

University of Nevada, Reno

**Gender Differences, Marriage, and Mental Health**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in  
Sociology

by

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## Abstract

Women consistently exhibit more psychological distress than men. This study addresses the gender gap in psychological distress by using a stress process approach to examine the effects of stressors and resources within the marital or cohabiting relationship on mental health. Data from 2,869 married and cohabiting respondents aged 18-54 from the 1990-91 National Co-Morbidity Survey was analyzed in order to explain a portion of the gender gap in distress.

Results showed that men reported experiencing more work stress, having higher levels of self-esteem, and deriving more support from their spouse or partner than women. Women reported more stress from household activities and from marital/partnered conflict, and derived more support from friends and relatives than men. Hierarchical regression revealed that resources like self-esteem appear to serve as a strong buffer against the negative stressors within the married or partnered relationship. The results suggest that women's lower levels of self-esteem may put them at a greater risk for distress. The analyses shed light on how men and women respond differently to the conditions of their marriages, partially explaining the persistent gendered inequality in the reported experience of psychological distress.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

#### A Brief Overview of the Problem

Women are more likely than men to suffer from anxiety, or feelings of worry and fear, and depression, or feelings of sadness or hopelessness (Mirowsky & Ross, 1986; Mirowsky & Ross, 1995; Mirowsky, 1996; Elliott, 2001; Kessler et al., 2003). Anxiety and depression also tend to be comorbid (Roy-Byrne et al, 1998). Previous research has suggested that marriage is experienced differently by women and men, and in general is more beneficial to men's mental health than to women's (Ross, Mirowsky, & Goldstein, 1990; Umberson, 1992). However, recent research has challenged the notion that men benefit more from marriage than do women in terms of health, arguing that both males and females benefit equally from marriage (Williams, 2003). Given that previous studies have yielded inconsistent results regarding the impact of marriage on the psychological well-being of males and females, and given that women are more likely than men to suffer from depression and anxiety, further research is necessary to better understand why the gender gap exists in depression and anxiety and how marriage may or may not contribute to the gender-distress association.

Kessler and Essex (1982) pointed out that married people are better able to cope with stressors, and are consequently less likely to suffer from depression, than are the non-married. Married individuals tend to be happier (Glenn, 1975) and to have greater psychological well-being than non-married individuals (Kim & McKenry, 2002). Other researchers have discovered that although cohabiting individuals report greater psychological well-being than other non-married groups, they report greater depression

and lower levels of psychological well-being than married individuals (Brown, 2000; Kamp Dush & Amato, 2005; Marcussen, 2005). These studies attribute the difference in well-being between married and cohabiting individuals to cohabiting individuals' relationship instability (Brown, 2000; Kamp Dush & Amato, 2005), perceived lack of commitment (Kamp Dush & Amato, 2005), or lower social status (Kamp Dush & Amato, 2005). However, it is unclear whether married versus cohabiting individuals' reactivity to stressors and resources may have an impact on their psychological well-being, and further research is therefore necessary in this area.

### The Reason for the Research

The purpose of the current study is to analyze the relationship between marital quality and well-being in an effort to explain a portion of sex differences in depression and anxiety. The current study will also assess what differences exist, if any, in the effects of stressors and resources on distress between the married versus the non-married in a cohabiting relationship with a partner. Because the non-married in a cohabiting relationship are potentially similar to married individuals, the present study will enable the investigators to better determine whether the fact of being married in itself has a powerful impact on exposure and individual reactivity to stressors.

### The Stress Process

The theoretical model guiding this study is the stress process model, which distinguishes position in the social structure from the stressors and resources that are likely to accompany the position (Pearlin et al., 1981). Social structural positions may include one's gender, marital status, income, occupation, race, ethnicity, and the like. Pearlin explains that stressors are "experiential circumstances that give rise to stress" and



may include major life events and chronic strains (1989: 243). Examples of chronic stressors include financial strain, and marital conflict, whereas examples of eventful stressors include being laid off from work or the death of a loved one. In contrast to stressors, resources, such as social support and self-esteem, help individuals cope with life's many stressors. The stress process model posits that an individual's position in the social structure affects both their exposure to stressors and access to resources, which in turn affect the individual's mental health.

#### Differential Exposure, Access, Vulnerability and Responsiveness

The idea of differential exposure is that people are exposed to different amounts and types of stressors as a function of their social-structural position. For instance, women may experience greater stress in their work and family lives than men (Bird 1999). Reasons for this include the wage gap between employed women and employed men, and the greater amount of household labor and childrearing women tend to partake in at home (Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994; Bird, 1999). Just as social-structural position affects exposure to stressors, it also affects access to resources. For instance, men typically have higher levels of self-esteem and a greater sense of control, or mastery, over their lives than do women (Mirowsky & Ross, 1989; Cotton, 1999), whereas women may have greater access than men to social support from friends and relatives.

Differential vulnerability suggests that some groups are more affected by stressors than others. For instance, men may be less vulnerable to stressors associated with work than women because men tend to have more control over their work. In other words, women may be more affected by work-related stressors than men because they tend to have less control over their working conditions. In addition to being differentially

affected by the same stressors, groups of people may respond differently to the same resources. This latter notion is referred to as differential responsiveness. For example, women may benefit more from social support than men.

### The Stress Process and the Current Study

In the current study, the focal social structural position is gender, and stressors and resources are conceptualized as aspects of the marital/partnered relationship as well as descriptors of other aspects of life such as paid employment. The outcome in the current study is distress, which is conceptualized as a continuum of symptoms of depression and anxiety that varies from the complete absence of any symptoms to pervasive symptoms of both. In the current study, stressors include past traumatic events, recent life events, financial strain, conflict within the marital/partnered relationship, fear of job loss, ongoing stress at work, ongoing interpersonal problems with others at work, and overall conflict within the work-family/family-work interplay. Resources include self-esteem, mastery, and spousal/partnered support.

Using secondary data from the baseline National Co-Morbidity Survey, the current study will compare the differential effects of stressors and resources on distress for women and for men. In so doing, the current study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. Do women and men differ in the amount and types of stressors to which they are exposed?
2. Do women and men differ in the amount and types of resources to which they have access?
3. Does differential exposure to stressors by gender account for a portion of the gender/distress association?

4. Does differential access to resources by gender account for a portion of the gender/distress association?
5. Do the effects of stressors and resources on distress differ by gender? More specifically, are there gender differences in vulnerability to stressors, and responsiveness to resources?

## CHAPTER 2

### Previous Research

#### Gender Differences in Distress and Well-being

Women are more likely to suffer from anxiety and depression than are men (Mirowsky & Ross, 1986; Breslau, Schultz, & Peterson, 1995; Mirowsky & Ross, 1995; Mirowsky, 1996; Elliott, 2001; Kessler et al., 2003). Anxiety and depression also tend to be comorbid with one another (Roy-Byrne, et al. 1998). Breslau, Schultz & Peterson's (1995) research found that a prior history of an anxiety disorder was primarily responsible for women's increased risk for depression, which they suggested was the result of women's greater tendency to suffer from anxiety disorders earlier in life. However, in the discussion of their findings the researchers did not put forth an explanation for why females in their early life would be more prone to anxiety disorders in the first place, leaving unresolved the question of why it is that females appear to be at a greater risk for not only anxiety but also for depression.

