MEDIATING THE INFLUENCE OF INTERFERENCE ON MARITAL

SATISFACTION: BOUNDARIES WITH IN-LAWS

by

Daniel Isaac Goldstein

(Under the Direction of Brian A. Glaser)

ABSTRACT

Of the many widely known stressors for couples, in-laws rank among the top five problematic areas (Schramm, Marshall, Harris & Lee, 2005). Interference is a major complaint for couples with regard to in-laws, and the mother-in-law has been identified as the most detrimental to marital satisfaction. The present study sought to determine the effect of perceived boundaries on the relationship between interference and marital satisfaction using a newly developed measure and the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale from the perspective of married females. 241 married females completed an online survey about their perceptions of their mothers-in-law's behavior and their husbands' boundary-setting behavior. The results demonstrated that the effect of interference on marital satisfaction is mediated by the perceived boundaries that are set by participants' husbands for their mothers. These findings highlight the importance of couples' communication about in-law difficulties and further ground family systems theory and Bowen's triangle theory. In addition, the new instrument may have useful clinical applications.

INDEX WORDS: Marital Satisfaction, Family Relationships, Quantitative, Couples

MEDIATING THE INFLUENCE OF INTERFERENCE ON MARITAL

SATISFACTION: BOUNDARIES WITH IN-LAWS

by

Daniel Isaac Goldstein

B.A., University of Florida, 2000

M.S., Barry University, 2011

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2015

MEDIATING THE INFLUENCE OF INTERFERENCE ON MARITAL

SATISFACTION: BOUNDARIES WITH IN-LAWS

by

Daniel Isaac Goldstein

Major Professor: Brian A. Glaser

Committee: Georgia B. Calhoun
                Linda F. Campbell

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
August 2015

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Words cannot express the gratitude that I feel toward everyone that has supported me on this journey of professional growth, which has also been so deeply personal. To the members of my doctoral committee, Drs. Glaser, Calhoun and Campbell, thank you for supporting and encouraging me and contributing your knowledge and experience in service of my growth throughout the program and this dissertation process.   The opportunity to learn from you has been invaluable. Thank you for taking an interest in my line of research, consistently demonstrating your confidence in my skills and abilities and constantly easing my anxiety throughout the process. I would also like to thank all of the faculty and staff in the department for providing such an enriching experience during my time in the program.

I lovingly thank my family. I thank my loving, intelligent, sensitive, caring and beautiful wife, Amy, for helping me find the courage to embark on this path and supporting me every step of the way. I thank my parents, Jim and Michelle for their unwavering support throughout this experience. I also thank my in-laws, Risa, Stephen, Shari and Stephen, who have shown me enthusiastic acceptance from the start and saw in me the courage to pursue my life's passion. Last but not least, I thank my daughters, Sarah and Stephanie, who are too young to realize how much they have deepened the meaning in my life.

I hope that through my continued research and practice in psychology, future couples can learn how to communicate more effectively with their parents and in-laws.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with a statement of the problem and is followed by the purpose of the study and hypotheses. This study seeks to further the development of a new instrument, which aims to measure wives' perceptions of marital interference and support from mothers-in-law as well as their respective perceptions of husbands' boundary-setting behaviors toward mothers-in-law. The ultimate goal is to determine whether such boundary-setting behavior mediates the negative effect of interference on marital satisfaction.

Context within Counseling Psychology

Approximately half of United States citizens choose to engage in marital relationships (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Newlyweds face many adjustments as they leave behind their single lives in favor of partnerships. Although Bronfenbrenner (1986) characterized marriage as a normal developmental transition, the statistics show that 20% to over 30% of marriages end in divorce or separation (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). The financial and educational costs of divorce are high; members of divorced families attain relatively lower levels of education (Keith & Finlay, 1988) and divorced parents often transmit the promise of poor incomes and family insecurity on to their children, thus continuing a cycle of economic distress (Ross & Mirowsky, 1999). Research has also demonstrated that adult children of high conflict families are more likely to report lower levels of well-being (Amato & Booth, 1991; Amato, Loomis, & Booth, 1995).

With a focus on promoting positive development and competence across the life span, Counseling Psychology would seem uniquely suited to explore issues related to marriage and marital satisfaction. Surprisingly, an EBSCO search of peer-reviewed articles in the *Journal of Counseling Psychology* and *The Counseling Psychologist* that contain the words "marital satisfaction" in the text returned less than 20 results. Similarly, a search for articles in those journals containing the words "marriage" returned less than 100 total entries.

Even though marriage and marital satisfaction seem to be areas of a peripheral focus within the specialty, Counseling Psychology is defined by the promotion of optimal development and human functioning across the life span, and thus is perfectly suited for investigating and preventing problems that arise in marriage.

Statement of the Problem

Research has indicated that even couples who possess protective factors, such as a high levels of problem-solving skills, can be negatively affected by external stressors (Neff & Karney, 2009), and in turn be at risk for marital conflict and/or divorce. Among those stressors that married couples report to be exceptionally problematic, difficulties with in-laws consistently rank highly. Both husbands and wives have reported in-laws among their top five problematic areas of their marriage, just behind financial stress and balancing jobs and marriage (Schramm, Marshall, Harris, & Lee, 2005). Despite the difficulty between couples and their in-laws, the research that examines couples' relationships with in-laws is relatively sparse and has not been examined as frequently compared to the amount of work on marriage and financial stress, work life balance, and of course the abundant work on marital satisfaction in general.

Duvall's (1954) seminal study on in-laws revealed that the mother-in-law is by far the most troublesome in-law for both husbands and wives. Furthermore, since that time, the problems between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law have been highlighted in the literature (Marotz-Baden & Cowan, 1987; Merrill, 2007; Turner, Young, & Black, 2006) and results of several studies (Chung, Crawford, & Fischer, 1996; Cong & Silverstein, 2008; Datta, Poortinga, & Marcoen, 2003; Gangoli & Rew, 2011; Sandel, 2004) suggested that these issues are not isolated to the Western world.

Turner et al.'s (2006) qualitative findings suggest that both mother-in-law and daughter-in-law enter the relationship with anxiety. Similarly, the overall research undertaken on adult-child parental relationships has resulted in a conceptualization referred to as the intergenerational ambivalence framework. Many children tend to spend less time with parents after marriage, and moreover, the literature that describes relationships between mothers and their adult sons suggests that adult sons tend to be report better relationships with their mothers when they are single. In that married sons frequently have difficulty in their relationships with their mothers, and relationships between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law are at time viewed as anxiety-inducing, it follows that an examination of the triadic relationship between a husband, his wife and his mother from the perspective of the couple seems to be warranted. Further, in a study of 451 rural white families, Bryant et al. (2001) found that the only in-law relationship that negatively impacted marital satisfaction for both spouses in a couple was the relationship between the wife and her mother-in-law.

Duvall's (1954) results indicated that the major complaint couples have about their mothers-in-law is interference. Interfering relationships with in-laws can detract

from marital satisfaction whereas supportive relationships with in-laws can enhance marital satisfaction for an individual (Julien, Markman, Léveillé, Chartrand, & Bégin, 1994; Klein & Milardo, 2000; Widmer, Giudici, Le Goff, & Pollien, 2009). Further, researchers have drawn attention to bidirectional causality inherent in the relationship between marital satisfaction and both interference and support from a couple's social network (Widmer et al., 2009). When one partner is distressed in the marital relationship, he or she tends to encourage interfering statements from his or her social network (Julien et al., 1994).

A couple's problems may also intensify if one or both partners become overly reliant on outsiders' opinions of their marriage (Widmer et al., 2009). Fittingly, Baucom, Gordon, Snyder, Atkins, and Christensen (2006) suggested that when a spouse sets boundaries with an outsider it shows support for the other spouse and is essential for overcoming an outsider's interference in the marriage. Alternatively, when a spouse fails to set appropriate boundaries with interfering outsiders, this may actually serve to strengthen the relationship with the outsider and weaken the spousal relationship.

Purpose of the Study

Despite some studies that involved the constructs of interference, support and boundaries, these constructs were not measured using more than one item, or several items were used to measure these constructs within a different context (e.g. work-family interference). Due to the lack of availability of questionnaires that specifically measured the construct of marital interference, support and boundaries, the author, in an earlier study (Goldstein, 2011b), developed a new scale called the Marital Interference and Boundaries Scale (MIBS;(Goldstein, 2011a)) that aimed to measure these constructs within the context of the aforementioned triadic relationship from the perspective of

married males and females. The items were generated after a thorough review of the extant literature as well as through unstructured interviews with married individuals. Content and face validity were verified by senior members of the clinical psychology faculty at a southeastern university. Criterion validity was demonstrated through the use of the instrument to predict marital satisfaction.

The MIBS (Goldstein, 2011a) drew from the literature that examined married couples and their social networks, including the couples' parents, as well as the adult-child parental relationship literature. The MIBS (Goldstein, 2011a) aimed to measure the husbands and wives' respective perceptions of interference and support that exists in the marital relationship by the husband's mother. It also intended to measure perceptions of the extent to which the husband sets and enforces psychological and emotional boundaries with his mother. Because the instrument aimed to measure the perception of both husband and wife in the couple, the author developed two versions of this instrument, female (MIBS-F) and male (MIBS-M). The female instrument asked females about their mothers-in-law whereas the male instrument asked about their mothers.

In the author's earlier study (Goldstein, 2011b), data from 301 married males and females were collected in a pilot study using a web-based survey design. After factor analyzing the MIBS (Goldstein, 2011a), the items of the female instrument revealed a three-factor structure. These factors were labeled Interference, Support, and Boundaries. The items of the male version did not conform to a clear structure. An explanation for this finding was not readily apparent. However, it was speculated that the perspectives within the triangle are reflective of the nature of the relationship within the triangle. Therefore, the constructs may be more salient to the women in the study, e.g. Bryant, et

al., 2001.   Regardless of the reason, the further development of the male version of the MIBS (Goldstein, 2011a) is beyond the scope of this study.

In addition to factor analyzing the instrument, the measure was used in a hierarchical regression to determine whether the prevailing factors predicted marital satisfaction. The results for the author's earlier study demonstrated that Interference and Support predicted marital satisfaction for females. Also, Boundaries scores mediated the relationship between interference and marital satisfaction for females; thus boundaries set by the husband for his mother reduced the effect that interference had on marital satisfaction for females. These results highlighted the importance of boundary setting within the context of this triad.

In light of these preliminary findings, the development of the MIBS (Goldstein, 2011a) is an important step in the investigation of the understudied field of in-law relationships and could ultimately provide a useful clinical and research tool. The MIBS (Goldstein, 2011a) could eventually be used to supplement existing measures of marital satisfaction or as an independent assessment tool in cases in which interference or lack of boundary setting appears to be an issue for a couple or in studies that seek to examine interference, support, and boundaries further.

Research Statement

The present study seeks to confirm the factor structure for the female version of the Marital Interference and Boundaries Scale (Goldstein, 2011a).   As stated previously, the instrument possesses face and content validity as verified by senior faculty at a southeastern university. Although criterion validity of the instrument was determined in the earlier study, the results of that study will be replicated by using the new measure to predict marital satisfaction beyond other major predictors of marital satisfaction.

Convergent validity will be demonstrated by correlating the new measure to previously used methods to assess the construct under investigation.

General Hypotheses

With regard to the items on the MIBS (Goldstein, 2011a):

1) It is hypothesized that the instrument will possess a three-factor structure.

2) It is hypothesized that the items of the Interference subscale will predict marital satisfaction.

3) It is hypothesized that the items of the Boundaries subscale will mediate the effect of interference on marital satisfaction.

4) It is hypothesized that the items of the Support subscale will predict marital satisfaction.

5) It is hypothesized that the Interference subscale of the MIBS will be correlated significantly to previously used methods of assessing marital interference.

6) It is hypothesized that the MIBS factor score will be significantly correlated to daughters-in-law's perception of the closeness between mothers-in-law and husbands.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

In order to understand the phenomenon under investigation, it is important to be knowledgeable about the literature that relates directly and indirectly relates to the phenomenon under investigation. Therefore, in preparing to undertake this study, the following areas of literature were reviewed: marital satisfaction, adult-child parental relationships, daughter-in-law mother-in-law relationships, social networks' impact on marital satisfaction, and in-laws' behaviors' effect on marital satisfaction. This chapter provides a summary of those areas of the literature.

Marital Satisfaction

Researchers often disagree on the definition of the construct of marital satisfaction, positing that many studies actually measured other variables such as marital quality and/or dyadic adjustment. Spanier (1976) referred to dyadic adjustment as "a process of movement along a continuum which can be evaluated in terms of proximity to good or poor adjustment." Spanier (1988) claimed that his instrument, the *Dyadic Adjustment Scale* (DAS; 1976) worked best as a global assessment of marital quality and the individual subscales of the instrument did not adequately capture their reflected constructs. Since the creation of the DAS, researchers have utilized the combined subscales to represent marital satisfaction. However, according to Ward, Lundberg, Zabriskie, and Berrett (2009) the construct of marital quality or dyadic adjustment, suggested by Spanier (1976, 1988), refers to a person's global evaluation of the marriage relationship, which is similar, but not equivalent to marital satisfaction. Ward et al.

