature, meaning, and measure of teacher flow in elementary schools: A test of rival hypotheses. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 46*(3), 426-458.
- Bell, R. R. (1975). Significant roles among a sample of Australian women. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology, 11*, 2-11.
- Benson, P. (1952). The interests of happily married couples. *Marriage and Family Living, 14*(4), 276-280.

- Bradbury, T. N., Fincham, F. D., & Beach, S. R. H. (2000). Research on the nature and determinants of marital satisfaction: A decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62(4), 964-980.
- Carrère, S., Buehlman, K. T., Gottman, J. M., Coan, J. A., & Ruckstuhl, L. (2000). Predicting marital stability and divorce in newlywed couples. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 14(1), 42-58.
- Chen, L. H., Ye, Y., Chen, M., & Tung, I. (2010). Alegria! Flow in leisure and life satisfaction: The mediating role of event satisfaction using data from an acrobatics show. *Social Indicators of Research*, 99(2), 301-313.
- Cherlin, A. J. (2010). Demographic trends in the United States: A review of research in the 2000s. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72, 403-419.
- Coombs, R. H. (1991). Marital status and personal well-being: A literature review. *Family Relations*, 40(1), 97-102.
- Crawford, D. W., Houts, R. M., Huston, T. L., & George, L. J. (2002). Compatibility, leisure, and satisfaction in marital relationships. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64(2), 433-449.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Graham, J. M. (2008). Self-expansion and flow in couples' momentary experiences: An experience sampling study. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95(3), 679-694.
- Hawks, S.R. (1991). Recreation in the family. In S.J.Bahr (Ed.) *Family research: A sixty year review, 1930-1990, Vol.1* (387-433). New York: Lexington books.

- Herridge, K., Shaw, S., & Mannell, R. (2003). An exploration of women's leisure within heterosexual romantic relationships. *Journal of Leisure Research, 35*(3), 274-291.
- Holman, T., & Epperson, A. (1984). Family and leisure: A review of the literature with research recommendations. *Journal of Leisure Research, 16*, 277-294.
- Holman, T. B., & Jacquart, M. (1988). Leisure activity patterns and marital satisfaction: A further test. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 50*, 69-77.
- Jackson, S. A., & Marsh, H. W. (1996). Development and validation of a scale to measure optimal experience: The flow state scale. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 18*, 17-35.
- Jackson, J. B., Miller, R. B., Oka, M., & Henry, R. G. (2014). Gender differences in marital satisfaction: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 76*(1), 105-129.
- Johnson, H. A., Zabriskie, R. B., & Hill, B. (2006). The contribution of couple leisure involvement, leisure time, and leisure satisfaction to marital satisfaction. *Marriage and Family Review, 40*(1), 69-91.
- Kim, H. K., & McKenry, P. C. (2002). The relationship between marriage and psychological well-being. *Journal of Family Issues, 23*(8), 885-911.
- Lavner, J. A., & Bradbury, T. N. (2010). Patterns of change in marital satisfaction over the newlywed years. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 72*, 1171-1187.
- Orthner, D. K. (1975). Leisure activity patterns and marital satisfaction over the marital career. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1*, 91-102.
- Orthner, D. K. (1998). Strengthening today's families: A challenge to parks and recreation. *Parks and Recreation, 87-98*.

- Orthner, D. K., & Mancini, J. A. (1990). Leisure Impacts on Family Interaction and Cohesion. *Journal of Leisure Research, 22*(2), 125-137.
- Orthner, D. K., & Mancini, J. A. (1991). Benefits of leisure for family bonding. In B. L. Driver, P. J. Brown, & G. L. Peterson, (Eds.), *Benefits of Leisure*, (pp. 215-301). State College, PA: Venture Publishing.
- Palisi, B. J. (1984). Marriage companionship and marriage well-being: A comparison of metropolitan areas in three countries. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 15*, 43-56.
- Peleg, O. (2008). The relationship between differentiation of self and marital satisfaction: What can be learned from married people over the course of life? *The American Journal of Family Therapy, 36*, 388-401.
- Poff, R., Zabriskie, R., & Townsend, J. (2010). Australian family leisure: Modelling parent and youth data. *Australian Family Leisure, (13)*3, 420-438.
- Reis, H. T., Maniaci, M. R., & Rogge, R. D. (2013). The expression of compassionate love in everyday compassionate acts. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 1*, 1-26.
- Reissman, C., Aron, A., & Bergen, M. R. (1993). Shared activities and marital satisfaction: Causal direction and self-expansion versus boredom. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 10*(2), 243-254.
- Smith, G. T., Snyder, D. K., Trull, T. J., & Monsma, B. R. (1988). Predicting relationship satisfaction from couples' use of leisure time. *The American Journal of Family Therapy, 16*(1), 3-13.

- Vallerand, J. V., Genevieve, A. M., Elliot, A. J., Dumais, A., Demers, M., & Rousseau F. (2008). Passion and performance attainment in sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 9*, 373-392.
- Ward, P., Barney, K., Lundberg, N., & Zabriskie, R. (2014). A critical examination of couple leisure and the application of the Core and Balance Model. *Journal of Leisure Research, 6*(5), 593-611.
- Ward, P., Lundberg, N., Zabriskie, R., & Barrett, K. (2009). Measuring marital satisfaction: A comparison of the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale and the Satisfaction with Married Life Scale. *Marriage and Family Review, 45*(4), 412-429.
- Zabriskie, R. B. (2000). *An examination of family and leisure behavior among families with middle school aged children*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.
- Zabriskie, R. B. (2001). Family recreation: How can we make a difference? *Parks and Recreation, 36*(10), 30-42.
- Zabriskie, R. B., & Freeman, P. (2004). Contributions of family leisure to family functioning among tranracial adoptive families. *Adoption Quarterly, 7*(3), 49-77.
- Zabriskie, R. B., & McCormick, B. P. (2003). Parent and child perspectives of family leisure involvement and satisfaction with family life. *Journal of Leisure Research, 35*(2), 163-189.

Table 1

Significant Variables from Stepwise Analysis and Satisfaction with Married Life (SWML; listed in the order in which they entered the model)

Effect	Num DF	Den DF	F Value	Pr > F
Outdoor Activities Worse than Spouse	1	583	8.52	0.0036
Athletic Activities Worse than Spouse	1	583	9.37	0.0023
Non-Athletic Activities Worse than Spouse	1	583	9.11	0.0026
Outdoor Activities Similar Skills	1	583	6.04	0.0143
Outdoor Activities Similar Skills (Flow)	3	583	6.43	0.0003
Unemployed in Past 12 Months	1	583	8.28	0.0042
Most Common Skill Difference (MCSD)	2	583	4.59	0.0105
Outdoor Activities Worse than Spouse (Flow)	3	583	2.91	0.0339
Non-Athletic Activities Similar Skills	1	583	3.15	0.0763
Previously Divorced	1	583	3.17	0.0757
Outdoor Activities Better than Spouse (Flow)	3	583	2.54	0.0557
Athletic Activities Similar Skills (Flow)	3	583	3.13	0.0254
Non-Athletic Activities Worse than Spouse (Flow)	3	583	3.21	0.0228

Table 2

Most Common Skill Difference (MCSD) Pairwise Comparison of Satisfaction With Married Life (SWML):

Effect	MCSD	_MCSD	Estimated Difference	StdErr	DF	tValue	AdjP
MCSD	1	2	1.2701	0.4646	583	2.73	0.0177
MCSD	1	3	0.0153	0.3390	583	0.05	0.9989
MCSD	2	3	-1.2548	0.4365	583	-2.87	0.0117

*Notes: 1=Husband Better than Wife, 2=Wife Better than Husband, 3=Both at a Similar Skill Level

Table 3

Gender Output Table (with husband and wife estimates added)

Activity Type	Husband Mean	Wife Mean	Difference	FValue	ProbF
Athletic Activities Better than Spouse	28.7753	28.2050	0.5703	9.92	0.0017
Athletic Activities Worse than Spouse	28.8182	28.1912	0.627	11.95	0.0006
Athletic Activities Similar Skill	28.7947	28.2225	0.5722	10.31	0.0014
Non-Athletic Activities Better than Spouse	28.7992	28.2264	0.5728	10.47	0.0013
Non-Athletic Activities Worse than Spouse	28.7887	28.2069	0.5818	10.72	0.0011
Non-Athletic Activities Similar Skills	28.7665	28.1699	0.5966	11.17	0.0009
Outdoor Activities Better than Spouse	28.8387	28.3046	0.5341	8.68	0.0033
Outdoor Activities Worse than Spouse	28.9532	28.3128	0.6404	12.64	0.0004
Outdoor Activities Similar Skills	28.7944	28.2097	0.5847	10.82	0.0011
Most Common Skill Difference (MCSD)	28.3500	27.8116	0.5384	9.09	0.0027