Mirowsky and Ross's (1995) research ruled out Freudian theories about women's repressed frustrations making women more depressed, theories about how women's stressors manifest in the form of emotional problems as opposed to men's behavioral manifestations, and theories about how women may experience more guilt and isolation than men (which they argue is not the case) as possible explanations for the gender gap in distress. However, they did not go further and attempt to explain why they found that women tended to suffer from distress more than men. Elliott's (2001) findings suggested that women's tendency to have a lower socioeconomic status than men may put them at an increased risk for depression. As previous research has shown, many different factors

may contribute to one's psychological distress versus well-being. The following discussion will focus on the gender disparity in well-being, specifically analyzing the stressors and resources that are linked to marital status which may increase the likelihood for women to suffer from more symptoms of distress than men.

### Gender, Marriage and Well-being

Many researchers have compared married individuals with non-married or divorced individuals to determine whether or not marriage has advantageous effects on health and whether or not the health advantage differs between women and men. For instance, Glenn (1975) discovered that "married persons report greater personal happiness than widowed, divorced or separated, or never-married persons" with "the difference being somewhat greater for females than for males" (599). Although Glenn's (1975) findings are somewhat outdated and did not determine whether non-married individuals had partners, more recent research including cohabiting individuals has generally supported the finding that married individuals "have a higher level of psychological well-being than members of any other marital status group" (Kim & McKenry, 2002:905). Kessler and Essex (1982) also discovered that married individuals are better able to cope with stressors, and consequently are less likely to suffer from depression, than are non-married individuals. In short, researchers have consistently shown that marriage provides individuals with protective health benefits and contributes to greater well-being than is present among the non-married (Williams, 1988; Ross, Mirowsky, & Goldsteen, 1990).

Reasons given for the greater well-being of the married relative to the non-married groups vary. For example, Gove, Style and Hughes (1990) explain that married

individuals are often healthier mentally and physically than are non-married individuals, which the researchers argue is “primarily due to the effect of the marital relationship on individuals” (25). Gove, Hughes and Style (1993) also point out that it is not the fact of being married in itself but rather the quality of the marital relationship which contributes to individual well-being. However, other researchers call attention to the notion that marriage provides “economic benefits” which non-married individuals may not experience (Smock, Manning & Gupta, 1999:809). This implies that those who are not married, and particularly divorced women, may be more prone to distress than married or divorced men as a result of having a lower socioeconomic status and of women’s added responsibilities regarding childrearing (Lennon & Rosenfield, 1992; Smock et al., 1999; Rodgers & Power, 1999). This is also consistent with Elliott’s (2001) suggestion that women’s lower socioeconomic status may put them at a greater risk for depression than men. Given these findings and the wage gap between employed women and employed men (Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994; U.S. Department of Labor, 2009), it is not surprising that women experience greater stress in their work and family lives than men (Bird 1999).

Other researchers have discovered that although cohabiting individuals report greater psychological well-being than other non-married groups, they report greater depression (Brown, 2000; Marcussen, 2005), lower levels of psychological well-being (Kamp Dush & Amato, 2005) and poorer perceived health (Ren, 1997) than married individuals. These studies attributed the difference in well-being between married and cohabiting individuals to cohabiting individuals’ relationship instability (Brown, 2000; Kamp Dush & Amato, 2005), perceived lack of commitment, and lower social status

(Kamp Dush & Amato, 2005). Although previous studies have controlled for demographic factors that may impact the cohabiting individuals' lower levels of psychological well-being, it is unclear whether married versus cohabiting individuals' reactivity to stressors and resources may have an impact on their psychological well-being.

Thus, there are differences between married and non-married individuals in terms of well-being, with men faring better than women and the married faring better than the non-married. Cohabiting individuals are also found to be less depressed than the non-married but more depressed than the married. Additionally, non-married women, and especially those women with dependent children, appear to be at an increased risk for distress. Given these differences, the following sections will explore the impact of gender on distress by investigating gender differences in marriage-based stressors and resources.

#### Gender Differences in Division of Household Labor

Among those who are married, researchers have investigated how men and women may be differentially affected by the household division of labor. Studies have typically focused on who engages in the most household labor, and how unequal distribution may affect men's and women's psychological well-being differently. For instance, Brines (1994) found that men who are economically dependent on their wives are less likely to do their fair share of housework to compensate for their lack of economic contribution to the family, whereas women who are economically dependent on their husbands carry out more household duties, though the possibility of a selection bias is not mentioned. Greenstein's (1996) findings indicated that married men are less

likely to participate in housework “unless both they and their wives are relatively nontraditional in their beliefs about gender and marital roles” (593). Although men have increased their participation in household labor, other studies have also pointed out that women still typically engage in more domestic labor than do men (Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994; Bird, 1999; Bartley, Blanton, & Gilliard, 2005).

Although married women tend to do the majority of the housework, it is unclear whether married men and women perceive this as just or unjust. Noor (1997) discovered that wives’ “estimate of their husbands’ time spent doing housework is a better predictor of their distress symptoms than their estimates of their own time” and that this “is mediated by their perceptions of support” (418-9). In other words, the more housework wives perceive their husbands engage in, and the more wives perceive their spouse supports them, the lower the wives’ levels of distress will be. Noor’s (1997) findings suggest that perceptions of support may therefore serve as mediators in the gender-distress association.

However, Lennon and Rosenfield (1994) found that although women in their study were responsible for the majority of household duties, “most women (60.8%) and most men (67.5%) believe that this uneven distribution of housework is fair to both spouses” (1994:525). Lennon and Rosenfield (1994) further pointed out that those women who accepted the inequity in household labor as fair were also likely to “report greater happiness in their marriage,” to “contribute relatively more to the time-consuming female tasks,” and to “believe their lives would be worse outside marriage” (522-3). Lennon and Rosenfield (1994) explained that those women in their study who found the idea that they participated in the most household labor to be unfair were likely to



“experience more symptoms of depression” (1994:525). Grote and Clark (2001) also found that both married men and women perceived that the wives engaged in the majority of the housework and that this perceived unequal distribution of labor, once realized, led to greater marital conflict and subsequent distress for both partners (291).

To summarize, research has consistently shown that married women tend to do more of the household labor than married men. However, previous research has yielded inconsistent findings as to whether married women and men perceive the unequal division of labor to be fair or unfair. Nevertheless, when married individuals do perceive that the inequality in the division of housework is unjust, they are at a greater risk for distress than are those who find the inequality to be fair. Previous research also suggests that perceptions of support may at least mediate the relationship between gender and distress.

#### Marital Quality, Social Support and Conflict

Ren (1997) pointed out that “the health of individuals depends not only on marital status but also on the quality of marital and cohabiting relationships” (247). Some of the studies in the previous section suggested that the quality of the marital relationship, the amount of perceived spousal support, and the amount of perceived marital conflict might contribute to married women’s increased likelihood for distress (Noor, 1997; Rosenfield, 1994). Thus, an examination follows of the possible impact that factors like perceived support and relationship quality may have on the gender/distress association within the marital/partnered relationship.

