SHARED FUN AND ENJOYMENT IN OLDER ADULTHOOD

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Siera Jo Schwanz
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the current study is to explore the use of shared fun and enjoyment in older adult couples across varying contexts and examine how shared fun and enjoyment is related to husbands' and wives' current and future marital functioning. In being the first to examine older adult couples engaging in shared fun and enjoyment across varying interactions (marital narrative task, health support task, and problem-solving task), the current study expands the focus on marital functioning to an understudied population. To further explore this area, the current study used both self-reports and observations drawn from a sample of 64 happily married older couples followed over a year. Using actor-partner interdependence models, the current study aims to answer four research questions: (1) How much shared fun and enjoyment are the couples engaging in and does it depend on the conversation they are having?; (2) How does shared fun and enjoyment during couples' interactions predict spouses' current and future marital satisfaction?; (3) Does the association between shared fun and enjoyment and marital satisfaction differ depending on the interactional context (problem solving, health support, and reminiscing)? and (4) Does the association between shared fun and enjoyment and marital functioning (marital satisfaction and marital closeness) differ for husbands and wives? Couples were observed having moderate levels of fun globally and across all three interaction tasks. When couples were observed having more fun together, both spouses reported being more maritally satisfied at Wave 1. As to the specific associations between fun during the tasks and spouses' marital satisfaction, findings varied both across interactions and between spouses. Given the considerable increase of this population residing in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014), there is a need to continue to explore what may optimize relational well-being in the older adulthood.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One Introduction 1
Chapter Two Literature Review 4
  Defining Fun and Enjoyment in Couples 4
  Fun and Enjoyment for Couples 5
  Considering Fun and Enjoyment in Context 8
  Considering Fun and Enjoyment Later in Life 11
Chapter Three Methods 13
  The Current Study 13
  Participants 14
  Procedure 15
  Measures 16
    Observational Coding 16
    Relationship Interaction Tasks 17
    Marital Satisfaction 19
  Analysis Plan 19
Chapter Four Preliminary Results and Discussion 21
  Results 21
    Preliminary Analyses 21
    How Much Fun Were Couples Having and Did it Depend on Their Discussions? 22
    Shared Fun and Enjoyment and Current and Future Marital Functioning 23
    Does it Depend on Context? 23
  Discussion 26
    A Focus on Fun and Enjoyment in Problem-Solving and Health Support Task 27
    The Limits of Fun, Particularly for Wives and During the Marital Narrative Task 29
Chapter Five Recommendations and Conclusions 32
List of References 35
Appendix 42
Vita 49

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1. Shared Fun and Enjoyment Across Interaction Tasks 44
Figure 4.2. APIM and Global Shared Fun and Enjoyment 45
Figure 4.3. APIM and Shared Fun and Enjoyment in the Marital Narrative Task 46
Figure 4.4. APIM and Shared Fun and Enjoyment in the Problem Solving Task 47
Figure 4.5. APIM and Shared Fun and Enjoyment in the Health Support Task 48

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Playful interactions are one of the most enjoyable and rewarding parts of romantic relationships as they can enhance positive feelings and bonding, elicit feelings of fun and enjoyment, and foster feelings of trust, intimacy, and security over time (Campbell, Martin, & Ward, 2008; De Koning & Weiss 2002; Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015a, 2015b). Relatedly, the use of humor in romantic relationships has been identified as a factor in reducing stress, increasing trust and intimacy, and increasing satisfaction in interpersonal relationships (Campbell et al., 2008; Hampes, 2001; Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015a, 2015b). Butzer and Kuiper (2008) suggest that couples often use humor to cope with various aspects of their lives, such as conflict situations and to optimize pleasant encounters. Although the significance of humor, play, and playful interactions within romantic relationships has been explored in young adult dating and married couples (Butzer & Kuper, 2008; Cambell et al., 2008; Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015b), there is a dearth of literature examining shared fun and enjoyment in older adult couples.

Such an omission is surprising as researchers have proposed that the benefits of fun and enjoyment in fact accrue over time (Campbell et al., 2008; McCoy, Rauer, & Sabey, 2017; Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015a, 2015b). Moreover, humor, play, and playful interactions may be especially relevant in older adult couples as individuals' desire to seek positive emotions from close relationships increases later in life. Socioemotional selectivity theory suggests this change happens because older adults perceive time to be less open-ended (Carstensen, 1992; Carstensen, Isaacowitz, & Charles, 1999;

Charles, 2010; Li & Fung, 2011). This change in time perspective causes a corresponding change in priorities, whereby older adults begin to prioritize positive interactions within their close relationships and focus more on enhancing intimacy and satisfaction within these relationships over obtaining status, resources, and wealth (Carstensen et al., 1999; Charles, 2010; Li & Fung, 2011). Thus, this theory would suggest that older adults' increased desire to optimize positive emotions and intimacy may lead them to seek out more playful and enjoyable experiences within their marital interactions (Li & Fung, 2011). As to which interactions may lend themselves to older adults experiencing play, fun, and enjoyment, is less clear.

Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to better understand the use of shared fun and enjoyment in older adult couples across varying conversational contexts and examine how shared fun and enjoyment is related to husbands' and wives' current and future marital satisfaction. Accordingly, the current study aims to capture the extent to which older couples engage in shared fun and enjoyment across three different interaction tasks and the associations of these behaviors with self-reported marital satisfaction. We focus here on a marital narrative task, a problem-solving task, and a health support task to provide insight into how older couples may behave differently across these contexts, as all of these interactions predict marital satisfaction and stability (Buehlman, Gottman, & Katz, 1992; McCoy, Rauer, & Sabey, 2017). By examining couples across interaction tasks, we can begin to see if older couples uniformly engage in fun and enjoyment when interacting or if shared fun and enjoyment occurs only in specific encounters. To accomplish this goal, the current study seeks to use a multi-method, two-wave study of 64 higher-functioning, happy older couples to

explore the links between shared fun and enjoyment and marital satisfaction. Moreover, we will explore whether these links vary based on the nature of the interaction or based on spouses' gender. Exploring shared fun and enjoyment is important as literature suggests playful behaviors, such as participating in recreational activities together may stimulate feelings of closeness (Claxton & Perry Jenkins, 2008; Moore & Henderson 2018) as well as increase a sense of understanding and appreciation for one another (Claxton & Perry-Jenkins, 2008; Crawford et al., 2002; Moore & Henderson, 2018). Unfortunately, the research on play and playfulness in adults is scarce (Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015a, 2015b), particularly for the older adult population.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Fun and Enjoyment in Couples

Although there has yet to be a definitive conceptualization of shared fun and enjoyment in marital interactions, the closely related play and humor literatures offer a potential avenue through which to explore these concepts. Looking first at play, Van Vleet and Feeney (2015a) define play as a behavior or activity that is carried out with the goal of amusement, enjoyment, and fun. Play is distinguishable from other leisure and social activity behaviors, such as reading, watching television, and playing sports, due to two main components. First, the activity must be highly interactive, and second, the motivation for engaging in the activity must be to have fun above all other goals (Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015a; 2015b). Play in adulthood can be many activities, including dancing, throwing the frisbee, having secret code names, and sharing inside jokes (Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015a; 2015b). Additionally, Van Vleet and Feeney (2015a) outline the construct of playfulness as separate from play, as “playfulness is described as a dispositional tendency to engage in play (i.e., an inclination to pursue activities with the goal of amusement or fun), with an enthusiastic and in- the moment attitude, and that are highly-interactive in nature” (p.632). Van Vleet and Feeney (2015a) further suggest that activities that require little interchange and interaction between participants or the activity itself is too passive to be considered play. From this work, the framework of play and playfulness provides a key piece to understanding shared fun and

enjoyment, namely that there is a mutual behavior that is carried out with the goal of amusement, enjoyment, and fun.

The literature on humor provides a complementary insight into the conceptualization of shared fun and enjoyment. Similar to play, there are several different definitions based on the context and motivation of the social interaction. For example, Ziv and Gadish (1989) described intentional humor which is defined as humor created by people to be enjoyed as a form of mutual communication to elicit a behavioral response (smile or laughter) reflecting cognitive-emotional processes. Although this definition focuses on the motivation for the humor, Butzer and Kuipner (2008) offer an alternative definition that focuses on different types of humor. Positive humor is generally used to feel a mutual closeness to one's partner and to ease tension, whereas negative humor is used to express hostility towards one partner. Avoiding humor is used to minimize or avoid conflict through changing the focus of the conversation (Butzer & Kuipner, 2008; De Koning & Weiss, 2002). From these definitions of humor and its potential motivations, key components can be used to structure our conceptualization of shared fun and enjoyment. Again, the focus is on humor created as a form of mutual communication to elicit positive affect and the motivation to feel a mutual closeness to one's partner. Thus, using play, playfulness, and humor as a framework, the current study conceptualizes shared fun and enjoyment as an inherently dyadic interaction in which partners who are satisfied with their interaction express mutual positive affect and enjoyment in their shared responses.