Table 4

Types of Activities by Skill Level Difference and Satisfaction With Married Life

Effect	Slope	Std Err	DF	tValue	Probt
Outdoor Activities Worse than Spouse	0.6033	0.2067	583	2.92	0.0036
Athletic Activities Worse than Spouse	0.5123	0.1673	583	3.06	0.0023
Non-Athletic Activities Worse than Spouse	0.5861	0.1941	583	3.02	0.0026
Outdoor Activities Similar Skill	0.5189	0.2111	583	2.46	0.0143
Non-Athletic Activities Similar Skill	0.3339	0.1880	583	1.78	0.0763

Table 5

Flow in Outdoor Activities Similar Skill (OASS) and Satisfaction With Married Life

Effect		Estimated Difference	StdErr	DF	tValue	AdjP
OASS 0	1	1.6273	1.8384	583	0.89	0.8126
OASS 0	2	2.2099	0.5110	583	4.32	0.0001
OASS 0	3	0.4776	0.3831	583	1.25	0.5974
OASS 1	2	0.5826	1.8917	583	0.31	0.9899
OASS 1	3	-1.1496	1.8663	583	-0.62	0.9270
OASS 2	3	-1.7322	0.5305	583	-3.27	0.0063

*Notes: 0=Didn't Participate, 1=Disagree with Flow questions, 2=Neutral, 3=Agree with Flow questions

Table 6

Flow in Outdoor Activities Worse than Spouse (OAWTS) and Satisfaction With Married Life

Effect			Estimate	StdErr	DF	tValue	AdjP
			Difference				
OAWTS	0	1	-0.6154	1.3068	583	-0.47	0.9654
OAWTS	0	2	0.2379	0.4706	583	0.51	0.9578
OAWTS	0	3	-1.1643	0.4198	583	-2.77	0.0292
OAWTS	1	2	0.8533	1.3355	583	0.64	0.9193
OAWTS	1	3	-0.5488	1.3556	583	-0.40	0.9776
OAWTS	2	3	-1.4022	0.5840	583	-2.40	0.0780

*Notes: 0=Didn't Participate, 1=Disagree with Flow questions, 2=Neutral, 3=Agree with Flow questions

Table 7

Flow in Outdoor Activities Better than Spouse (OABTS) and Satisfaction With Married Life

Effect			Estimate	StdErr	DF	tValue	AdjP
			Difference				
OABTS	0	1	4.2245	2.0304	583	2.08	0.1606
OABTS	0	2	0.9755	0.6226	583	1.57	0.3985
OABTS	0	3	-0.2227	0.3218	583	-0.69	0.9001
OABTS	1	2	-3.2489	2.1142	583	-1.54	0.4162
OABTS	1	3	-4.4472	2.0421	583	-2.18	0.1306
OABTS	2	3	-1.1983	0.6668	583	-1.80	0.2757

*Notes: 0=Didn't Participate, 1=Disagree with Flow questions, 2=Neutral, 3=Agree with Flow questions

Table 8

Flow in Athletic Activities Similar Skills (AASS) and Satisfaction With Married Life

Effect		Estimate Difference	StdErr	DF	tValue	AdjP
AASS 0	1	4.2235	1.8743	583	2.25	0.1104
AASS 0	2	0.1230	0.3984	583	0.31	0.9898
AASS 0	3	-0.5629	0.3203	583	-1.76	0.2953
AASS 1	2	-4.1004	1.8793	583	-2.18	0.1295
AASS 1	3	-4.7863	1.8793	583	-2.55	0.0540
AASS 2	3	-0.6859	0.4178	583	-1.64	0.3559

*Notes: 0=Didn't Participate, 1=Disagree with Flow questions, 2=Neutral, 3=Agree with Flow questions

Table 9

Flow in Non-athletic Activities Worse than Spouse (NAWTS) and Satisfaction With Married Life

Effect			Estimate	StdErr	DF	tValue	AdjP
			Difference				
NAWTS	0	1	-4.2730	1.4663	583	-2.91	0.0193
NAWTS	0	2	-0.4016	0.3518	583	-1.14	0.6640
NAWTS	0	3	0.07636	0.3418	583	0.22	0.9961
NAWTS	1	2	3.8714	1.4706	583	2.63	0.0431
NAWTS	1	3	4.3494	1.4890	583	2.92	0.0189
NAWTS	2	3	0.4780	0.4056	583	1.18	0.6408

*Notes: 0=Didn't Participate, 1=Disagree with Flow questions, 2=Neutral, 3=Agree with Flow questions

Appendix A: Prospectus

Marital Leisure Satisfaction: Investigating Comparative Skill Levels Within Marital Leisure Activities

I love playing tennis and have dedicated large amounts of time and resources to improve and develop this skill. I brought my love of tennis into my marriage with dreams of playing it with my spouse from the honeymoon through retirement, but for some reason, tennis, as a shared leisure activity between my wife and me, did not ignite into the bonfire I had hoped for. We play now and then, but when we do, she is agreeing to play for my sake and not for her intrinsic love or interest for the activity. This is an example of divergent skill levels. Racquetball, however, was introduced to both of us at the same time, we are at similar skill levels, and we both share a love and interest for it. We are both likely to suggest playing it and have more fun participating in it together than we do tennis. Why is that? This question can potentially apply to everyone who is involved in marriage, or even dating, relationships.

Research specifically studying the benefits of marriage has shown married people as happier, living longer, having better mental health, more fulfillment, were less likely to suffer physical abuse, and were physically healthier when compared to individuals who were not married (Coombs, 1991). Given the benefits of marriage, the growth and strengthening of marriage relationships would ideally be on the rise; unfortunately, quite the opposite is happening. Anderson and Philipov (2002) reported over 20% of married couples separate or divorce within 5 years of marrying. Over the course of a lifetime, the probability of marital and cohabitating disruption is between 40-50% (Cherlin, 2010). These high divorce rates demonstrate how marriages are struggling in today's society and the importance of studying potential factors related to stronger marriages.

Factors that have been correlated with stronger marriages are personality traits, stress, aggression (Lavner, & Bradbury, 2010), and leisure (Johnson, Zabriskie, & Hill, 2006). An influential framework in marital leisure research was Orthner's (1975) Joint Couple Leisure Model. In this model, couple leisure was divided into one of three categories: (a) individual, (b) parallel, (c) and joint. The element that differentiated the leisure activities into one of the three categories was how much the activity itself promoted interaction between the couple. Higher interacting activities (joint activities) were more strongly correlated to marital satisfaction than activities that didn't inherently promote interaction (parallel activities) or activities the couples participated in apart from each other (individual activities) (Holman & Epperson, 1984; Orthner & Mancini, 1990, 1991). This framework was also implemented in Australia (Palisi, 1984), England (Bell, 1975), and Korea (Ahn, 1982) and produced consistent findings in each of these countries. Orthner and Mancini (1990) affirmed the relationship between joint leisure and marital satisfaction by saying "There does not appear to be any recent study that fails to find an association." (p. 127). Thus it was concluded that couples who participate in joint leisure activities had higher levels of marital satisfaction than those who didn't engage in similar activities together (Holman & Epperson; Orthner & Mancini).

Orthner's (1975) Joint Couple Leisure Model established a consistent line of marital leisure research; however, the measurements of leisure in the model were limited to time measurements only (Johnson et al., 2006). Johnson et al. reported that simply measuring the hours of leisure together was not the best representative factor correlated to marital satisfaction, it was attributed to other factors. Johnson et al. concluded "it was not the level or amount of couple leisure involvement or the satisfaction with the amount of time spent together, but the satisfaction with the couple leisure that contributed to marital satisfaction" (p. 16). In other

words, the aspect of being satisfied with couple leisure contributed to marital satisfaction, whereas the amount of couple leisure or even satisfaction with time spent together was not significantly correlated.