Williams (1988) found that “while marital quality is important for the well-being of both women and men, the apparent effects are greater for women,” which she

attributed to a possible perceived lack of emotional support from husbands (464-466). Recent research has suggested that marital conflict can lead to decreased physical and mental health (Choi & Marks, 2008). Thus, if it is true that women are more sensitive to the quality of the marital relationship, then it is also possible that women are more negatively affected by marital conflict. In other words, marital or partnered conflict may be a more powerful stressor for women than for men. However, Williams (2003) discovered that “being in a satisfying, supportive marriage offers similar benefits to women and men” (483). In other words, it appears that the impact of marriage on men’s and women’s well-being may have changed over the last twenty years such that the inequity in the effects of marriage on male versus female well-being may have diminished over time. Further research is necessary to determine whether one gender is more vulnerable to marital conflict than the other.

Of course, the extent to which one’s marriage is a source of satisfaction or distress depends on a number of factors. For example, Pasch and Bradbury (1998) learned that positive social support and behaviors that “facilitate mutual understanding” and that communicate “low levels of anger and contempt” during conflicts improved marital satisfaction and quality for both husbands and wives (227). Other researchers have discovered that employed women’s earnings “positively affected husbands’ perceptions of wives’ decision-making power” in the household (Huber & Spitze, 1981:165). This finding implies that wives who are unemployed or only part-time employed may experience a lack of decision-making power and less control over household or family decisions, which may put them at an increased risk for distress. These studies suggest that perceptions of the quality of one’s relationship are important in predicting well-being

versus distress. In addition, these studies show that there are certain behaviors specific to males and others particular to females which may promote distress and a poorer quality relationship.

### The Interplay between Family and Work

Some studies have also focused on the impact that employment may have on gender differences in distress among the married. For instance, Barnett, Marshall, Raudenbush, and Brennan (1993) discovered that work experiences increased distress among both husbands and wives. This is contrary to the popular belief that employed, married males are more likely to have negative health effects due to their job than are employed, married women. The researchers suspect that the work stress and negative health effects experienced by husbands and wives may be partly due to their holding more similar roles (802-803). Other researchers have found that married women who are employed and who have young children in the home suffer from more distress than do married, employed men with young children (Cleary & Mechanic, 1983). In addition, Milkie and Peltola (1999) discovered that employed women were more likely than employed men to experience difficulty in balancing work and family if they had young children to care for (488). These studies suggest that being married and employed can be equally stressful for both married men and married women. However, if there are young children to care for in the home then married, employed wives may experience more distress than their husbands, perhaps due partly to women's more salient role in childrearing (Lennon & Rosenfield, 1992).

Brotheridge and Lee (2005) examined the relationships between "work-family interference" and psychological well-being, and found that "both job distress and work

overload influenced home overload and intention to leave one's marriage through their impact on work interfering with family" (216). Heller and Watson (2005) found that aspects of work and marriage often "spillover" into each environment. These studies imply that negative affect, or symptoms of distress in other words, and positive affect from work and marriage influence the experiences individuals have in each setting.

#### Personality: Sense of Control and Self-Esteem

A person's level of self-esteem and perceived sense of control over aspects of his or her life can also affect his or her psychological well-being. Cast and Burke (2002) learned that people with higher levels of self-esteem tend to suffer less from depression, anxiety and hostility than do those with lower levels of self-esteem (1055). This finding demonstrates how high self-esteem can contribute to an individual's well-being while low self-esteem can be detrimental to a person's health. Furthermore, studies have shown that men generally tend to possess higher levels of self-esteem than do women (Mirowsky & Ross, 1989; Cotten, 1999), which suggests that women may be more vulnerable to certain stressors if they do not have high self-esteem to serve as a buffer against the negative effects of stressors.

Sense of control and mastery may also play an important part in an individual's health. Lachman and Weaver (1998) found that individuals "with higher [perceived] mastery and lower perceived constraints had higher life satisfaction, better perceived health, and lower depression" (771). The opposite was true for low income individuals, who "had lower levels of perceived mastery and stronger beliefs in the existence of external constraints in their lives" (Lachman & Weaver, 1998:771). Furthermore, the researchers discovered that "control beliefs appear to serve as a buffer for the negative

ramifications of low social class in regard to health and well-being” (Lachman & Weaver, 1998:771). This finding suggests that perceptions of mastery may also serve as moderators which may attenuate the effects of stressors on the gender/distress association.

In sum, men generally experience higher levels of self-esteem and a greater sense of control in their lives than do women (Mirowsky & Ross, 1989; Cotton, 1999). The studies in this section imply that women, who generally have lower levels of self-esteem, a lower sense of control, and lower incomes, may be more vulnerable to stressors and generally more prone to distress than men. Additionally, perceptions of mastery have been found to serve as buffers against class-based stressors, and along with self-esteem they may also moderate the effects of stressors in the gender/distress association.

#### The Current Study

The current study will contribute to the growing body of research on mental health by further investigating the relationship between marriage and mental health outcomes, specifically focusing on the continuum of distress versus well-being. Although many of the studies described in the aforementioned paragraphs have investigated gender differences in the relationship between marital status and mental health, few have studied the impact of marital status and other social structural positions, gender differences in household division of labor, marital quality, social support, marital conflict, the work-family/family-work interplay, and personality attributes all within the same study. The present study is also unique in that it will adopt a stress process approach in analyzing the relationship between marriage and mental health, which few studies have attempted to date. Thus, the current study provides a more comprehensive

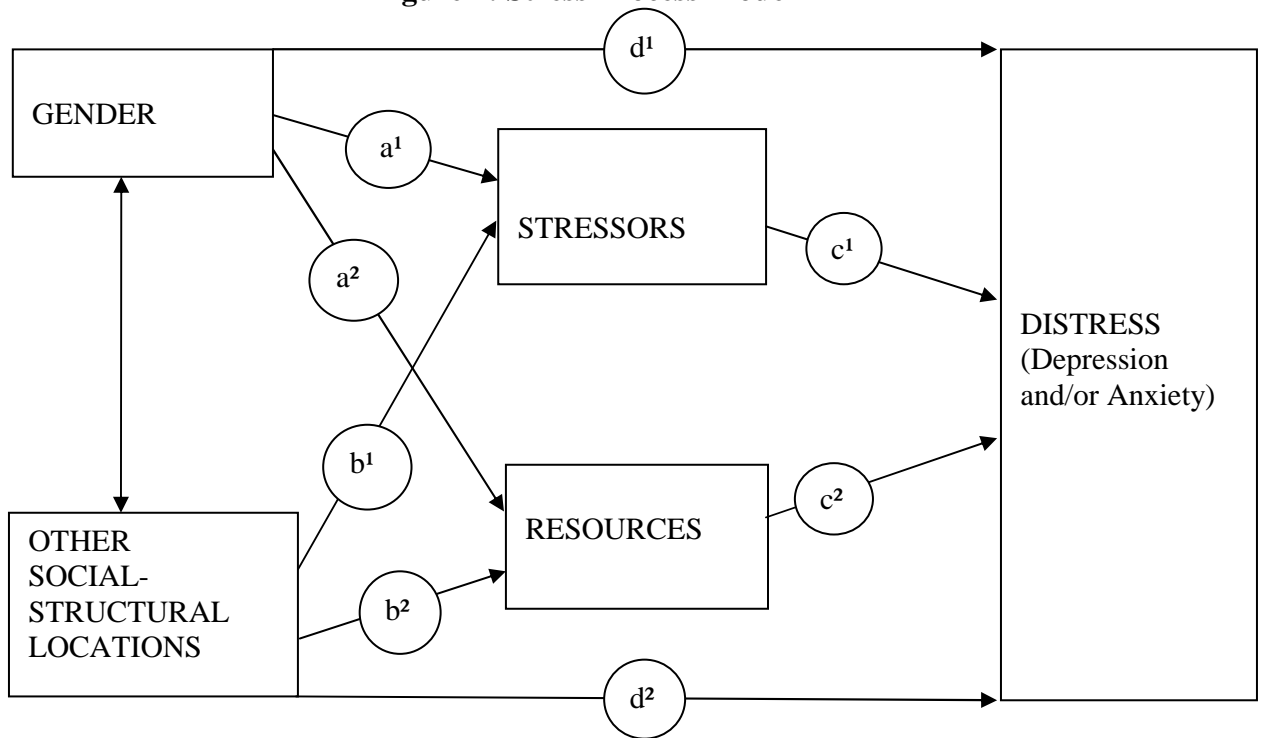
social-psychological understanding of the factors within the marital relationship which may contribute to gender differences in distress and well-being.