Fun and Enjoyment for Couples

Deriving mutual fun and enjoyment through engaging in play behavior may produce both immediate benefits for the individuals and the couple, as well as long-term benefits for both (Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015a). Regarding the immediate benefits of play for individuals, it can generate positive affect, feelings of happiness, enjoyment, inspiration, enthusiasm, delight, and excitement (Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015a). In addition to positive affect, play may also immediately reduce negative affect, as it may provide a break from life's stressors (Helgeson & Berg, 2019; Lauer & Lauer. 2002; Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015a). Over the long term, the reduction of stress due to play may help build resilience and problem solving skills and foster individuals' ability to think more flexibly (Lauer & Lauer, 2002; Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015b).

Beyond the short- and long-term benefits of play for individuals, research suggests various immediate relational benefits as well. Because play is among the few voluntary and non-obligatory behaviors that individuals engage in, shared play behaviors are likely to yield feelings of being in tune with one's partner, as well as being accepted, valued, and understood by them (Van Vleet & Feeny, 2015b). Additionally, the spontaneity of play and playful behavior may elicit feelings of compatibility and positive communication (Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015b). Further, Van Vleet & Feeney (2015b) suggest that positive emotions for one's partner is likely to be amplified due to the activity itself. High levels of shared sense of humor, shared novel activities, and spontaneity have been linked with greater relationship closeness, positive affect, and relationship satisfaction (Aune & Wong, 2002; Vanderbleek, Robinson, Casado-Kehoe & Young, 2011; Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015b). Furthermore, higher scores on shared

enjoyment in activities are also associated with better communication skills, better conflict resolution, and more idealistic views of the partner (Vanderbleek et al., 2011; Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015a). Play, playful behavior, and humor also produce several long-term benefits for romantic relationships.

Long-term outcomes of play include increased feelings of intimacy, trust, and security over time (Campbell et al., 2008; Hampes, 2001; Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015b). Additionally, prior research has suggested that shared play increases relationship satisfaction (Butzer & Kuiper, 2008), enhances bonding (Ziv & Gadish, 1989), and yields a greater appreciation for the significant other (De Konning & Weiss, 2002). In addition to play, shared humor can also enhance many positive long-term relational outcomes, such as strengthening attachment, enhancing relationship satisfaction and bonding, and buffering and stabilizing relationships (Cambell et al., 2008; Hampes, 2001). Interestingly, several studies have found that not every kind of joint activity enhances relationship functioning (Crawford, Houts, Huston, & George, 2002; Reissman, Arron, & Bergen, 1993). For example, one longitudinal study following married couples for over a decade found that the association between companionship and relationship satisfaction was contingent on the type of joint leisure activity and whether an individual and their spouse preferred that activity or not (Crawford, Houts, Huston, & George, 2002).

The reason for these mixed findings may be because shared activities influence men and women differently. Couple's compatibility in shared activities may be differentially associated with men and women's relationship functioning. For instance, couples that are incompatible may pursue activities separately or one partner might agree to participate in an activity that they do not particularly enjoy. Consequently,

incompatible couples may experience a decrease in relationship satisfaction, relationship quality, or closeness (Crawford et al., 2002). The way that couples ultimately decide on which activities they choose to pursue is likely influenced by multiple factors, such as the differing gender-role socialization of men and women, an individual's gender identity, and the extent to which leisure activities are normatively sex-typed (Crawford, et al., 2002; Swim & Surra, 1999). For example, women are traditionally socialized as the primary caretaker of emotional well-being for their relationships, such as initiating conversations surrounding feelings and conflict. Moreover, women are often socialized to make individual sacrifices for the benefit of the other person in their relationship, such as sacrificing their own interests and time for the interest of their male partner (Coontz, 1992; Crawford, et al., 2002). Women may be more likely to relent when the couple's interests do not align with one another (Crawford, et al., 2002), potentially resulting in them engaging in activities with their significant other that they do not enjoy, which is likely to lead to feelings of dissatisfaction or incongruence among men and women's perceived relationship functioning. Although fun and enjoyment of certain activities may be associated differently for men's and women's marital satisfaction, the context in which these activities occur may also be linked differently with marital satisfaction.

Considering Fun and Enjoyment in Context

Van Vleet and Feeney (2015b) suggest that future research on play behaviors should begin to identify the contexts in which play may be more or less beneficial to an individual or their relationship. Although it is generally hypothesized that play and humor

would elicit many benefits for relationships, there are also likely to be conditions under which play and humor may not lead to positive outcomes (Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015b). For example, verbally teasing someone may result in conflict or dissolution of the relationship if the teasing is not received well (Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015b). Further, even individuals who poke fun at somebody they are close to may elicit negative emotions, as it could be perceived as an attack (Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015a, 2015b). However, much of the play and humor literature does not specify the context of the interaction, rather researchers analyze self-reports on the overall use of play or humor and their effects on relationship functioning, such as closeness, intimacy, and relationship satisfaction (De Konning & Weiss, 2002; Hampes, 2001; Ziv & Gadish, 1989).

Of the few studies that consider interactional context, there is evidence to suggest its importance. For instance, Butzer and Kuiper (2008) explored the use of humor and relationship satisfaction in conflict scenarios and pleasant encounters among undergraduates who were in romantic relationships for at least 3 months. Findings revealed that participants who reported greater relationship satisfaction reported significantly lower levels of negative humor and avoidant humor in conflict scenarios compared to pleasant encounters (Butzer & Kuiper, 2008). In contrast, participants who reported being less satisfied reported the same levels of avoidant humor and negative humor regardless of the context of their interaction (Butzer & Kuiper, 2008). Similarly, Campbell et al. (2008) found that younger individuals whose partners used less aggressive humor during conflict tasks were more satisfied with their relationship and reported higher levels of perceived closeness and better problem-

solving skills following the task than those whose partners used more aggressive humor.

Although conflict continues to be important for older couples (Birditt & Fingerman, 2005; Carstensen, Graff, Levenson, & Gottman, 1996; Hoppmann & Blanchard-Fields, 2011; Rauer, Williams, & Jensen, 2017), there are additional interactional contexts that may also be particularly relevant for older adult couples. For instance, as individuals age, they begin to experience more health-related problems and illnesses (Becker & Kaufman, 1995; Lynn & Adamson, 2003). Thus, fun and enjoyment with spouses surrounding health challenges may be an important interactional context to examine relationship functioning. For instance, Van Vleet, Helgeson, and Berg (2019) explored daily play with one's romantic partner and its link to mood, diabetes disclosure, receiving support from partner, and perceived coping stressors in patients with Type 1 diabetes. Findings revealed that daily play with one's romantic partner was linked to a more positive mood, greater disclosure of diabetes to one's partner, higher support received from one's partner and higher levels of perceived coping effectiveness (Van Vleet et al., 2019). Although Van Vleet and colleagues (2019) were the first to examine chronic illness and the effects that play has on relationship functioning within this context, further work needs to be done to examine to what extent couples engage in shared fun and enjoyment while discussing health issues more generally, as this may give researchers insight into the extent that individuals and relationships cope with chronic illnesses and other health-related challenges.

Expanding beyond the scope of conflict and health, reminiscence is another context in which older adult couples are likely to engage and derive unique benefits

(Butler, 2002). Reminiscent and storytelling activities yield several important mental and physical health benefits for older adults (Butler, 2002). For instance, individuals who frequently engage in positive reminiscent activities (e.g., self-identity and child rearing) experience greater overall well-being (Burke & Rauer, under review; Cappeliez & O'Rourke, 2006). Older couples may reflect on past experiences as a way to reinforce positive emotions and resolve past conflicts to maximize the quality of the rest of their lives (Burke & Rauer, under review). Therefore, examining older couples reminiscing together may be a particularly relevant opportunity for couples to engage in shared fun and enjoyment.

Considering Fun and Enjoyment Later in Life

Evidence suggesting shared fun and enjoyment may meaningfully differ across contexts underscores the importance of taking a developmental perspective to the study of shared fun and enjoyment. Accordingly, the current study is grounded in socioemotional selectivity theory (Carstensen, 1991, 1992, 1999), which is a life-span theory that suggests that individuals' perceptions of time become more limited – whether conscious or unconscious – as they age, and this changing perception plays a role in the prioritization of goals (Carstensen et al., 1999). More specifically, socioemotional selectivity theory suggests that two types of goals motivate humans: those that are knowledge-related (e.g., accruing resources and a larger social network) and those that are emotionally-based (e.g., a desire for close interpersonal relationships). As individuals age, there is an increased desire to focus on meaningful emotional goals due to their place in the life cycle and perspective of more limited time,

whereas the prioritization of knowledge-related goals declines over the course of life (Carstensen et al., 1999). For example, the theory suggests that an older adult may have a selective, small social network with fewer knowledge-based resources but it is more emotionally intimate (Carstensen et al., 1996; Carstensen et al., 1999). Thus, over time, older adults may begin to seek out playful interactions, fun, and enjoyment as a way to promote meaningful emotional social interactions.