The foundational groundwork to study couple leisure was laid by Orther (1975) through establishing the correlation between marital leisure and marital satisfaction. This foundation has been built upon by Johnson et al. (2006) by demonstrating leisure satisfaction to be a better indicator of marital satisfaction than simply the amount or time spent doing the activity together. Johnson et al.'s study can be further built upon through asking what specific factors contribute to marital leisure satisfaction. Or in other words, what makes leisure satisfying for a married couple? Johnson et al. recommended "more consideration needs to be given to the context of the activities themselves and the motivation behind participation" (p. 87). Some examples of activity contexts, or motivation behind participation, could be spouses participating out of obligation, how the leisure activity is chosen within the couple, or comparative skill levels between the husband and wife. Of all the different starting points that would work equally well to test potential factors that correlate to marital leisure satisfaction, comparative skill levels was chosen because of a couple reasons. The first reason was because I noticed comparative skill levels as a potential factor in my personal marital leisure when my wife was much more willing to play racquetball than tennis with me. A theoretically based reason to study comparative skill levels is illustrated in Flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Flow is a euphoric experience a person has when the skill required to do an activity and the challenge of the activity balance out, and therefore would suggest a stronger positive correlation between joint couple leisure and marital satisfaction when both individuals in the marriage are at similar skill levels as opposed to divergent skill levels.

Statement of the Problem

Numerous studies have examined the correlation between marital leisure satisfaction and satisfaction with married life such as examining the relationship to spouse support and congruence of commitment among runners (Baldwin, Ellis, & Baldwin, 1999), women's leisure within heterosexual romantic relationships (Herridge, Shaw, & Mannell, 2003), leisure activity patterns and marital satisfaction (Holman, & Jacquart, 1988), the contribution of couple leisure involvement, leisure time, and leisure satisfaction to marital satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2006), leisure activity patterns and marital satisfaction over the marital career (Orthner, 1975), shared activities and marital satisfaction (Reissman, Aron, & Bergen, 1993), and predicting relationship satisfaction from couples' use of leisure time (Smith, Snyder, Trull, & Monsma, 1988). These studies have helped establish the correlation between marital leisure satisfaction and marital satisfaction, but studies examining the specific factors contributing to marital leisure satisfaction remain largely unstudied. Specifically, this study will examine how comparative skill levels in joint couple leisure activities within a marriage relationship relate to marital leisure satisfaction and ultimately marital satisfaction. Additionally, gender will be included in the analysis when scrutinizing the comparative skill levels within the marital relationship.

Purpose of the Study

The correlation between marital leisure satisfaction and marriage satisfaction has already been established through previous research (Johnson et al., 2006; Orthner, 1975; Ward, Barney, Lundberg, & Zabriskie, in press; Zabriskie, 2000). The question of what contributes to marital leisure satisfaction, however, is still in its infancy of being dissected. Johnson et al. recommended "more consideration needs to be given to the context of the activities themselves and the motivation behind participation" (p. 87). Flow theory reinforces the exploration of

comparative skill levels between husband and wife because it scrutinizes the balance between the skill required to accomplish an activity and the challenge of the activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), which will potentially impact how much leisure satisfaction the married couples attain from their marital leisure participation. Flow theory would suggest a stronger positive correlation between satisfaction with couple leisure and marital satisfaction when both individuals in the marriage are at similar skill levels as opposed to divergent skill levels. If we are able to identify factors related to higher couple leisure satisfaction then we would be able to provide clear, empirically based behavioral direction to couples interested in improving overall marital satisfaction. It is hoped the results from this study will provide married couples insight into obtaining and maintaining a satisfying marriage.

Significance of the Study

This study of if and how comparative skill levels within marital leisure activities relate to marital leisure satisfaction is important in terms of addressing the next logical question pertinent to marital leisure research. This study is pursuing Johnson et al.'s (2006) recommendation to give "more consideration ... to the context of the activities themselves and the motivation behind participation" (p. 87). Discovering specific factors that affect marital leisure satisfaction provides practical application to the correlation already established between marital leisure satisfaction and marital satisfaction (Johnson et al.; Orthner, 1975; Zabriskie, 2000).

These findings will also do more than further marital leisure research. The practical application of specific factors that affect marital leisure satisfaction and ultimately marital satisfaction enables this line of research to be implemented within individual marriage relationships. This is especially relevant because high divorce and separation rates demonstrate how marriages are struggling in today's society and the importance of studying potential factors

to strengthen marriages (Anderson & Philipov, 2002; Cherlin, 2010). The findings of the study could potentially be used to increase marital satisfaction and decrease marital disruption. The findings are also likely to have practical value to all couples who are interested in maintaining a positive, healthy marriage and even to those considering marriage.

Delimitations

The scope of this study is delimited to the following:

1. Respondents will be couples who have been married for less than six years and have no children.
2. The national sample will include only married couples who currently live in the United States.
3. The types of marital leisure activities being studied are inherently active in nature and therefore won't account for common marital leisure activities such as a couple going out to dinner and then watching a movie afterward.
4. Questionnaires will be sent out through the Internet.
5. The survey responses from the respondents will be observed cross-sectionally.
6. The survey responses will only be computed if returned before the chosen deadline.
7. The survey responses will be computed using SAS 9.2 statistical software.

Limitations

The results will be interpreted considering the following limitations:

- This study will use correlational techniques and therefore will not determine causation.
- The sample size in some of the comparative skill level categories may be small, possibly resulting in non significant findings.
- This population may still be in a honeymoon stage of their marriage. Newlyweds may

overstate their married leisure satisfaction and married life satisfaction scores regardless of the activities they pursue together.

- The married respondents will not be a random sample; therefore, the results will not be generalized to a larger target population.
- The environment in which the couples interact with each other will not be controlled; therefore, other social factors may influence the survey responses.

Assumptions

The study will be based on the following assumptions:

1. Participants will answer to the best of their abilities and be honest in completing the questionnaire.
2. The Modified Marital Activity Profile (MMAP), a modified version of the MAP (Marital Activity Profile), which includes the imbedded Family Leisure Satisfaction Scale (FLSS), will provide a valid and reliable measure of marital leisure involvement and marital leisure satisfaction (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001).
3. The SWML instrument (Satisfaction with Married Life) will provide a valid and reliable measure of satisfaction with family life (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003).

Hypotheses

The study would be designed to test the following null hypotheses (H_0):

1. H_0 : There is no relationship between comparative skill levels and satisfaction with married leisure.

H_1 : There is a relationship between comparative skill levels and satisfaction with married leisure.

2. H_0 : There is no relationship between types of activities and satisfaction with married leisure.
 H_2 : There is a relationship between types of activities and satisfaction with married leisure.
3. H_0 : There is no relationship between gender, or gender interacting with comparative skill levels, and satisfaction with married leisure.
 H_3 : There is a relationship between gender, or gender interacting with comparative skill levels, and satisfaction with married leisure.

Definition of Terms

The following terms and phrases are defined to clarify their use in the study:

1. Divergent skill levels – One spouse is more skilled than the other in the leisure activity, thus inhibiting the more skilled spouse from participating at their optimal level to compensate for the other spouse’s lack of skill comparatively.
2. Similar skill levels – When both individuals in the marriage are at similar, or comparative, skill levels in the leisure activity they are participating in together.
3. Marriage – The state of being united to a person of the opposite sex as husband or wife in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).
4. Couple – Couple will be used interchangeably with marriage throughout this study, typically representing both husband and wife.
5. Leisure – “The combination of free time and the expectation of preferred experience” (Kleiber, 1999, p. 3).
6. Marital leisure satisfaction – Marital leisure satisfaction is derived from the summed satisfaction scores from the MMAP and indicates individual’s self-report levels of

satisfaction with leisure participation, or lack thereof, with spouse (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001).

7. Marital satisfaction - An individual's emotional state of being content with the interactions, experiences, and expectations of his or her married life (Ward, Lundberg, Zabriskie, & Barrett, 2009, 415).

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The problem of this study is to identify factors related to higher couple leisure satisfaction and ultimately marital satisfaction between husband and wife who have been married for less than six years and have no children. Specifically, this study will attempt to examine how comparative skill levels in couple leisure activities correlate to marital leisure satisfaction and marital satisfaction in athletic, non-athletic, and outdoor activities. This study is pursuing Johnson et al.'s (2006) recommendation to give "more consideration ... to the context of the activities themselves and the motivation behind participation" (p. 87). Discovering specific factors that affect marital leisure satisfaction provides practical application to the correlation already established between marital leisure satisfaction and marital satisfaction (Johnson et al.; Orthner, 1975; Zabriskie, 2000). This is especially relevant because high divorce and separation rates demonstrate how marriages are struggling in today's society and the importance of studying potential factors to strengthen marriages (Anderson & Philipov, 2002; Cherlin, 2010). Furthermore, the data will be nested in couples, thus accounting for couple-level variance in addition to accounting for individual level-analysis.