(2009) argued that the construct of marital satisfaction should have a positive connotation rather than a meaning that is derived from the absence of distress.

Since the purpose of this study is to differentiate between distressed and non-distressed couples to test the phenomenon under investigation, and since the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) was utilized in the present study to test the construct whose definition was not modified from Spanier's original definition, Spanier's (1976) definition of dyadic adjustment will be utilized to represent marital satisfaction: "A process, the outcome of which is determined by the degree of: (1) troublesome dyadic differences, (2) interpersonal tensions and personal anxiety; (3) dyadic satisfaction; (4) dyadic cohesion; and (5) consensus on matters of importance to dyadic functioning."

Even though some researchers try to draw clear distinctions between various constructs and terms i.e. marital quality, dyadic adjustment and marital satisfaction, many others have used them interchangeably without specifying their unique definitions and conceptualizations. Nevertheless, marital satisfaction is one of the most studied phenomena and robust constructs in marriage and family research. It has for many couples become a measure of the success and stability of a marriage and by extension, personal satisfaction and happiness. For numerous researchers, it has become a useful dependent variable in predicting distress or divorce.

20% of marriages are disrupted by separation or divorce after five years (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). The research undertaken in the area of marital satisfaction has yielded various factors that explain the success or failure of couples' relationships. The following factors have been identified in the research as having significant influence on

marital satisfaction: positive perceptions, adaptive behavior, individual characteristics, external stress, couples' social networks, and adult-child parental relationships.

Positive perceptions

The findings of Huston, Caughlin, Houts, Smith, and George (2001) suggested that most differences between happy and unhappy couples are a result of the difference in attitude and exist already at the start of marriage rather than developing later. Spouses involved in lasting happy marriages identified the ability to focus on each other's positive qualities and pay attention to the enjoyment they experience in their relationship as major factors that serve as an explanation of the strength of their union. In contrast, couples that are less in love later in their marriage viewed each other as less open, are more ambivalent about their relationship, and are more pessimistic than are couples who stay married and are happy in a marriage. It follows that, according to Huston et al. (2001), in more troubled marriages, the propensity to give one's partner the benefit of the doubt may subside.

Huston et al.'s (2001) research also suggested that newlyweds' inclination to view their partner's behavior compassionately may be contingent on how confident they are that their relationship will last and how motivated they are to preserve a positive image of each other. Additionally, even though some couples who stay married may become less openly affectionate and less in love, they might view these declines as a natural progression from a romantic relationship to a working partnership. The stability displayed in these relationships may be explained as enduring psychological qualities that partners bring to their relationship (Huston et al., 2001).

Cobb, Davila, and Bradbury's (2001) findings also contribute to the notion that holding positive perceptions of one's partner beneficially influences a relationship. They add that positive perceptions can be manifested through a couple's supportive interactions; spouses who had positive illusions were better support providers and receivers, as were their partners. Therefore, positive perceptions may affect how people feel about relationships, but they may also affect how people behave in relationships (Cobb et al., 2001).

Adaptive Behavior

McNulty (2008) studied a particular behavior central to supportive interaction -- forgiveness. His research examined the effects of spouses' tendencies to forgive their partners over the first two years of marriage. On the one hand, McNulty's (2008) results suggested that increased forgiveness is beneficial among partners who rarely exhibit negative behavior and decreased forgiveness is harmful. On the other hand, increased forgiveness is harmful for those partners who frequently engage in negative behavior and decreased forgiveness is beneficial for partners who frequently behave in negative behavior.

Along the lines of adaptive behavior, several researchers have examined certain problem solving behaviors that have been found to be associated with marital satisfaction. Tallman and Hsiao (2004) examined newlywed couples to determine the effect of cooperative problem-solving behavior on marital satisfaction. Their findings show that the initial period in marriage generates regular and severe disagreements; if not resolved, these disagreements can threaten long-term satisfaction. Couples who possess sufficient marital satisfaction and mutual trust are better able to engage in exchanges that

involve cooperation and compromise. In defining compromise, neither party completely surrenders; rather both parties are active in initiating and accepting conciliatory offers. Furthermore, the link between satisfaction and cooperation appears to be mediated by shared respect for the partners' interpersonal skills (Tallman & Hsiao, 2004).

Johnson et al. (2005) contributed to the concept of the positive influence of problem-solving behavior in marriages by adding the dimension of positive affect. Newlyweds in their first marriage in Los Angeles County, California completed questionnaires prior to a laboratory session where they were observed discussing marital difficulties. Over the next four years they reported on their marital satisfaction seven additional times. The data suggested that low levels of positive affect and high levels of negative problem-solving skills foretold rapid rates of deterioration, whereas high levels of positive affect buffered the effects of high levels of negative skills (Johnson et al., 2005).

Cohan and Bradbury's (1997) research focused on verbal content and affective expressions exhibited during marital problem-solving. Their results indicated that positive problem-solving behavior and certain affective expressions lessened the effect of life events, and negative problem-solving behaviors and certain affective expressions exacerbated the effect of negative life events. Specifically, wives' increased anger was helpful for their individual and marital adjustment in the context of life events, whereas husbands' increased use of humor in the face of major life events predicted separation or divorce. The findings support that successful problem-solving may increase the probability that couples will employ problem-solving behavior in the future. Failed attempts to solve problems may result in dissatisfaction and the perception in couples that their marriage is deteriorating.

Wilson, Charker, Lizzio, Halford, and Kimlin (2005) studied the organized problem-solving behavioral technique known as relationship self-regulation (SR) and its effect on marital satisfaction. SR consists of the four following activities: appraisal, goal setting, change implementation and evaluation. In their study, the researchers examined newlywed and long married couples to determine the extent to which regular relationship SR is associated with increased marital satisfaction. In newlywed couples, both partners SR were associated with relationship satisfaction. In contrast, only husbands' SR was associated with satisfaction in long married couples.

Results of a subsequent study showed relationship that SR accounted for 25% to 66% of the variance in marital satisfaction. Additionally, SR predicted irregular and unpredictable change in relationship satisfaction. In other words, if couples high in SR navigate major life events successfully, they might show sudden jumps in satisfaction, whereas if couples low in SR cannot traverse major life events satisfactorily, they may show sudden drops in marital satisfaction (Halford, Lizzio, Wilson, & Occhipinti, 2007).

Schneewind and Gerhard (2002) research findings suggested that as relationships progress, problem solving behaviors become more predictable and form more of a style of handling conflict, which resembles a disposition or personality type. Specifically, this dispositional manner of solving problems may grow to be an extension of a relationship's personality patterns. For example, one style of handling problems is that as issues arise, the wife becomes angry and the husband attempts to deflect the anger with humor which in turn further enrages the wife. Schneewind and Gerhard (2002) examined German newlywed couples to determine the effect that this couple relationship personality pattern has on marital satisfaction as well as the mediating effect of couple conflict resolution

style. The results demonstrated that relationship personality and conflict resolution style are considerable factors in predicting marital satisfaction. Furthermore, as time passes, couples' conflict resolution style becomes more important in predicting marital satisfaction.

Individual Characteristics

Some researchers have found that certain individual characteristics and demographic variables contribute to marital satisfaction. Research by Shackelford, Besser, and Goetz (2008) identified personality traits of spouses that may be related to marital satisfaction. Using the Five Factor Model (McCrae & Costa, 1987), they found that individuals with spouses who were particularly high on agreeableness (A) and conscientiousness (C) were more satisfied with their marriage, leading the spouses to estimate a lower probability of becoming involved in an extramarital affair in the next year.

McNulty, Neff, and Karney (2008) studied the extent to which physical attractiveness is associated with marital behavior and satisfaction. They indicated that the initial attraction that draws couples together continues to exert an influence on relationships after marriage. However, as the relationship intensifies and grows, it appears that a change occurs in the manner in which physical appearance affects the relationship. Whereas at first, the absolute attractiveness of two individuals may have independent effects on their relationship, as the relationship grows, the spouses' relative levels of attractiveness may have the greater impact. Specifically, results demonstrated that wives' greater physical attractiveness relative to husbands' attractiveness was associated with increased positive behavior and marital satisfaction.

Another factor to consider in marital satisfaction is each partner's family of origin. Story, Karney, Lawrence, and Bradbury (2004) research illustrated that experiences in the family of origin are consequential for later marital well-being because of the interpersonal processes they shape in the individuals as children. Interpersonal behaviors and processes seem to be a vessel by which negative experiences from husbands' and wives' families of origin are carried forward into the future. For example, DiLillo et al. (2009) studied the effect of child maltreatment on marital satisfaction in a sample of newlyweds. Their results implied that husbands who survive early maltreatment may have particular trouble with intimate relationships. For both husbands and wives, early maltreatment predicted lower trust of each other. Reduced marital trust was most strongly correlated to childhood psychological abuse and neglect.

A child who is constantly criticized by a caregiver or does not have basic requirements met may ultimately find it challenging as an adult to depend emotionally on intimate partners. Moreover, these individuals may have trouble with being conscious of and responding to their partners' needs. According to DiLillo et al. (2009), maltreatment exerted a progressively more harmful impact on marital functioning. Specifically, husbands' psychological abuse and neglect predicted progressively worse marital satisfaction. Their results point to early neglect as a factor in growing verbal and physical conflict along with deteriorating satisfaction on the part of husbands. The harsh abuse experiences reported by couples in their study suggest that child maltreatment contributes to a more rapid termination of some marriages. Overall, these results demonstrate that the early family environment can be a basis for learning maladaptive interpersonal behaviors that may be transmitted to later intimate relationships.

Riggio (2004) examined relations between memories of parental conflict and divorce, and social outcomes in young adulthood. Young adults from both divorced and intact families completed questionnaires to measure parental conflict, quality of parent–adult child relationships, anxiety in relationships with others, and perceptions of social support from others. Divorce and conflict in families of origin had significant independent effects on outcomes in young adulthood which included the anxiety in personal relationships. Furthermore, Riggio's (2004) findings indicated that wives from divorced family backgrounds reported elevated levels of psychological and physical aggression as newlyweds, which in turn increased the likelihood of dissatisfaction and dissolution in their marriages. Among husbands, reports of conflict and divorce in their families of origin covaried with higher levels of observed resentment and disdain in newlywed marital interaction, and this increased the likelihood they would experience adverse marital outcomes.

Stress

Despite the findings that suggest problem solving skills are crucial in predicting marital satisfaction, Karney and Bradbury (2005) asserted that when a couple faces stresses outside the marriage, even couples with satisfactory skills may struggle with utilizing those skills effectively. Therefore, in determining marital satisfaction, stress seems to be an important factor because it may hinder a couple's capacity to utilize adaptive processes. When individuals experience stress they seem to engage in less adaptive processing. Neff and Karney (2009) assessed the degree to which spouses who were experiencing stress outside their relationship were more reactive to daily experiences within the relationship. Although manifestations of stress varied

significantly, some spouses who experienced greater stress tended to be less close, more uncomfortable with dependence and anxious in their relationships. When faced with stress, these spouses reported a more negative overall assessment of their marriage, which indicates that their satisfaction was dependent on perceiving mostly positive and few negative events in the relationship that day. Overall, they tended to be more reactive to daily relationship experiences, and accordingly, stress was shown to be significant predictor of reactivity.

Given that under stress spouses are more likely to experience negative relationship events and fail to process and interpret events in an adaptive manner, it is important to note that there are certain life events that appear to exert stress on one partner and not the other, for example, a husband's job related stress. Neff and Karney (2007) examined couples and the extent to which one partner's stress influenced the other partner's evaluation of the relationship. A significant crossover effect was observed in husbands; their wives' stress consistently caused stress in them resulting in decreased marital satisfaction. In contrast, the influence of husbands' stress on wives' marital satisfaction depended on wives' own stress levels.

Schramm et al. (2005) examined 1,010 husbands and wives to assess marital satisfaction, marital adjustment, and problem areas experienced during the early months of marriage and both husbands and wives ranked in-laws among the top five most problematic areas. Other problematic areas reported by couples were financial stress, balancing job and marriage, sexual relations, resolving major conflicts, daily communication, caring for and/or disciplining the children, and division of household duties. Consequently, these areas of difficulty will be utilized as control variables in the

present study to determine whether perceived marital interference will predict marital satisfaction beyond other known areas of difficulty for couples.

Couples' Social Networks

Interestingly, despite being reported as a major problem area for couples, a paucity of research exists that examines the reason why in-law relationships are problematic. One area of the literature that seems to describe the impact of in-laws on couple's relationships is the research on couples' social networks. Two models, the support model and the interference model, explain an outsiders' influence on marriage. In the support model, outside actions help the couple to build a satisfying marriage. For example, confirming that the spouse's partner is a good and loving person and by emphasizing that the couple can work things out together, outsiders can exert a strengthening effect on the marriage. Conversely, in the interference model, outsiders exert a destructive effect on the marriage. Through actions that obstruct the couple from building from a satisfying marriage, outsiders can contribute to marital dissatisfaction by directly or indirectly criticizing a spouse's partner, by persuading a spouse that their partner is a bad person or harmful to one's wellbeing, or suggesting that only coercion and threats or abandoning the relationship and their partner can solve the marital problem (Julien et al., 1994).