Complementing socioemotional selectivity theory, Li and Fung (2011) suggest that couples experience a similar change to that which is experienced in individual goals across the lifespan. For example, as older couples age together, their shared goals switch from knowledge-related goals, such as goals that allow them to acquire knowledge from social relationships and prepare them for the future, to emotional goals, such as seeking positive emotions from social relationships (Li & Fung, 2011). The shift in goals can help couples derive greater meaning from life and to maintain and enhance positive affect in the present. As a result, older couples may elicit fun and enjoyment within their romantic relationship more frequently as they begin to place greater importance on meaningful interactions with one another. Thus, it seems reasonable to expect that older adult couples may experience high levels of shared fun and enjoyment to enhance their relationship closeness and satisfaction (Baxter, 1987; Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015a).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

The Current Study

The purpose of the current study is to better understand the use of shared fun and enjoyment in older adult couples across varying contexts and examine how shared fun and enjoyment is related to husbands' and wives' current and future marital satisfaction. In being the first to examine older adult couples engaging in shared fun and enjoyment across varying interactions, the current study expands the focus on marital satisfaction to an understudied population. Due to the increase in older adults residing in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014), there is a need to further explore what may optimize relational well-being in this population. Unfortunately, there is limited research about older adults' marital functioning.

Thus, the current study aimed to answer four research questions. First, how much shared fun and enjoyment are the couples engaging in and does this depend on the conversation they are having? Based on the socioemotional selectivity theory, we hypothesized that this sample of happily-married, long-term couples will demonstrate high amounts of global fun and enjoyment with one another across all three interaction tasks. Due to the positive nature of the marital narrative task, we hypothesized that there will be a greater amount of shared fun and enjoyment in the reminiscing task than in either the health support or problem-solving tasks. Second, how does shared fun and enjoyment during couples' interactions predict spouses' current and future marital satisfaction? We hypothesized that the more overall shared fun and enjoyment that

couples were engaging in at Wave 1, the more maritally satisfied both spouses will be concurrently and a year later. Third, does the association between shared fun and enjoyment and marital satisfaction differ depending on the interactional context (problem solving, health support, and reminiscing)? Finally, we explored if the association between shared fun and enjoyment and marital satisfaction differed for husband and wives? These last two questions were more exploratory and thus we did not propose a priori hypotheses. Examining the understudied older adult population may provide researchers and practitioners with unique insights about how shared fun and enjoyment may foster greater current and future marital functioning during the later years. Doing so is critical, as better marital functioning has been shown to enhance health across a number of outcomes (e.g., self-rated health, quicker wound healing; reduced cardiovascular disease; Robles, Slatcher, Trombello, & McGinn, 2014), making fun and enjoyment a potentially important avenue through which to enhance both relational and individual well-being.

Participants

Sixty-four married heterosexual couples in the Southeastern United States were recruited as part of a larger longitudinal study investigating marital relationships and well-being in older adulthood. Participants for the current study were recruited via newspaper advertisements, as well as from flyers and announcements in churches and other organizations within the community. To participate in the study, couples had to be: (1) married, (2) at least partially retired or working less than 40 hours a week, and (3) able to drive to the research center.

At Wave 1, wives and husbands were approximately 69.45 (*SD* = 7.00) and 71.42 years old (*SD* = 7.41). A majority of the couples were in their first marriage (79.70% for wives, 81.30% for husbands) and had been married for an average of 42.40 years (*SD* = 14.97). Wives had approximately 2.52 (*SD* = 1.29) children and husbands had an average of 2.59 (*SD* = 1.39) children. Of the 64 participants, most were White (*n* = 60 and *n* = 61, respectively). In terms of education, most pairs (67.20% of wives and 89.10% of husbands) had college or post-graduate degrees. The average household income was $85,875.00 (*SD* = $64,079.49) and they had an average total wealth of $1,082,547.62 (*SD* = $1,277,611.95), which included couple assets such as property, pensions, and IRAs. Fifty-four wives and fifty-one husbands were fully retired.

For Wave 2, 55 of the original 64 couples (86%) agreed to participate in the second wave. Wave 2 was completed approximately 1 year after the first wave of data collection (*M* = 16.8 months).

Procedure

Couples participated in two waves of data collection. At Wave 1, couples came to an on-campus research facility for a 2-3 hour marital interview comprised of several relationship interaction tasks, including the marital narrative task, problem-solving task, and health support task, which are the focal relationship interaction tasks of the current study. At the end of Wave 1, each spouse was given a take-home questionnaire assessing individual health, marital functioning, and various marital correlates (e.g., personality, religiosity). Couples were compensated $75 after completing and returning their questionnaires via pre-addressed, pre-stamped envelopes.

At Wave 2, the fifty-five couples that agreed to participate in a follow-up interview were sent questionnaires via mail. Couples were paid $50 upon completing and returning the questionnaires in the pre-addressed, pre-stamped envelopes. Attrition analyses revealed no significant differences between couples who participated in Wave 1 only and couples who participated in both Wave 1 and Wave 2 for husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction or shared fun and enjoyment in all three interaction tasks.

Measures

Observational coding

Shared fun and enjoyment. At Wave 1, couples participated in three interaction tasks (marital narrative, problem-solving, and health support) that were video recorded and later coded by two graduate assistants for shared fun and enjoyment. Shared fun and enjoyment was coded on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*"Very low"*) to 7 (*"Very high"*). The 7-point scale was designed to assess the degree to which the dyad demonstrated mutual enjoyment of the interaction and joint activity. Ratings focused on (a) affective signs (e.g., mutuality of the interaction, tone of voice, visual signs such as facial expressions and physical touching, and body language); and (b) the tone of the interaction (i.e., neutral, enthusiastic, and delightful). Spouses who enjoyed their interaction but did not show it affectively were not rated as highly as those who were more demonstrative. The scale ranged from 1 (*Very low: No evidence of pleasure. Pair never has fun or enjoys the interaction, although there may be joint interaction. There is no mutual enjoyment of positive affect or negative interaction.)* to 4 *(Moderate*: *The pair does not mind being together. It is a pleasant interaction for both partners, though not*

really enjoyable. There are likely to be contingent expressions of affect with little visual regard.) to 7 *(Very high*: *The pair is very satisfied with the interaction and activity. The couple shows enjoyment in their interaction marked with exuberance or delight. There is consistent visual regard coupled with affective sharing)*. Due to the neutral nature of 3 (*There is occasional positivity that is not strong or frequently displayed and may be displayed by only one partner towards the other. Pair is doing OK together but without real joy or enthusiasm for their shared interactions), it was used as the anchor for the ratings.* Higher scores represented greater shared fun and enjoyment. Ratings for each couple were given at 5-minute intervals during each of the interaction tasks and were then averaged for each task to create a single score per task. A global shared fun and enjoyment score was then additionally calculated per couple by averaging shared fun and enjoyment scores across all three tasks. To achieve reliability, the first author trained the two coders using subsample videotapes until interobserver agreement was 80% or higher. Reliability was calculated via intraclass correlation on 20% of the taped interactions, and these intraclass correlations ranged from moderate reliability to good reliability (Koo & Li, 2016). Specifically, in the marital narrative task the two coders reached moderate reliability (r =.66), followed by good reliability in both the health support task (r =.76) and the problem-solving task (r =.88).

Relationship Interaction Tasks

Marital narrative task. Using a marital narrative task adapted from the Early Years of Marriage (EYM) project (Holmberg, Orbuch, &Veroff, 2004), couples were asked to work together to describe their relationship to an interviewer from its formation

to the present to expectations for the future. More specifically, couples were asked to share the story of how they met, their newlywed years, their middle years, the most recent years, and lastly their speculations about the future of their marriage. The interviewer encouraged the couples to recount their story organically and however they wanted to, as long as both partners participated. There were no time restrictions for this task, and couples, on average, completed the task in 31.84 minutes (*SD* = 13.19). For more information on the marital narrative task, see McCoy, Rauer, and Sabey (2017).