Several benefits of marriage have been found through multiple studies (Carrère, Buehlman, Gottman, Coan, & Ruckstuhl, 2000; Coombs, 1991; Kim & McKenry 2002). Those married tended to be happier, live longer, and were less likely to suffer physical abuse when compared to individuals who were not married (Coombs). Married couples have also been shown to have higher levels of psychological well-being (Kim & McKenry). Carrère et al. even found married couples were physically healthier than their unmarried counterparts.

The benefits of marriage underline the importance of marriage and ensuring continued success of marital relationships. Marriage relationships are not on the rise and existing marriages are struggling to succeed. Anderson and Philipov (2002) reported over 20% of married couples separate or divorce within 5 years of marrying. Over the course of a lifetime, the probability of marital and cohabitating disruption is between 40-50% (Cherlin, 2010). These high separation and divorce rates emphasize the importance of studying potential factors to strengthen marriages. This study aims to examine a specific factor potentially contributing to marital satisfaction.

Marital satisfaction

Marital satisfaction is one of the most commonly studied facets of marital research (Ward, Lundberg, Zabriskie, & Barrett, 2009). This may be because of its relation to the perpetuation of marriage and to better quality of life (Peleg, 2008). Peleg defined marital satisfaction as “the degree to which spouses perceive their partners meet their needs and desires” (p. 389). Similarly, Ward et al. defined it as “an individual’s emotional state of being content with the interactions, experiences, and expectations of his or her married life” (p. 415). Both definitions demonstrate a level of emotional content concerning spousal interaction. Because marital satisfaction has been found to be the central component of individual and family well-being (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000), the continued examination of factors producing marital satisfaction is advised (Carrère, Buehlman, Gottman, Coan, & Ruckstuhl, 2000)

Leisure and Marital Satisfaction

During the last several decades, academia has produced progress in leisure research on marital and family life satisfaction (Hawks, 1991). Studies dealing specifically with concerns related to recreation and the family first appeared in periodical literature around 1930. The

decade from 1930-1940 was during the great depression so it may be why the studies were commonly interested in how socioeconomic status impacted family leisure choices and locations. The studies from this decade used nonrandom convenient samples, no statistical analysis, and were atheoretical. The next decade from 1940-1949 continued to study how socioeconomic status impacted leisure, but also covered other leisure topics such as individual versus family social participation, and the relation between childhood and adult leisure activities. Theoretical frameworks were beginning to appear, though still in their infancy, and more complex statistical methods to analyze data were being employed. This decade was limited by no new data collection techniques and no clear description of the target population, thus limiting the validity and generalizability of the results. The following decade 1950-1959 provided the first relevant research specific to couple leisure. Benson (1952) reanalyzed existing data to test if mutual leisure interests within the couple were related to marital adjustment. Benson did not establish a relationship between the numerical total of common leisure interests and marital adjustment and concluded it was unclear whether leisure interests were actual causes or just concomitants of marital accord. The couple leisure articles from 1960-1969 were noteworthy because they began to look at attitudes about couple leisure instead of just types and amounts of couple leisure activities (Hawks). The random sampling used in these studies also demonstrated more advanced data collection techniques. 1975 is a focal year in couple leisure research through Orthner's differentiation of joint, parallel, and individual leisure which instituted the Joint Couple Leisure Model (Orthner, 1975; Orthner & Mancini, 1990; Orthner & Mancini, 1991).

Joint Couple Leisure Model. Orthner's Joint Couple Leisure Model (1975) will be discussed extensively in this study because it provided a clear conceptual framework with testable hypotheses while controlling for confounding variables. The Joint Couple Leisure

Model divided couple activities into three categories: (a) individual, (b) parallel, and (c) joint. Individual leisure was pursued without the spouse or other partner in the relationship; parallel activities were done conjointly with the other partner but the activity did not, by nature, facilitate communication; and joint activities were similar to parallel with the addition of communication being present and part of the activity. Research found individual leisure was negatively related to marital satisfaction, whereas both parallel and joint leisure were positively related to marital satisfaction; joint more so (Orthner & Mancini, 1990, 1991). A strength of this theoretical framework is it was tested in different countries and a wide range of target populations and produced similar results each time (Ahn, 1982; Palisi, 1984). Orthner and Mancini (1990) affirmed the relationship between joint leisure and marital satisfaction by saying “There does not appear to be any recent study that fails to find an association.” It is apparent from this bold statement they knew they had discovered something worthwhile. Some weaknesses preventing the framework from continued use were the ambiguity of defining parallel and joint activities separate from each other and simply measuring time spent doing activities instead of satisfaction with the activities or other explanatory variables (Johnson et al., 2006). Current leisure research continues to forge ahead in defining couple leisure and its correlation with marital and family life satisfaction. A current line of supporting research dealing specifically with couples and family is the Core and Balance Model (Zabriskie, 2000).

Core and balance. In this model, developed by Zabriskie (2000), two basic categories of family leisure were identified: (a) core and (b) balance. These two categories were used to meet the needs of stability and change. Core leisure is defined as everyday, low-cost, generally home-based activities. Balance activities are defined as novel activities like skiing, camping, and cruises. Balance activities require families to negotiate and adapt to new input that is different

from everyday life. An established pattern of activities led to closeness and familiarity; new activities promoted development and negotiation. Where a family fits into the model was assessed through the Family Leisure Activity Profile (FLAP). The FLAP is a self-reporting instrument that can evaluate three perspectives: (a) parent, (b) youth, and (c) family. Core activities help facilitate communication and develop family roles in order to have more successful balance activities. The balance activities facilitate negotiation and flexibility needed for family transitions and change (Zabriskie, 2001). This model successfully demonstrated the relationship between leisure satisfaction and marital and family life satisfaction, but the factors contributing to couple leisure satisfaction remained unidentified.

Leisure Satisfaction and Marital Satisfaction

Though couple leisure has been shown to be correlated to marital satisfaction, satisfaction with couple leisure has a stronger correlation to marital satisfaction than the amount of couple leisure itself (Johnson et al., 2006). Leisure satisfaction is directly correlated to marital satisfaction as well as family life in general, which has been shown in multiple recent studies (Agate et al., 2009; Johnson, Zabriskie, & Hill, 2006; Poff et al., 2010; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003). This correlation was evidenced through findings from Zabriskie and McCormick (2003). They stated “satisfaction with leisure, rather than other life domains is the foremost determinate of life satisfaction or mental wellbeing. In other words, leisure plays a substantial role in an individual’s life satisfaction and quality of life” (Zabriskie & McCormick, p. 164).

Previous studies have clarified how parents and children perceive dyadic leisure satisfaction differently. Poff et al. (2010) said “parents are likely to focus more and more on quality versus quantity” whereas “children on the other hand are developmentally able to focus primarily on the quantity of family leisure” (p. 386). For children, simply the participation and

time with their family is enough. This can be applied to a parent-child relationship. If the parent wants to avoid the stress and effort required to plan an elaborate event, the parent can spend time with the children doing something simple at home and may fulfill the child's requirement to feel satisfied with life. Orthner (1998) supported this possibility when he quoted Resnick et al.'s (1997) observation,

Adolescents clearly value time with their parents, even more than they are openly willing to admit. And this time has payoffs; shared time with parents was associated with less involvement with addictive substances, less early sexual behavior, and better performance in school. (p. 90)

Doing something spontaneous and home-based may be all a child needs to experience these benefits. But would a spouse also prefer quantity of shared leisure time over quality?

Johnson et al. (2006) began to answer the question of quantity versus quality when she reported couples in her study “indicated that it was not the level or amount of couple leisure involvement or the satisfaction with the amount of time spent together, but the satisfaction with couple leisure that contributed to marital satisfaction” (p. 83). In other words, the quality of the couple leisure was more important than the amount, satisfaction with the time, or type of couple leisure involvement. If quality of marital leisure is a better indicator of marital life satisfaction, what contributes toward dyadic leisure satisfaction in marriages? These factors will be discussed after establishing a foundation of supporting theoretical frameworks.