## CHAPTER 3

### Conceptual Model and Hypotheses

#### Conceptual Model

The current study will test the theoretical model known as the stress process, which differentiates position in the social structure from the stressors and resources that tend to accompany the position (Pearlin et al., 1981). The focal social structural position of the current study is gender, which is conceptualized in Figure 1 as the beginning of the stress process by which an individual is exposed to stressors ( $a^1$ ) and access to resources ( $a^2$ ). In the present study, stressors and resources are conceptualized, in part, as aspects of the marital relationship. The association between the social structural position of gender and the health outcome of distress is depicted by ( $d^1$ ). Other social structural positions in the model include income, years of education, race/ethnicity, age, employment status, and number of children. These additional social structural locations may affect the stressors one is exposed to ( $b^1$ ) as well as the resources available to an individual ( $b^2$ ). They may also affect the health outcome of distress ( $d^2$ ). Stressors are expected to negatively affect health ( $c^1$ ). For instance, financial strain may positively and directly contribute to ill health. On the contrary, resources are predicted to negatively and directly affect health ( $c^2$ ). Spousal support and high self-esteem may enhance one's health directly by reducing distress.

**Figure 1: Stress Process Model**Hypotheses

The current study was designed to test the following hypotheses:

1. *Differential Exposure to Stressors by Gender:* Women and men differ in the amount and types of stressors to which they are exposed.
2. *Differential Access to Resources by Gender:* Women and men differ in the amount and types of resources to which they have access.
3. *Stressors as Mediators of the Gender/Distress Association:* Differential exposure to stressors by gender accounts for a portion of the gender/distress association.
4. *Resources as Mediators of the Gender/Distress Association:* Differential access to resources by gender accounts for a portion of the gender/distress association.
5. *Gender as a Moderator of the Effects of Stressors and Resources on Distress:* The effects of stressors and resources on distress differ by gender. More specifically, there are gender differences in vulnerability to stressors, and responsiveness to resources.



## CHAPTER 4

### Data and Methods

#### Dataset and Sample

The current study employed data from the baseline National Comorbidity Survey (NCS), which is a nationally representative survey investigating the prevalence and correlates of DSM III-R disorders. The baseline NCS consists of a stratified, multistage area probability sample of 8,098 non-institutionalized individuals aged 15 to 54 residing in the 48 contiguous U.S. states. Data collection occurred from 1990 to 1992 and had a response rate of 82.6 percent. The surveys were conducted via face-to-face household interviews of respondents. For additional information about the NCS, see Kessler et al. (1994).

The NCS baseline survey was divided into two parts. 8,098 respondents responded to Part I of the survey, with 5,877 respondents responding to both Part I and Part II of the survey. Part I asks questions related to DSM III-R disorders. Part II assessed stressors, such as work and family conflict, financial strain, and past and recent life events, as well as resources, such as social support, mastery and self-esteem. Of the 5,877 who responded to both Parts I and II, 2,899<sup>1</sup> were either married or partnered. Three cases were removed from the 2,899 because they were missing data on the dependent variable items about distress, and 27 cases were removed because they indicated they were not living together in the same household. Therefore, the final

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<sup>1</sup> One case was eliminated from the sample because the inconsistencies in responses to the marital status items and check points made it uncertain as to whether the respondent was eligible for inclusion in the current study. This brought the total of married or partnered individuals down from 2,900 to 2,899.

sample size for these analyses was 2,869, and it consisted of responses from 1,546 women and 1,323 men.

### Measurement

Unless otherwise specified, all measures are multiple-item additive scales, and all scale items are listed in the Appendix. There is one dependent variable, distress, which is measured by combining scale items for depression and for anxiety (Kessler et al., 2002). The distress scale (alpha reliability .918) includes responses to questions about mental health over the past 30 days. There are nine items for depression, asking such questions as whether respondents felt “blue” or “worthless” in the past 30 days, and five items for anxiety, asking whether respondents felt “tense or keyed up” or “frightened.”

Demographic control variables include gender, measured by 0 for male and 1 for female; education, measured by number of years of formal education completed; income, measured by 19 categories ranging from no income to \$100,000 or more; age, measured in years; and race/ethnicity, broken down into dummy variables of white, black, Hispanic or other race. Employment status (1 for employed for pay and 0 for other) and number of children living in the household are also measured.

Measures of stressors include verbal and physical abuse within the marital/partnered relationship, the household division of labor, and work and family conflict. Conflict within the marital/partnered relationship is assessed primarily with four scales. The first of the marital conflict scales assesses a variety of specific behaviors, such as making too many demands, being argumentative, and being critical, which constitute relationship strain (alpha reliability .810). The second scale of conflict within the marriage/partnered relationship, referred to as inconsiderate behavior (alpha

reliability .764), measures incidence of specific acts of verbal abuse, such as insulting or swearing. The third and fourth scales of marital/partnered conflict measure specific acts of physical violence, such as pushing and shoving. One of the last two marital/partnered conflict scales measures the respondent's report of physical abuse committed by the respondent (alpha reliability .466), and the other marital/partnered conflict scale measures the respondent's report of physical abuse committed by his or her spouse or partner (alpha reliability .561). The two physical abuse scales were also combined into a single scale measuring the respondent's report of a mutually abusive relationship (alpha reliability .731), in which both the respondent and the respondent's spouse or partner engage in acts of physical violence toward each other.

Household division of labor assesses respondents' reports of how willing or unwilling their partner is to help around the house after a demanding day as well as how household tasks are divided within the marriage. The latter measure varies from 1 (respondent spends a lot more time than their husband/wife/partner) to 7 (husband/wife/partner spends a lot more time than the respondent on household tasks). Overall work and family conflict (alpha reliability .737) is measured with seven items that assess the negative effects of work on family combined with the effects of family on work. Three work-related measures were also included: (1) fear of job loss in the past 12 months, (2) ongoing stress on the job, and (3) ongoing interpersonal problems at work, each measured as present, represented with a value of 1, or absent, represented with a value of 0.

Specific resources include social support, mastery, and self-esteem. Social support within the marriage/partnered relationship is measured with six items (alpha reliability

.820). Mastery (alpha reliability .672) was measured with eight items assessing how much control the respondent believes he/she has over his/her life. Self-esteem (alpha reliability .789) is measured with five items.