Problem-solving task. In the problem-solving task, couples were videotaped during a fifteen-minute problem-solving discussion, which assessed how couples interact with one another when discussing problems in their marriage. Prior to engaging in the task, spouses were given a list of common marital problems (e.g., wanting to go on more dates, needing to be more organized; adapted from Gottman, 1999) and were instructed to independently rate each issue within their marriage on a 6-point Likert scale from 0 (*not an issue*) to 5 (*major problem*). Next, couples were directed to jointly identify one issue to discuss in a research setting. The couple was then allotted fifteen-minutes to express both spouses' view of the conflict until they came up with a mutually agreed upon resolution or compromise. The interviewer was not present during the discussion. On average, couples completed the task in 8.98 minutes (*SD* = 4.31). For more information on this task, see Rauer et al. (2015).

Health support task. The health support task was modeled after a twenty-minute, turn-based discussion procedure developed by Cutrona, Hessling, and Suhr (1997) to capture support more generally. For the purposes of the larger study, however, the task was modified so that each spouse spoke only about a current or an anticipated health

concern (e.g., declining physical abilities). As the speaker, the spouse could choose any health topic that had not been previously discussed by the couple and was not an issue for which they blamed their spouse. As the listener, the spouse was instructed to respond as naturally as they would at home if their spouse came to them with an issue. Each spouse took turns being the speaker and the listener, and the order of which spouse presented their issue first was randomized. Again, the interviewer was not present for either support discussion. On average, couples completed the health support task in 8.58 minutes (*SD* = 5.29).

Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction was measured using a 24-item Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire for Older Persons (Haynes, et al., 1992). The questionnaire assessed standard marital satisfaction topics (e.g., “Overall, how satisfied are you with your marriage?”), as well as topics specific to older adult couples (e.g., “How satisfied are you with your spouse’s physical health?”). Marital satisfaction was assessed at both waves on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Very dissatisfied* to 6 = *Very satisfied*). Responses were coded so that higher scores reflected greater marital satisfaction, with a possible range of 24-139. At both waves reliability was high, Wave 1 (husbands: α = .93; wives: α = .93) and Wave 2 (husbands: α = .95; wives: α = .90).

Analysis Plan

To answer our first research question about the level of fun and enjoyment couples had overall and across different conversational tasks, we conducted descriptive

statistics and paired sample *t*-tests. To address our second research question about how couples' overall shared fun and enjoyment across their interactions predicted spouses' current and future marital satisfaction, an Actor Partner Interdependence Model (APIM; Kashy & Kenny, 2000) was fit in MPLUS 6.0 to account for the interdependence of couples. To examine our third research question regarding the association between shared fun and enjoyment and marital satisfaction within three different interactional contexts, three separate models were fit to assess the links between context-specific fun and enjoyment and marital satisfaction. Marital duration was included as a control in all models. According to Austin and Steyerberg (2015) and Iacobucci (2010), our sample size was acceptable for these models. Consistent with the recommendations for analyzing APIMs with distinguishable dyads, all models were fully saturated and thus demonstrated perfect fit (Peugh, DeLillo, & Panuzio, 2013). Missing data was addressed using Full Information Likelihood (FIML).

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations are presented in Table 4.1 of the appendices. Preliminary correlations revealed that shared fun and enjoyment in all three interaction tasks were correlated. Specifically, shared fun and enjoyment within the problem-solving task and the health support task were positively correlated, $r = .55$, $p < .01$. Further, shared fun and enjoyment within the problem-solving task and the marital narrative task were positively correlated, $r = .50$, $p < .01$. Lastly, shared fun and enjoyment in the marital narrative task was positively correlated with shared fun and enjoyment in the health support task, $r = .38$, $p < .01$.

Correlations also indicated that global shared fun and enjoyment was strongly correlated with husbands' marital satisfaction at Wave 1 ($r = .32$, $p < .01$) and Wave 2 ($r = .36$, $p < .01$). Further, global shared fun and enjoyment was marginally associated with wives' marital satisfaction at Wave 1 ($r = .24$, $p = .054$) and significantly associated at Wave 2 ($r = .28$, $p < .05$). Looking at the specific interaction tasks, no significant correlations were found between shared fun and enjoyment in the marital narrative task and husbands' marital satisfaction at Wave 1 or Wave 2. Moreover, there were no significant correlations found between shared fun during the narrative task and wives' marital satisfaction at Wave 1. Wives' marital satisfaction at Wave 2 was correlated with observed fun during the marital narrative task, $r = .27$, $p < .05$. Couples' demonstrating

more fun during the problem-solving task was associated with husbands reporting greater marital satisfaction at Wave 1, $r = .34$, $p < .01$, and at Wave 2, $r = .39$, $p < .01$. Wives' marital satisfaction at Wave 1, $r = .33$, $p < .01$, and at Wave 2, $r = .28$, $p < .05$, were also positively associated with couples' fun during the problem-solving task at Wave 1. Lastly, preliminary analyses revealed a marginal correlation between observed fun during the health support task and husbands' marital satisfaction at Wave 1, $r = .21$, $p < .09$ and a significant correlation at Wave 2, $r = .31$, $p < .05$. No significant correlations were found between couples' fun during the health support task and wives' marital satisfaction at either Wave 1 or Wave 2.

Paired sample *t*-tests revealed no significant differences between husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction at either Wave 1 ($M = 1.19$, $SD = 15.42$) or Wave 2 ($M = .214$, $SD = .76$). When comparing within spouses over time, there were no significant differences in husbands' marital satisfaction between the two waves, indicating that husbands' marital satisfaction appeared to be stable over time. Wives' satisfaction, however, significantly declined from Wave 1 to Wave 2, $t(55) = -5.02$, $p < .01$.

How Much Fun Were Couples Having and Did it Depend on Their Discussions?

As seen in Figure 4.1 of the appendix, couples displayed a moderate level of global shared fun and enjoyment ($M = 3.39$, $SD = .63$) and a moderate level of shared fun and enjoyment across all three interaction tasks. Surprisingly, couples displayed the highest level of shared fun and enjoyment in the problem-solving task ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.09$), followed by the marital narrative task ($M = 3.36$, $SD = .75$), and lastly the health support task ($M = 3.19$, $SD = .68$).

Paired *t*-tests revealed that couples demonstrated significantly more fun during the problem-solving task than during the health support task, $t(64) = 2.24$, $p < .05$ (M = .214, SD = .76). There were no significant differences in how much fun couples engaged in during the marital narrative task and the problem-solving task or the marital narrative task and health support task.

Shared Fun and Enjoyment and Current and Future Marital Functioning

We fit a fully saturated APIM with global shared fun and enjoyment and husbands' and wives' satisfaction predicting their own and their spouse's marital satisfaction (see Figure 4.2 of the appendix). The control variable, marital duration, was included. Wives' marital satisfaction at Wave 1 predicted their own marital satisfaction at Wave 2, $\beta = .98$, $p < .001$, and husbands' marital satisfaction at Wave 1 predicted their own marital satisfaction at Wave 2, $\beta = .37$, $p < .01$. Additionally, wives' marital satisfaction at Wave 1 predicted husbands' marital satisfaction at Wave 2, $\beta = .32$, $p < .05$, and husbands' marital satisfaction at Wave 1 was negatively linked to wives' marital satisfaction at Wave 2, $\beta = -.16$, $p < .05$. The more satisfied wives were at Wave 1, the more satisfied husbands were at Wave 2, however, the more satisfied husbands were at Wave 1, the less satisfied wives were at Wave 2.

Addressing our second research question, we found that global shared fun and enjoyment was positively correlated with husbands' marital satisfaction at Wave 1, $\beta = .32$, $p < .01$ and wives' marital satisfaction at Wave 1, $\beta = .24$, $p < .05$ (see Figure 4.2 of the appendix). Thus, when couples were observed having more fun together, both spouses reported being more maritally satisfied at Wave 1. However, global shared fun

and enjoyment did not predict husbands' or wives' marital satisfaction at Wave 2. The model explained a significant amount of variance for husbands' marital satisfaction (46.5%) and wives' marital satisfaction (82.6%) at Wave 2.

Does it Depend on Context?

To answer the third research question, a series of fully saturated APIMs were fit with husbands' and wives' satisfaction and shared fun and enjoyment within each of the three interactional contexts (marital narrative task, problem-solving task, and health support task). The control variable, marital duration, was included in all three models. First, as seen in Figure 4.3 of the appendix, we examined how couples' shared enjoyment during the marital narrative was linked to their concurrent and future marital satisfaction. Consistent with findings from the previous model examining global fun, wives' marital satisfaction at Wave 1 predicted their own marital satisfaction at Wave 2, $\beta = .98$, $p < .001$ and husbands' marital satisfaction at Wave 1 predicted their own marital satisfaction at Wave 2, $\beta = .37$, $p < .01$. Additionally, wives' marital satisfaction at Wave 1 predicted husbands' marital satisfaction at Wave 2, $\beta = .32$, $p < .05$, and husbands' marital satisfaction at Wave 1 was negatively linked to wives' marital satisfaction at Wave 2, $\beta = -.16$, $p < .05$. Shared fun and enjoyment in the marital narrative task was marginally linked to husbands' marital satisfaction at Wave 1, $\beta = .21$, $p < .10$, and marginally linked to wives' marital satisfaction at Wave 1, $\beta = .20$, $p < .10$. Thus, it appears that if the more couples were observed to have fun during the marital narrative task, they were marginally more likely to be maritally satisfied at Wave 1. Shared fun and enjoyment in the marital narrative task was not linked to either

husbands' or wives' marital satisfaction at Wave 2. The model explained a significant amount of variance for husbands' marital satisfaction (44.1%) and wives' marital satisfaction (82.5%) at Wave 2.