Limitations of Past Research

The Joint Couple Leisure Model (Orthner, 1975) and the Core and Balance Model (Zabriskie, 2001) demonstrated the positive correlation between couples doing activities together and marital satisfaction; however, the measurements of marital leisure in the Joint Couple

Leisure model was limited to time measurements only (Johnson et al., 2006). Johnson et al. discovered simply measuring time spent together was not the best representative factor correlated to marital satisfaction, rather it was attributed to other factors. Johnson et al. concluded “it was not the level or amount of couple leisure involvement or the satisfaction with the amount of time spent together, but the satisfaction with the couple leisure that contributed to marital satisfaction” (p. 16). In other words, time and even satisfaction with amount of time were not significantly correlated to marital satisfaction. Measuring couple leisure satisfaction has been shown to be a better indicator of marital life satisfaction than simply measuring couple leisure participation (Johnson et al.).

The Next Step

The foundational groundwork to study couple leisure was laid by Orthner (1975) through establishing the correlation between marital leisure participation and marital satisfaction. This correlation has been confirmed by multiple subsequent studies (Crawford et al., 2002; Herridge et al., 2003; Holman & Epperson, 1984; Orthner & Mancini, 1991; Zabriskie, 2001). This foundation has recently evolved through Johnson et al. (2006) by demonstrating couple leisure satisfaction to be a better indicator of marital satisfaction than simply the amount or time spent doing the activity together. Johnson et al.’s study can be further augmented through asking what specific factors contribute to marital leisure satisfaction. Or in other words, what makes dyadic leisure satisfying for a married couple? Johnson et al. recommended “more consideration ... be given to the context of the activities themselves and the motivation behind participation” (p. 20). Some examples of activity contexts, or motivation behind participation, could be spouses participating out of obligation, how the marital leisure activity is chosen within the couple, or comparative skill levels between the husband and wife. Of all the different starting points that

would work equally well to test potential factors that correlate to marital leisure satisfaction, comparative skill levels was chosen because of a couple reasons. The first reason was because I noticed comparative skill levels as a potential factor in my personal marital leisure when my wife was much more willing to play racquetball than tennis with me. A theoretically based reason to study comparative skill levels is illustrated in Flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Flow theory. Flow is an experience a person has when his skills meet the required challenge (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). If the challenge is disproportionately higher than the participant's skill level, the participant experiences anxiety. On the other hand, if the challenge is considerably lower than the skill level of the participant, the participant experiences boredom. When skill and challenge balance out, flow is possible. Flow is described and measured according to nine dimensions. They are challenge-skill balance, action-awareness merging, clear goals, unambiguous feedback, concentration on task-at-hand, sense of control, loss of self-consciousness, transformation of time, and autotelic experience (Csikszentmihalyi; Jackson, & Marsh, 1996). Flow is commonly associated with sports, but it can also apply to any activity in which a skill base must rise to meet the required challenge. Flow can be enjoyed by any level of athlete (Jackson, & Marsh). Experts have compiled numerous studies in diverse disciplines using the flow theory (Bakker, 2005; Beard & Hoy, 2010; Chen, Chen, & Tung, 2010; Graham, 2008; Vallerand et al., 2008). Though flow is commonly measured and discussed in a sports setting, it can also happen at work, school, leisure, and/or everyday life situations (Graham). Whether it is in sport or some other activity, the best performances have been found to be associated with flow (Jackson, & Marsh).

An interesting study looked at couples' everyday life experiences and flow (Graham, 2008). Graham hypothesized "when couples engage in exciting and activating conjoint

activities, they feel connected with their partners and more satisfied with their relationships” (p. 679). The results supported the hypothesis and suggested “the level of activation experienced during an activity was positively related to experience-level relationship quality” (p. 679). Graham found “couples assigned to exciting activities report greater relationship quality than couples assigned to activities that are simply pleasant” (p. 679). Therefore, the type of activities these married couples did together may have influenced their flow experience and their satisfaction with their joint leisure experience, and ultimately their married life satisfaction.

Flow theory points out all leisure experiences do not have the same correlation. Experiences that promote flow have a stronger correlation between leisure satisfaction and marital satisfaction. Flow theory, however, has not been evaluated while considering comparative skill levels within a marriage relationship. According to the skill-challenge balance of flow, if one partner is notably more skilled than the other, the challenge would be considerably lower than the skill level obtained and boredom would be experienced. At the same time, the partner with less skill would experience anxiety because the challenge is disproportionately higher than the obtained skill level. A couple with distinctly different skill levels would theoretically not experience flow together. Therefore, it is proposed that participating in joint couple leisure activities at similar skill levels will have a stronger positive correlation between marital leisure satisfaction and ultimately marital satisfaction than joint couple leisure activities at divergent skill levels.

To enhance the positive effects of marriage through studying couple leisure, researchers have made great progress concerning leisure research in the past 70 years (Hawks, 1991), specifically couple leisure satisfaction and its relationship to marital satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2006). Numerous studies have examined the correlation between marital leisure satisfaction and

satisfaction with married life such as examining the relationship to spouse support and congruence of commitment among runners (Baldwin, Ellis, & Baldwin, 1999), women's leisure within heterosexual romantic relationships (Herridge, Shaw, & Mannell, 2003), leisure activity patterns and marital satisfaction (Holman, & Jacquart, 1988), the contribution of couple leisure involvement, leisure time, and leisure satisfaction to marital satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2006), leisure activity patterns and marital satisfaction over the marital career (Othner, 1975), shared activities and marital satisfaction (Reissman, Aron, & Bergen, 1993), and predicting relationship satisfaction from couples' use of leisure time (Smith, Snyder, Trull, & Monsma, 1988). These studies have helped establish the correlation between marital leisure satisfaction and marital satisfaction, but studies examining the specific factors contributing to marital leisure satisfaction remain largely unstudied. Specifically, this study will examine how comparative skill levels in joint couple leisure activities within a marriage relationship relate to marital leisure satisfaction and ultimately marital satisfaction. Additionally, gender will be included in the analysis when scrutinizing the comparative skill levels within the marital relationship. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate if and how comparative skill levels within marital leisure activities relate to marital leisure satisfaction differently.

Chapter 3

Methods

The problem of this study is to identify factors related to higher couple leisure satisfaction and ultimately marital satisfaction between husband and wife who have been married for less than six years and have no children. Specifically, this study will attempt to examine how comparative skill levels in couple leisure activities correlate to marital leisure satisfaction and marital satisfaction in athletic, non-athletic, and outdoor activities. This study is pursuing Johnson et al.'s (2006) recommendation to give "more consideration ... to the context of the activities themselves and the motivation behind participation" (p. 87). Discovering specific factors that affect marital leisure satisfaction provides practical application to the correlation already established between marital leisure satisfaction and marital satisfaction (Johnson et al.; Orthner, 1975; Zabriskie, 2000). Additionally, gender will be included in the analysis when scrutinizing the comparative skill levels within the marital relationship. The conduct of the study includes the following organizational steps: (a) identifying study sample; (b) instrumentation; (c) data collection procedures, and (e) data analysis.

Study Sample

The sample for this study will be married couples who have been married less than six years because the Orthner (1975) study, in which he measured the amount of leisure time spent together as a married couple throughout the marriage career, found married couples spent the most leisure time together in the first five years of their marriage. Some benefits of sampling this specific population are these couples may spend large portions of leisure time together, may have more time and financial resources for joint leisure, and joint couple leisure may be more of a focus during this time of their lives overall. Participants for this study will be recruited through

SSI, an online survey sampling company that draws subjects from a multi-source Internet panel of millions of households worldwide. The married couples surveyed by the online database will not be a random sample. All other study methods will be covered in the data collection procedures section of this chapter.

Instrumentation

The Modified Marital Activity Profile (MMAP) will be used to measure satisfaction with marital leisure. The MMAP is a modification from the Marital Activity Profile (MAP) (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003). It has been modified to differentiate skill differences and include nine items from the 36-item Flow State Scale (FSS) (Jackson & Marsh, 1996) (see Appendix A). The MMAP uses six items to measure involvement and satisfaction in teaching an activity (first two items), being taught an activity (third and fourth items) and participating at similar skill levels (fifth and sixth items). The respondents will be specifically asked if they participate in the activity with their spouse. If participants answer yes, then they report the frequency and duration of participation. These two scores will be multiplied together to obtain a total involvement score. The total involvement scores from all three sections (teaching, being taught, and similar skill level) will be summed for a comprehensive marital leisure involvement score. Additionally, marital leisure satisfaction is evaluated using a Likert scale, allowing respondents to score their level of satisfaction between 1 (very dissatisfied) and 5 (very satisfied). The MAP has an acceptable reliability, $r = .78$ for total leisure involvement, in psychometric tests. The content and construct validities of the MAP also fall within acceptable ranges (Zabriskie & Freeman, 2004). Because this instrument has been modified, pilot testing will take place prior to its official use to ensure acceptable validity and reliability.