### Methods of Data Analysis

Means and standard deviations were used to describe the sample. Gender differences in means were estimated with the independent samples t-test. The predictors of distress were tested with Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression, which is appropriate for continuous dependent variables. We used the log of the distress scale in all regression analyses because the scale was positively skewed. Variables were entered in blocks, beginning with demographic controls, proceeding to stressors, and ending with resources. Demographic variables were entered first to take into account expected predictors of distress as well as to establish the baseline association between gender and distress. Stressors were added second to test the extent to which they mediate the gender/distress association. Resources were added third to test whether they also mediate the gender/distress association, as well as whether they mediate the association between stressors and distress. More specifically, stressors and resources as *mediators* of the gender/distress association were tested by assessing the reduction in the gender coefficient when stressors and resources, respectively, were added to the equation. Stressors and resources as *moderated* by gender were assessed by estimating separate regression models for women and men and comparing regression coefficients between the two genders using the slopes test, i.e., the ratio of the difference between slopes and the square root of difference between the standard errors of the slopes (Armitage, Berry and Matthews 2002). Stressors and resources as moderated by marital status were

assessed by estimating separate regression models for married versus cohabiting individuals and comparing regression coefficients between the two groups using the aforementioned slopes test.

## CHAPTER 5

### Results

#### Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for all variables separately for women and men, identifying where mean values are significantly distinct by gender. As expected, women tend to be more psychologically distressed than men ( $p < .001$ ). There are no gender differences in marital status, with 87 percent married and 13 percent living together but not married. Men tend to be about one year older than women ( $p < .05$ ), and family income is greater for men than for women. The racial/ethnic breakdown of the sample does not vary by sex with about 83 percent of the sample being white. Men are more likely to be employed for pay than are women ( $p < .001$ .) The average years of formal education are about 13 years for both men and women. Both men and women have an average number of 2 children living in the household.

In terms of work stressors, men are more likely to fear losing their job or business than are women ( $p < .001$ ). Men are slightly more likely than women to have ongoing stress at work ( $p < .001$ ).

In terms of stressors in the marital/partner relationship, women are more likely than men to report overall conflict and abuse, whether verbal or physical, from their spouse/partner ( $p < .01$ ). Women are more likely than men to report that their spouse/partner is unwilling to help out at home ( $p < .001$ ), and women report spending significantly more time on home responsibilities than men ( $p < .001$ ).

Men are more likely than women to report overall work-family or family-work conflict ( $p < .05$ ). Men report more traumatic past life events ( $p < .001$ ). Women report

more recent life events within the past year ( $p < .001$ ). Financial strain does not differ by sex.

When considering resources, men have higher self-esteem than women ( $p < .001$ ). Men also report greater social support from their spouse/partner ( $p < .001$ ).

### Regression Results

Table 2 displays a hierarchical OLS regression of psychological distress in stages, starting with demographic control variables, then adding stressors in equation two, and lastly, adding resources in equation three. Equation one presents the regression of distress on age, years of education, sex, income, race, employment status, and number of children. All associations are in the expected direction, and five of the seven demographic control variables are significant predictors of distress. Women tend to suffer from distress more than men, even when controlling for other demographic characteristics. Education, income and being employed are negatively related to distress, whereas number of children is positively related to distress. Race is not associated with distress, regardless of which dummy variable is used as the reference indicator. Being married versus living with a partner was not significantly associated with distress in this or any of the other models so it was not included in the results.

In the second equation of the regression a series of stressors were added, a subset of which focused on the marital/partner relationship. Tests showed that both measures of an inequitable distribution of household labor were consistently non-significant so they were omitted from the final version of equation two. The three indicators of stressors associated with paid employment were all positively associated with distress, as was the scale of financial strain. Lifetime traumatic events as well as recent life events both

predicted higher distress levels. Overall work and family conflict was also positively associated with distress. Of the several scales indicative of marital/partnered relationship problems, three out of four were significant predictors of distress: overall relationship strain, inconsiderate behavior on the part of the spouse/partner, and the respondent being abusive toward his or her spouse/partner. Interestingly, the scale reflecting the respondent being abused by his or her spouse/partner was not significant, and diagnostic tests confirmed that this was not caused by multicollinearity. In an alternate model (results not shown) the scale that captured physical abuse going both ways (where the respondent abuses the spouse/partner and where the spouse/partner abuses the respondent) did significantly predict distress.

Although most of the stressors assessed did positively predict distress, stressors did not appear to mediate the gender/distress association because it scarcely changed between equation one and equation two. However, family income and number of children in the house became non-significant once stressors were controlled. Furthermore, the overall explained variance in distress increased from five percent in equation one to 35 percent in equation two.

Equation three added three resources: spousal support, self-esteem, and mastery. All three resources are negatively and significantly associated with distress at the .001 level. The overall explained variance increased from 35 to 47 percent once resources were added in equation three. In addition, the gender coefficient decreased by almost one-third, indicating that differential access to resources does explain a portion of the gender difference in distress. Further analyses (not shown) in which each resource was added individually indicated that it was self-esteem that accounted for the bulk of the



change in the gender coefficient. In other words, lower self-esteem among women accounts for a substantial portion of the gender difference in distress. That is, because women tend to have lower self-esteem than men, they tend to be more distressed, even after taking into account a myriad of stressors.

Finally, gender differences in the predictors of distress were tested by estimating equation three separately for women and men, and then comparing the individual regression coefficients with the slopes test (Armitage, Berry & Matthews, 2002). Table 3 presents the gender-specific regression equations. Although in Table 3 several of the coefficients appear to differ by gender, the slopes test revealed that only three of these differences were in fact significant. In terms of stressors, the slopes test found that ongoing stress at work increases distress for men but not for women ( $p < .001$ ). The slopes test also revealed that although recent life events increases distress for both women and men ( $p < .001$ ), the effect appeared to be nearly twice as great for women than for men. Lastly, in terms of resources, the slopes test found that though self-esteem was negatively related to distress for both women and men ( $p < .001$ ), the effect was greater for men than for women. The findings consistently suggest that self-esteem is a key variable responsible for explaining the gender difference in distress.

Additionally, equation three was run separately for married versus partnered individuals, and the regression coefficients were compared using the aforementioned slopes test (results not shown below). However, the slopes test revealed that there were no significant differences in the coefficients for the married and partnered groups.

## CHAPTER 6

### Discussion

The results from the current study reveal that there were significant mean differences in stressors and resources by gender. When stressors were added to the regression equation, the gender coefficient did not change substantially. However, the addition of resources to the regression equation yielded a nearly thirty percent reduction in the gender coefficient, which indicates that resources, and self-esteem in particular, explain a portion of the gender differences in distress. Finally, the slopes test revealed that there were a few differences by gender in the effects of stressors and resources on mental health. However, the slopes test found no differences by marital status (married vs. partnered) in the effects of stressors and resources on mental health. The remainder of this section will discuss these results and their implications in further detail.

The present study used a stress process model to examine gender differences in exposure and access to stressors and resources that may occur within the marital/partnered relationship. In so doing, it sought to help explain a portion of the gender differences in distress. Using an independent samples t-test, mean differences were compared in stressors and resources by gender in order to answer hypotheses one and two. Hierarchical OLS regression was conducted to answer hypotheses three and four, and the slopes test was used to answer hypothesis five.