Using the support and interference models, Julien et al. (1994) examined 87 couples to assess whether wives' interactions with supportive outsiders predicted greater marital adjustment than wives who had interactions with outsiders who engaged in interfering behaviors. The findings indicated that adjusted wives and their confidants were more likely to continue statements supportive of marriage. Essentially, the

confidants were less likely to respond to statements of support with statements of interference and less likely to respond to statements of interference with statements of support. Furthermore, when wives experienced interactions with their confidants characterized by interference, they felt a greater distance from their husbands. These results suggest that an outsider's interfering behaviors in a marriage, such as being critical of one's spouse and discouraging the couple from working things out can be detrimental to marital satisfaction whereas interactions that are characterized by supportive behaviors can promote harmony and increase marital satisfaction.

In a longitudinal study, Widmer et al. (2009) evaluated 1,534 couples to determine the effect of relatives' supportive or interfering behaviors on marital satisfaction. Available support was measured by asking respondents whether they felt they could count on their relatives' support in the event of a severe problem. Interference was measured by asking respondents whether they felt controlled by their relatives in regard to their married life and was defined as spouses' feelings about third-party involvement in their relationship.

The results demonstrated that marriages consisting of supportive and non-interfering relationships with relatives were associated with higher marital satisfaction whereas structures that were associated with interference were associated with lower marital satisfaction. Couples involved with interfering relatives displayed a reduction in one or both partners' self-efficacy which led to a reduced ability to resolve problems on their own and thus decreased marital satisfaction. Overall, interference may tend to encourage conflicts and intensify stress in a marital relationship and a couple's problems

may escalate if one or both partners become overly reliant on outsiders' opinions of their marriage.

Further, Widmer et al. (2009) called attention to bidirectional causality, which they asserted is characteristic of couples' relationships with their social networks. Therefore, not only is a couple affected by their social network's support or interference, but a couple's satisfaction or dissatisfaction may be contributing to the supportive or interfering pattern of interactions that they have with friends or relatives. Widmer et al.'s (2009) results further suggested that couples with supportive members of each partner's social network reported higher marital satisfaction than couples with an imbalanced set of supportive friends and relatives on either partner's side, or those with fewer sources of support.

Despite some studies that involved the constructs of interference, support and boundaries, these constructs were not measured using more than one item, or several items were used to measure these constructs within a different context (e.g. work-family interference). Due to the lack of availability of questionnaires that specifically measured the construct of marital interference, support and boundaries, the author, in an earlier study (Goldstein, 2011b), developed a new scale called the Marital Interference and Boundaries Scale (MIBS) that aimed to measure these constructs within the context of the aforementioned triadic relationship.

The MIBS (Goldstein, 2011a) drew from the literature that examined married couples and their social networks, including the couples' parents, as well as the adult-child parental relationship literature. For example, Bryant, Conger and Meehan (2001) measured discord with in-laws by asking each member of the couple ''How happy are

you with your mother-in-law'', ''How much conflict, tension, or disagreement do you feel there is between you and your mother-in-law'', and ''How often do you feel that your mother-in-law makes too many demands on you?''.

Hay, Fingerman and Lefkowitz (2007) measured negative social exchanges between parents and their adult children by asking how often an adult-child's mother or father had engaged in negative actions such as being unfriendly, behaving insensitively, making the participant feel bad or inferior, not giving desired assistance, making demands, questioning or doubting the participants decisions, or neglecting the participant. Hay, Fingerman and Lefkowitz (2007) measured supportive social exchanges by asking how often an adult-child experienced their parents acting affectionately and considerately, doing favors, supporting decisions, and being reliable and trustworthy.

Thus, the MIBS (Goldstein, 2011a) was developed by the author to measure the degree of interference and support that exists in the marital relationship by the husband's mother. It also intended to measure the extent to which the husband sets and enforces psychological and emotional boundaries with his mother. The responses were recorded on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Because the instrument aimed to measure the perception of the couple, the author developed two versions of this instrument, female (MIBS-F) and male (MIBS-M). Both versions of the instrument asked participants to respond to items about the husband's mother. Therefore, females were asked about their mothers-in-law and males were asked about their mothers.

In the author's earlier study (Goldstein, 2011b), data from 301 married males and females were collected using a web-based survey design. After factor analyzing the

MIBS-F, the items seemed to reveal a three-factor structure. The three factors were labeled "Interference," "Support," and "Boundaries." Interference items related to wives' perceptions of their mothers-in-law as critical and overinvolved in the wives' marriage. Support items related to positive perceptions of and feelings of acceptance by their mothers-in-law. Boundaries items reflected wives' perceptions of the extent to which husbands set and enforced clear psychological boundaries with their mothers.

The male version of the instrument did not demonstrate a clear factor structure, and an explanation for this was not readily apparent. The difference in factor-structure could be attributed to the differences in the relative position of females and males in the triadic relationship. In other words, the perspectives within the triangle are reflective of the nature of the relationship within the triangle. Females were asked strictly about their mothers-in-law's behavior and their husbands' boundary-setting behavior. Because males are the linchpin in the triad, not only were they asked what their mother may be doing to interfere or support his marital relationship, but they also were asked to characterize what their mother is doing in her relationship with his wife, as well as their own boundary-setting behavior with their mothers. Thus, the males' position as linchpin in this triad may be one of heightened complexity over that of females. The study of the male as linchpin in the triad may be more suitable for qualitative inquiry. Nevertheless, the examination of males' perceptions' is beyond the scope of this study.

To demonstrate criterion validity of the MIBS in the author's previous study (Goldstein, 2011b), he sought to determine whether interference and support, as measured by the MIBS (Goldstein, 2011a), would predict marital satisfaction, and to determine whether husbands' boundary-setting behavior, as perceived by husbands and

wives respectively, mediated the effect of interference on marital satisfaction. The results suggested that Interference and Support predicted marital satisfaction for females, but not for males. Boundaries scores were also a significant predictor of marital satisfaction for both males and females. In addition, Boundaries scores reduced the effect of interference on marital satisfaction, which suggested that boundaries may have a mediating relationship between interference and marital satisfaction. These results highlighted the importance of boundary setting within the context of this triad.

Adult-Child Parental Relationships

In that one spouse's parent is by definition involved in married couples' conflicts with in-laws, another aspect of relationships between married couples and in-laws can be elucidated by examining the literature that pertains to adult-child parental relationships. A common emotional thread that weaves in and out of the study of adult-child parental relationships is ambivalence. In numerous studies, the adult-child parental relationship has been explained using the intergenerational ambivalence framework. Ambivalence can be defined as feeling conflicted, torn, or experiencing both positive and negative emotions about the same object (Birditt, Miller, Fingerman, & Lefkowitz, 2009). Ambivalence can result from a variety of sources because being a parent to an adult-child is a dynamic process consisting of constant compromise between tendencies, stances, and motivations Levitzki (2009).

Conflict can arise between parents' desire for connection with their adult-children and their expectations that adult-children should become independent. Specifically, Shulman, Cohen, Feldman, and Mahler's (2006) study concluded that in all types of mother-son relationships, it appeared that ambivalence was prevalent, evidenced by mothers

acknowledging or having the tendency to push their sons toward independence on the one hand and raising questions about their sons' real capabilities on the other. Consistent with those findings, Buhl's (2008) research revealed that mothers' perceptions of connectedness was less with sons than with daughters and mothers described declines in affection with older children. However, Kaufman and Uhlenberg's (1998) findings demonstrated that for men, being single was indicative of better relationships with their mothers.

In addition to the conflict between the desire for connection to and a wish for the child's independence, parents are held by another conflict which appears to be pervasive. Parents are motivated by both reciprocity, which suggests that give and take should be fair between relationship partners, and also by the concept of solidarity, which implies that individuals should help close family members no matter the cost (Pillemer et al., 2007). Life course transitions can often result in differences in developmental needs (Birditt et al., 2009) which can lead to a lack of reciprocity, and ultimately ambivalence. Kaufman and Uhlenberg (1998) analyzed data from the National Survey of Families and Households (1987-1988; 1992-1994) to examine the quality of adult-child parental relationships across various life course transitions. Results demonstrated that parents declining health and parental divorce have a detrimental effect on the relationship. Similarly, problems in the adult child's marriage had a damaging effect on the relationship. However, married couples are less likely than single adults to stay in touch with their parents, which includes giving or receiving emotional, practical, and/or financial assistance (Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2008).

In examining this phenomenon from the couple's perspective, Beaton, Norris, and Pratt (2003) studied couples and their issues that involved their parents in order to determine major stressful themes. Couples discussed one unresolved issue in their relationships that involved a parent. The themes that emerged as a result of Beaton et al.'s research were summarized in terms of the following: boundary ambiguity, changing roles and rules, and struggling with power. Furthermore, the majority of couples did not communicate openly to their parents about issues that affected their marriage, nor did the couples engage in talking together about the issues related to their parents. Perhaps it is the ambivalence inherent in adult-child parental relationships that prevents couples from engaging in communication about these issues.

Given that married individuals tend to have a weaker relationship with their parents, it follows that parents benefit from investing in other roles aside from being parents. Fingerman, Chen, Hay, Cichy, and Lefkowitz (2006) interviewed over 150 families that included an adult child and his or her mother and father. The results showed that parents who were invested in other social roles experienced less ambivalence. Conversely, when parents were primarily invested in their parental role they tended to worry more.

On the one hand, worry is one of the negative emotions inherent in the adult-child parent relationship and reflects ambivalence. Worry is associated with ambivalent feelings because worry signifies an attempt to gain a sense of control over an uncontrollable situation. Parents worry over various things: adult-children being busy, dissatisfaction with quality time with adult-children, adult-children's romantic partners, and their adult-children's parenting style (Peters, Hooker, & Zvonkovic, 2006). On the other hand, it appears that worry also reflects investment in the relationship. Hay,

Fingerman & Lefkowitz's (2007) investigation of 213 adult-children and their mothers and fathers yielded results indicating that parents and adult-children who consider relationships highly important worry more about each other.

Testing a Triangular Theory of a Couple's Relationships with In-laws

In that either or both the marital relationship and the adult-child parental relationship can be characterized by conflict, perhaps the relationship between a couple and an in-law can best be viewed in terms of a Bowen triangle (Bowen, 1972; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Triangles are a large part of Bowen family systems theory (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). To buffer tension between a dyad, one member of the dyad often recruits a third party. Diffusing the tension can stabilize a system, but does not resolve the tension. Thus, in a triangle, the system gains stability, but it also creates a third-party member who is often marginalized. Bowen (Bowen, 1972; Kerr & Bowen, 1988) posited that anxiety produced by one's marginalization within a system is a powerful force.

According to Bowen's theory (Bowen, 1972; Kerr & Bowen, 1988), increasing or decreasing amounts of tension within a triangular system causes interactional patterns between its members to adjust. For example, during tranquil periods, the original dyad experiences closeness whereas the third-party experiences the discomfort in being an outsider. The dyad actively excludes the third-party while he or she attempts to get closer to one of them. The couple strengthens their relationship by aligning with each other instead of the outsider, which incites particularly severe feelings of rejection in the outsider. If tension develops within the dyad, the member that experiences the most discomfort will move closer to the outsider, and at that point, the original third-party outsider becomes an insider. Inevitably, the new outsider will maneuver to reinstate their

insider position. During times of moderate levels of tension, triangles typically have two parties in harmony and one member at odds with the others. Tension or conflict is not necessarily intrinsic in the relationship in which it exists but represents the interpersonal dynamics of a triangular system.

More recently, Serewicz (2008) introduced an in-law specific triangular theory of the communication and relationships in which she described an in-law triad as an involuntary relationship consisting of a spouse, a linchpin (in the present study, the husband), and a linchpin's parent. She provided four assumptions in her triangular theory of communication with in-laws: "1) The non-voluntary and triadic features of the in-law relationship are its defining characteristics… 2) The in-law relationship usually exists as the weak side of a triangle in which the other two sides represent strong ties… 3) The in-law triangle is constantly in flux… and 4) Communication among triad members carries repercussions for the triad as a whole."

According to the theory, the relationship between in-laws usually manifests as the weaker side of a triangle in which the other two sides, the familial and spousal sides, represent the stronger bonds. While the marital and familial sides of the triangle are characteristically stronger than the in-law side, the two strong sides of the triangle are not likely to be of equal strength. Differences in the relative strength of the marital and familial relationships imply discrepancies in the influence that the two in-law triad members have over the linchpin. The in-law triad member with the closer bond to the linchpin can exert greater pressure on the other in-law through that relationship.

Serewicz's (2008) results also involved disclosure and its impact on the in-law relationship. Specifically, the more the parent disclosed to the spouse about relational

trouble, historical identity, and acceptance disclosure, the more satisfied the parent and spouse were with the triad in general. Further, the more disclosure the spouse had received from the family about acceptance, the more satisfied the parent was with his or her unique relationship with the spouse. In another study as well, Serewicz and Canary (2008) found that hearing in-laws disclose their love, recognition, and acceptance of one as a family member was linked with positive relational consequences, and hearing in-laws disclose criticism and gossip about family members was linked with negative relational consequences.

Serewicz (2008) conceded that a possible limitation of her research was that 86% of the parents in her sample were mothers, 70% of the linchpins were female, and 57% of the familial dyads were mother/daughter pairs. In turn, the sex composition of the triads seemed to be sizeable factors with regard to the interpretation of the results. This implies that perhaps her results could have differed if the majority of linchpins were male, or conversely, if the majority of in-law dyads consisted of mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law.