The flow experience will be measured using items from the FSS (see Appendix A-1). The FSS scale was created by Jackson and Marsh (1996) based on past research, qualitative analysis, and finally quantitative testing. Reasonable internal consistency was shown ($\alpha M = .83$) when tested among 394 athletes.

There are four items used in the original FSS to measure each of the nine dimensions of flow, totaling 36 items. For this study, one item was selected out of each group of four due to length considerations for the total questionnaire. Each item was selected according to which one performed the best when being tested for validity and reliability (Jackson & Marsh, 1996). These nine items are repeated in each of the nine items of the MMAP.

The Satisfaction with Married Life (SWML) scale is included after the MMAP to obtain the overall satisfaction with married life score (Ward, Lundberg, Zabriskie, & Berrett, 2009) (see Appendix A-1). The SWML has five items allowing the respondent to rate his or her agreement toward satisfaction statements on a Likert scale between 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree). Reliability and validity for the SWML was evaluated using an online sample of 1,187 couples throughout the United States. The instrument's factor analyses demonstrated the validity of marital satisfaction truly being measured. The reliability also had an acceptable range of Cronbach's alpha at .958 (Ward et al.).

Demographic questions such as gender, age, years married, marriage history, education obtained, ethnicity, and location (see Appendix A-1), will be asked in order to find the best fit of demographics for the mixed models analysis of co-variance.

Data Collection Procedures

An online questionnaire, designed using Qualtrics software, will be used to collect data beginning September 2013. Responses will be distributed and collected through Survey

Sampling International (SSI) until we have approximately 600 participating couples regionally reflecting the population and ethnicity across the United States. It would be ideal to have at least 520 couples respond. This specific number of surveys was calculated by taking the range of possible scores from the MMAP. There is a 36 point range in the possible scores with nine questions. The standard deviation was estimated to be 9 and the meaningful difference to be 2.5, which is 7% or a .3 difference for each individual question. The responses will be split into three groups: (a) participating in activity in which the respondent is noticeably better than their spouse, (b) participating in activity in which the spouse is noticeably better than the respondent, and (c) participating in leisure activity with both respondent and spouse are at similar skill levels. Of the three groups, participating in activity in which the spouse is noticeably better than the respondent is predicted to be the smallest group. Estimating for a conservative 20% of the responses to include the smallest group would provide 104 surveys from the smallest group to be analyzed. This should enable even the smallest group to be tested for statistical significance.

To be considered in the sample, couples must be married fewer than six years.

Confidentiality will be assured using a consent disclosure included at the beginning of the Qualtrics survey. By completing the questionnaire, the participant is consenting to be involved in the study (see Appendix B). Once couples have responded, the data will be cleaned and examined.

Data Analysis

The data will be analyzed using SAS 9.3 software. A mixed models analysis of covariance will be computed. In this model the dependent variable is marital leisure satisfaction and the independent variables are the various comparative skill differences and similarities of the couple engaging in leisure activities, their gender, and the skill-gender interactions. The

dependent variable will be tested for its relationship with the independent variables between three main categories of activity types: (a) athletic, (b) non-athletic, and (c) outdoor activities. Furthermore, couples will be used as blocks in the analysis. All independent variables will be tested at the 0.05 alpha level. Non-significant effects will be eliminated from the statistical model using all possible models and selecting the model with the lowest Bayesian information criterion (BIC).

Normality of the data will be checked and unusable data points, such as outliers and incomplete responses, will be filtered out. Descriptive statistics will be used to analyze demographics of the sample. The demographic questions will be gender, current age, years married, if they have ever been divorced, ethnicity, city and state in which they currently reside, approximate population of place of residence, highest obtained level of education, combined annual income as a couple, if they have been unemployed in the past 12 months, and if so, then for how many months.

References

- Andersson, G., & Philipov, D. (2002). Life-table representations of family dynamics in Sweden, Hungary, and 14 other FSS countries: A project of descriptions of demographic behavior. *Demographic Research, 7*(4), 67-69.
- Agate, J., Zabriskie, R., Agate, S., & Poff, R. (2009). Family leisure satisfaction and satisfaction with family life. *Journal of Leisure Research, 41*(2), 205-223.
- Bakker, A. B. (2005). Flow among music teachers and their students: The crossover of peak experiences. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 66*, 26-44.
- Baldwin, J. H., Ellis, G. D., & Baldwin, B. M. (1999). Marital satisfaction: An examination of its relationship to spouse support and congruence of commitment among runners. *Leisure Sciences, 21*, 117-131.
- Beard, K. S., & Hoy, W. K. (2010). The nature, meaning, and measure of teacher flow in elementary schools: A test of rival hypotheses. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 46*(3), 426-458.
- Bell, R. R. (1975). Significant roles among a sample of Australian women. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology, 11*, 2-11.
- Benson, P. (1952). The interests of happily married couples. *Marriage and Family Living, 14*(4), 276-280.
- Bradbury, T. N., Fincham, F. D., & Beach, S. R. H. (2000). Research on the nature and determinants of marital satisfaction: A decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 62*(4), 964-980.

- Carrère, S., Buehlman, K. T., Gottman, J. M., Coan, J. A., & Ruckstuhl, L. (2000). Predicting marital stability and divorce in newlywed couples. *Journal of Family Psychology, 14*(1), 42-58.
- Chen, L. H., Ye, Y., Chen, M., & Tung, I. (2010). Alegria! Flow in leisure and life satisfaction: The mediating role of event satisfaction using data from an acrobatics show. *Social Indicators of Research, 99*(2), 301-313.
- Cherlin, A. J. (2010). Demographic trends in the United States: A review of research in the 2000s. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 72*, 403-419.
- Coombs, R. H. (1991). Marital status and personal well-being: A literature review. *Family Relations, 40*(1), 97-102.
- Crawford, D. W., Houts, R. M., Huston, T. L., & George, L. J. (2002). Compatibility, leisure, and satisfaction in marital relationships. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 64*(2), 433-449.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Goodale, T., & Godbey, G. (1988). *The Evolution of Leisure: Historical and Philosophical Perspectives*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing.
- Graham, J. M. (2008). Self-expansion and flow in couples' momentary experiences: An experience sampling study. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 95*(3), 679-694.
- Hawks, S.R. (1991). Recreation in the family. In S.J.Bahr (Ed.) *Family research: A sixty year review, 1930-1990, Vol.1* (387-433). New York: Lexington books.

- Herridge, K., Shaw, S., & Mannell, R. (2003). An exploration of women's leisure within heterosexual romantic relationships. *Journal of Leisure Research, 35*(3), 274-291.
- Holman, T., & Epperson, A. (1984). Family and leisure: A review of the literature with research recommendations. *Journal of Leisure Research, 16*, 277-294.
- Holman, T. B., & Jacquart, M. (1988). Leisure activity patterns and marital satisfaction: A further test. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 50*, 69-77.
- Jackson, S. A., & Marsh, H. W. (1996). Development and validation of a scale to measure optimal experience: The flow state scale. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 18*, 17-35.
- Johnson, H. A., Zabriskie, R. B., & Hill, B. (2006). The contribution of couple leisure involvement, leisure time, and leisure satisfaction to marital satisfaction. *Marriage and Family Review, 40*(1), 69-91.
- Kim, H. K., & McKenry, P. C. (2002). The relationship between marriage and psychological well-being. *Journal of Family Issues, 23*(8), 885-911.
- Kleiber, D. A. (1999). *Leisure experience and human development: A dialectical interpretation*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Lavner, J. A., & Bradbury, T. N. (2010). Patterns of change in marital satisfaction over the newlywed years. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 72*, 1171-1187.
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Marriage [Def. 1a]. *Merriam-Webster Online*. Retrieved July 1, 2013, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/marriage>.
- Orthner, D. K. (1975). Leisure activity patterns and marital satisfaction over the marital career. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 1*, 91-102.