The current study found support for hypothesis one regarding differential exposure by gender to amount and types of stressors. It was hypothesized that women and men would differ in the amount and types of stressors to which they are exposed. According to the results displayed in Table 1, men reported experiencing a significantly

greater fear of losing their job and significantly more ongoing stress from work than did women. Additionally, men reported having significantly greater overall work and family conflict than women. Contrary to previous research which proposed that men and women would be equally vulnerable to work stressors (Barnett et al., 1993), these findings suggest that perhaps men are more vulnerable to work stressors than women. One explanation for the finding that the men in the current study were more likely than women to fear losing their job may be related to the notion that historically men were often perceived as the primary breadwinner in the household. In a society in which both men and women are employed for pay, the loss of the man's job while the woman is still working may call the man's masculinity into question. Gender role attitudes seem to be changing for the benefit of women in the past few decades, especially with regard to being more supportive of women's role in paid employment, but perhaps gender role attitudes about men have not seen as much change.

Another interesting finding was that men were significantly more likely than women to report having a spouse/partner who is willing to help out at home, whereas women reported spending significantly more time on household activities than men. These findings suggest that women may be more vulnerable to stressors emanating from the domestic realm of life, possibly due to their greater responsibilities toward child rearing and their greater share in household chores, as previous research suggested.

In terms of stressors within the marital or partnered relationship, women consistently reported significantly more relationship strain and conflict, inconsiderate and verbally abusive behaviors, overall reciprocal marital/partnered abuse, and overall reciprocal marital/partnered conflict from their spouse than men. Interestingly, women

also reported physically abusing their spouse/partner significantly more often than men. It would appear that in the current study, women not only report experiencing more marital conflict, verbal and physical abuse from their spouse or partner, but they also are more likely to admit to behaving in a physically abusive manner toward their spouse/partner.

In terms of other types of stressors, men report experiencing significantly more stress from traumatic life events and from conflict with friends. Women, on the other hand, tend to experience significantly more stress from recent life events and from conflict with relatives.

The current study also found support for hypothesis two, which stated that women and men would differ in the amount and types of resources to which they have access. The data of mean differences in levels of resources from Table 1 show that men tend to derive significantly more support from their spouse or partner than do women. Finally, men report significantly greater levels of self-esteem than women, which is consistent with previous research findings (Mirowsky & Ross, 1989; Cotton, 1999). This also suggests that self-esteem may serve as a mediator in the gender-distress association because women's lower levels of self-esteem put them at greater risk for distress.

Hypothesis three, which stated that differential exposure to stressors by gender accounts for a portion of the gender/distress association, was not supported. As Table 2 illustrates, once stressors were added to the regression equation, the coefficient for gender did not change. However, hypothesis four, which suggested that differential access to resources by gender would account for a portion of the gender/distress association, was supported. The Table 2 results show that when resources were added to the regression in

equation three, there was a nearly one-third reduction in the gender coefficient. This indicates that resources may explain a portion of the gender differences in distress. As was mentioned in the results section, when the resources were added separately to the equation, it was self-esteem that was primarily responsible for the change in the gender coefficient, which suggests that self-esteem may serve as a powerful buffer against the negative effects of stressors, and may thereby reduce levels of distress as well. Given that previous research has found that men tend to possess higher levels of self-esteem and mastery than women (Mirowsky & Ross, 1989; Cotton, 1999), perhaps women are indeed more vulnerable to the negative effects of life's stressors because they are lacking in some of the resources, like self-esteem, to cope with stressors.

Lastly, hypothesis five suggested that the effects of stressors and resources on distress would differ by gender; in other words, there would be gender differences in vulnerability to stressors and in responsiveness to resources. Although the data in Table 3 point out many possible differences in gender coefficients of stressors and resources, the slopes test identified only three significant gender differences in the effects of stressors or resources on mental health. In terms of stressors, the slopes test found that ongoing stress at work increased distress for men but not for women; in other words, men were found to be more vulnerable to ongoing stressors at work than were women. As was mentioned earlier in the discussion, men tend to be more vulnerable to work stressors than women. This may possibly be due to men's history as being the primary breadwinners in the household. Men's greater vulnerability to work stressors may be due to the notion that society has traditionally attributed greater importance to men's roles in the workplace than women's. As such, men were given a greater stake in paid

employment in the sense that their gender identity is called into question if they lose their job, if they work only part-time, or if they under-perform when compared to working women. The slopes test also revealed that although recent life events increases distress for both women and men at the .001 level, the effect appeared to be nearly twice as great for women than for men. This finding suggests that women were more vulnerable to stress from recent life events than men, which may possibly be due to women's being more responsive than men to events that occur in their social network, such as having a close friendship break up, being separated from a loved one for a period of time, or having a close friend or relative pass away.

When considering resources, the slopes test found that though self-esteem was negatively related to distress for both women and men at the .001 level, the effect was greater for men than for women. In other words, men were differentially more responsive to self-esteem than were women. Thus, in addition to being a mediator in the gender-distress association, self-esteem was also found to serve as a moderator because it served as more of a buffer against stressors for men than for women. These findings suggest that women appear to be more vulnerable to the negative effects of life's stressors because, unlike men, they are lacking in some of the resources, like self-esteem, to cope with stressors.

### Strengths and Limitations

One of the strengths of the current study is the relatively large sample of 2,869 married and cohabiting individuals, of which 1,546 were women and 1,323 were men, and which provided a great deal of data and insight into the gender-distress association.

Furthermore, the NCS baseline study is a dataset with ample and in depth measures of stressors, resources and health outcomes.

Limitations of the current study include the fact that the data is roughly 20 years old. Given the age of the data, it is possible that cultural shifts in the attitudes people have about gendered expectations and roles may have occurred such that men and women may share more nontraditional gender role attitudes. Such a cultural shift toward more egalitarian gender role attitudes might decrease the amounts of work and family based stressors and resources that men and women tend to experience. Furthermore, the economic recession may have not only shaped gender role attitudes but may have also affected men's and women's employment, which in turn may have increased work and family stressors as well as available resources for coping with stressors. In addition to the age of the data, another limitation is the cross-sectional nature of the data, which makes the establishment of causal direction difficult at best.

#### Directions for Future Research

When considering methodology, future researchers should use longitudinal designs which can monitor changes in the amounts and types of stressors afflicting men and women, and how these changes may affect health outcomes such as distress. Longitudinal data may also help better establish causal direction and may provide a clue as to how particular cultural shifts in gender role attitudes may affect stressors and resources, and subsequently affect health outcomes. Future survey research should also investigate not only the respondent's perspective about marital/partnered conflict and abuse, work conflict, gender role attitudes, and other measures used in the current study, but it should also seek the perspective of the spouse or partner in such studies to seek a

more complete picture of work and family stressors which may directly or indirectly affect health outcomes. This research found that men and women are differentially exposed to stressors, and future research should investigate a wider range of stressors that may affect men and women. This study also shed some light on how resources like self-esteem may indirectly affect the well-being of men and women, and further research incorporating more and different types of resources or studies looking at how self-esteem may be particularly beneficial for both men's and women's well-being are warranted.