In-Law Relationships (MIL/DIL)

For more than a century, the relationship between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law has been fodder for works in popular culture. In many of these works, the mother-in-law is portrayed in a stereotypically negative light, and perhaps fittingly, because the early studies on in-law relationships indicate that the mother-in-law is the most troublesome of in-laws for a married couple (Duvall, 1954). More recently, the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law has received increased attention in the literature.

As psychologists began to examine the complex dynamics of this in-law dyad, some studies have suggested that these relationships overall are not as conflict-ridden as the media suggests. For example, Marotz-Baden and Cowan (1987) investigated the sources of conflict between 44 mothers-in-law and 55 daughters-in-law in 2-generation farm families. Marotz-Baden and Cowan (1987) findings indicated that daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law did not report unusual amounts of stress. Further, some studies indicate that a considerable amount of these relationships are described by their participants and can be characterized as positive and supportive, but tend to vary by region (Duvall, 1954). Indeed, many studies around the world contain varying perspectives of the relationships between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law (Bryant et al., 2001; Chung et al., 1996; Datta et al., 2003; Gangoli & Rew, 2011; Pak, 2011; Sandel, 2004; Wu et al., 2010).

Gangoli and Rew (2011) focused on acts of domestic violence perpetrated against daughters-in-law by their mothers-in-law in India. However, rather than as a form of gender-based violence against women, the legal conceptualization of mother-in-law perpetrated violence is as intra-women relational conflict between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. Similarly, in Korea, because of age and status as the mother of younger women's husbands, mothers-in-law frequently control and criticize their daughters-in-law. This situation may be caused by the accrued and escalating suffering of women in Korea, in which, both females are dominated in that society by men and tend to view suffering as their destiny. In that way, frustrations of the oppressed, older Korean women are then directed against their daughters-in-law so that daughters-in-law

are denigrated not just by the men in the family but also by an older woman who has authority over her (Pak, 2011).

Sandel (2004) analyzed interviews with 16 mothers-in-law and 16 daughters-in-law in Taiwan in order to explore the interpersonal conflict that seems to characterize these relationships. His findings indicated that conflicts seemed to stem from daughters-in-law challenging the authority of their mothers-in-law. In the hierarchical structure that typifies the Taiwanese family, the mother-in-law has the freedom to openly criticize her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law should respectfully accept whatever criticism her mother-in-law makes. In contrast, daughters-in-law should not openly criticize their mothers-in-law. Mothers-in-law defended their intentions and behavior as maintaining the value of respecting elders. Daughters-in-law, in contrast, indicated that conflicts resulted from inadvertent mistakes or the faults of their mothers-in-law. This structure and its corresponding social rules present a challenge in that within this culture as the lives of mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law are intertwined in many areas.

In the United States, Turner et al. (2006) highlighted a more balanced view of the relationship between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. Turner et al. (2006) interviewed 23 daughters-in-law and 19 mothers-in-law as well as held focus groups to examine the complex dynamics of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationships. Participants talked about their relationships as central to their identity; therefore, their comments centered on relational themes of trust, acceptance, and warmth, and conversely rejection, disloyalty, and hostility. Further, both members of the dyad may enter the relationship with ambivalent emotions about the future of the relationship. While both may optimistic, they may also experience anxiety about the future of the relationship.

Even those who reported superb relationships with their mothers-in-law or daughters-in-law expressed some hesitancy about trusting the relationship.

In describing their relationship with their mothers-in-law prior to marriage, daughters-in-law shared a range of different experiences. Whereas some had a positive sense of the relationship prior to marriage and even saw an ideal family in their future husband's family, others portrayed a tense relationship before the wedding took place. Most daughters-in-law entered marriage hopeful that they could win their mothers-in-law's approval and establish a warm, comfortable relationship. Consequently, many women described their effort to try to begin the relationship on a positive note. In contrast, some daughters-in-law never feel comfortable as evidenced by their reported sense of insecurity and fear of rejection.

Mothers-in-law were more guarded in their evaluations of the relationship prior to marriage than the daughters-in-law. The majority of the mothers-in-law indicated that they had a positive, somewhat secure relationship with their daughters-in-law prior to their sons' weddings despite not knowing their future daughter-in-law well enough to know what they had in common. However, again, mothers-in-law also reported a range of diverse experiences. Some mothers-in-law indicated that the relationship was strained from the beginning whereas other suggested the relationship began positively and then became distressful after the wedding.

To summarize Turner et al. (2006) findings, when the daughter-in-law and mother-in-law first begin their relationship, they have varied emotions about the future. While daughters-in-law are anxious to please their mothers-in-law, they also wish to exercise their independence in the relationship with their husbands. Simultaneously, mothers-in-

law are facing a radical transformation in the role that has formed their identities as women across much of their adult life. They struggle with their desire for their sons to have independence without losing the connection that has defined them for many years. It is within the context of this shifting foundation that the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship begins to take shape. In light of these findings, Turner et al. (2006) concluded that the negative stereotypical image of the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship does not exist.

The Role of the Husband

Many of the studies that examine mother-in-law daughter-in-law conflict do not examine the role of the husband, whether he is affected, or whether he affects the relationship between his wife and his mother. However, Bryant et al. (2001) examined 451 rural white families over five years to determine the effect that the quality of mother-in-law and father-in-law relationships had on both spouses' evaluation of marital success. The results of this landmark longitudinal study demonstrated that the quality of wives' relationships with their mothers-in-law when compared to wives' relationships with fathers-in-law, husbands' relationships with mothers-in-law and husbands' relationships with fathers-in-law predicted marital success for both wives' and husbands' the over time. In other words, only the discord between wives and their mothers-in-law predicted marital success over time for both wives and husbands, which suggests that husbands are impacted adversely by conflict between their wives and mothers.

Shih and Pyke (2010) interviewed Chinese mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law and found that daughters-in-laws' perceptions of mothers-in-law behavior is what determines conflict in the relationship. When daughters-in-law show respect for their mothers-in-

law's domestic and child care expertise, conflict is minimized. However, when daughters-in-law viewed their mothers-in-law's behavior as interfering, conflict increased. Additionally, daughters-in-law who had children reported more conflict with their mothers-in-law than those without children. Furthermore, these women reported that they enlist their husbands to mediate conflicts with mothers-in-law on their behalf.

Chung et al. (1996) examined the psychological well-being and marital adjustment of Korean women who were in conflict with their mothers-in-law. Results indicated that perceived severity of conflict, behavioral self-blame, impersonal blame, and husbands' emotional support were all significantly associated with wives' psychological well-being. However, husbands' support was the only significant predictor of wives' marital adjustment.

Along the same line,Wu et al. (2010) studied 125 married Taiwanese women to determine whether husbands' supportive or unsupportive behavior moderates the association between conflict with the mother-in-law and a Taiwanese woman's marital satisfaction. The results demonstrated a significant negative main effect for conflict with the mother-in-law on the wife's marital satisfaction. This main effect was moderated by two types of husband behavior, husbands taking wives' sides or using problem-solving strategies to resolve the conflict. The conflict and the aforementioned supportive husband behaviors accounted for 32% to 38% of the variance in wives' marital satisfaction. Taken together, these findings suggest husbands' supportive behavior has a positive impact on wives' perception of marital satisfaction.

While Chung et al. (1996), among others (Bryant et al., 2001; Marotz-Baden & Cowan, 1987; Sandel, 2004; Wu et al., 2010), studied conflict within relationships

between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, the present study is unique in that, rather than examining conflict, the author intends to examine a perceived precipitant of conflict: interference in the marital relationship. Similarly, instead of assessing husbands' supportive behaviors, the variable that will be examined represents not only supportive behaviors, but behaviors that signify the setting and enforcement of psychological and emotional boundaries by husbands for their mothers. These boundaries with husbands' mothers serve not only to strengthen the spousal relationship and increase marital satisfaction by showing support (Chung et al., 1996), but it is hypothesized that boundaries serve to significantly counteract the negative effects of interfering behaviors on marital satisfaction.

The further development of the MIBS (Goldstein, 2012) is an important step in assessing marital interference, support, and boundaries. In-law problems are perceived to be one of the major problem areas for couples (Schramm et al., 2005). From the literature that examines married couples' social networks (Julien et al., 1994; Klein & Milardo, 2000; Widmer et al., 2009), interference and support seem to be significant predictors of marital satisfaction. Therefore, development of an instrument that specifically assesses these variables within the context of this triad will have useful clinical and research applications. Furthermore, in that the present study examines a triad, the validity and applicability of Bowen's (1972; 1988) theory of triangles can be extended (see also Serewicz (2008)).

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Methodology

All participants were tested utilizing internet sampling. After obtaining approval

from the researcher's doctoral committee and University of Georgia's Institutional

Review Board, the confidential survey, consisting of the demographic questionnaire, the

Marital Interference and Boundaries Scale, the *Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale*, and

measures of mother-in-law discord were uploaded onto surveymonkey.com utilizing a

new account created by the author. To recruit participants, the link to the survey was

emailed to the researcher's contacts and posted daily on social networking websites,

including Facebook and Linkedin, for approximately two weeks from November 23,

2012 to December 11, 2012. When participants followed the link to the survey, the

screen displayed the approved informed consent document (see Appendix E).

Participants

Participants were married females ($N = 299$) with living mothers-in-law. 52

participants failed to complete the survey. Six participants were screened out of the study

because they reported that their mothers-in-law were no longer living. Of the 241

participants that completed the survey, the reported median age was 34. 196 participants

(81.3%) reported their race as White, 25 participants or 10.4% reported their race as

Hispanic.

Materials

Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale

The *Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale* (RDAS ; Busby, Crane, Larson, &

Christensen, 1995) consists of 14 items and is a commonly accepted and widely used

measure of marital satisfaction (see Appendix A). Participants mark their responses on a

five point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*always disagree*) to 5 (*always agree*). A

sample item is "making major decisions." All items are summed to determine a score

representing an individual's level of marital satisfaction. Individual scores range from 0

to 70; higher scores indicate greater satisfaction. This measure has been demonstrated to

have acceptable internal consistency. Although utilized by researchers and practitioners

alike, this scale was not originally intended to measure marital satisfaction, but dyadic

adjustment. Dyadic adjustment, in terms of the RDAS, can be broken down into the

constructs of consensus, satisfaction, and cohesion. However, most researchers combine

these individual constructs to measure marital satisfaction and/ or marital happiness

(Johnson, Zabriskie & Hill, 2006).

Marital Interference and Boundaries Scale (MIBS)

In light of the findings of Bryant, Conger, and Meehan (2001) that demonstrated

that unlike other in-law dyads, discord between a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law has

an effect on both husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction, the MIBS (see Appendix B)

was developed by the author to measure the degree of interference and support that exists

in the marital relationship by the husband's mother. The MIBS (Goldstein, 2011a) also

intends to measure the extent to which the husband sets and enforces psychological and

emotional boundaries with his mother. Thus, the MIBS consists of two subscales: Interference and Boundaries.

Originally, in the author's earlier study (Goldstein, 2011b), a male and female version of the instrument were created. However, as stated previously, the further development of the female version is the focus of the present study. The female version of the questionnaire asks female respondents about their mothers-in-law's interfering and supportive behaviors and their husbands' ability to set and enforce boundaries with their mothers. Overall, the female version of the MIBS demonstrated high internal consistency in the current study.

The original MIBS consisted of 41 items that ask participants to respond to statements that contain attitudes and behaviors pertaining to a mother-in-law that could be construed as interfering or supportive as well as items that related to wives' perceptions of their husbands' boundary setting behavior toward their mothers. After factor analysis and reliability analysis in the previous study, the number of items was reduced to 27.   One item from the previous study was reworded and was included in the current study. Therefore, the instrument currently consists of 28 items across three factors: 15 interference items, eight support items, and five boundary items. One sample interference item is "My mother-in-law tries to manipulate my husband against me." One sample support item is "I feel accepted by my mother-in-law." One sample boundaries item is "My husband defends me to his mother when she criticizes me." The responses are recorded on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Values of Cronbach's alpha for scores from this scale previously established in the researcher's earlier study are as follows: Interference, .93; Support, .95; and

Boundaries, 81. In the current study values of Cronbach alpha for Interference Support and Boundaries were .94, .94, and .89, respectively. These values support the homogeneity and demonstrate an adequate to excellent reliability of the subscales.

Demographic Questionnaire

The demographic questionnaire (see Appendix C) was developed on the basis of the literature review (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002; Schramm, Marshall, Harris & Lee, 2005) and includes 32 questions on demographic characteristics (e.g., age, educational level, household income), as well as questions related to the marital relationship. For example, one item is "Do you share the same race as your spouse?" Other items relate to information about one's mother-in-law. For example, one item is "From 1 to 7, with 1 being not close at all and 7 being very close rate the closeness of your husband to his mother."

Measures of Discord with Mother-in-law

In a longitudinal study, Bryant et al. (2001) asked participants ''How happy are you with your mother-in-law'', ''How much conflict, tension, or disagreement do you feel there is between you and your mother-in-law'', and ''How often do you feel that your mother-in-law makes too many demands on you?'' to assess discord between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law. These items were measured on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1(*Very happy, None, Never*) to 4 (*Very unhappy, A lot, always*). These items will be included in order to demonstrate convergent validity with the MIBS.