We next fit a fully saturated APIM with shared fun and enjoyment in the problem-solving task and husbands' and wives' satisfaction predicting their own and their spouse's marital satisfaction (see Figure 4.4 of the appendix). Again, findings regarding actor and partner effects in marital satisfaction were consistent with the previous models. Shared fun and enjoyment in the problem-solving task, however, was positively correlated with husbands' marital satisfaction at Wave 1, $\beta = .34$, $p < .01$ and positively correlated with wives' satisfaction at Wave 1, $\beta = .33$, $p < .01$. Shared fun and enjoyment in the problem-solving task was marginally linked to husbands' marital satisfaction at Wave 2, $\beta = .32$, $p < .05$, but did not predict wives' marital satisfaction at Wave 2. These findings suggest that the more fun couples had during the problem-solving tasks, the more satisfied both spouses were at Wave 1 and the more satisfied husbands were a year later, albeit marginally. The model explained a significant amount of variance for husbands' marital satisfaction (47.8%) and wives' marital satisfaction (82.6%) at Wave 2.

Finally, we examined how shared fun and enjoyment within the health support task predicted husbands' and wives' satisfaction (see Figure 4.5 of the appendix). Findings from this fully saturated APIM regarding actor and partner effects for marital satisfaction were again consistent with previous models. Couples' observed shared fun and enjoyment in the health support task was not linked to wives' marital satisfaction at Wave 1 but was marginally linked to husband's marital satisfaction at Wave 1, $\beta = .21$, p

< .10. Additionally, shared fun and enjoyment in the health support task was not linked to wives' marital satisfaction at Wave 2 but was significantly correlated with husbands' satisfaction at Wave 2, $\beta = .20$, $p < .05$. Thus, the more observed fun that couples were engaging in during the health support task, husbands were somewhat more likely to be satisfied at Wave 1 and significantly more likely to be satisfied at Wave 2.

Discussion

Researchers have found that husbands and wives consider humor and fun to be a key ingredient for a successful marriage (Butzer & Kuiper, 2008; Goodwin & Tang, 1991; Lauer, Lauer, & Kerr, 1990). However, even within a sample of highly satisfied couples, there are likely to be significant variations in the level of fun couples are having across different conversational contexts. Moreover, the extent to which couples' fun predicts husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction may vary as well. In being the first to examine older adult couples having fun together within three interaction tasks (marital narrative, problem-solving, and health support task), we were able to expand the consideration of how fun and enjoyment links to marital satisfaction to an understudied but highly relevant population. As predicted, findings from the current study suggest that these highly satisfied older couples did in fact display moderate levels of fun and enjoyment overall and across the three interaction tasks. Further, when couples were observed having more fun together, both spouses reported being more maritally satisfied at Wave 1. As to the specific associations between fun during the tasks and spouses' marital satisfaction, findings varied both across interactions and between spouses. Given the considerable increase of this population residing in the United

States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014), there is a need to continue to explore what may optimize relational well-being among those in older adulthood.

A Focus on Fun and Enjoyment in Problem-Solving and Health Support Task

As hypothesized, couples engaged in moderately high levels of fun globally and within all three interaction tasks. Consistent with Carstensen's (1992) socioemotional selectivity theory, the couples in our study may derive greater meaning from life by enhancing their present situations through eliciting fun and enjoyment more frequently with one another (Baxter, 1987; Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015a). Further, the socioemotional selectivity theory suggests that as individuals age, they desire to seek and optimize positive emotions from close relationships (Carstensen, 1992; Carstensen, Isaacowitz, & Charles, 1999; Charles, 2010; Li & Fung, 2011). Although having fun with one another was not associated with marital satisfaction across time, the positive interactions that the couples engaged in may have still been meaningful to the couple and the individuals. For instance, having fun during these three different interactional contexts could have elicited feelings of closeness or intimacy, which were not captured by marital satisfaction. Thus, the couples in our study may have been eliciting fun as a means to seek positive emotions, such as happiness and closeness, from their spouse.

As to whether this fun translated into greater marital satisfaction, findings suggest that having more fun in the problem-solving task and health support task was linked cross-sectionally with both spouses' marital satisfaction. Moreover, couples' fun and enjoyment at Wave 1 predicted husbands' marital satisfaction at Wave 2, though no significant links were found for wives' marital satisfaction at Wave 2 and having fun in

any of the three interaction tasks. Our findings that fun and enjoyment were stronger predictors of husbands' marital satisfaction than wives' are consistent with previous work on humor. For example, in an observational study of spontaneous shared laughter among heterosexual, young adult couples, Kurtz and Algoe (2015) found that shared laughter was more strongly linked to relational correlates for men than women, particularly men's commitment and passion (Kurtz & Agloe, 2015). The authors suggested that laughter and fun may be a more important relationship behavior for men than for women (Kurtz & Algoe, 2015).

A possible explanation for these gender differences comes from work suggesting that men and women derive value in their relationships from enacting different behaviors. For instance, Samster (2002) explains that men highly value and desire to entertain others in comparison to female counterparts, whose focus is primarily on expressing and managing emotions. Furthermore, shared fun and enjoyment may serve as a symbol of validation, understanding, and support for men but not for women (Kurtz & Algoe, 2015). Jensen, Rauer, and Volling (2013) suggest that husbands benefit from providing support, as it is a marker of how they feel about themselves as individuals and in turn how they feel towards their marriages. Thus, if shared fun and enjoyment serves as a symbol of support and understanding toward their spouse and relationship (Kurtz & Algoe, 2015), then relational benefits for men may be derived from this fun instantaneously and accrue across time (Jensen et al., 2013).

Another reason why fun and enjoyment may be so beneficial for couples, particularly during the problem-solving task, is that couples often use humor as a means of coping with various aspects in their lives, such as conflict and other negative

situations (Butzer & Kuiper, 2008). By using positive humor with one's partner, it can provoke feelings of closeness and serve as a buffer to easing tension when discussing difficult topics (Butzer & Kuiper, 2008; De Koning & Weiss, 2002). This could explain why the couples in our study had the highest levels of observed fun during the problem-solving task than any other interaction task, as couples were observed to joke with each other about their difficulties and disagreements surrounding topics such as being unorganized and not getting along with their in-laws. Further, many of the couples referred to similar conversations they had previously surrounding these same issues that had yet to change, which have now become a joke.

Although these findings offer a promising explanation as to why fun was most salient in the problem-solving task, Rauer, Sabey, Proulx, and Volling (2019) also suggest that stably-married older couples may be better equipped to navigate both new and older issues than couples earlier in marriage. Further, as suggested by Rauer and colleagues (2019), the happy couples in our study may represent an exclusive group, as they stayed together despite challenges while other couples who struggled with marital issues may have ended their relationship prior to entering older adulthood. It is important to note that although having fun in the problem-solving task seemed to be beneficial for both spouses' marital satisfaction at Wave 1 and husbands' marital satisfaction at Wave 2, having fun and joking with one another may not be beneficial in every conversation, particularly regarding health issues in older adulthood.

The Limits of Fun, Particularly for Wives and During the Marital Narrative Task

As individuals age, physical health challenges are likely to increase (Becker & Kaufman, 1995; Lynn & Adamson, 2003), thus, the need for both formal and informal supports are likely to become more critical to the older population (Gibbons et al., 2014; Van Vleet, Helgeson, & Berg, 2019). How couples navigate support for one another when facing health challenges may be an important contributor to marital outcomes in older adulthood (Van Vleet, Helgeson, & Berg, 2019). The couples in the current project engaged in the least amount of fun when discussing health challenges with one another. Furthermore, there was no significant association between shared fun and enjoyment in the health support task and wives' marital satisfaction at either wave. It may be that when discussing health challenges with their husbands, the wives in the current study were more concerned with thoughts of taking on the task of caregiving, as many women are expecting that they will assume these caregiving roles (Gibbons et al., 2014). According to an earlier study that explored gender differences in burden and mental health challenges in informal caregiving, women comprise of 70% of the caretaking population (Gallicchio, Siddiqi, Langenberg, & Baumgarten, 2002). Moreover, according to Gibbons and colleagues (2014), women experience a greater burden than men even when in similar caregiving situations. Thus, having fun with their husbands during this interaction task may not serve as a buffer to easing tension around health challenges like it did for the marital issues raised in the problem-solving task. Having fun while navigating conversations around health and marital challenges yielded many gender differences regarding the links to marital satisfaction, whereas

having fun in the marital narrative task appeared to hold similarly little predictive value for either spouses' marital satisfaction.