Orthner, D. K. (1998). Strengthening today's families: A challenge to parks and recreation.

Parks and Recreation, 87-98.

Orthner, D. K., & Mancini, J. A. (1990). Leisure Impacts on Family Interaction and Cohesion.

Journal of Leisure Research, 22(2), 125-137.

Orthner, D. K., & Mancini, J. A. (1991). Benefits of leisure for family bonding. In B. L. Driver,

P. J. Brown, & G. L. Peterson, (Eds.), *Benefits of Leisure*, (pp. 215-301). State College,

PA: Venture Publishing.

Palisi, B. J. (1984). Marriage companionship and marriage well-being: A comparison of

metropolitan areas in three countries. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 15, 43-56.

Peleg, O. (2008). The relationship between differentiation of self and marital satisfaction: What

can be learned from married people over the course of life? *The American Journal of*

Family Therapy. 36, 388-401.

Poff, R., Zabriskie, R., & Townsend, J. (2010). Australian family leisure: Modelling parent and

youth data. *Australian Family Leisure*, (13)3, 420-438.

Reissman, C., Aron, A., & Bergen, M. R. (1993). Shared activities and marital satisfaction:

Causal direction and self-expansion versus boredom. *Journal of Social and Personal*

Relationships, 10(2), 243-254.

Smith, G. T., Snyder, D. K., Trull, T. J., & Monsma, B. R. (1988). Predicting relationship

satisfaction from couples' use of leisure time. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*,

16(1), 3-13.

Vallerand, J. V., Genevieve, A. M., Elliot, A. J., Dumais, A., Demers, M., & Rousseau F. (2008).

Passion and performance attainment in sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 9, 373-

392.

- Ward, P., Barney, K., Lundberg, N., & Zabriskie, R. (in press). Modeling the relationship between marital satisfaction and couple leisure. *Journal of Leisure Research*.
- Ward, P., Lundberg, N., Zabriskie, R., & Barrett, K. (2009). Measuring marital satisfaction: A comparison of the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale and the Satisfaction with Married Life Scale. *Marriage and Family Review, 45*(4), 412-429.
- Zabriskie, R. B. (2000). *An examination of family and leisure behavior among families with middle school aged children*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.
- Zabriskie, R. B. (2001). Family recreation: How can we make a difference? *Parks and Recreation, 36*(10), 30-42.
- Zabriskie, R. B., & McCormick, B. P. (2003). Parent and child perspectives of family leisure involvement and satisfaction with family life. *Journal of Leisure Research, 35*(2), 163-189.

Appendix A-1: Instruments

Modified Marital Activity Profile (MMAP)

(Modified to include Flow and comparative skill levels)

The following questions ask about the activities you do with your spouse. Please refer to the last year or so. These questions ask about groups of activities, so try to answer in terms of the group as opposed to any one specific example. This may require you to “average” over a few different activities. Don’t worry about getting it exactly “right.” Just give your best estimate.

Take a moment to look at the example below. This will give you some instruction on how to fill in your answers.

QUESTION: Do you participate in **athletic activities** *with your spouse* (for example swimming, cycling, dancing, soccer, basketball, etc.) in which you are noticeably better than your spouse?

First do you do these activities? → YES X NO ___

If YES how often?	
At least daily	
At least weekly	x
At least monthly	
At least annually	

For about how long per time? (check only one)					
< 1 hour		1-2 hrs		2-3 hours	x
3-4 hours		4-5 hours		5-6hours	
6-7 hours		7-8 hours		8-9 hours	
9-10 hours		>10 hours		> 1 day	

Next, how often do you usually do these activities?

Then, about how long, on average, do you typically do this type of activity each time you do it?

Last, how satisfied are you with your participation with your spouse in these activities? Please answer this question EVEN IF YOU DO NOT do these activities with your spouse.

How satisfied are you with your level of participation with your spouse in these activities? (please circle one)

Very					Very
Dissatisfied					Satisfied
1	2	3	4	5	

COMPARATIVE SKILL LEVELS WITHIN MARITAL LEISURE

1. Symbol Key

< = less than (e.g. < 1 hour reads "less than one hour")

> = more than (e.g. > 10 hours reads "more than ten hours")

2.

3. **1. Do you participate**

in athletic activities *with your spouse* (for example swimming, cycling, dancing, soccer, basketball, etc.) in which you are noticeably better than your spouse?

YES ____ NO ____

If YES how often?		For about how long per time? (check only one)			
At least daily		< 1 hour	1-2 hrs	2-3 hours	
At least weekly		3-4 hours	4-5 hours	5-6hours	
At least monthly		6-7 hours	7-8 hours	8-9 hours	
At least annually		9-10 hours	>10 hours	> 1 day	

How satisfied are you with your level of participation with your spouse in these activities? (please circle one)

Very					Very
Dissatisfied					Satisfied
1	2	3	4	5	

These next set of questions relate to the thoughts and feelings you may have experienced during the activities in which you are noticeably better than your spouse. There are no right or wrong answers. Think about how you felt during the event and answer the questions using the rating scale below. Circle the number that best matches your experience from the options to the right of each question.

Rating Scale:

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree nor disagree Strongly agree Agree

1 2 3 4 5

My abilities matched the challenge of

the situation.

1 2 3 4 5

At least monthly		→	6-7 hours		7-8 hours		8-9 hours	
At least annually			9-10 hours		>10 hours		> 1 day	

How satisfied are you with your level of participation with your spouse in these activities? (please circle one)

Very					Very
Dissatisfied					Satisfied
1	2	3	4	5	

These next set of questions relate to the thoughts and feelings you may have experienced during the activities in which *your spouse is noticeably better than you*. There are no right or wrong answers. Think about how you felt during the event and answer the questions using the rating scale below. Circle the number that best matches your experience from the options to the right of each question.

Rating Scale:

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly agree	Agree
1	2	3	4	5

My abilities matched the challenge of the situation. 1 2 3 4 5

I did things spontaneously and automatically without having to think. 1 2 3 4 5

I knew what I wanted to achieve. 1 2 3 4 5

I was aware of how well I was performing. 1 2 3 4 5

I had total concentration. 1 2 3 4 5

I felt in total control of my body. 1 2 3 4 5

I was not worried about what others may have been thinking of me. 1 2 3 4 5

The way time passed seemed to be different from normal. 1 2 3 4 5

I found the experience extremely rewarding. 1 2 3 4 5

3. Do you participate in **athletic activities** *with your spouse* (for example swimming, cycling, dancing, soccer, basketball, etc.) in which you and your spouse are at similar skill levels?

YES ___ NO ___

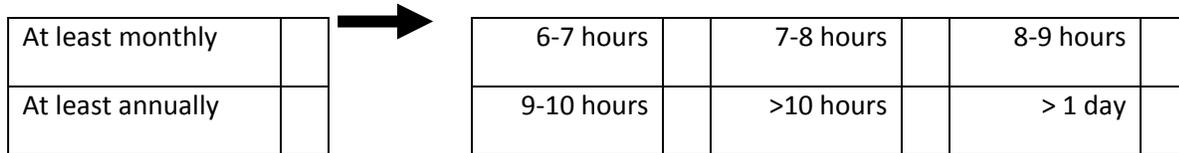
If YES how often?	
At least daily	
At least weekly	
At least monthly	
At least annually	



For about how long per time? (check only one)			
< 1 hour	1-2 hrs	2-3 hours	
3-4 hours	4-5 hours	5-6hours	
6-7 hours	7-8 hours	8-9 hours	
9-10 hours	>10 hours	> 1 day	

How satisfied are you with your level of participation with your spouse in these activities? (please circle one)

Very Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 Very Satisfied



How satisfied are you with your level of participation with your spouse in these activities? (please circle one)

Very					Very
Dissatisfied					Satisfied
1	2	3	4	5	

These next set of questions relate to the thoughts and feelings you may have experienced during the activities in which *your spouse is noticeably better than you*. There are no right or wrong answers. Think about how you felt during the event and answer the questions using the rating scale below. Circle the number that best matches your experience from the options to the right of each question.

Rating Scale:

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly agree	Agree
1	2	3	4	5

My abilities matched the challenge of the situation. 1 2 3 4 5

I did things spontaneously and automatically without having to think. 1 2 3 4 5

I knew what I wanted to achieve. 1 2 3 4 5

I was aware of how well I was performing. 1 2 3 4 5

I had total concentration. 1 2 3 4 5

I felt in total control of my body. 1 2 3 4 5

I was not worried about what others may have been thinking of me. 1 2 3 4 5

The way time passed seemed to be different from normal. 1 2 3 4 5

I found the experience extremely rewarding. 1 2 3 4 5

6. Do you participate in *non-athletic activities* with your spouse (for example card games, music, art, crafts, cooking, etc.) in which you and your spouse are at *similar skill levels*?

YES _____ NO ____

If YES how often?	
At least daily	
At least weekly	
At least monthly	
At least annually	



For about how long per time? (check only one)			
< 1 hour	1-2 hrs	2-3 hours	
3-4 hours	4-5 hours	5-6hours	
6-7 hours	7-8 hours	8-9 hours	
9-10 hours	>10 hours	> 1 day	

How satisfied are you with your level of participation with your spouse in these activities? (please circle one)

Very Dissatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 Very Satisfied

I found the experience extremely rewarding. 1 2 3 4 5

7. Do you participate in **outdoor activities** *with your spouse* (for example hiking, fishing, waterskiing, bird watching, rock climbing, scuba diving, etc.) in which you are noticeably better than your spouse?

YES _____ NO ____

If YES how often?			For about how long per time? (check only one)		
At least daily			< 1 hour	1-2 hrs	2-3 hours
At least weekly			3-4 hours	4-5 hours	5-6hours
At least monthly			6-7 hours	7-8 hours	8-9 hours
At least annually			9-10 hours	>10 hours	
			1 day	8 days	15 days
			2 days	9 days	16 days
			3 days	10 days	17 days
			4 days	11 days	18 days
			5 days	12 days	19 days
			6 days	13 days	20 days
			One week	Two weeks	3 or more weeks

How satisfied are you with your level of participation with your spouse in these activities? (please circle one)

Very				Very
Dissatisfied				Satisfied
1	2	3	4	5

These next set of questions relate to the thoughts and feelings you may have experienced during the activities in which you are noticeably better than your spouse. There are no right or wrong answers.

8. Do you participate in **outdoor activities** *with your spouse* (for example hiking, fishing, waterskiing, bird watching, rock climbing, scuba diving, etc.) in which *your spouse is noticeably better than you?*

YES _____ NO ____

If YES how often?		➔	For about how long per time? (check only one)					
At least daily			< 1 hour		1-2 hrs		2-3 hours	
At least weekly			3-4 hours		4-5 hours		5-6hours	
At least monthly			6-7 hours		7-8 hours		8-9 hours	
At least annually			9-10 hours		>10 hours			
			1 day		8 days		15 days	
			2 days		9 days		16 days	
			3 days		10 days		17 days	
			4 days		11 days		18 days	
			5 days		12 days		19 days	
			6 days		13 days		20 days	
			One week		Two weeks		3 or more weeks	

How satisfied are you with your level of participation with your spouse in these activities? (please circle one)

Very					Very
Dissatisfied					Satisfied
1	2	3	4	5	

These next set of questions relate to the thoughts and feelings you may have experienced during the activities in which *your spouse is noticeably better than you.* There are no right or wrong answers. Think about how you felt during the event and answer the questions using the rating scale below. Circle the number that best matches your experience from the options to the right of each question.

9. Do you participate in **outdoor activities** *with your spouse* (for example hiking, fishing, waterskiing, bird watching, rock climbing, scuba diving, etc.) in which you and your spouse are at similar skill levels?

YES _____ NO ____

If YES how often?				For about how long per time? (check only one)					
At least daily	<input type="checkbox"/>			< 1 hour	<input type="checkbox"/>	1-2 hrs	<input type="checkbox"/>	2-3 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>
At least weekly	<input type="checkbox"/>			3-4 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	4-5 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	5-6hours	<input type="checkbox"/>
At least monthly	<input type="checkbox"/>			6-7 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	7-8 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	8-9 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>
At least annually	<input type="checkbox"/>			9-10 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	>10 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
				1 day	<input type="checkbox"/>	8 days	<input type="checkbox"/>	15 days	<input type="checkbox"/>
				2 days	<input type="checkbox"/>	9 days	<input type="checkbox"/>	16 days	<input type="checkbox"/>
				3 days	<input type="checkbox"/>	10 days	<input type="checkbox"/>	17 days	<input type="checkbox"/>
				4 days	<input type="checkbox"/>	11 days	<input type="checkbox"/>	18 days	<input type="checkbox"/>
				5 days	<input type="checkbox"/>	12 days	<input type="checkbox"/>	19 days	<input type="checkbox"/>
				6 days	<input type="checkbox"/>	13 days	<input type="checkbox"/>	20 days	<input type="checkbox"/>
				One week	<input type="checkbox"/>	Two weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>	3 or more weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>

How satisfied are you with your level of participation with your spouse in these activities? (please circle one)

Very					Very
Dissatisfied					Satisfied
1	2	3	4	5	

These next set of questions relate to the thoughts and feelings you may have experienced during the activities in which you and your spouse are at similar skill levels. There are no right or wrong answers. Think about how you felt during the event and answer the questions using the rating scale below. Circle the number that best matches your experience from the options to the right of each question.

Rating Scale:

Below are seven statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 1-7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by circling the appropriate number on the line following that item. Please be open and honest in responding.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree
1. In most ways my married life is close to ideal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. The conditions of my married life are excellent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I am satisfied with my married life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. So far I have gotten the important things I want in my married life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. If I could live my married life over, I would change almost nothing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Marital activities are an important part of our married life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Marital activities add to the quality of our life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Satisfaction With Married Life (SWML)

Below are seven statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 1-7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by circling the appropriate number on the line following that item. Please be open and honest in responding.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	strongly disagree	disagree	slightly disagree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree
1. In most ways my married life is close to ideal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. The conditions of my married life are excellent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I am satisfied with my married life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. So far I have gotten the important things I want in my married life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. If I could live my married life over, I would change almost nothing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Demographic Questions

1. You are a Male _____ Female _____
2. What is your current age (years)?
 - 20 or Younger
 - 21-25
 - 26-30
 - 31-35
 - 36-40
 - 40-45
 - Older than 45
3. Years Married _____
4. Have you ever been divorced? Yes _____ No _____
5. Ethnicity _____
6. City and State in which you currently reside _____
7. What is the approximate population of the city in which you currently reside?
Urban/Suburban (More than 50,000) _____ or Rural (Less than 50,000) _____
8. What is your highest obtained level of education?
 - Less than high-school
 - High-School or GED
 - Some college

- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Post College Graduate

9. What is your COMBINED annual income as a couple, approximately?

- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000-\$19,999
- \$20,000-29,999
- \$30,000-\$39,999
- \$40,000-\$49,999
- \$50,000-\$59,999
- \$60,000-\$69,999
- \$70,000-\$79,999
- \$80,000-\$99,999
- \$100,000-\$124,999
- \$125,000-\$150,000
- Over \$150,000

10. Have you been unemployed within the last 12 months? Yes ____ No ____ . If yes, then for how many months? _____

Appendix B: Consent Form

Qualtrics Consent Form

If you agree to participate in the research pool you will be asked to provide some demographic information about yourself in addition to your name and email address. This information will be collected confidentially and you have the right to leave incomplete any questions you do not wish to answer. This consent form and any demographic information you provide will be kept separately from the materials used in any experiment you choose to participate in.

Only faculty and research assistants conducting research will have access to this information. Only averages and general trends among variables will be shown in publications. Demographic information will only be used to exclude participants from studies in the rare event that demographics are a significant variable in the research being conducted.

Your participation in the research pool and in any individual study is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to participate, you do not have to consent. The benefits you may expect from joining the participant pool are: (a) payment for your participation in research studies and (b) an opportunity to contribute to scientific research.

This survey is being conducted by Brigham Young University students to determine a relationship between comparative skill levels in leisure activities and marital leisure satisfaction. You have been invited to participate because you are married, and have been for less than six years. Your participation in this study will require the completion of the attached survey. This should take approximately 20-30 minutes of your time. Your participation will be anonymous and you will not be contacted again in the future. There are minimal risks for participation in this study. There will be no reference to your individual identity. There are no direct benefits to you personally. If you have questions regarding this study you may contact Ramon Zabriskie at zabriskie@byu.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in research projects, you may contact: Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, phone: (801)-422-5490.