Marital Problem Areas

Schramm et al.'s (2005) research study yielded several ranked problem areas for couples including: financial stress, balancing job and marriage, sexual relations, in-laws,

division of household duties, resolving major conflicts, daily communication, and caring

for and/or disciplining the children. These areas were included as 7-point Likert scale

items ranging from 1 (*no problem*) to 7 (*severe problem*). For these eight items together,

Chronbach's alpha was .80. It was intended that these items, with the exception of in-

laws, because of its hypothesized relatedness with mother-in-law interference, would be

used as controls in the regression model.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Maximum likelihood estimation was used in this CFA model for this analysis because of the balanced, reliable, and efficient estimates it produces. Also, because of the limited sample size of the current study, Hu and Bentler (1999) recommended using this estimation technique to reduce errors in the calculation of the fit indices. The hypothesized CFA model was analyzed using Amos 21.0. The fit indices chosen in this analysis include the chi-square statistic, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), the CFI, and the NNFI, and they were chosen from the suggestions of previous literature and their sensitivity to model misspecification (Hu & Bentler, 1999). MacCallum, Browne, and Sugawara (1996) considered RMSEA values in the range of .08 to. 10 to indicate mediocre fit. Hu and Bentler (1999) recommended cutoff values of .95 or higher for the CFI and NNFI.

The value for the RMSEA (.096, 90% confidence interval = .090 - .101) suggests a mediocre fit for the CFA model, according to MacCallum et al. (1996), whereas the values for the CFI (.84) and the NNFI (.80) fall below the Hu and Bentler's (1999) suggested cutoff of .95. However, as noted by Lance, Butts, and Michels (2006), some authors argue whether the .95 cutoff should be lowered or abandoned all together. The chi-square statistic, $X^2 = 2(350) = 1302.77$, $p < .01$, supports the conclusion for lack of model fit. However, the problem of relatively well-fitting models being rejected by the

chi-square statistic has been well documented in the literature. Thus, the results showed

mixed support for the hypothesized factor structure of the instrument.

Figure 1 - Confirmatory Factor Analysis of MIBS
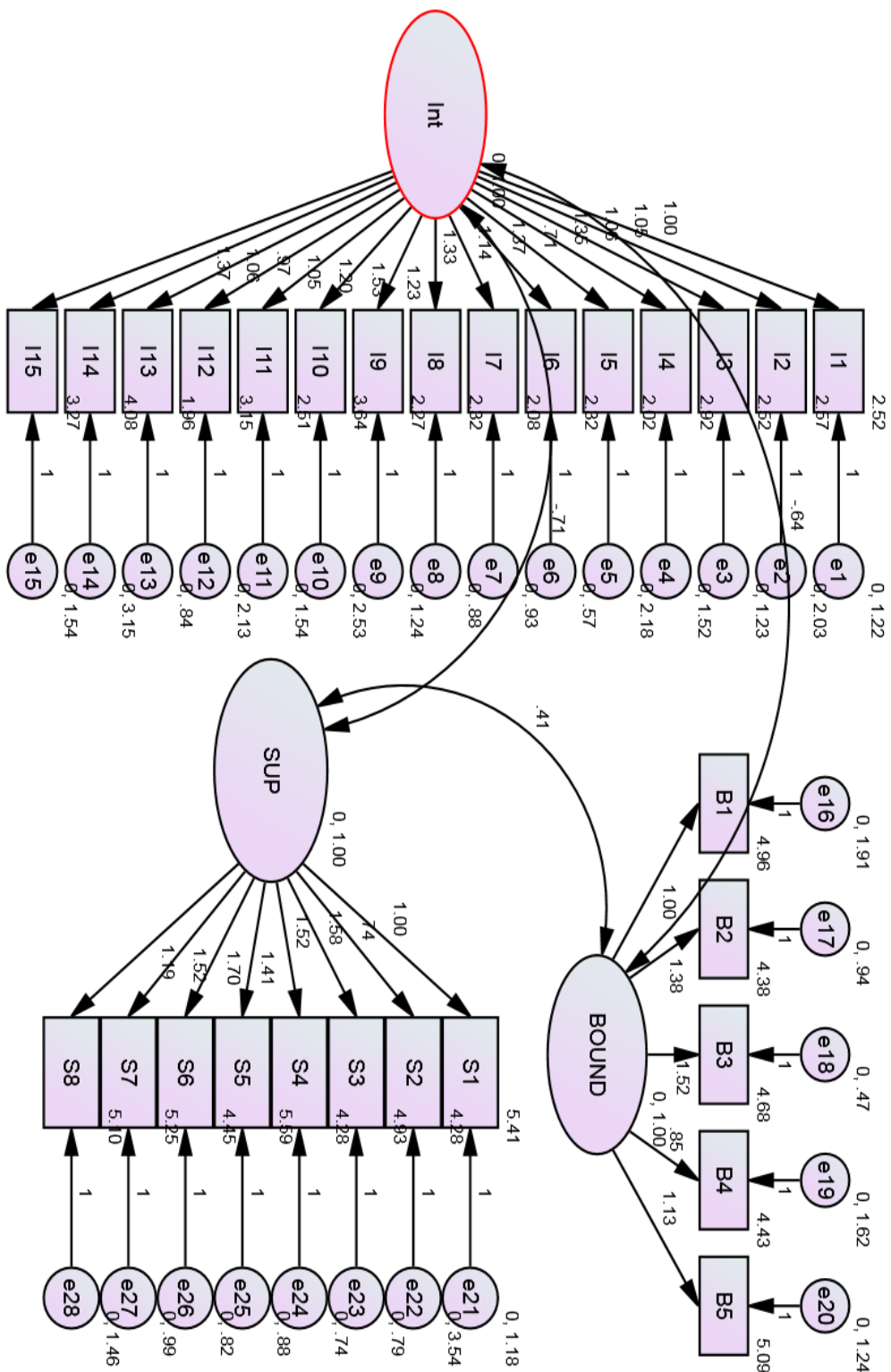
Regression Analysis of Variables Predicting Marital Satisfaction

      Correlations and the regression analyses were performed in SPSS 21.0. Scores

from individual items of the RDAS were added up to obtain marital satisfaction scores

for participants. Similarly, items that represented each of the factors from the MIBS were

added together to obtain scores for Interference, Boundaries and Support. Correlations

were performed to determine whether any demographic variables correlated with marital

satisfaction. The descriptive statistics for females and correlations between independent

variables and the dependent variable, marital satisfaction, are reported in Table 1.

Table 1 - Descriptive Statistics and Correlations between Independent Variables and Marital Satisfaction

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Marital satisfaction	6.14	.97	-						
2. Education	3.14	1.24	.18**	-					
3. Family type	1.44	.80	-.24**	-.20**	-				
4. MIL education	39.98	20.75	.16*	.22**	-.18**	-			
5. Interference	39.33	13.08	-.34***	-.08	.04	-.04	-		
6. Boundaries	23.46	7.53	.47***	.15*	-.13	.04	-.57***	-	
7. Support	46.62	8.45	.26***	.02	-.10	.07	-.69***	39***	-

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

      The demographic variables that were significantly correlated with marital

satisfaction included education, family type i.e. nuclear, single parent, blended, or

extended, and mother-in-law level of education. Furthermore, both the Interference,

Support, and Boundaries scores correlated significantly with the marital satisfaction

scores obtained from the RDAS scores, $r = -.34$ and $r = .47$, $p < .001$, respectively.

Schramm, Marshall, Harris, and Lee's (2005) findings show that financial stress,

balancing job and marriage, sexual relations, resolving major conflicts, division of

household duties, daily communication, and caring for and/or disciplining the children

are the most significant problems facing married couples. As expected, all of the known

problem areas of marriage correlated significantly with marital satisfaction scores. See

Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Correlations between Marital Satisfaction and Marital Problem Areas

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Marital Satisfaction	-								
2. Financial stress	-.30***	-							
3. Balancing job and marriage	-.43***	.38***	-						
4. Resolving major conflicts	-.66***	.38***	.56***	-					
5. Sexual relations	-.58***	.25***	.30***	.57***	-				
6. In-laws	-.28***	.22***	.23***	.31***	.12	-			
7. Caring for and/or disciplining children	-.47***	.22**	.45***	.51***	.40***	.22**	-		
8. Division of marital duties	-.46***	.23***	.36***	.42***	.26***	.16*	.34***	-	
9. Daily communication with spouse	-.67***	.26***	.45***	.63***	.44***	.21**	.49***	.48***	-

N = 223

The significantly correlated demographic variables along with these marital

problem areas, with exception of In-laws, were used as controls when performing the

regression analysis to test hypothesis 2 regarding the Interference factor predicting

marital satisfaction. These results were significant, thus providing support for hypothesis 2. See Table 3 below.

Table 3 - Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Marital Satisfaction (N = 201)

Step and Predictor Variable	B	SE B	β	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1:				.63***	.63***
Financial stress	.01	.24	.00		
Balancing job and marriage	.02	.30	.00		
Sexual Relations	-1.30	.26	-.27***		
Daily Communication	-1.65	.35	-.29***		
Resolving major conflicts	-1.31	.39	-.23**		
Division of household duties	-.55	.26	-.11*		
Caring for/disciplining children	-.41	.29	-.08		
Education	.45	.42	.05		
Family of origin type	-1.04	.49	-.10*		
Mother-in-law education	.20	.32	.03		
Step 2:				.64*	.01*
Interference	-.05	.02	-.12*		
Step 3:				.67***	.03***
Boundaries	.25	.06	.22***		

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

Hypothesis 3 predicted that Boundaries would mediate the effect of Interference on marital satisfaction. Mediation can be said to occur if (1) the independent variable (Interference) significantly affects the mediator (Boundaries), (2) Interference

significantly affects the dependent variable (marital satisfaction) in the absence of Boundaries, (3) Boundaries has a significant unique effect on the marital satisfaction, and (4) the effect of the Interference on the Marital Satisfaction shrinks upon the addition of Boundaries to the model.

The initial hierarchical regression analysis indicated that Interference predicted RDAS scores, that Boundaries has a significant effect on RDAS scores, and that the effect of Interference was reduced upon the addition of Boundaries to the model (See Table 3). Another regression analysis was used to test if Interference significantly predicted participants' scores on Boundaries. The results showed Interference significantly predicted Boundaries (β = -.57, p < .001). Interference also explained 33% of the variance in Boundaries scores (R^2 = .33, F (1, 226) = 109.46, p < .001).

Although the above criteria can be used to informally judge whether or not mediation is occurring, a Sobel test was conducted (Soper, 2012) to formally assess for mediation. These results were significant, z = -3.64, $p < .001$. Therefore, it can be concluded that the relationship between marital satisfaction and Interference is mediated by Boundaries after having statistically controlled for well-known marital problem areas, education of both mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law's family of origin type.

With regard to hypothesis 4, another regression analysis was performed. RDAS scores were entered as the dependent variable. Marital problem areas of financial stress, balancing job and marriage, sexual relations, daily communication, resolving major conflicts, division of household duties, caring for and/or disciplining the children, and demographic variables family of origin type, education, and mother-in-law education,

were all entered in step 1. In step 2, Support was entered. The results supported the hypothesis; Support predicted marital satisfaction beyond other predictors of marital satisfaction, $\beta = .14$, $p = .002$. Support also explained an additional 2% of the variance in RDAS scores beyond the other factors ($R^2 = .63$, $F (11, 206) = 30.60$, $p < .001$.

With regard to hypothesis 5 about convergent validity, the instrument, including all subscales showed convergent validity (See Table 4). The items were significantly correlated to the method used by Bryant et al. (2001) to assess daughters-in-law's discord with their mothers-in-law. Bryant et al.'s (2001) items were ''How happy are you with your mother-in-law'', ''How much conflict, tension, or disagreement do you feel there is between you and your mother-in-law'', and ''How often do you feel that your mother-in-law makes too many demands on you?''.

Table 4 - Correlations between Convergent Validity Variables and the MIBS Factors.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Convergent validity variable 1	-					
2. Convergent validity variable 2	$-.82^{***}$	-				
3. Convergent validity variable 3	$-.55^{***}$	$.64^{***}$	-			
4. Interference	$-.74^{***}$	$.79^{***}$	$.65^{***}$	-		
5. Boundaries	$.41^{***}$	$-.44^{***}$	$-.33^{***}$	$-.57^{***}$	-	
6. Support	$.88^{***}$	$-.79^{***}$	$-.47^{***}$	$-.69^{***}$	$.39^{***}$	-

Note. All correlations are significant at the $p < 0.001$ level (2-tailed).

The instrument also showed discriminant validity as Interference and Support factor scores were unrelated to the marital problem areas of balancing job and marriage and sexual relations.

Hypothesis 6, which predicted that the MIBS factors, Interference, Support and Boundaries, would be correlated to the participants' perception of closeness between their spouses and their mothers-in-law, received support as well. Interference and Support were significantly correlated to participants' current perceptions of closeness, $r = -.23$, $p = .001$ and $r = .56$, $p < .001$, respectively. Boundaries and Support were significantly correlated to participants' perceptions of their husbands' and mothers-in-law's closeness prior to marriage, $r = -.17$, $p = .012$ and $r = .17$, $p = .009$, respectively.