Table 1. Descriptive Statistics Table of Males and Females (N=2,869)

<i>Variables</i>	Males (N=1,323)		Females (N=1,546)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Dependent Variable</b>				
Distress***	1.551	0.538	1.704	0.604
<b>Demographic Control Variables</b>				
Married	0.874	0.332	0.880	0.325
Partnered	0.126	0.332	0.120	0.325
Age*	36.165	8.415	35.431	9.495
Income	17.023	3.246	16.801	3.620
White	0.825	0.380	0.832	0.374
Black	0.064	0.245	0.069	0.253
Hispanic	0.079	0.270	0.072	0.258
Other Race	0.032	0.175	0.028	0.165
Working for pay***	0.918	0.274	0.689	0.463
Years of Formal Education	13.179	2.442	13.109	2.178
# of Children	2.058	1.760	2.075	1.665
<b>Work Stressors</b>				
Fear of losing job***	0.167	0.354	0.128	0.275
Ongoing problems getting along with someone	0.133	0.327	0.125	0.281
Ongoing stress at work***	0.455	0.480	0.395	0.415
<b>Relationship Stressors</b>				
Relationship Strain**	2.250	0.561	2.311	0.623
Inconsiderate Behavior***	1.444	0.392	1.497	0.458
Overall Marital/Partnered Abuse***	1.522	0.409	1.579	0.436
Respondent Abuses Spouse/Partner***	1.507	0.401	1.606	0.470
Spouse/Partner Abuses Respondent	1.537	0.475	1.553	0.493
Overall Spouse/Partner Conflict**	1.728	0.387	1.772	0.441
Spouse or partner willingness to help at home***	3.591	0.601	3.233	0.854
Who spends the most time on home responsibilities***	2.624	1.673	5.580	1.640
<b>Work and Family Conflict</b>				
Overall Work-Family or Family-Work Conflict*	2.346	0.507	2.308	0.453

**Other Stressors**

Traumatic Life Events***	1.398	1.488	0.990	1.358
Recent Life Events***	1.101	1.236	1.362	1.283
Financial Strain	0.003	0.896	-0.003	0.882

**Resources**

Mastery	3.359	0.433	3.361	0.428
Self-Esteem***	3.486	0.524	3.373	0.624
Spousal Support***	3.793	0.317	3.667	0.466

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\*p<.05. \*\*p<.01. \*\*\*p<.001.

Table 2. Hierarchical regression of distress on demographic variables, stressors, and resources on the pooled sample of married/cohabiting men and women (N=2,869)

	Equation 1		Equation 2		Equation 3	
	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	$\beta$
<i>Constant</i>	.678		-.290		.823	
<b>Demographics</b>						
Age	-.001	-.029	.001	.026	.000	.003
Years of Education	-.006*	-.044	-.009***	-.064	-.002	-.013
Female	.072***	.109	.073***	.111	.056***	.085
Family Income	-.008***	-.083	-.002	-.024	.001	.011
White	-.002	-.002	-.015	-.018	-.010	-.012
Employed	-.061***	-.075	-.040**	-.049	-.022	-.027
Number of Children	.010**	.054	-.001	-.006	.002	.012
<b>Stressors</b>						
Fear of Job Loss			.058***	.056	.040**	.039
Ongoing Interpersonal Problems at Work			.036*	.033	.032*	.030
Ongoing Stressors at Work			.042***	.058	.051***	.070
Financial Strain			.049***	.134	.029***	.079
Number of Traumatic Events			.018***	.077	.015***	.064
Number of Life Events			.034***	.130	.032***	.123
Overall Work-Family Conflict			.154***	.225	.130***	.190
Relationship Strain			.059***	.107	.030**	.054
Inconsiderate Behavior			.134***	.176	.073***	.095
Respondent Abuses Spouse/Partner			.053***	.072	.022	.029
Spouse/Partner Abuses Respondent			-.007	-.011	.009	.014
<b>Resources</b>						
Spousal Support					-.050***	-.062
Self Esteem					-.190***	-.339
Mastery					-.051***	-.068
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.045		.353		.467	
<i>S.E.E.</i>	.320		.264		.240	

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001.

Table 3. Hierarchical regression of distress on demographic variables, stressors, and resources on men and women separately

	Equation 3			
	Females (N=1,545)		Males (N=1,322)	
	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	$\beta$
<i>Constant</i>	.880		.896	
<b>Demographic Variables</b>				
Age	-.000	-.002	-.000	.001
Years of Education	-.003	-.021	-.001	-.005
Family Income	.000	.004	.004	.037
White	-.038*	-.043	.021	.026
Employed	-.004	-.005	-.086***	-.075
Number of Children	.002	.008	.003	.018
<b>Stressors</b>				
Scare of Job Loss	.029	.024	.054**	.061
Ongoing Interpersonal Problems at Work	.024	.020	.042*	.044
Ongoing Stressors at Work <sup>^^</sup>	.008	.010	.087***	.134
Financial Strain	.030***	.079	.026***	.074
Number of Traumatic Events	.015**	.062	.014**	.067
Number of Recent Life Events <sup>^</sup>	.041***	.158	.021***	.082
Overall Work-Family Conflict	.131***	.177	.123***	.200
Relationship Strain	.043**	.081	.012	.021
Inconsiderate Behavior	.050*	.068	.103***	.129
Respondent Abuses Spouse/Partner	.026	.037	.009	.012
Spouse/Partner Abuses Respondent	.015	.022	.009	.014
<b>Resources</b>				
Spousal Support	-.061***	-.085	-.034	-.035
Self-Esteem <sup>^^</sup>	-.172***	-.322	-.221***	-.370
Mastery	-.045**	-.058	-.059***	-.081
R <sup>2</sup>	.450		.488	
S.E.E.	.249		.226	

\*p<.05. \*\*p<.01. \*\*\*p<.001. ^ = slope test sig at .05 level. ^^ = slope test significant at .01 level. ^^ = slope test sig at .001 level.

## APPENDIX

Problems in the Marriage/Partnered Relationship*Relationship Strain,  $\alpha = .810$* *Responses ranged from 1=never to 4=often*

How much does your (husband/wife/partner) make too many demands on you?

How often does (he/she) make you feel tense?

How often does (he/she) argue with you?

How often does (he/she) criticize you?

How often does (he/she) let you down when you are counting on (him/her)?

How often does (he/she) get on your nerves?

*Inconsiderate Behavior,  $\alpha = .764$* *Responses ranged from 1=never to 4=often*

My (husband/wife/partner) drinks or uses drugs too much.

(He/She) wastes money the family needs for other things.

(He/She) has extramarital affairs.

(He/She) has times when (he/she) is so depressed that it interferes with (his/her) normal activities.

(He/She) is very disagreeable.

(He/She) threatens to end our relationship or leave me.

(He/She) is away from home overnight.

(He/She) comes home late or stays away from home.

(He/She) has temper tantrums.

*Relationship Mutually Abusive,  $\alpha = .731$* *Responses ranged from 1=never to 4=often*

When you have a disagreement with your (spouse/partner), how often do you do any of the following: insult or swear, sulk or refuse to talk, stomp out of the room, do or say something to spite, threaten to hit or smash or kick something in anger?

How often does (he/she) do any of these things to you?

When you have a disagreement with your (spouse/partner) how often do you do any of these things: push, grab or shove, throw something, slap or spank?

How often does (he/she) do any of these things to you?

When you have a disagreement with your (spouse/partner), how often do you do any of the following to (him/her): kick, bite or hit with a fist, hit or try to hit with something, beat up, choke, burn or scald?

How often does (he/she) do any of these things in to you?

*Respondent Abusive,  $\alpha = .466$* *Responses ranged from 1=never to 4=often*

When you have a disagreement with your (spouse/partner), how often do you do any of the following: insult or swear, sulk or refuse to talk, stomp out of the room, do or say something to spite, threaten to hit or smash or kick something in anger?

When you have a disagreement with your (spouse/partner) how often do you do any of the following: push, grab or shove, throw something, slap or spank?

When you have a disagreement with your (spouse/partner), how often do you do any of the following: kick, bite or hit with a fist, hit or try to hit with something, beat up, choke, burn or scald?

*Spouse/Partner Abusive,  $\alpha = .561$*

*Responses ranged from 1=never to 4=often*

How often does (he/she) do any of these things to you: insult or swear, sulk or refuse to talk, stomp out of the room, do or say something to spite, threaten to hit or smash or kick something in anger?

How often does (he/she) do any of these things in to you: push, grab or shove, throw something, slap or spank?

How often does (he/she) do any of these things to you: kick, bite or hit with a fist, hit or try to hit with something, beat up, choke, burn or scald?

*Overall Spouse/Partner Conflict,  $\alpha = .871$*

*Responses ranged from 1=never to 4=often*

How much does your (husband/wife/partner) make too many demands on you?

How often does (he/she) make you feel tense?

How often does (he/she) argue with you?

How often does (he/she) criticize you?

How often does (he/she) let you down when you are counting on (him/her)?

How often does (he/she) get on your nerves?

My (husband/wife/partner) drinks or uses drugs too much. Does this happen often, sometimes, rarely, or never?

(He/She) wastes money the family needs for other things?

(He/She) has extramarital affairs.

(He/She) has times when (he/she) is so depressed that it interferes with (his/her) normal activities.

(He/She) is very disagreeable.

(He/She) threatens to end our relationship or leave me.

(He/She) is away from home overnight.

(He/She) comes home late or stays away from home.

(He/She) has temper tantrums.

How often does (he/she) do any of these things to you: insult or swear, sulk or refuse to talk, stomp out of the room, do or say something to spite, threaten to hit or smash or kick something in anger?

How often does (he/she) do any of these things to you: push, grab or shove, throw something, slap or spank?

How often does (he/she) do any of these things to you: kick, bite or hit with a fist, hit or try to hit with something, beat up, choke, burn or scald?

### Work and Family Conflict

*Overall Work-Family, Family-Work Interplay,  $\alpha = .737$*

*Responses ranged from 1=never (if vol.) to 4=often*

- How often do things going on at home make you tense and irritable on the job?
- How often do the demands of your family interfere with your work on the job?
- When you are at work, how often do you think about things going on at home?
- How often do things going on at work make you tense and irritable at home?
- How often do the demands of your job interfere with your family life?
- When you are at home, how often do you think about things going on at work?
- How often do you feel that you do not have enough time to do a good job both at home and at work?

### Other Social Stressors

*Financial Strain,  $\alpha = .726$*

- In general, would you say (you have/your family living here has *more money* than you need, *just enough* for your needs, or *not enough* to meet your needs?
- How difficult is it for (you/your family living here) to pay (your/its) monthly bills—*very difficult*, *somewhat*, *not very*, or *not at all difficult*?

*Traumatic Events,  $\alpha = .581$*

*Responses ranged from 1=yes to 0=no*

Did (the following event) ever happen to you?

- EVENT 1: You had direct combat experience?
- EVENT 2: You were involved in a life threatening accident?
- EVENT 3: You were involved in a fire, flood, or natural disaster?
- EVENT 4: You witnessed someone being badly injured or killed?
- EVENT 5: You were raped?
- EVENT 6: You were sexually molested?
- EVENT 7: You were seriously physically attacked or assaulted?
- EVENT 8: You were physically abused as a child?
- EVENT 9: You were seriously neglected as a child?
- EVENT 10: You were threatened with a weapon, held captive, or kidnapped?

*Recent Life Events,  $\alpha = .415$*

*Responses ranged from 1=yes to 0=no*

In the past 12 months:

- EVENT 1: Did you have a close friendship break up?
- EVENT 2: Did you have a long separation from a loved one?
- EVENT 3: Were you robbed or burglarized?
- EVENT 4: Was your driver's license suspended?
- EVENT 5: Did you sue someone?
- EVENT 6: Were you sued by someone?

EVENT 7: Did you have serious trouble with the police or the law?

EVENT 8: Did you have serious, ongoing tensions, conflicts, or arguments with your natural father, step-father, natural mother, step-mother, brother, sister, or any other person?

EVENT 9: Did any close friend or close relative die (other than your spouse or your child)?

EVENT 10: Did your natural father, step-father, natural mother, step-mother, brother, sister, or any other person have a major life crisis like a problem with the law, life-threatening illness, or other crisis that could affect them for years to come?

EVENT 11: Other than the things we have already covered did any other major stressful event happen to you?

### Resources:

*Spousal Support,  $\alpha = .820$*

*Responses ranged from 1=not at all to 4=a lot*

How much does your (husband/wife/partner) really care about you?

How much does (he/she) understand the way you feel about things?

How much does (he/she) appreciate you?

How much can you rely on (him/her) for help if you have a serious problem?

How much can you open up to (him/her) if you need to talk about your worries?

How much can you relax and be yourself around (him/her)?

*Mastery,  $\alpha = .672$*

*Responses ranged from 1=very true to 4=not true at all*

My life is determined by my own actions. (Item reverse coded, 1=not true at all to 4=very true)

When I get what I want, it is usually because I worked hard for it. (Item reverse coded, 1=not true at all to 4=very true)

When I get what I want, it is usually because I am lucky.

Often, there is no way I can protect myself from bad luck.

It is not always wise for me to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune.

I believe that chance or luck plays an important role in my life.

I feel like what happens in my life is mostly determined by powerful people.

My life is chiefly controlled by powerful others.

*Self-esteem,  $\alpha = .789$*

*Responses ranged from 1=very true to 4=not true at all*

On the whole I am satisfied with myself. (Item reverse coded, 1=not at all true to 4=very true)

At times I think I am no good at all.

I wish I could have more respect for myself.

All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.



I feel I am a person of worth, at least equal with others. (Item reverse coded,  
1=*not at all true* to 4=*very true*)

Dependent Variables:

*Depression scale,  $\alpha = .896$*

*Responses ranged from 1=never to 4=often*

In the past 30 days, how often did you...

- blame yourself for things—often, sometimes, rarely, or never?
- feel lonely?
- feel blue?
- feel no interest in things?
- feel hopeless about the future?
- have trouble concentrating?
- feel everything was an effort?
- feel worthless?
- feel exhausted for no good reason?

*Anxiety scale,  $\alpha = .760$*

*Responses ranged from 1=never to 4=often*

In the past 30 days, how often did you...

- feel trapped or caught?
- feel suddenly scared for no reason?
- worry too much about things?
- feel frightened?
- feel tense or keyed up?

*Distress scale,  $\alpha = .918$*

*Responses ranged from 1=never to 4=often*

In the past 30 days, how often did you...

- blame yourself for things—often, sometimes, rarely, or never?
- feel lonely?
- feel blue?
- feel no interest in things?
- feel hopeless about the future?
- have trouble concentrating?
- feel everything was an effort?
- feel worthless?
- feel exhausted for no good reason?
- feel trapped or caught?
- feel suddenly scared for no reason?
- worry too much about things?
- feel frightened?
- feel tense or keyed up?

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