During the marital narrative task, couples were asked to recount the story of their lives together. More specifically, they reminisced on how they met, what their middle years were like, and where they are now and what they foresee for their future (Holmberg et al., 2004). Such a task should not only be developmentally salient according to Erickson (1959; 1963; 1982), but it has been found to generate many individual benefits such as the promotion of self-acceptance and self-worth (Stevens-Ratchford & 1993). Although couples in the current study engaged in moderate levels of fun and enjoyment during the marital narrative task, there were only marginal cross-sectional links of husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction and no significant correlations between husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction at Wave 2. Although these findings are surprising, it is important to note that even if fun during the reminiscence task was not linked to marital satisfaction, recounting their life together may still have been meaningful for them individually as they recalled hard times in their lives that they had gone through together, such as deaths, moving, and war. Processing these challenging moments in their lives may have been beneficial and meaningful to each spouse individually as they become more accepting of their life, but it may not have been as meaningful to the relationship (Stevens-Ratchford & 1993). Our findings suggest that there is variability in the significant associations of fun for husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction both cross-sectionally and longitudinally.

CHAPTER FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Our confidence in the findings are bolstered by our methodological design. First, our multimethod approach was imperative to our design, specifically the observational data of couples at Wave 1. This allowed us to examine shared fun and enjoyment as it naturally occurred between spouses across the interaction tasks. Had we not captured organically how couples were interacting with one another, we would have missed a compelling piece of couple's lives. Further, we were the first to explore how older couple's engagement in fun with one another is associated to both the husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction in multiple contexts. Understanding how older adult couples navigate conversations with one another while eliciting fun gives us greater insight into the multiple and complex discussions older couples have within their daily lives.

Due to certain limitations, results should be interpreted with caution. First, our sample primarily consisted of highly educated, White, financially-stable couples, which could affect how they elicit fun within these interaction tasks. For example, both trained coders were European Americans, and there is evidence to suggest that they may perceive and express fun and enjoyment differently than other race and ethnicities (Matsumoto, Seung, & Fontaine, 2008). For instance, a study conducted with over 5,000 participants in 32 countries found that there was great variability in expressivity norms between cultures (Matsumoto, Seung, & Fontaine, 2008). For example, cultures with greater values of individualism expressed emotions less freely than other cultures (Matsumoto, Seung, & Fontaine, 2008). Cultural differences among participants and

coders may influence how fun and enjoyment was displayed and perceived. Additionally, previous studies suggest that fun may manifest differently for couples in a lower socioeconomic status. For example, in a study done on couples with low-income status, Moore and Henderson (2018) found that transportation affected couples' ability to engage in recreational activities and have fun outside the home, thus, they often spent time participating in home-based activities with one another. Future work may want to choose a broader socioeconomic demographic to capture a more holistic picture of how older adult couples have fun with their spouse while discussing their life history, health issues, and marital problems. Another limitation was that during the marital narrative task, the interviewer was in the room and engaging in conversation with the couple. Trained coders were tasked with coding for shared fun and enjoyment during the marital narrative task between the couple, while excluding shared fun and enjoyment during this task between the couple and the interviewer. Coding reliability was lowest in the marital narrative task which may be due to coders having greater difficulty distinguishing who was engaging in fun and if it was naturally occurring within the couple or if it was influenced by the interviewer. Future research may want to exclude observational coding interactions where there is a third party engaging in conversations with the couple. Lastly, the three interaction tasks in which couples were observed weren't specifically designed to capture fun. Future research should observe couples engaging in tasks and activities that are specifically designed to be more enjoyable, such as leisure and recreational activities to better capture how having fun with one another is associated with marital correlates.

In conclusion, given the growing body of research suggesting that playful and enjoyable interactions are among the most fulfilling components of romantic relationships (Campbell, Martin, & Ward, 2008; De Koning & Weiss 2002; Van Vleet & Feeney, 2015a, 2015b), coupled with the literature suggesting that older adults desire more positive and emotionally intimate close relationships (Carstensen, 1991, 1992, 1999), it is vital that we as scholars work to understand how couples later in life use fun and enjoyment as a means to enhancing their relationship. Our findings indicate there is considerable variability in how fun and enjoyment are associated with husbands' and wives' current and future marital satisfaction across multiple conversational contexts. Although couples had moderate levels of fun globally and within all three interactions, wives' fun tended to be limited particularly in the health support task, whereas husbands' fun tended to be positively associated to marital satisfaction longitudinally in the health support task and problem-solving task. Given the varied associations of fun within the three interaction tasks and between husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction, more attention should be devoted to understanding how older couples navigate having fun together, as doing so may reveal how couples are able to maintain their marital satisfaction.

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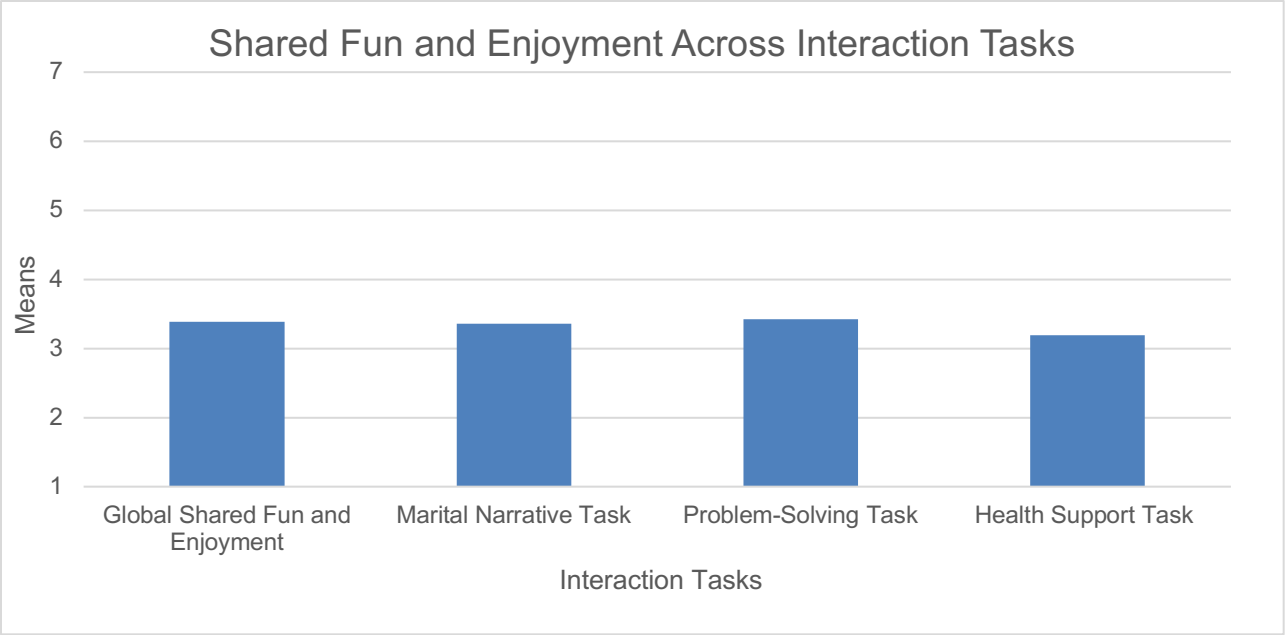
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APPENDIX

Table 4.1 Bivariate Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Marital duration	1.00								
2. Global fun	-0.17	1.00							
3. Fun - Marital narrative	-0.10	0.76**	1.00						
4. Fun - Problem solving	-0.15	0.87**	0.50**	1.00					
5. Fun - Health support	-0.15	0.80**	0.38**	0.55**	1.00				
6. H Marital satisfaction W1	-0.11	0.32**	0.21	0.34**	0.21†	1.00			
7. H Marital satisfaction W2	0.01	0.36**	0.17	0.39**	0.31*	0.61**	1.00		
8. W Marital satisfaction W1	-0.02	0.24†	0.20	0.33**	0.04	0.57**	0.57**	1.00	
9. W Marital satisfaction W2	-0.04	0.28*	0.27*	0.28*	0.12	0.45**	0.87**	0.59**	1.00
M	42.4	3.39	3.41	3.48	3.3	116.36	113.8	117.55	113.52
SD	14.97	0.62	0.70	0.85	0.74	18.07	17.57	14.57	15.28

Figure 4.1: Bar graph of the means across all three interaction tasks and the global shared fun and enjoyment.



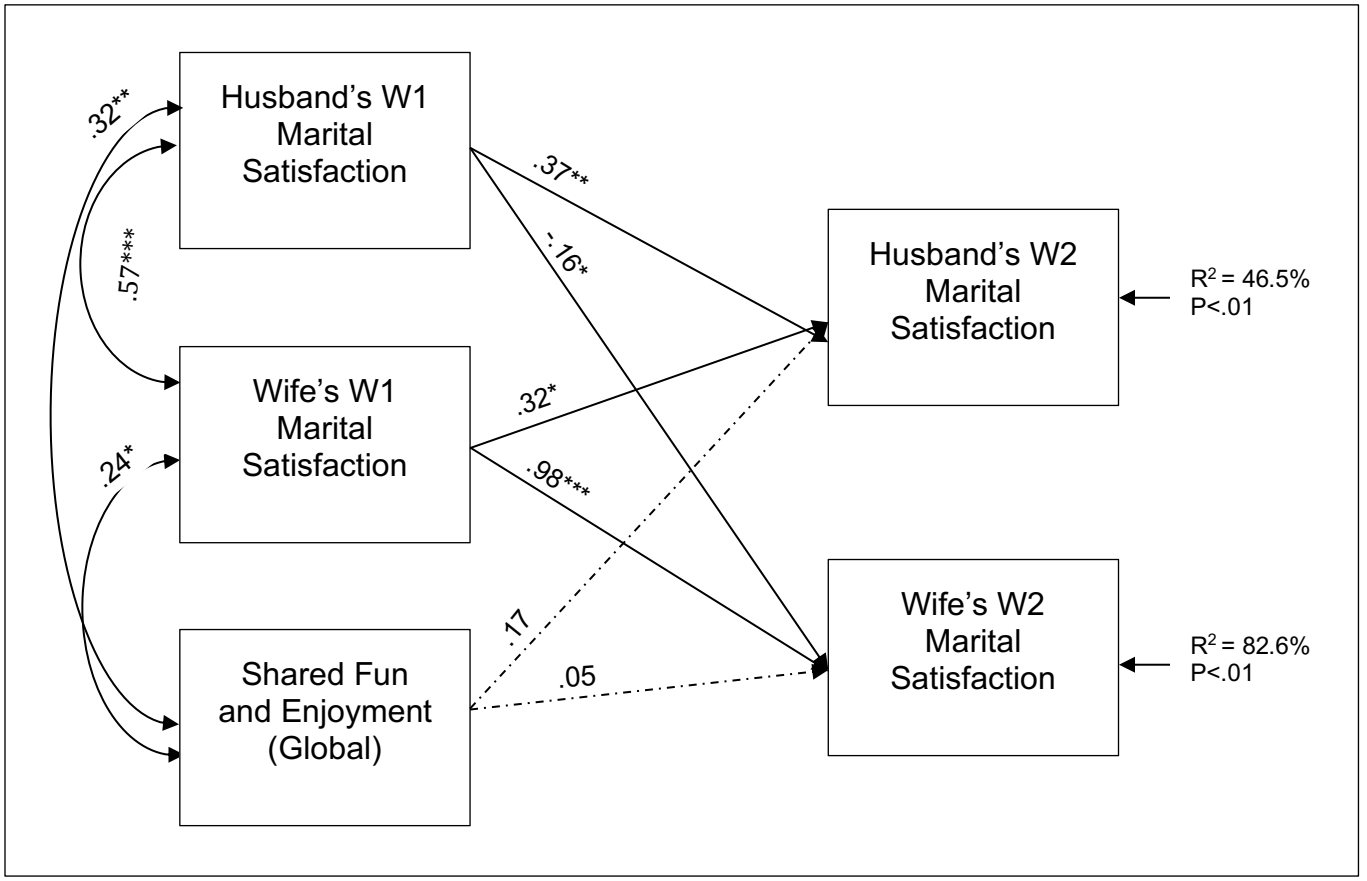


Figure 4.2: Modified APIM of husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction regressed on global shared fun and enjoyment. Marital duration was used as a control variable for husband's marital satisfaction at Wave 1 and Wave 2, along with wife's marital satisfaction at Wave 1 and Wave 2. Non-significant paths are shown as dotted lines. APIM = Actor-partner interdependence model. $p < .001$ = ***, $p < .01$ = **, $p < .05$ = *, $p < .10$ = †

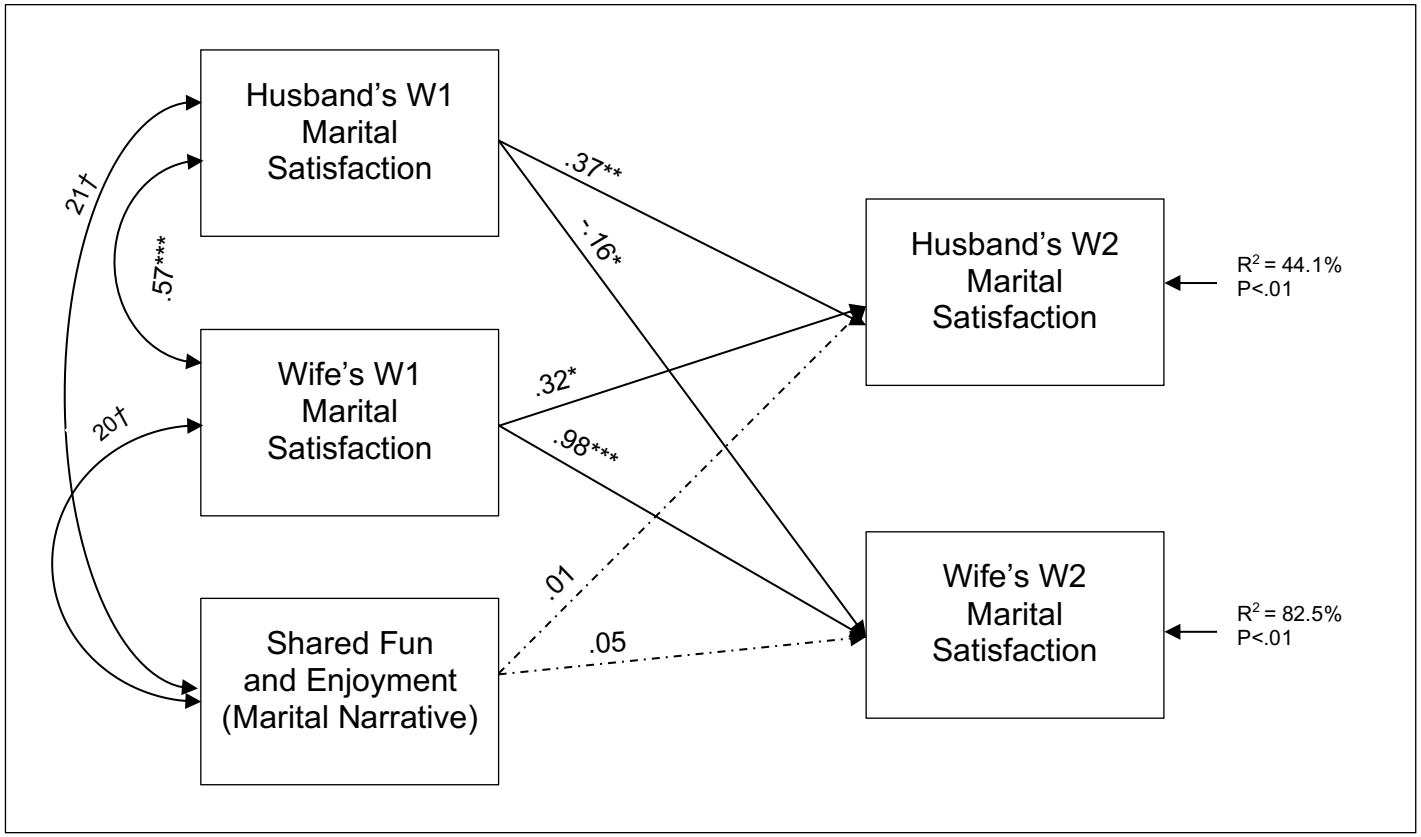


Figure 4.3: Modified APIM of husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction regressed on shared fun and enjoyment in the marital narrative interaction task. Marital duration was used as a control variable for husband's marital satisfaction at Wave 1 and Wave 2, along with wife's marital satisfaction at Wave 1 and Wave 2. Non-significant paths are shown as dotted lines. APIM = Actor-partner interdependence model.
$p < .001$ = ***, $p < .01$ = **, $p < .05$ = *, $p < .10$ = †

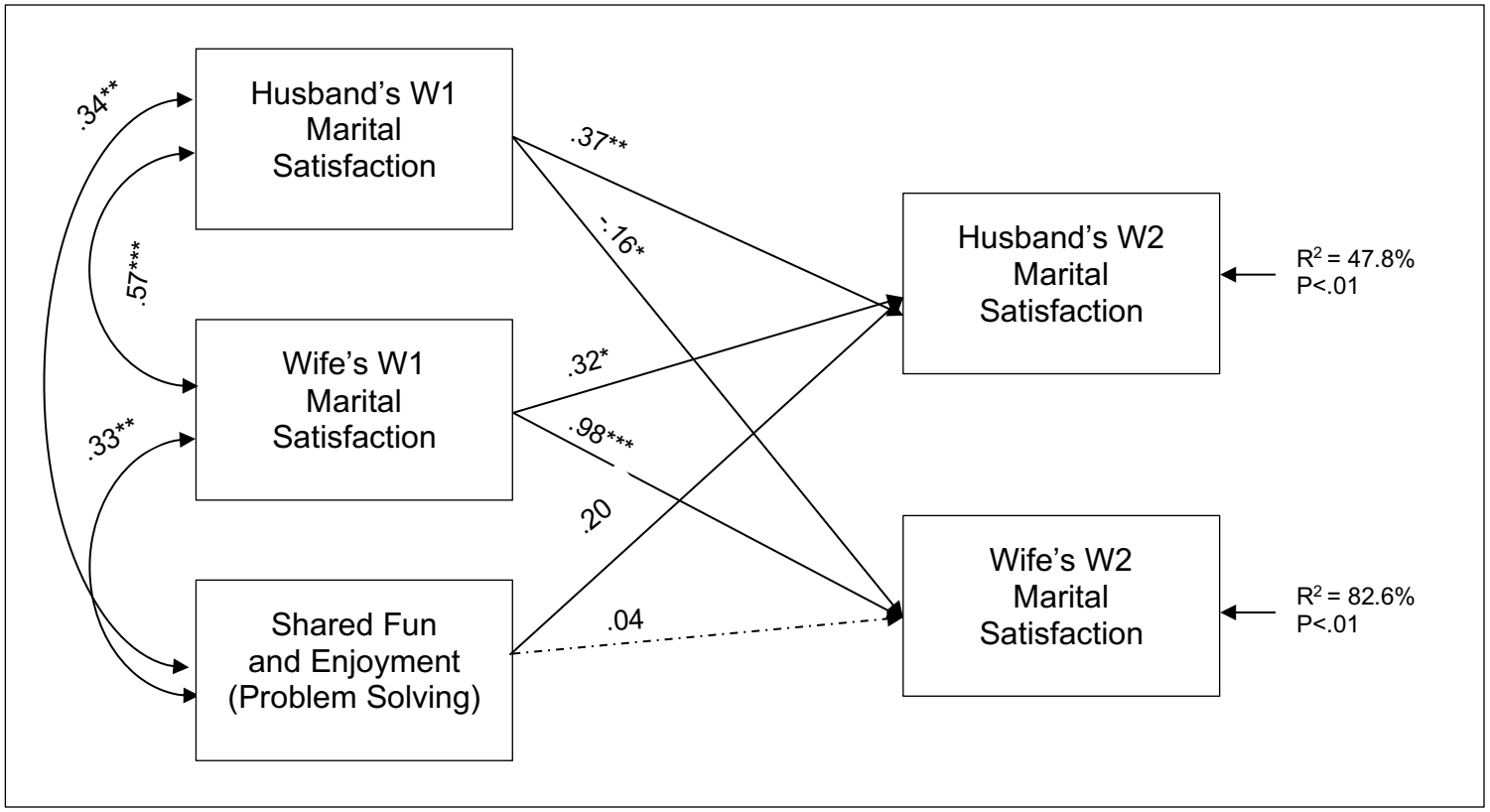


Figure 4.4: Modified APIM of husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction regressed on shared fun and enjoyment in the problem-solving interaction task. Marital duration was used as a control variable for husband's marital satisfaction at Wave 1 and Wave 2, along with wife's marital satisfaction at Wave 1 and Wave 2. Non-significant paths are shown as dotted lines. APIM = Actor-partner interdependence model. $p < .001$ = ***, $p < .01$ = **, $p < .05$ = *, $p < .10$ = †

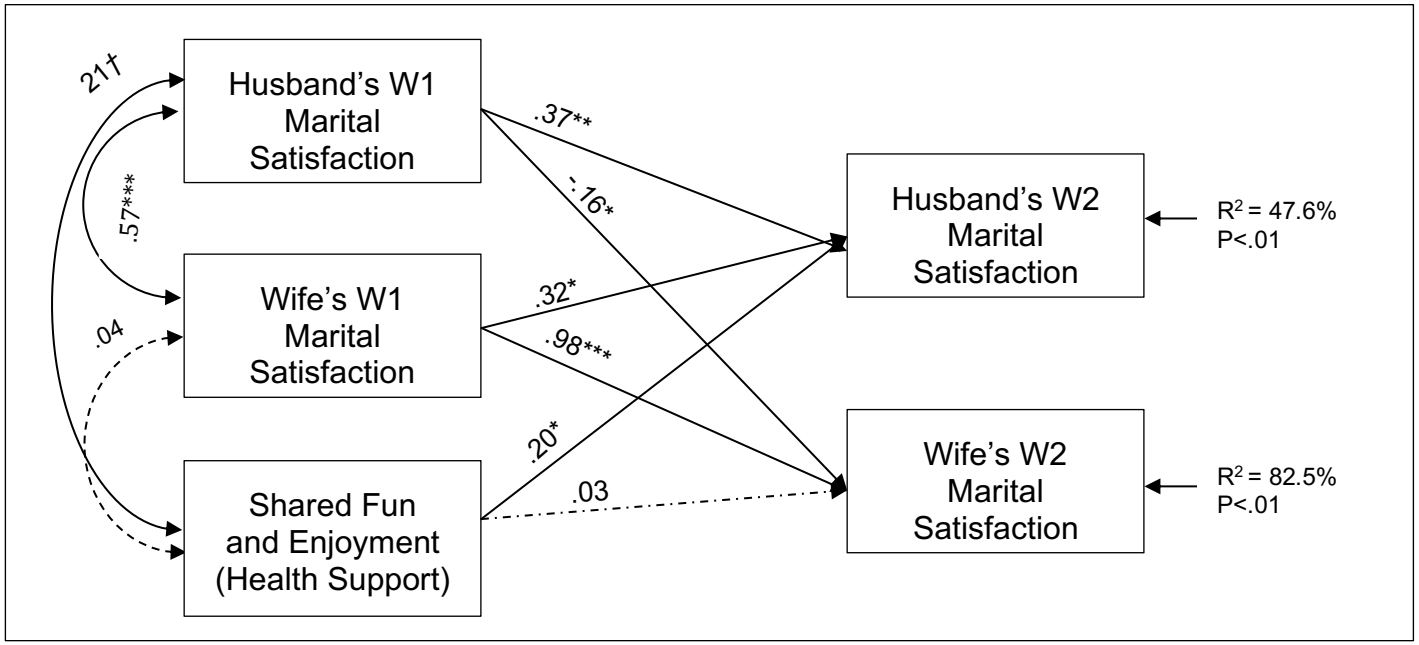


Figure 4.5: Modified APIM of husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction regressed on shared fun and enjoyment in the health support interaction task. Marital duration was used as a control variable for husband's marital satisfaction at Wave 1 and Wave 2, along with wife's marital satisfaction at Wave 1 and Wave 2. Non-significant paths are shown as dotted lines. APIM = Actor-partner interdependence model.
$p < .001$ = ***, $p < .01$ = **, $p < .05$ = *, $p < .10$ = †

VITA

Siera Jo Schwanz was born on November 9th, 1994, in Gothenburg, NE. After completing her work at Gothenburg High School, Gothenburg, NE, in 2013, she received the degree of Bachelor of Science in Child Family Studies with a minor in Early Childhood Education from The University of Nebraska-Kearney in 2017. During the next year, she was employed as a peer support specialist for transitional youth at Families CARE. In August of 2018, she entered the Graduate School at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville where she began pursuing her Masters en route to PhD degree in Child and Family Studies with a minor in Statistics. During her time at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Siera was awarded the Graduate School Fellowship and Ruby McKeel Rives Scholarship. Siera is a member of the National Council on Family Relations, a Certified Family Life Educator, and the president of the Child and Family Studies Graduate School Organization. Siera graduated from the University of Tennessee in 2020 and plans to continue toward her doctoral degree.

This thesis was typed by the author.