In sum, hypothesis 1 received weak support regarding the factor structure. Hypothesis 2, which stated that Interference would predict marital satisfaction, was

supported by the results. Hypothesis 3 regarding the mediating relationship of Boundaries to Interference and marital satisfaction was also supported. Hypothesis 4, which predicted that Support scores would predict RDAS was supported. Hypothesis 5 regarding convergent and discriminant validity of the instrument were supported by MIBS items relatedness to measures of in-law discord, and Interference and Support items lack of relatedness to marital problem areas of balancing job and marriage and sexual relations. Hypothesis 6, regarding the factors relatedness to participants' perceptions of closeness between their husbands and their mothers-in-law also was supported in the present study.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Development of the MIBS

Due to a lack of availability of instruments specifically measuring outside interference and support from a marital couple's social network, including in-laws, the Marital Interference and Boundaries Scale (MIBS) was created by the researcher. The items intended to reflect interfering and supportive behaviors that could conceivably be engaged in by a man's mother with regard to his marital relationship. The items constructed with regard to boundaries were created to demonstrate a husband's active alignment with his spouse relative to his mother. These items were developed by a thorough review of the literature related to marital satisfaction, couple's social networks, adult child parental relationships, and in-law relationships.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) would validate the three-factor structure of the MIBS. The CFA showed mixed support for the hypothesized structure of the instrument. While the RMSEA value suggested a mediocre fit (MacCallum et al., 1996), other fit indices (CFI, NFI, and chi-square) suggested that the proposed model was a poor fit to the data. This suggests that the MIBS items may represent more than the hypothesized three factor structure. Indeed, other authors have suggested that there may be more variables involved with in-law relationships, such as positive and negative aspects of support, for example, showing acceptance or withholding trust and appreciation. However, it was noted by Lance et al. (2006) that suggested

cutoff's and the implication of those cutoffs for the goodness of fit indices have been widely misinterpreted over time. Further, despite the conceivable poor fit, the instrument's subscales possessed good to excellent internal consistency. The instrument also possesses good criterion validity and demonstrated convergent validity.

Regression Findings

Hypothesis 2 asserted that within the triadic relationship between the daughter-in-law, her husband, and his mother, the level of interference that existed as a result of the mother-in-law's behavior would be a significant predictor of marital satisfaction. Hypotheses 2 regarding interference received support as participant's Interference factor scores significantly predicted *Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale* (RDAS) scores. This is consistent with findings from the literature related to couple's social networks, which indicates that interfering relatives can detract from marital satisfaction (Julien et al., 1994; Marotz-Baden & Cowan, 1987; Widmer et al., 2009). Similarly, Hypothesis 4 regarding supportive in-law interaction was supported, which is consistent with findings that indicate supportive in-law interactions can result in increases in marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3 asserted that participants' greater Boundaries factor scores on the MIBS would serve as a mediator to the effect of Interference factor scores on RDAS scores. Similarly, this hypothesis received support as it appears that the relationship between Interference and marital satisfaction is mediated by husbands' supportive and boundary-setting behaviors. This is divergent from Wu et al.'s (2010) findings which suggest a moderating relationship of husbands' supportive behaviors. Rather than lessening the effect of interference on marital satisfaction, when the Boundaries factor

was added to the regression model, the effects of interference on marital satisfaction were completely counteracted.

Theoretical Implications

Taken together, the results confirm results achieved by researchers of couples' social networks (Bryan, Fitzpatrick, Crawford, & Fischer, 2001; Julien et al., 1994; Widmer et al., 2009). The results also can be explained by and suggest support for Bowen's (1972) theory of triangles. Within a triadic relationship between an adult son, his mother and his wife, that is characterized by interference, the mother appears to be the marginalized third party who is trying to re-establish a relationship and connection with her son, which has defined her for so much of her adult life (Turner et al., 2006). When the adult son allows his mother to interfere by not defending his wife if his mother criticizes her, it results in the son's alignment with his mother, which in turn makes the wife the alienated third party. It follows that this alienation from the triad results in decreased marital satisfaction. Thus, even though wives' marital satisfaction may decrease with interference from her mother-in-law, those effects are nulled when husbands set appropriate boundaries and show support for wives when interacting with husbands' interfering mothers. For example, when a mother-in-law is openly critical of her daughter-in-law, interference will exert its effect on the couple's marital satisfaction. However, when women perceive that their husbands set and enforce boundaries with their mothers, the effects are twofold: the mother lessens, if not discontinues, engaging in the interfering behavior, but also the marital bond is strengthened because the husband's act of setting boundaries with his mother demonstrates trust and support for his wife. Thus, the balance of power shifts in favor of the marital relationship relative to the

familial relationship, and in turn increases marital satisfaction for wives, which occurs because the dyadic relationship between husband and wife is being strengthened by husbands' boundary-setting behavior toward their mothers.

The findings of the present study are also consistent with Serewicz's (2008) triangular theory of communication with in-laws. Serewicz's theory posited that the relationship between in-laws usually manifests as the weaker side of a triangle in which the other two sides represent the stronger bonds. In the present study, the stronger bonds would be the spousal and familial relationships. Floyd and Morr's (2003) findings demonstrated that while the marital and familial sides of the triangle are characteristically stronger than the in-law side, the two strong sides of the triangle are not likely to be of equal strength. Thus, it is not likely that the strength of the familial relationship, between adult son and his mother, and the spousal relationship can be equal. Serewicz (2008) suggested that differences in the relative strength of the marital and familial relationships correspond to differences in the power of the two in-law triad members. The in-law triad member with the closer bond to, in the case of the present study, the husband, can exert greater influence on the other in-law, the wife or mother, through that relationship. Additionally, according to Serewicz (2008), the quality of the husband's relationships with his mother and his wife are independent of the relationship between the daughter-in-law and mother-in-law.

In the present study, in accordance to Serewicz's theory (2008), daughters-in-law who reported more interference by their mothers-in-law can be said to have less power in their marital relationship than their mother-in-laws have in the relationship with their sons, respectively. Similarly, those wives who reported that their husbands set a higher

level of emotional boundaries with their mothers-in-law can be viewed as having greater power in the relationship with their husbands relative to their mothers-in-law.   Those wives who reported lower Boundaries have less power in the relationship with their husbands than their in-law counterparts. Consequently, this discrepancy of power, according to Serewicz's (2008) findings and the results of the present study, translated to reduced marital satisfaction.

In sum, while discord between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law may be an important predictor of marital satisfaction for the daughter-in-law, even more essential is the degree in which her husband supports her in the face of her in-law relationship conflict. It seems that Boundaries is a better predictor of marital satisfaction than Interference. This is consistent with research which demonstrates that positive communication, trust and cooperation are significant predictors of marital satisfaction (Tallman & Hsiao, 2004).

Interestingly, Interference was significantly negatively correlated to participants' current perceptions of closeness between their husbands and mothers-in-law, which suggests that as daughters-in-law perceived their mothers-in-law to be increasingly more interfering or negative, they perceived that their husbands were less close within the relationship to their mothers. Thus, with regard to Serewicz's (2008) findings and theory, the closer a man is in relationship with his mother, the less she interferes in his marital relationship. This may suggest that she already possesses sufficient power relative to the marital relationship. A man's closer relationship with his mother allows his marital relationship more freedom from interference because his mother feels secure with her familial bond with her son, and therefore boundaries are easier to establish and enforce.

Conversely, when reported interference is higher, daughters-in-law reported that their husbands are less close to their mothers. Because of the correlational nature of these findings, we must be cautious about making causal inferences. In addition, Widmer et al. (2009) points out that the effects of couples' social networks' behavior on marital satisfaction are characteristically bidirectional.

Boundaries scores were significantly negatively correlated to participants' perceptions of their husbands' and mothers-in-law's closeness prior to marriage. This suggests that daughters-in-law who perceived their husbands to be extremely close with their mothers before marriage, experience their husbands as less able to effectively support them by setting boundaries in the marital relationship with their mothers. Consistent with Morr Serewicz's (2008) triangular theory of communication with in-laws, this may imply that for daughters-in-law who reported their husbands had a close relationship with their mothers before marriage it was harder to gain power in the relationship with their husbands relative to the power already possessed by their mothers-in-law. Additionally, these husbands with close ties with their mothers may have been ineffective in, unaware of the need to, and/or found it more difficult to set and enforce appropriate boundaries with their mothers due to being too close.

Supportive In-law Relationships

Support predicted marital satisfaction, which implies that while it may be important to a marriage for a female to gain the respective power over her husband in relation to his mother, it may be even more useful to try to maintain equal power. Serewicz (2008) asserted that if a power struggle between an in-law dyad does not occur,

the strength of the bond between the two in-laws is likely to be enhanced as they get to know each other.

Therefore, if a husband maintains a close, but healthy relationship with his mother before marriage, this may increase the likelihood that his wife will enter into the triadic relationship with equal power and over time, his wife and mother will grow to achieve mutual love and respect. According to Serewicz (2008), it is likely that in-laws who like each other will experience a relationship that more closely resembles a voluntary, genuine relationship than will in-laws who dislike each other.

Limitations and Future Directions

One of the limitations of this study was that only married females were used as participants. Future studies on this topic may be more useful to include couples' reports. For both theoretical and methodological benefit as well as for a better understanding of the relationship, it is important that data be collected from both partners in the relationship. Some researchers may argue that only by comparing the data between husbands and wives can we determine the verifiable impact of a man's relationship with his mother on a couple's marriage. However, obtaining observations from both partners, however, does not guarantee that the research is dyadic. In addition, by insisting on both partners as informants, researchers may slight the individual as an important source of information about the relationship (Thompson & Walker, 1982). Because of the limited utility of the male version of the scale, this study was limited to validating the female version. Future inquiry into the male experience may be better accomplished through other methods, i.e. qualitative inquiry.

The web-based survey design provides a useful way to collect data quickly, but it also has limitations. There are fewer controls over the conditions under which the survey is completed. It is possible that bias is being introduced due to inattention, multi-tasking, or the presence of other people or distractions.

The CFA resulted in mixed support for the proposed model; however, many of the guidelines and cutoffs proffered in the SEM literature have been argued to be tenuous and arbitrary. The reliabilities of the subscales of the Marital Interference and Boundaries Scale (MIBS) and the scale overall was very good. The instrument demonstrated clear criterion validity as evidenced by the results of the regression analyses predicting marital satisfaction. It also demonstrated convergent and discriminant validity by its correlation to related measures and lack of correlation to unrelated measures, respectively. Overall, the development of the MIBS was an important step in the study of the largely understudied field of in-law relationships. The findings of the present study suggest the MIBS, particularly the Boundaries subscale, could be a useful clinical tool to supplement existing measures of marital satisfaction. Further, the results of the regression analyses indicated that interference, support and boundaries are important constructs with regard to in-law relationships and marital satisfaction. Future studies may examine the factors that predict these constructs in an effort to decrease interference and increase support and, in the end, marital satisfaction.

Overall, the findings in the present study suggest that the dynamics of the triadic relationship between spouses and an in-law be explored further, specifically with regard to establishing a balance of power, via the establishment and enforcement of boundaries, between the familial and spousal sides of the communication triangle to prevent the

harmful effect of interference. An important next step in strengthening the relationship between a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is designing and implementing an intervention that would attempt to reduce or eliminate those interfering behaviors engaged in by the mother-in-law, educate the daughter-in-law about the possible motivations and ambivalent feelings that may be driving the mother-in-law's behavior, and most importantly to educate the husband/son about how to set boundaries with his mother, and finally measuring the degree of improvement in the relationships among the triad members.

The introduction of children into the triad represents another future area of investigation. The extent to which daughters-in-law see their mothers-in-law as supportive or interfering may have an impact on the level of involvement that their mothers-in-law have in their children's lives. Furthermore, the relationship between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law, whether characterized by support or interference, may serve as a model for children that defines the parameters of their future-in-law relationships.

The results also carry implications for the area of adult-child parental relationships for an obvious reason; on one hand, the literature on that subject clearly demonstrates older parents are already faced with ambivalent feelings toward their adult offspring due to lack of reciprocity and worry. On the other hand, worry signifies an attempt to gain control over an uncontrollable situation. If boundaries are established by the adult-child for his or her older parents that convey clearly a feeling that the adult-child is responsible and is in control of their life situation, it may lessen the anxiety associated with being an older parent.

One assumption of Serewicz's theory (2008) is that the in-law triangle is in a state of constant fluctuation. Therefore, future studies would benefit from a longitudinal design, where changes in the nature of the triadic relationship can be observed through life transitions or major events, such as the birth of a child. Finally, while this study focused on one specific in-law triad, it is important to consider other in-law triads, such as son-in-law, father-in-law and daughter, as well as similar familial triadic relationships, such as stepparent relationships, where further support for a triangular theory could be garnered.

REFERENCES

Amato, Paul R., & Booth, Alan. (1991). Consequences of parental divorce and marital unhappiness for adult well-being. *Social Forces, 69*(3), 895-914. doi: 10.2307/2579480

Amato, Paul R., Loomis, Laura Spencer, & Booth, Alan. (1995). Parental divorce, marital conflict, and offspring well-being during early adulthood. *Social Forces, 73*(3), 895-915. doi: 10.2307/2580551

Baucom, Donald H., Gordon, Kristina C., Snyder, Douglas K., Atkins, David C., & Christensen, Andrew. (2006). Treating Affair Couples: Clinical Considerations and Initial Findings. *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy, 20*(4), 375-392. doi: 10.1891/jcpiq-v20i4a004

Beaton, John M., Norris, Joan E., & Pratt, Michael W. (2003). Unresolved issues in adult children's marital relationships involving intergenerational problems. *Family Relations, 52*(2), 143-153. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3729.2003.00143.x

Birditt, Kira S., Miller, Laura M., Fingerman, Karen L., & Lefkowitz, Eva S. (2009). Tensions in the parent and adult child relationship: Links to solidarity and ambivalence. *Psychology and Aging, 24*(2), 287-295. doi: 10.1037/a0015196

Bowen, Murray. (1972). Family therapy and family group therapy. In H. I. Kaplan & B. J. Sadock (Eds.), *Group treatment of mental illness.* New York, NY England: E. P. Dutton.

Bramlett, M.D., & Mosher, W.D. (2002). Cohabitation, Marriage, Divorce, and

Remarriage in the United States. *National Center for Health Statistics., Vital

Health Stat 23*((22)).

Bronfenbrenner, Urie. (1986). Ecology of the family as a context for human

development: Research perspectives. *Developmental Psychology, 22*(6), 723-742.

doi: 10.1037/0012-1649.22.6.723

Bryan, Laura, Fitzpatrick, Jacki, Crawford, Duane, & Fischer, Judith. (2001). The role of

network support and interference in women's perception of romantic, friend, and

parental relationships. *Sex Roles, 45*(7-8), 481-499. doi:

10.1023/a:1014858613924

Bryant, Chalandra M., Conger, Rand D., & Meehan, Jennifer M. (2001). The influence of

in-laws on change in marital success. *Journal of Marriage & the Family, 63*(3),

614-626. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2001.00614.x

Buhl, Heike M. (2008). Significance of individuation in adult child-parent relationships.

Journal of Family Issues, 29(2), 262-281. doi: 10.1177/0192513x07304272

Chung, Hyejeong, Crawford, Duane W., & Fischer, Judith L. (1996). The Effects of

Conflict with Mothers-in-Law on the Psychological Well-Being and Marital

Adjustment of Korean Daughters-in-Law. *Family and Consumer Sciences

Research Journal, 25*(1), 57-78. doi: 10.1177/1077727x960251003

Cobb, Rebecca J., Davila, Joanne, & Bradbury, Thomas N. (2001). Attachment security

and marital satisfaction: The role of positive perceptions and social support.

Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 27(9), 1131-1143. doi:

10.1177/0146167201279006

Cohan, Catherine L., & Bradbury, Thomas N. (1997). Negative life events, marital
interaction, and the longitudinal course of newlywed marriage. *Journal of
Personality and Social Psychology, 73*(1), 114-128. doi: 10.1037/0022-
3514.73.1.114

Cong, Zhen, & Silverstein, Merril. (2008). Intergenerational support and depression
among elders in rural China: Do daughters-in-law matter? *Journal of Marriage
and Family, 70*(3), 599-612. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2008.00508.x

Datta, Prishnee, Poortinga, Ype H., & Marcoen, Alfons. (2003). Parent Care by Indian
and Belgian Caregivers in Their Roles of Daughter/Daughter-In-Law. *Journal of
Cross-Cultural Psychology, 34*(6), 736-749. doi: 10.1177/0022022103258589

DiLillo, David, Peugh, James, Walsh, Kate, Panuzio, Jillian, Trask, Emily, & Evans,
Sarah. (2009). Child maltreatment history among newlywed couples: A
longitudinal study of marital outcomes and mediating pathways. *Journal of
Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 77*(4), 680-692. doi: 10.1037/a0015708

Duvall, Evelyn Millis. (1954). *In-laws: pro and con; and original study of inter-personal
relations*. Oxford England: Association Press.

Fingerman, Karen L., Chen, Pei-Chun, Hay, Elizabeth, Cichy, Kelly E., & Lefkowitz,
Eva S. (2006). Ambivalent reactions in the parent and offspring relationship. *The
Journals of Gerontology: Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences,
61B*(3), P152-P160.

Floyd, K., & Morr, M. C. (2003). Human affection exchange: VII. Affectionate
communication in the sibling/spouse/sibling‐in‐law triad. *Communication
Quarterly, 51*(3), 247-261.

Gangoli, Geetanjali, & Rew, Martin. (2011). Mothers-in-law against daughters-in-law: Domestic violence and legal discourses around mother-in-law violence against daughters-in-law in India. *Women's Studies International Forum, 34*(5), 420-429. doi: 10.1016/j.wsif.2011.06.006

Goldstein, Daniel. (2011a). Marital Interference and Boundaries Scale.

Goldstein, Daniel. (2011b). *The Marital Interference and Boundaries Scale (MIBS): Assessing the triadic relationship between wives, husbands and mothers-in-law. (Unpublished master's thesis).* Barry University. Florida.

Halford, W. Kim, Lizzio, Alf, Wilson, Keithia L., & Occhipinti, Stefano. (2007). Does working at your marriage help? Couple relationship self-regulation and satisfaction in the first 4 years of marriage. *Journal of Family Psychology, 21*(2), 185-194. doi: 10.1037/0893-3200.21.2.185

Hay, Elizabeth L., Fingerman, Karen L., & Lefkowitz, Eva S. (2007). The experience of worry in parent-adult child relationships. *Personal Relationships, 14*(4), 605-622. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6811.2007.00174.x

Hu, Li-tze, & Bentler, Peter M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling, 6*(1), 1-55. doi: 10.1080/10705519909540118

Huston, Ted L., Caughlin, John P., Houts, Renate M., Smith, Shanna E., & George, Laura J. (2001). The connubial crucible: Newlywed years as predictors of marital delight, distress, and divorce. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 80*(2), 237-252. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.80.2.237

Johnson, Matthew D., Cohan, Catherine L., Davila, Joanne, Lawrence, Erika, Rogge, Ronald D., Karney, Benjamin R., . . . Bradbury, Thomas N. (2005). Problem-Solving Skills and Affective Expressions as Predictors of Change in Marital Satisfaction. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 73*(1), 15-27. doi: 10.1037/0022-006x.73.1.15

Julien, Danielle, Markman, Howard J., Léveillé, Sophie, Chartrand, Elise, & Bégin, Jean. (1994). Networks' support and interference with regard to marriage: Disclosures of marital problems to confidants. *Journal of Family Psychology, 8*(1), 16-31. doi: 10.1037/0893-3200.8.1.16

Karney, Benjamin R., & Bradbury, Thomas N. (2005). Contextual Influences on Marriage: Implications for Policy and Intervention. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 14*(4), 171-174. doi: 10.1111/j.0963-7214.2005.00358.x

Kaufman, Gayle, & Uhlenberg, Peter. (1998). Effects of life course transitions on the quality of relationships between adult children and their parents. *Journal of Marriage & the Family, 60*(4), 924-938. doi: 10.2307/353635

Keith, Verna M., & Finlay, Barbara. (1988). The impact of parental divorce on children's educational attainment, marital timing, and likelihood of divorce. *Journal of Marriage & the Family, 50*(3), 797-809. doi: 10.2307/352648

Kerr, Michael E., & Bowen, Murray. (1988). *Family evaluation: An approach based on Bowen theory*. New York, NY US: W W Norton & Co.

Klein, Renate C. A., & Milardo, Robert M. (2000). The social context of couple conflict: Support and criticism from informal third parties. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 17*(4-5), 618-637. doi: 10.1177/0265407500174008

Lance, C. E. , Butts, M. M. , & Michels, L. C. (2006). The Sources of Four Commonly Reported Cutoff Criteria What Did They Really Say? *Organizational Research Methods, 9*(2), 202-220.

Levitzki, Naama. (2009). Parenting of adult children in an Israeli sample: Parents are always parents. *Journal of Family Psychology, 23*(2), 226-235. doi: 10.1037/a0015218

MacCallum, Robert C., Browne, Michael W., & Sugawara, Hazuki M. (1996). Power analysis and determination of sample size for covariance structure modeling. *Psychological Methods, 1*(2), 130-149. doi: 10.1037/1082-989X.1.2.130

Marotz-Baden, Ramona, & Cowan, Deane. (1987). Mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law: The effects of proximity on conflict and stress. *Family Relations, 36*(4), 385-390. doi: 10.2307/584488

McNulty, James K. (2008). Forgiveness in marriage: Putting the benefits into context. *Journal of Family Psychology, 22*(1), 171-175. doi: 10.1037/0893-3200.22.1.171

McNulty, James K., Neff, Lisa A., & Karney, Benjamin R. (2008). Beyond initial attraction: Physical attractiveness in newlywed marriage. *Journal of Family Psychology, 22*(1), 135-143. doi: 10.1037/0893-3200.22.1.135

Merrill, Deborah M. (2007). *Mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law: Understanding the relationship and what makes them friends or foe*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Neff, Lisa A., & Karney, Benjamin R. (2007). Stress crossover in newlywed marriage: A longitudinal and dyadic perspective. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 69*(3), 594-607. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2007.00394.x

Neff, Lisa A., & Karney, Benjamin R. (2009). Stress and reactivity to daily relationship experiences: How stress hinders adaptive processes in marriage. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 97*(3), 435-450. doi: 10.1037/a0015663

Pak, Jung Su. (2011). The anguish of the Korean woman's soul: Feminist theologians on a real-life issue. *Pastoral Psychology, 60*(2), 291-303. doi: 10.1007/s11089-011-0337-8

Peters, Cheryl L., Hooker, Karen, & Zvonkovic, Anisa M. (2006). Older Parents' Perceptions of Ambivalence in Relationships With Their Children. *Family Relations, 55*(5), 539-551. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3729.2006.00424.x

Pillemer, Karl, Suitor, J. Jill, Mock, Steven E., Sabir, Myra, Pardo, Tamara B., & Sechrist, Jori. (2007). Capturing the complexity of intergenerational relations: Exploring ambivalence within later-life families. *Journal of Social Issues, 63*(4), 775-791.

Riggio, Heidi R. (2004). Parental marital conflict and divorce, parent-child relationships, social support, and relationship anxiety in young adulthood. *Personal Relationships, 11*(1), 99-114. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6811.2004.00073.x

Ross, Catherine E., & Mirowsky, John. (1999). Parental divorce, life-course disruption and adult depression. *Journal of Marriage & the Family, 61*(4), 1034-1045. doi: 10.2307/354022

Sandel, Todd L. (2004). Narrated relationships: Mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law justifying conflicts in Taiwan's Chhan-chng. *Research on Language and Social Interaction, 37*(3), 365-398. doi: 10.1207/s15327973rlsi3703_4

Sarkisian, Natalia, & Gerstel, Naomi. (2008). Till marriage do us part: Adult children's relationships with their parents. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 70*(2), 360-376. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2008.00487.x

Schneewind, Klaus A., & Gerhard, Anna-Katharina. (2002). Relationship personality, conflict resolution, and marital satisfaction in the first 5 years of marriage. *Family Relations, 51*(1), 63-71. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3729.2002.00063.x

Schramm, David G., Marshall, James P., Harris, V. William, & Lee, Thomas R. (2005). After 'I do': The newlywed transition. *Marriage & Family Review, 38*(1), 45-67. doi: 10.1300/J002v38n01_05

Serewicz, Mary Claire Morr. (2008). Toward a triangular theory of the communication and relationships of in-laws: Theoretical proposal and social relations analysis of relational satisfaction and private disclosure in in-law triads. *Journal of Family Communication, 8*(4), 264-292. doi: 10.1080/15267430802397161

Serewicz, Mary Claire Morr, & Canary, Daniel J. (2008). Assessments of disclosure from the in-laws: Links among disclosure topics, family privacy orientations, and relational quality. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 25*(2), 333-357. doi: 10.1177/0265407507087962

Shackelford, Todd K., Besser, Avi, & Goetz, Aaron T. (2008). Personality, martial satisfaction, and probability of marital infidelity. *Individual Differences Research, 6*(1), 13-25.

Shih, Kristy Y., & Pyke, Karen. (2010). Power, resistance, and emotional economies in women's relationships with mothers-in-law in Chinese immigrant families. *Journal of Family Issues, 31*(3), 333-357. doi: 10.1177/0192513X09350875

Shulman, Shmuel, Cohen, Omri, Feldman, Benni, & Mahler, Amalia. (2006). Emerging

    adult men and their mothers in divorced families: A typology of relationship

    patterns. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 23*(3), 465-481. doi:

    10.1177/0265407506064216

Soper, D.S. (2012). Sobel Test Calculator for the Significance of Mediation (Online

    Software). from http://www.danielsoper.com/statcalc.

Spanier, Graham B. (1976). Measuring dyadic adjustment: New scales for assessing the

    quality of marriage and similar dyads. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 38*(1),

    15-28. doi: 10.2307/350547

Spanier, Graham B. (1988). Assessing the strengths of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale.

    Journal of Family Psychology, 2(1), 92-94. doi: 10.1037/h0080477

Story, Lisa B., Karney, Benjamin R., Lawrence, Erika, & Bradbury, Thomas N. (2004).

    Interpersonal Mediators in the Intergenerational Transmission of Marital

    Dysfunction. *Journal of Family Psychology, 18*(3), 519-529. doi: 10.1037/0893-

    3200.18.3.519

Tallman, Irving, & Hsiao, Ying-Ling. (2004). Resources, Cooperation, and Problem

    Solving In Early Marriage. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 67*(2), 172-188. doi:

    10.1177/019027250406700204

Thompson, Linda, & Walker, Alexis J. (1982). The dyad as the unit of analysis:

    Conceptual and methodological issues. *Journal of Marriage and the Family,

    44*(4), 889-900. doi: 10.2307/351453

Turner, M. Jean, Young, Carolyn R., & Black, Kelly I. (2006). Daughters-in-Law and

    Mothers-in-Law Seeking Their Place Within the Family: A Qualitative Study of

Differing Viewpoints. *Family Relations, 55*(5), 588-600. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3729.2006.00428.x

Ward, Peter J., Lundberg, Neil R., Zabriskie, Ramon B., & Berrett, Kristen. (2009). Measuring marital satisfaction: A comparison of the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale and the Satisfaction with Married Life Scale. *Marriage & Family Review, 45*(4), 412-429. doi: 10.1080/01494920902828219

Widmer, Eric D., Giudici, Francesco, Le Goff, Jean Marie, & Pollien, Alexander. (2009). From support to control: A configurational perspective on conjugal quality. *Journal of Marriage & the Family, 71*(3), 437-448. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2009.00611.x

Wilson, Keithia L., Charker, Jill, Lizzio, Alf, Halford, Kim, & Kimlin, Siobhan. (2005). Assessing How Much Couples Work at Their Relationship: The Behavioral Self-Regulation for Effective Relationships Scale. *Journal of Family Psychology, 19*(3), 385-393. doi: 10.1037/0893-3200.19.3.385

Wu, Tsui-Feng, Yeh, Kuang-Hui, Cross, Susan E., Larson, Lisa M., Wang, Yi-Chao, & Tsai, Yi-Lin. (2010). Conflict with mothers-in-law and Taiwanese women's marital satisfaction: The moderating role of husband support. *The Counseling Psychologist, 38*(4), 497-522. doi: 10.1177/0011000009353071

APPENDIX A

Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS)

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

1. Religious matters

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always Agree					Always Disagree

2. Demonstrations of affection

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always Agree					Always Disagree

3. Making major decisions

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always Agree					Always Disagree

4. Sex relations

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always Agree					Always Disagree

5. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always Agree					Always Disagree

6. Career decisions

1	2	3	4	5	6
Always Agree					Always Disagree

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

1	2	3	4	5	6
All the time					Never

8. How often do you and your partner quarrel?

1	2	3	4	5	6
All the time					Never

9. Do you ever regret that you married (or lived together)?

1	2	3	4	5	6
All the time					Never

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

1	2	3	4	5	6
All the time					Never

11. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?

1	2	3	4	5
Every Day		Occasionally		Never

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

12. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas

1	2	3	4	5	6
Never					More than once a day

13. Work together on a project

1	2	3	4	5	6
Never					More than once a day

14. Calmly discuss something

1	2	3	4	5	6
Never					More than once a day

APPENDIX B

Marital Interference and Boundaries Scale

The following items relate to your relationship with your mother-in-law and your perception of the way your husband relates to your mother-in-law (his mother). Please rate your responses on the seven point scale provided.

1. I am very grateful to have my mother-in-law in my life.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

2. My mother-in-law sometimes shows up at my house unannounced.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

3. Sometimes I think my mother-in-law would prefer if I were not married to her son.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

4. My mother-in-law respects the rules my husband and I have established in our home.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

5. My mother-in-law is too involved in my marriage.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

6. My husband would recognize it if his mother's involvement were harmful to our marriage.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

7. My mother-in-law offers her help without me having to ask her.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

8. My husband listens to his mother's advice about how to deal with me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

9. My husband thinks his mother is harmless to our marriage.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

10. My husband has to tell his mother not to make criticisms of me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

11. My mother-in-law always has good intentions.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

12. My husband does not respect his mother's opinions.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

13. My mother-in-law criticizes the way I treat my husband.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

14. My husband sets clear boundaries with his mother when it comes to our marriage.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

15. I am satisfied with the way my husband sets boundaries with his mother.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

16. My mother-in-law does not give my husband and me enough attention.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

17. My husband defends me to his mother when she criticizes me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

18. My husband sometimes goes to his mother for advice about how to deal with me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

19. My mother-in-law has a positive impact on my marriage.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

20. My mother-in-law doesn't respect the rules that I have in my home.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

21. My mother-in-law comes to my house only when I'm not around.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

22. My mother-in-law calls my husband twice or more per day.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

23. My mother-in-law interferes in my marriage.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

24. My husband lets his mother interfere in our marriage.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

25. My husband is not influenced by his mother's opinions.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

26. My mother-in-law tries to manipulate my husband against me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

27. My husband often seems torn between me and his mother.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

28. My mother-in-law shares her unsolicited negative opinions.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

29. My husband sometimes argues with me after speaking with his mother.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

30. My mother-in-law criticizes the way I am raising my children.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

31. My mother-in-law feels too comfortable in my house.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

32. My mother-in-law tells my husband that he doesn't have to listen to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

33. My mother-in-law is a sweet and caring woman.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

34. I adore my mother-in-law.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

35. My mother-in-law puts pressure on my husband and I to celebrate holidays with her.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

36. My mother-in-law doesn't visit often enough.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

37. My mother-in-law should focus more attention on her own life instead of my marriage.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

38. Overall, I am satisfied with the level of involvement that my mother-in-law has in my marriage.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

39. I feel accepted by mother-in-law.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

40. My mother-in-law often gives me compliments.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

41. My husband and I function as a team when dealing with his mother.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree

APPENDIX C

Demographic Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions. Please be open and honest in responding.

1. Is your mother-in-law alive?

Yes   No

2. What is the highest level of education your mother-in-law has completed?

Some high school   High school diploma Bachelor's degree   Graduate degree

3. What is the marital status of your mother-in-law?

Single/Never Married   Married   Divorced/Single   Divorced/Remarried   Widowed

4. Describe the amount of time it takes to travel to reach your mother-in-law.

_____ hours, _____minutes

5. On a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 being never and 7 being always, rate how often you see your mother-in-law.

_____
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

6. From 1 to 7, with 1 being not close at all and 7 being very close, rate the closeness of your husband to his mother.

_____
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

7. From 1 to 7, with 1 being not close at all and 7 being very close, rate the closeness of your
husband to your mother before you got married.

_____
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

8. What is your age (in years)?

9. What is your ethnicity?

Asian or Pacific Islander
African American

Hispanic
Native American or Alaskan Native
Caucasian
Other

10. What is your religious affiliation?

Catholicism
Protestantism (Christianity)
Judaism
Islam
Buddhism
Hinduism
Other
None

11. What is your level of education?

Some high School
High school diploma
Some college
Bachelor's degree
Graduate degree

12. Were you raised in a two-parent intact family?

Yes   No

13. Do you have siblings?

No   Yes

14. How many siblings do you have?

15. What was your birth order?

16. Your current marriage is your:

1st   2nd   3rd   4th   Other

17. How long (in years) have you been married to your current spouse?

18. Do you share the same race as your spouse?

Yes   No

19. Do you share the same religion as your spouse?

Yes   No

20. What is your approximate household income?

21. Is your spouse currently employed?

Yes   No

22. Do you have children?

Yes   No

23. Did you have children prior to this marriage?

Yes   No

24. How long did you wait (in years) after getting married to your current spouse to have your first child?

25. How many children total do you have?

26. How many children do you have under the age of 18 living in your household?

27. On a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 is no problem and 7 is a severe problem area in your relationship, rate the following items:

Financial Stress

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Balancing job and marriage

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Resolving major conflicts

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Sexual relations

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

In-laws

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Caring for and/or disciplining the child/children

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Division of marital duties (e.g. washing dishes, taking out garbage)

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Daily communication with spouse

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

APPENDIX D

Invitations

Facebook Event Posting

Time:

Location: Online at www.surveymonkey.com

Created By: Daniel Goldstein

More Info: Females ages 18 to 90 with living mothers-in-law are asked to please participate in this confidential online survey entitled "Validation of the Marital Interference and Boundaries Scale." Ladies, this survey asks how well you get along with your mother-in-law and what your husband does in terms of setting boundaries with his mother. Share your experience while helping contribute to the research on marriage and in-law relationships. The research is being conducted by Brian A. Glaser, Ph.D. and Daniel Goldstein within the University of Georgia's Department of Counseling and Human Development Services. For further information, please contact danielg@uga.edu. The purpose of the study is to further develop an instrument that aims to assess marital interference and support by mothers-in-law, and boundary-setting behavior by husbands. This survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

If you've already completed the survey, please help me by forwarding this to your friends. Thank you for your support!

JustAskBoo Posting

Does your mother-in-law impact your marriage positively or negatively?
Ladies, is your mother-in-law a *Monster-In-Law or* more like Mother Teresa? Do you get along with your mother-in-law? Does your mother-in-law interfere in your marriage? What is your husband's role in this? Share your experience while supporting ongoing research at the University of Georgia.

Females ages 18 to 90 with living mothers-in-law are asked to please participate in this confidential online survey. The research is being conducted by Brian A. Glaser, Ph.D. and Daniel Goldstein within the University of Georgia's Department of Counseling and Human Development Services. For further information, please contact danielg@uga.edu. The purpose of the study is to further develop an instrument that aims to assess marital

interference and support by mothers-in-law, and boundary-setting behavior by husbands. This survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Go to www.surveymonkey.com/s/inlaw to participate in the survey! Thank you so much for participating.
Flyer Posted in the University of Georgia's School of Education

Ladies, is your mother-in-law a Monster-In-Law or more like Mother Teresa? Ladies, is your mother-in-law a *Monster-In-Law* or more like Mother Teresa? Do you get along with your mother-in-law? Does your mother-in-law interfere in your marriage? What is your husband's role in this? Share your experience while supporting ongoing research at the University of Georgia.

Females ages 18 to 90 with living mothers-in-law are asked to please participate in this confidential online survey. The research is being conducted by Brian A. Glaser, Ph.D. and Daniel Goldstein within the University of Georgia's Department of Counseling and Human Development Services. For further information, please contact danielg@uga.edu. The purpose of the study is to further develop an instrument that aims to assess marital interference and support by mothers-in-law, and boundary-setting behavior by husbands. This survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

Visit www._____ to participate in the survey! Thank you so much for participating.

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent

Dear Research Participant:

Your participation in a research project is requested. To be eligible for participation in this study, you must be a married female age 18 to 90 with a living mother-in-law. The title of the study is Validation of the Female version of the Marital Interference and Boundaries Scale. The research is being conducted by Daniel I. Goldstein (305) 724-5485, a student in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at the University of Georgia, and is being overseen by Brian A. Glaser, Ph.D. (706) 542-4117.

Your participation is voluntary; you can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time during the study without penalty or loss of benefits which you would otherwise be entitled.

The study is seeking information that will be useful in the field of marriage, marital satisfaction, and in-law relationships. The aim of the research is the further development of a new instrument that measures women's perceptions of interfering behaviors engaged in by husbands' mothers and boundaries set by husbands for their mothers. In accordance with these aims, questionnaires called the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS), the Marital Interference and Boundaries Scale (MIBS) and a demographic questionnaire follow this letter. I anticipate the number of participants to be 200.

If you decide to participate in this research, you will be asked to answer questions about your mother-in-law's behavior, your attitude towards your mother-in-law, your marital relationship, your perception of your spouse's behavior with regard to your mother-in-law, as well as some demographic questions. The questionnaires are estimated to take 15-20 minutes to complete.

There are no known risks you. You may experience minimal psychological discomfort in completing the survey. For example, if you would describe your relationship with your spouse or mother-in-law as characterized by conflict, the questions may elicit frustration, sadness, disappointment, or anger. Again, your participation is voluntary and your results are confidential. You can skip questions that make you feel uncomfortable and stop taking the survey at any time. Your results will not be shared with your spouses or their mothers-in-law. There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study; however, your participation will contribute to research in the area of marital satisfaction.

Internet communications are insecure and there is a limit to the confidentiality that can be guaranteed due to the technology itself. However, once the materials are received by the researcher, standard confidentiality procedures will be employed. SurveyMonkey.com allows researchers to suppress the delivery of IP addresses during the downloading of data, and in this study no IP address will be delivered to the researcher. However, SurveyMonkey.com does collect IP addresses for its own purposes. If you have concerns about this you should review the privacy policy of SurveyMonkey.com before you begin.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study or your participation in the study, you may contact me, Daniel Goldstein, by phone at (305) 724-5485 or by email at danielg@uga.edu.

By completing and submitting this electronic survey you are acknowledging that you are at least 18-years-old, that you understand the procedures described above, your questions have been answered to your satisfaction, and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the study. You may print this form for your records.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,
Daniel Goldstein

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 629 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu