

**Me, You, and Us: Affectivity Predicting Interactive Behaviors in Older Couples'  
Relationship Narratives**

by

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## Abstract

The current study was developed to investigate how older spouses' self-reported positive and negative affectivity were associated with their behavioral interactions during a relationship narrative task. To accomplish this goal, the current study used observations of 62 older married couples sharing the history of their relationship together. Hierarchical linear regression analyses were conducted to examine the unique contributions of one's own affectivity and that of one's spouse to individual, spousal, and couple interactive behaviors. Results revealed that wives' negative affectivity was negatively related to their own observed positive affect, her husbands' communication skills, and couples' overall enjoyment/fun. Additionally, her negative affectivity was positively related to her display of negative affect during the task. For husbands, his positive affectivity was positively associated with his own observed positive affect and with couple engagement and enjoyment/fun during the task. Possible explanations for these findings and clinical implications are discussed.

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## **Introduction**

As the years pass, each individual writes his or her personal life story and likely elects to share snippets of these unique experiences with others. Perhaps this phenomenon is no better captured than by considering the storytelling habits of older adults as they recount various life events. In fact, research suggests that older adults, in comparison to younger adults, may actually experience greater benefits from recalling their pasts (Parker, 1999). As to why this might be, according to Erikson and Erikson (1998), older adults are entering an important period of life review, whereby one looks back on past experiences in order to integrate them into a coherent picture of oneself in preparation for death. For older adults, reminiscence is a positive task which serves to wrap up loose ends in relationships while simultaneously initiating conversation with others (Cappeliez, O'Rourke, & Chaudhury, 2005). Supporting this view of reminiscence as a positive task is research demonstrating that reminiscing for older adults may actually ward off depression (Watt & Cappeliez, 2000) and improve emotional well-being and overall quality of life (Bohlmeijer, Roemer, Cuijpers, & Smit, 2007).

Older adults may thus enjoy multiple benefits from simply reviewing their life experience, however life review often occurs conversationally rather than alone in one's mind. Hence, it follows that the majority of older adults would likely engage in life review with a close friend or partner. Due to great increases in longevity (Oeppen & Vaupel, 2002), many spouses may be with each other well into their 60s or 70s, and beyond, suggesting that life review may regularly occur with a spouse. Though we know that older couples often engage in narrative storytelling (Dixon & Gould, 1996; James, Burke, Austin, & Hulme, 1998), there is scant

research on the role of life review within the couple context, nor is there research to speak to the nature of life reviews that specifically focus on the years spouses spent together.

Without acknowledging how a couple's story transforms over the duration of their relationship, research neglects a major portion of personal and relational growth. Thus it is imperative to ascertain during the relationship narrative not only where a couple has been in life, but also who they have been as a couple and as individuals. Relationship narratives can reveal important differences both between and within a couple, as how they share their story is predictive of their marital quality and satisfaction (Holmberg, Orbuch, & Veroff, 2004). Research has shown that, in comparison to distressed couples in a narrative task, satisfied couples demonstrate higher rates of positive affect and intimacy and lower rates of negative affect (Osgarby & Halford, 2013).

Additionally, the act of joint storytelling in couple interactions should reveal individual affectivity through couples' delivery of their experiences. For example, in one couple the wife may take over their narrative and completely shut down the husband's contribution to the story. In this example, one might notice that, although the husband does not tell much of the story, he sits with a smile on his face. Through this observation it would appear that the husband exhibits positive affectivity based on his reaction to his wife and his own affect. On the other hand, it may initially seem that his wife embodies more negative affectivity in light of her preventing her husband from speaking; however, while observing the storytelling it becomes clear that she is actually excited about the content in the moment, preferring to tell her perspective before suggesting her husband add his take. Simply observing their method of delivery may enable us to understand the contributions of individual affectivity to couple interaction. By examining the couple during their relationship narrative, we may generalize their positive and negative

emotions from the storytelling to the greater context of their marriage (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Therefore, positive and negative affect may be observed in a couple interaction as a measure of overall positivity or negativity within a relationship (Holmberg et al., 2004).

To explore the role of spouses' affectivity in predicting how they share their relationship history, the current study utilized questionnaire responses and observational data from relationship narratives collected from 62 older adult couples. As both verbal and nonverbal components of couple communication contribute to the quality of the overall interaction (Fincham, 2004), both were included in a behavioral coding system designed to capture the intricacies of the marital interaction. By assessing the individual affectivity of each partner and observing each couple's relationship narrative, we may begin to understand how affect shapes behavior within a narrative interaction between older adults. Due to the influence of interactive behaviors in a narrative setting on couples' current and future marital satisfaction (Brown, Rauer, & Sabey, under revision), it is imperative to understand how affectivity may contribute to interactive behaviors in order to enhance successful aging, both individually and within a couple relationship.

## **Literature Review**

### **Theoretical Background**

This study is conducted under the overarching premises of Lev Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social constructivism. Stating that knowledge and meaning are derived from social interactions and one's interpretation of specific environmental experiences (Liu & Matthews, 2005), social constructivism assists in explaining the differences in each individual's life story. One's cognitive development is influenced by the culture surrounding him or her in that every event encountered and each person met influences one's unique interpretation of experiences. As an individual forms a working knowledge of the world, social constructivist theory suggests that behavior naturally changes as a byproduct of motivated learning (Sivan, 1986).

This basic understanding of how people are influenced by others and the surrounding environment provides a solid framework for Erik Erikson's (1950b; Erikson & Erikson, 1998) theory of psychosocial development, which details the ubiquitous struggle to develop personal individuality during various stages of aging. These stages range from birth through death, reflecting the impact of social experiences over the entire lifespan as individuals cultivate ego identity. Similar to the aforementioned concepts of social constructivism, ego identity is the unique character that develops based on one's experiences and interactions with others. Ego identity is not just the way one views the self but also the way others view the individual. Each of Erikson's stages centers on a universal, age-related struggle (e.g., fostering romantic relationships during young adulthood) that must be successfully resolved in order to achieve well-being. Failing to do so, however, may not only result in maladjustment during that stage but also increase the risk of experiencing difficulties during later stages. The final stage, ego

integrity versus despair, is thought to characterize older adulthood. This conflict focuses on whether one achieves life satisfaction or experiences regrets. If an individual looks back on his or her life and is satisfied, then he or she is said to have achieved ego integrity and gained wisdom; if an individual experiences regrets or bitterness, then he or she will likely experience despair and be fearful of death (Erikson, 1950a; Hargrave & Anderson, 1997).

In order to successfully obtain ego integrity, an individual typically reflects on his or her own life experiences—a process coined by Robert Butler as “life review” (1963). These experiences can be recounted privately within one’s own mind, though they are often shared aloud with others (Butler, 2002). It is not uncommon for older adults to be judged as living in the past as they tell countless stories from yesteryear; however, this process of life review has been found to be paramount to successful aging (Butler, 1974; Rowe & Kahn, 1997; Wong & Watt, 1991). During this process the individual evaluates his or her own life story with the twofold goal of enjoyment and gaining new perspective or understanding in the present. Butler (1963) describes the process of life review as a common, natural process which is characterized by recalling past experiences so that one may resolve the injuries of past conflicts. These experiences are then reintegrated into one’s meaning of life, which suggests a rather flexible and somewhat existential viewpoint that may be unique to older adulthood.

Although Eriksonian theory focuses on the importance of personal growth through relationships with others, each stage is based on the development of the individual; however, we know that social interactions are vital throughout the lifespan, especially when considering the tenets of social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978; Liu & Matthews, 2005). Thus, life review may be better conceptualized for many people as a more social experience rather than as a private process, particularly for older adults as research suggests these connections are especially salient

in later life (Carstensen, 1992). However, only a limited number of studies have been published on life review with non-spousal dyads (Haight et al., 2003), families (Caldwell, 2005), and groups (Hanaoka & Okamura, 2003), but none to date with couples. Further, for studies on life review, research points to the need for more empirical observation as it typically presents a more accurate picture of behavior than does self-reported data (Baumeister, Vohs, & Funder, 2007). However, at this point there appears to be a dearth of published research regarding the utilization of an observational approach with life review, let alone within the couple context.

### **Couples' Narratives as a Window**

One area of research that has recently blossomed and may be quite informative about how couples' shared life reviews may operate comes from work on relationship narratives, which capture a joint recollection of a couple's history together. Studying these cooperative accounts is meant to shed light on the meaning couples give to relationships "and how this emerging meaning may relate to present and future well-being" (Orbuch, Veroff, & Holmberg, 1993, p.815). To date, however, research has focused almost entirely on the narratives of younger to middle-aged couples and has neglected the aforementioned "future" relationship of older age. In the seminal work of Holmberg and colleagues on the Early Years of Marriage Project (EYM; Holmberg, Orbuch, Brown, Birditt, & Antonucci; 2004), the authors followed 344 young couples (wives were around 20 to 24 at Year 1; husbands were approximately 25 to 29) and asked them to reflect on their relationship stories as newlyweds, at Year 3, and at Year 7 of marriage. Qualitative in nature, these stories were recorded, and analyzed using a comprehensive coding system that focused on multiple facets of their narrative, including that of couple interaction. Examining the connection between spouses, their collaborative effort and flow in sharing their

story, and the perceived enjoyment of the couple during the task revealed important differences in couples' marriages.

As detailed by Orbuch and colleagues (1993), however, these recollections of marriage were not entirely static over the early years of marriage. Couples' stories over time became less detailed and integrated than in previous years. Thus, although narratives remained rather positive in overall nature, they became more generic descriptions of life with one's partner. As to why this occurred, the authors theorize that the couples may have believed that there was no need to share the same story as thoroughly for the project once it had already been told in Year 1, or that the couples lacked practice in telling their story together and thus were somewhat rusty. The authors also suggested that the couples may not be using "their narratives as a source of meaning-making over time" (p. 83), as they are comfortably settled in their perspective of their marriage. This concept may indeed be true for younger couples, but older couples, as we know, are likely preparing for or entering a period of life review. Accordingly, it may be that older couples would tell more comprehensive narratives as they integrate these experiences, positive and negative, into their life perspectives.

These joint narratives provide unique insight into marital processes that cannot be elicited through survey measures (Veroff, Sutherland, Chadiha, & Ortega, 1993). Arguably one of the most salient findings concerns the role of affect within their marriages. Couples overall displayed significantly more positive than negative affect during their relationship narrative, regardless of their self-reported happiness. However, most couples did demonstrate some negative affect during the duration of their relationship narrative. The authors explain that the negativity was often subtle, but that, nonetheless, its presence indicated some area of discord for the couple. Of course, it is not expected that couples would shame their partner in a voluntary interview on

marital satisfaction; however, it is interesting to consider the overall affective tone as a diagnostic tool, especially for those couples who displayed more negative affect. Though the content processed during the interviews remained similar from year to year, there were shifts in affective tone and emphasis. The authors argue that these differences may be based on the current issues and concerns of the storytelling couple, thus their present emotional perspective colors their stories of the past (Holmberg et al., 2004). The question that remains unanswered, however, is to what extent the affect seen in these narratives may actually be reflecting their unique, individual personalities rather than capturing something distinctive about the relationship itself.

### **The Role of Affectivity**

Instead of assuming that the interactive behaviors in a relationship narrative are state-dependent, such that what is seen in the narrative reflects more of the content, it is also possible that these narrative behaviors are tapping into each spouses' affectivity. For example, more frequent demonstrations of positive affectivity (e.g., laughing, smiling) while sharing his or her relationship history could indicate that the individual displays more positive characteristics in general, and likewise for negative affectivity (e.g., frowning, eye rolling) begetting more negative traits (Watson & Clark, 1999). However these affective displays are not entirely independent as both positive and negative emotional states undoubtedly coexist within each individual's own life— a positive person will likely present negative affect at some point, as will a negative person demonstrate positive behaviors. It is likely that engaging in couples' shared life review will bring out many aspects of spouses' affectivity, as couples recall the challenges and the joys of their time together.

Although individuals are likely to express both positive and negative affect during these stories, there is evidence to suggest that there may be gender differences in how much affect spouses express during this task. For instance, wives in the aforementioned EYM project consistently demonstrate more positive and negative affect than their husbands during the narrative task (Holmberg et al., 2004). Older women, too, tend to experience more intense positive and negative affect than older men when recalling emotional memories (Levenson, Carstensen, Friesen, & Ekman, 1991). However, it is important to note that although men are generally less emotionally expressive overall, they have been found to increasingly display positive affect as they age (Mroczek & Kolarz, 1998).

These findings are consistent with work demonstrating that affect changes over time based on life experiences and a person's stage in life (Roberts & Mroczek, 2008; Staudinger & Kunzmann, 2005). In a nationally representative study of 2,727 adults ranging from age 25 to 74, negative affect was found to be highest among young adults and lowest among older adults (Mroczek & Kolarz, 1998). Initially older adults reportedly experienced greater positive affect and less negative affect than the younger adults, suggesting age-related differences. Yet upon disentangling the effects of gender, it was found that negative affect was unrelated for women when controlling for marital status and age. For men, however, the findings were quite different. Both younger and older unmarried men displayed relatively high levels of negative affect. On the other hand, older married men reported less negative affect than younger married men. The authors surmised that married men were presumably happier than their unmarried counterparts and thus likely exhibited more positive behaviors overall. Through these findings it appears that not only does age play a role in affect, but that being in a relationship might as well.

The effects of positive and negative affectivity are often quite clear within a couple dynamic. Ratings of both husbands' and wives' high-intensity negative affect (a summation of behaviors linked to belligerence, defensiveness, and contempt) has predicted divorce in newlywed couples (Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson, 1998). Additionally, in response to negative affect presented by their husbands, wives' reciprocal low-intensity negative affect (a summation of behaviors of whining, anger, disgust, fear, and stonewalling) has been found to predict divorce and unsatisfying interactions between spouses. In fact, a number of studies have found evidence of the detrimental effects of negative affect on a marriage. Based on their meta-analysis, Karney and Bradbury (1995) estimated that the impact of negative affect on marital satisfaction using Pearson's  $r$  was  $-.19$  for wives and  $-.13$  for husbands. Conversely, they found that both husbands' and wives' positive affect and behaviors were positively correlated with their own and their spouse's marital satisfaction. Similarly, Bouchard and Arseneault's (2005) found that both women's and men's positive affect predict positive couple interactions, suggesting that spouses who have more positive demeanors may be observed to engage in a more positive, enjoyable sharing of their history together. Taken together, these studies reveal that a spouse's emotions predict not only his or her own affective and interactive behaviors, but that it also predicts the behaviors of the couple on the whole. As most of these findings, however, were based on studies of younger and middle-aged couples, it remains to be seen how older couples' affectivity will be linked to their behaviors in a narrative task. In light of the complex interaction between gender, personality, and life events (Ormel, 1983), addressing this research aim represents a critical next step in this literature.

### **The Current Study**

As research has primarily focused on the influences of affectivity within younger couples (e.g., Holmberg et al., 2004; Gottman et al., 1998), this study intends to explore how older spouses' affectivity contribute to their couple interactions during a joint narrative task. Since older adults typically undergo the process of life review and engage in recalling their own life stories (e.g., Butler, 1963; Butler, 2002; Erikson, 1950a; Hargrave & Anderson, 1997), we focus on the marital relationship in which life review is likely to occur socially. Given the aforementioned gender differences (e.g., Holmberg et al., 2004; Levenson et al., 1991; Mroczek & Kolarz, 1998), we anticipate spousal differences in both positive and negative affectivity and their effects on interactive behaviors. Overall, we expect evidence of high ratings of positive affect for both husbands and wives and generally low ratings of negative affect.

Whereas most extant literature utilizes conflict-oriented tasks as a means of examining marital communication patterns (Melby, Ge, Conger, & Warner, 1995), we employ a naturalistic relationship narrative task to evaluate the influence of both spouses' affectivity on their interactive behaviors as both individuals and as a couple. For the purpose of this study, we will focus on the effects of self-reported affectivity on both individual and couple behaviors. Individual behaviors include observations of both husbands' and wives' positive and negative affect and communication skills. Couples' behaviors include balance in storytelling, couples' engagement and interpersonal skills, and the perceived enjoyment of the interaction during the narrative task. In analyzing these behaviors, we hypothesize that (1) one's own positive and negative affectivity will predict one's own interactive behaviors in a relationship narrative task; (2) the spouse's positive and negative affectivity will explain unique variance in one's own interactive behaviors; and (3) both spouses' affectivity will together predict the joint couple behaviors in the task. We anticipate that this study will further our understanding of how

affectivity of older adults may affect not only individual, but also spousal interactions in a relationship narrative task. The implications of such findings may well encourage the clinical and non-clinical practice of life review for older couples as a way of improving their overall mental and physical health, marital happiness, and life satisfaction (Bohlmeijer, Roemer, Cuijpers, & Smit, 2007; Holmberg et al., 2004; Watt & Cappeliez, 2000;). By increasing the recognition and awareness of the possible benefits of dyadic life review, a therapy niche for facilitating aging couples in joint storytelling may emerge in the coming years as the Baby Boomer population enters older adulthood.

## Method

### Participants

Sixty-four heterosexual married couples were recruited as part of a study exploring multiple facets of marital relationships in older adulthood. Participants were recruited in the Southeast United States through newspaper advertisements, community health care agencies, and church announcements, and local organizations. Eligibility requirements for couple participation were as follows: (1) couples had to be married, (2) at least one individual in the couple had to be partially retired, and (3) couples had to be able to drive to the research location to ensure their high functioning.

On average, husbands were approximately 71 years old ( $SD = 7.4$ ) and wives were approximately 70 years old ( $SD = 7.0$ ). Couples had been married for an average of 42 years ( $SD = 15$ ) and had an average of 2.6 children ( $SD = 1.3$ ; range = 0-6). Eighty percent of couples ( $n = 51$ ) were in their first marriage. Seventy-three percent of couples ( $n = 47$ ) were fully retired and 27% ( $n = 17$ ) were partially retired, in which one or both spouses were working less than 40 hours a week for pay. Husbands and wives were predominately European American ( $n = 60$  and  $n = 61$ , respectively) and highly educated. Forty-three husbands (67.2%) and 57 wives (89.1%) had completed college or post-graduate degrees. Annual income for couples averaged \$85,875 ( $SD = \$64,074$ ) and total wealth (including couple assets such as property, pensions, and IRAs) averaged \$1,082,547 ( $SD = \$1,277,611$ ). Complete data was available for 62 couples.

## **Procedures**

Couples participated in a visit at an on-campus research center lasting 2-3 hours, during which time they engaged in multiple marital communication tasks: a relationship narrative task, a baseline picture-viewing task, a problem solving task, a compassionate love task, and a support task. The current study focuses on the relationship narrative task, a modified version of Holmberg and colleagues' (2004) Early Years of Marriage Project (EYM). In this task, couples were asked to jointly share the story of their relationship. Each couple was given a storyboard (see Appendix A) that provided direction for them to tell their story, including how they met, how they became a couple, their wedding, the newlywed years, the middle years, the present situation, and finally their expectations for life in the upcoming years. The interviewer instructed the couple to jointly tell their story in any method they preferred (e.g., one spouse starts and the other spouse finishes, one spouse tells most of the story and the other spouse adds details). Upon completing the visit, couples were given questionnaires with detailed questions regarding their marital and individual lives. Once the couples returned the completed questionnaires in pre-addressed, pre-stamped envelopes to the research center, they were compensated \$75 for their participation.

## **Measures**

**Affectivity.** Participants' affectivity was measured using the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) developed by Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (1988). This 20-item self-report measure scales participant agreement with various emotionally-charged terms, such as "inspired", "hostile", and "jittery" (See Appendix B). Affectivity was divided into positive and negative scores based on the given word. Participants rated each term on a scale of one to five, with one indicating that he or she feels that emotion "very slightly or not at all," and five

indicating that he or she feels that emotion “extremely” within the past two to three months.

Reliability for this measure was good (husbands:  $\alpha = .86$ ; wives:  $\alpha = .79$ ).

**Couples’ narratives.** Each couples’ narrative was video recorded and later coded by two independent coders on individual and couple communication behaviors. Codes were adapted for the couples’ narrative task from the Interactional Dimensions Coding System (IDCS), a comprehensive system for capturing family communication behaviors (Kline et al., 2004). The coders established reliability by jointly observing and discussing video data from a small subset of videos until inter-observer agreement was 80% or higher for each code. Coders then independently coded a separate set of videos representing 20% of the full sample to calculate reliability. Length of couple narratives varied from 5-68 minutes with the average duration being 32 minutes. Each narrative was divided into ten-minute sections and coded independently by each coder. Coders rated each couple on three individual dimensions: positive affect, negative affect, and communication skills; and three couple dimensions: balance/reciprocity, engagement/interpersonal involvement, and fun/enjoyment.

**Individual codes.** Coders observed each individual’s positive affect behaviors, assessing the intensity and frequency of positive expressions directed towards the partner on a scale of one to seven. This includes demonstrations of laughter, tears of joy, smiling, and reaching out towards the partner. A score of 1 (“*very low*”) indicated that the individual exhibited no positive affect or enjoyment during the interaction. A score of 4 (“*moderate*”) indicated mild positive affect or low level enjoyment during the interaction, however these displays were not intense or prolonged. A score of 7 (“*very high*”) indicated constant, intense enjoyment of the interaction, exhibited through continuous signs of affection, smiling, laughing, or tears of joy throughout the

narrative. Inter-rater reliability was  $r = .86, p < .001$  for wives, and  $r = .89, p < .001$  for husbands.

Next, coders rated each individual's negative affect in regards to his or her expression of frowning, eye rolling, visible signs of anger, tears of sadness, etc., as directed towards the partner or in the telling of the narrative. A score of 1 (“*very low*”) indicated no negative affect. A score of 4 (“*moderate*”) indicated a level of negativity that, though clearly visible and occasionally expressed, did not disrupt the flow of the interaction during the narrative telling. A score of 7 (“*very high*”) indicated marked sadness or anger in extreme displays throughout the narrative telling. Inter-rater reliability for individual negative affect was  $r = .81, p < .001$  for wife negative affect, and  $r = .72, p < .001$  for husband negative affect.

Finally, coders evaluated communication skills of each partner, which includes the individual's ability to appropriately convey thoughts, emotions, and opinions in a coherent constructive manner. This code contains dimensions of eye contact, body orientation, clarity of speech, and the ability to understand the partner's point of view. A score of 1 (“*very low*”) indicated virtually no effort or ability to communicate thoughts, emotions, and opinions. A score of 4 (“*moderate*”) indicated an individual exhibiting basic communication skills, yet lacking a fully developed communication style. A score of 7 (“*very high*”) indicated an individual with exceptionally clear and articulate expression of his or her thoughts, emotions, and opinions. Inter-rater reliability for communication skills was  $r = .93, p < .001$  for wife communication skills, and  $r = .94, p < .001$  for husband communication skills.

***Couple codes.*** For the balance/reciprocity code, coders assessed the overall contributions of each partner to the interactive story-telling. This code includes dimensions of sharing control, turn-taking, and equity of conversational input, rated on a scale of one to seven. A score of 1

(“*very low*”) indicated a couple that appeared to be in disequilibrium as one partner completely controlled or dominated the story-telling. A score of 4 (“*moderate*”) indicated a fairly consistent sharing of opinions and response; however one partner mainly controlled the movement of the interaction. A score of 7 (“*very high*”) indicated a couple in nearly complete synchrony as there was open sharing of opinions and response without domination. Inter-rater reliability for couple balance/reciprocity was  $r = .84, p < .001$ .

The next code, couple engagement/interpersonal involvement, measured the couples’ persistence of social connectedness during the interaction, including their visual regard, reciprocal interest, and conversation initiation. A score of 1 (“*very low*”) indicated a couple that engaged in minimal interaction, with both partners instead leaning towards indifference or withdrawal. A score of 4 (“*moderate*”) indicated a couple that appeared to be going through the motions of the task, though at least one partner made consistent efforts to maintain contact. A score of 7 (“*very high*”) indicated a couple that continued extensive visual regard and shared their narrative almost in the manner of a casual conversation, as if the experimenter were not in the room. Inter-rater reliability for couple engagement/interpersonal involvement was  $r = .89, p < .001$ .

Finally, fun/enjoyment was coded based on the perceptible pleasure the couple demonstrated in their interaction. Ratings focused on couples’ tone (i.e., neutral, animated) and affective signs (e.g., laughing, sighing) as a determination of whether the couple enjoyed the interaction. A score of 1 (“*very low*”) indicated no fun or enjoyment regarding the interaction. A score of 4 (“*moderate*”) indicated a couple that did not particularly mind interacting during the task, but did not appear to find their interaction decidedly enjoyable. A score of 7 (“*very high*”) indicated a couple who shared mutual pleasure in their joint interaction, as evidenced by marked

delight and multiple affective signs of smiling or laughing. Inter-rater reliability for couple fun/enjoyment was  $r = .84, p < .001$ .

### **Plan of Analysis**

We first conducted preliminary analyses to gather descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, skewness, in order to determine that the data are normally distributed. We examined correlations to verify that the variables were related. We then conducted paired t-tests to examine whether there are gender differences between husbands and wives' personalities and interactive behaviors. A series of hierarchical linear regression models were used to test the proposed hypotheses in order to reveal the contributions of affectivity characteristics to each spouse's and couple's interactive behavior during the relationship narrative task. We examined a total of nine models: husbands' positive affect, negative affect, and communication skills; wives' positive affect, negative affect, and communication skills; couples' balance/reciprocity, engagement/interpersonal skills, and fun/enjoyment.

In Step 1, we included couples' marital duration and duration of couples' narratives as controls for conservative estimation of these associations. In Step 2, we added one's own positive affectivity (husbands' positive affectivity for husbands' interactive behaviors; wives' positive affectivity for wives' interactive behaviors). In Step 3, we added one's own negative affectivity (husbands' negative affectivity for husbands' interactive behaviors; wives' negative affectivity for wives' interactive behaviors). In Step 4, we included spouses' positive affectivity to determine if this explained variance in interactive behaviors (husbands' positive affectivity for wives' interactive behaviors; wives' positive affectivity for husbands' interactive behaviors). Finally, in Step 5, we added spouses' negative affectivity to explain any further variance (husbands' negative affectivity for wives' interactive behaviors; wives' negative affectivity for

husbands' interactive behaviors). For models predicting couples' joint interactive behaviors, wives were entered into the models first.

## Results

### Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics were examined for all the study variables of interest (see Table 1). Couples on average completed the narrative task in 31 minutes ( $SD= 13.66$ ). Both husbands and wives displayed moderate to moderately high levels of positive affect and communication skills during the narrative task. On a scale ranging from 1 to 7 for both variables, husbands had a mean of 4.41 for observed positive affect and 5.06 for communication skills, whereas wives had means of 4.65 and 5.02, respectively. Wives demonstrated more positive affect,  $t(61) = 2.22, p < .05$  than husbands, although there were no differences for communication skills. Both spouses showed very low levels of observed negative affect, with the mean for husbands at 1.78 and wives at 2.10. Wives demonstrated more negative affect during the narrative task,  $t(61) = 3.88, p < .01$ . These observed means are similar to self-reports received from husbands and wives for positive and negative affectivity. Interestingly, husbands reported a moderately high mean score of 3.76 for positive affectivity, whereas wives reported a mean of 3.84 on a scale of 1 to 5. For negative affectivity, husbands had a notably low mean of 1.53 while wives had a mean of 1.72. Wives, again, reported greater negative affectivity,  $t(62) = 2.32, p < .05$ , however there were no differences for positive affectivity.

Correlations were examined to explore links between self-reported affectivity and observed behaviors for both husbands and wives (see Table 1). Among the predicting variables from the self-reported PANAS measures, husbands' positive affectivity was found to be positively correlated with husbands' observed positive affect. However, wives' negative affectivity was positively correlated with wives' observed negative affect.

Individual correlations among narrative behaviors were then examined, revealing that for both spouses', their observed positive affect was positively correlated with their communication skills but negatively correlated with observed negative affect. Between spouses, however, husbands' positive affect appeared to be positively correlated with wives' positive affect, and negatively correlated with wives' negative affect. Husbands' communication skills were positively correlated with wives' positive affect and with her communication skills as well. Husbands' negative affect was found to be positively correlated with wives' negative affect.

Next, we examined correlations for the couples' narrative task behaviors. Couple engagement and fun/enjoyment were positively correlated with both positive affect and communication skills for both spouses. Couple balance/reciprocity was positively correlated with spouse communication skills, wives' positive affect, and couple engagement. Finally, couple fun/enjoyment was negatively correlated with negative affect of both husbands and wives, although it was found to be positively related with couple engagement, couple balance/reciprocity, and husbands' positive and negative affectivity.

Finally, correlations revealed little evidence linking the control variables of marital duration or narrative duration to any of the study variables, although there are a few interesting exceptions. The longer a couple had been married, the less negative affectivity husbands reported, but the less positive affectivity wives reported. Additionally, marital duration was negatively related to couples' engagement, such that couples who were married longer were significantly less engaged than couples who had been married for less time. Despite these minimal correlations among the control variables, we retained these theoretically-relevant variables in the regression analyses to ensure a conservative estimate of the links between affectivity and narrative behaviors.

## **Affectivity and Husbands' Narrative Behaviors**

Hierarchical linear regression analyses were then conducted in order to examine the contributions of control variables, one's own positive and negative affectivity, and one's spouse's positive and negative affectivity. Model 1 first included both marital duration and narrative duration as control variables in predicting each narrative behavior. Next, Model 2 included one's own positive affectivity (e.g., husbands' positive affectivity predicting husbands' observed positive affect) to test whether this explained significant differences in the narrative behavior. In Model 3 we added one's own negative affectivity (e.g., wives' negative affectivity predicting wives' observed positive affect) to determine if this further explained any significant differences in the narrative behavior. Model 4 incorporated one's spouse's positive affectivity (e.g., wives' positive affectivity predicting husbands' communication skills) to explain further differences. Finally, Model 5 added one's spouse's negative affectivity (e.g., husbands' negative affectivity predicting wives' observed positive affect) to predict any additional differences in the narrative behavior.

For husbands' observed positive affect, Model 1 revealed no significant results for the control variables as predictors and the  $R^2$  statistic was not significant (see Table 2). With the addition of husband positive affectivity as a predictor, there was a significant change from Model 1 to Model 2, indicating that husbands' positive affectivity ( $\beta = .39, p \leq .01$ ) accounted for a significant amount of variance in husbands' observed positive affect. Including husbands' negative affectivity in Model 3, and wives' positive affectivity in Model 4 did not explain significant additional variance in husbands' observed positive affect, although husbands' positive affectivity remained significant in both models. In Model 5, husbands' positive affectivity was again significant, which resulted in a marginally significant change in the amount of variance

explained ( $F(6,54) = 2.95, p \leq .10$ ). Therefore, husbands who reported themselves as experiencing more positive affectivity were observed to display more positive affect during the narrative task, whereas husbands with wives who reported experiencing more negative affectivity were observed to display less positive affect during the narrative task.

Secondly, analyses for husbands' observed negative affect revealed consistent findings across all models for the significance of narrative duration as a predictor (see Table 3). From Model 1 through Model 4, narrative duration remained constantly significant ( $\beta = .28, p \leq .05$ ), only to change in Model 5 ( $\beta = .31, p \leq .05$ ), although none of these models revealed significant change in the amount of variance explained. Overall, the longer that a couple spoke during their narrative task, the husband appears to have engaged in more observed negative affect.

Finally, for husbands' communication skills, Models 1 through 4 did not reveal any significant findings (see Table 4). However, the addition of wives' negative affectivity in Model 5 resulted in a significant change from Model 4 ( $F(6,54) = 5.04, p \leq .05$ ), although the overall variance explained by Model 5 is not significant. In Model 5, wives' negative affectivity emerged as a significant predictor of husbands' communication skills ( $\beta = -.30, p \leq .05$ ). These findings suggest that husbands were observed to be worse communicators if their wives reported experiencing more negative affectivity.

### **Affectivity and Wives' Narrative Behaviors**

For wives, all models were conducted in the same manner as for husbands, except wives' positive and negative affectivity were added steps before including husbands' affectivity. These analyses revealed many interesting findings for wives' observed positive and negative affect, which are presented below. To note, however, no significant results were found for wives' communication skills (see Table 7).

For wives' observed positive affect, Models 1 and 2 revealed no significant results for the inclusion of the control variables or wives' positive affectivity. However, including wives' negative affectivity in Model 3 reveals a significant change from Model 2 ( $F(4,56) = 4.76, p \leq .05$ ). In Model 3 both marital duration ( $\beta = -.27, p \leq .05$ ) and wives' own negative affectivity ( $\beta = -.29, p \leq .05$ ) emerged as significant predictors of wives' observed positive affect. These findings are fairly consistent throughout Models 4 and 5 (see Table 5), respectively, although the overall amount of variance explained by these variables did not result in significant  $R^2$  statistics. Based on these findings, it appears that wives who report more negative affectivity and have been married for a longer duration display less positive affect during the narrative task.

Next, analyses for wives' observed negative affect revealed no significant results in either Model 1 or Model 2 (see Table 6). Model 3, however, indicated a significant change from Model 2 ( $F(4,56) = 5.91, p \leq .05$ ) with the inclusion of wives' negative affectivity, which emerged as a significant predictor ( $\beta = .32, p \leq .05$ ). Wives' negative affectivity remained significant throughout Models 4 and 5. Results revealed that wives displayed more negative affect during the task if they reported more negative affectivity.

### **Affectivity and Couples' Narrative Behaviors**

In considering the couples' joint narrative behaviors, all models were conducted with wives' positive and negative affectivity before those of husbands. As seen in Table 8, neither spouses' affectivity explained significant variance in couples' balance/reciprocity. However there are numerous significant findings for both couples' engagement/interpersonal skills and couples' fun/enjoyment behaviors during the narrative task.

For couples' engagement/interpersonal skills (see Table 9), marital duration emerged in Model 1 as a significant predictor ( $\beta = -.32, p \leq .05$ ) and explained a significant 11% of the

amount of variance ( $F(2,58) = 3.41, p \leq .05$ ). Although Model 2 did not reveal a significant change in the amount of variance from Model 1, marital duration remained a significant predictor ( $\beta = -.30, p \leq .05$ ). The significant addition of wives' negative affectivity ( $\beta = -.31, p \leq .05$ ) in Model 3 illustrated significant change from Model 2 ( $F(4,56) = 6.23, p \leq .05$ ). Furthermore, marital duration became highly significant ( $\beta = -.36, p \leq .01$ ) in Model 3. Including husbands' positive affectivity in Model 4 accounted for a highly significant change in the amount of variance explained ( $F(5,55) = 7.23, p \leq .01$ ). Greater positive affectivity of husbands ( $\beta = .31, p \leq .01$ ) and less negative affectivity of wives ( $\beta = -.30, p \leq .05$ ) were significantly related to couples' engagement with one another. Again, shorter marital duration ( $\beta = -.37, p \leq .01$ ) were found to be significantly related to overall engagement. Although the  $R^2$  statistic is significant with the inclusion of all predicting variables in Model 5 (see Table 9), there is no significant change from Model 4 to Model 5. Overall these results suggest that less negative affectivity from wives and greater positive affectivity from husbands are related to greater couple engagement and interpersonal skills. However, couples who have been married longer do not seem to be as engaged with one another during a narrative task.

Finally, although there were no significant findings for couples' fun/enjoyment in either Model 1 or Model 2 (see Table 10), the addition of wives' negative affectivity ( $\beta = -.30, p \leq .05$ ) in Model 3 revealed significant change from the previous model ( $F(4,56) = 5.26, p \leq .05$ ). Moreover, marital duration emerged as significant in Model 3 ( $\beta = -.26, p \leq .05$ ). By including husbands' positive affectivity in Model 4, there was again significant change from the previous model ( $F(5,55) = 4.58, p \leq .05$ ) and a significant amount of variance was explained ( $R^2 = .19$ ). Marital duration and wives' negative affectivity remained significant ( $\beta = -.27, p \leq .05$ ;  $\beta = -.29, p \leq .05$ , respectively) and husbands' positive affectivity emerged as a significant predictor as

well ( $\beta = .26, p \leq .05$ ). Finally, the inclusion of all predicting variables in Model 5 did not contribute to significant change from the previous model. Couples were observed to have more fun and enjoy the narrative task more when wives reported less negative affectivity and husbands reported greater positive affectivity. Finally, couples who had been married longer were not observed to have as much fun or enjoyment as those who had been married for less time.

## **Discussion**

We observed the behaviors of older adult husbands and wives during a relationship narrative task to examine how positive and negative affectivity contributed to interactive behaviors. Rather than have couples engaged in a more traditional conflict task, we observed couples as they shared their relationship histories to more closely approximate a natural, daily interaction (Driver & Gottman, 2004). Results of the current study revealed consistent evidence highlighting the role of wives' negative affectivity and husbands' positive affectivity. The more negative affectivity reported by wives, the more she was observed to demonstrate less positive affect and more negative affect during the narrative task. Further, greater negativity on wives' part also explained husbands' poorer communication skills and less engagement and enjoyment by the couple as a whole during the sharing of their relationship history. However, husbands' greater positive affectivity was associated with greater engagement and fun for the couple. Furthermore, the greater his positive affectivity, the more positive affect we observed from him during the narrative task. These findings suggest that individual and couple behaviors hinge neither on positive or negative affectivity alone or on which spouse is the focus, but rather, it is important to know the intersection between affectivity and spouse.

### **The Role of Wives' Negative Affectivity**

Our current findings suggest that wives' negative affectivity may play a particularly notable role in relation to her own interactive behaviors, those of her spouse, and those as a couple. Although wives were observed to exhibit significantly more positive and negative affect during the narrative task, which is consistent with gender differences found in other studies (Holmberg et al., 2004; Levenson et al., 1991), wives in the current study also reported

significantly more negative affectivity than their husbands. These findings are consistent with the literature examining an individual's "emotional expressivity" (Gross & John, 1997; Kring, Smith, & Neale, 1994; Rauer & Volling, 2005). Frequent emotional expression, regardless of its valence, has been found to be related to higher self-esteem, social intimacy, and overall well-being according to several studies (Gross & John, 1997; King & Emmons, 1990; Kring et al., 1994). Of particular interest to the current study, Simon and Nath (2004), found that men and women differ significantly in their self-reported frequency of experiencing certain positive and negative emotions: men generally reported more positive emotions, and women reported more negative emotions. If women are feeling more frequent emotions, it follows that they would likely be expressing these emotions more often. To note, however, the measure of negative affectivity used in the current study may reflect not only participants' feelings of anger and sadness, but also their feelings of distress and anxiety.

It is common for the wife to be considered the barometer of a couple's conflict as wives are not only more likely to express emotions, they are also more likely than their husbands to bring up issues in their marriage (Ball, Cowan, & Cowan, 1995). However, some studies have found that men may have a lower tolerance for negative emotions and be more sensitive to marital stress (Levenson, Carstensen, & Gottman, 1994). For example, Gottman and Levenson (1988) proposed that men become more physiologically distressed in the context of negative affect, and thus withdraw in order to manage their arousal. Gottman (1979) describes how this typical pursuer/withdrawer dance puts the wife in the lead as she pursues her husband with problem-oriented comments, consequently inspiring him to withdraw from possible conflict. Husbands' poorer communication skills in the current study may reflect this withdrawal effect. Further, if husbands are feeling as if they must withdraw from their wives in order to avoid

conflict, it may also explain why couple engagement was lower for couples in which the wives reported more negativity. These reports and our results, too, are consistent with Karney and Bradbury's (1995) finding that wives' negative affect has greater influence on marital satisfaction than does that of her husband. Thus it is not entirely unexpected that wives' negativity would overflow into several observed behaviors of her own and of her husband during the narrative task.

### **The Role of Husbands' Positive Affectivity**

Given that couples who engaged in the current study had been married for an average of 42 years, it is not surprising that our sample presented with relatively high levels of self-reported positive affectivity. As previously mentioned, high amounts of positive affect and behaviors have been linked with greater marital satisfaction (Bouchard & Arsenault, 2005; Gottman, 1994), thus it is likely that the couples in the current study have exhibited consistent and frequent positive affectivity over the years in order to have remained married. Although we did not find that spouses differed in their reports of positive affectivity, we did find evidence to suggest that husbands' positive affectivity appears to play a more significant role for the couples.

As to why husbands' positive affectivity was found to be particularly important for older couples, it may be developmentally driven. Various studies have reported that affect changes over time based on one's unique life experiences and a person's stage in life, suggesting variability throughout the lifespan (Roberts & Mroczek, 2008; Staudinger & Kunzmann, 2005). It is possible that our findings support Mroczek and Kolarz's (1998) results that older husbands are presumably happier and exhibit more positivity in their later years. One possible explanation for husbands' increased positivity may be that his expressions may be aligning with those of his wife after so many years spent together. Larger discrepancies in partners' affective disclosure

have been found to be associated with more relational distress (Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1990), thus it may be that stable, non-distressed couples move towards similar expressivity over time.

Furthermore, given that husbands' positive affectivity in marriage was related to the couples' overall reports of higher marital functioning in middle age (Rauer & Volling, 2005), it is likely that husbands' increased positive affectivity is appreciated by both spouses, thus explaining the links between husbands' positive affectivity and the couple behaviors of engagement and fun/enjoyment.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

The unique design of the current study bolsters our confidence in these findings. As an observational study, couples engaged in a narrative task which would similarly replicate more natural conversation between spouses. With a basic storyboard as their guide, couples were able to engage themselves in the task according to their own comfort rather than by specific questioning. Using the narrative task itself is distinctive as most knowledge on couple interactional patterns exists from studies with support or conflict tasks (Melby et al., 1995). These interactions in the narrative task are likely more pleasant for couples, as they recall the memories of their life together, thus providing insight into their more typical, everyday functioning. Finally, utilizing a dyadic design allowed us to capture important differences for husbands and wives in their experiences of emotions and how these related to their own and each other's interactional behaviors. This information may be vital to researchers and clinicians as they strive to further understand couple interaction patterns, especially in a more natural context.

Despite these strengths, there are some limitations to consider when interpreting these results. First, the participants in the current study were high-functioning older adults who were well educated, financially stable, and happily married. Further studies would ideally expand the

sample demographics to include a more diverse population of older couples along these dimensions in order to consider the presence of situational stressors on their interactional patterns. For example, Karney and Bradbury (1995) suggest that couples who are currently experiencing hardships (such as financial instability) may exhibit differing communication patterns due to the presence of multiple stressors. Within the parameters of the current study, more distressed couples would likely have been overall less positive and exhibited more intense negative affect, poorer communication skills, and less engagement and fun as a couple during the narrative task.

Second, although we attempted to capture trait-affect through the affectivity PANAS measure and state-affect during the narrative task, it may be that these emotional behaviors were not completely captured. While some couples may enjoy starting off their interview by reminiscing about their relationship in the narrative task (Jacobson & Christensen, 1996; Watt & Cappeliez, 2000), other couples may not have felt they had the freedom to fully express affect and behaviors during a task with a stranger as their interviewer. Future work may want to consider including an initial, brief adjustment period between interviewer and the couple in order to allow spouses to become more comfortable interacting within a new environment.

### **Clinical Implications**

Though research may currently be lacking on couple's life review, more observational research exists in the related field of narrative therapy (Caldwell, 2005; Kropf & Tandy, 1998; Vromans & Schweitzer, 2011). This therapeutic approach bears great resemblance to Erikson's life review in that both processes entail the 1) recollection of previous events, which are then 2) reassessed from the original perception, and 3) reintegrated into a current understanding. Whereas life review is considered a universal step in development, narrative therapy is typically

reserved as a clinical intervention for those who are distressed. According to developers Michael White and David Epston (1990), narrative therapy emphasizes the unique way an individual perceives his or her own life based on the experiences he or she has lived. Every individual sees his or her life through a particular set of lens, oftentimes perceiving events as problems or dysfunctions within the self. By assisting the individual in removing his or her problems from the self and reframing personal experiences in a more positive manner, narrative therapists help the client to build a “new” story of the self. Within the narrative task of the current study, couples recounted their life history together with an unknown interviewer. Although the interviewer did not intervene in the stories, he or she likely noted problematic perceptions put forth by both husbands and wives that could be analyzed and “re-storied” to improve overall positivity.

Narrative therapy may also serve as a useful couple technique (Rosen & Lang, 2005). With couples, narrative therapy aims to understand how the perceptions of social interactions influence how couples make sense of themselves and their relationships (Rosen & Lang, 2005; White & Epston, 1990). Oftentimes, a couple’s story about their life together is the first window through which a therapist views the past functioning of their relationship and their present interactive behaviors. For couples married for several years, or even decades, it is reasonable to speculate that they will likely have a rich life history together from which to draw upon. Thus, if perspective is problematic for either individual, there is a great wealth of history that can be utilized to re-construct a more positive story (Greenwald, 1980; Pasupathi, 2001). Based on the findings from the current study, clinicians may consider paying special attention to any evidence of wives’ negative affectivity in order to interrupt her pattern of problematic thinking. Intervening for the purpose of mitigating her negatively affective response to be more positive would likely positively change the effects upon her own and her spouse’s behaviors, as well as

those of the couple. According to Holmberg, Orbuch, and Veroff, couples who tell more positive stories actually become more positive couples over time (2004), so a positive re-construction of negative past events may improve couple happiness and increase positive affective displays.

Furthermore, research suggests that simply utilizing a reminiscence approach, even as just a warm-up in therapy (Watt & Cappeliez, 2000), will likely induce reminders of happier past experiences in which the couple's relationship was better (Jacobson & Christensen, 1996). These recollections of the past can be quite meaningful as a way of increasing positive emotional connection with others (Pasupathi & Carstensen, 2003), as sharing details about one's life increases intimacy in both social and romantic relationships (Bluck, Alea, Habermas, & Rubin, 2005). These benefits may be particularly poignant for older couples, given that those in long-term marriages tend to display more frequent and intense affection than younger couples when reminiscing (Carstensen, Gottman, & Levenson, 1995). Moreover, the applicability of these findings extends to other current approaches to therapy. For example, Boszormenyi-Nagy's contextual therapy highlights emotional healing in relationships by uncovering personal loyalties and connections to one another (Nichols & Schwartz, 1998), presenting an ideal realm for the couple to recount their story together in order to reach a therapeutic understanding of how their connection to each other unfolded. Accordingly, clinicians working with older adults in any setting may benefit from attending to and actively encouraging husbands' positive affectivity during such a task as these reports may foster greater dyadic engagement and enjoyment during reminiscence.

## **Conclusions**

Although Eriksonian theory advises older adults to individually engage in processing their life actions in order to achieve life satisfaction (Erikson, 1950a), our findings suggest the

engagement of spouses together in a narrative task similar to life review may be of benefit to individuals as well to the extent that it serves as a venue for positive affectivity, particularly on the part of the husbands. Though it is important to note that the presence of positive affectivity within a relationship does not ensure positive interactions, it may be linked to improved interactions and these in turn may benefit the marriage (Brown et al., under revision). Older men, especially, may engage in more positivity in order to increase their own positive demeanor and improve interactions with their wives. Negative affectivity, too, plays a role in affecting older couples' engagement and enjoyment when reminiscing about their past together, however clinical implications suggest that it may be important to mitigate this negativity through narrative therapy in order to enhance couples' interactions. As the aging population continues to grow (Oeppen & Vaupel, 2002), we suggest clinicians focus greater attention to developing more effective clinical skills for working with older couples as they may benefit from assistance in navigating the path to successful aging through joint life review.

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## Appendix - Tables

Table 1. *Descriptive statistics and correlations among study variables*

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.
1. Marital duration	--														
2. Narrative duration	.21	--													
3. Husband positive affect (obs.)	-.13	-.09	--												
4. Husband negative affect (obs.)	-.09	.24	-.46**	--											
5. Husband communication skills	-.08	.12	.45**	-.03	--										
6. Wife positive affect (obs.)	-.23	-.07	.53**	-.20	.40**	--									
7. Wife negative affect (obs.)	.09	-.03	-.33**	.35**	-.19	-.32*	--								
8. Wife communication skills	.08	.07	.09	.06	.42**	.45**	.14	--							
9. Couple engagement	-.29*	.09	.43**	.04	.53**	.68**	-.19	.47**	--						
10. Couple balance/reciprocity	-.10	-.07	.09	.07	.37**	.35**	-.10	.33**	.48**	--					
11. Couple fun/enjoyment	-.20	-.00	.72**	-.30*	.50**	.82**	-.35**	.38**	.69**	.28*	--				
12. Husband positive affect (PANAS)	-.00	.08	.38**	-.01	.24	.15	-.14	.24	.32*	.07	.27*	--			
13. Husband negative affect (PANAS)	-.28*	-.07	.07	.11	-.04	.10	.18	-.04	.06	-.08	.13	.14	--		
14. Wife positive affect (PANAS)	-.26*	-.02	.04	-.06	.03	.08	-.13	.11	.15	.20	.09	.16	-.09	--	
15. Wife negative affect (PANAS)	-.09	.16	-.21	-.05	-.24	-.24	.29*	-.07	-.24	-.18	-.25	-.09	.05	-.22	--
<i>M</i>	42.40	31.13	4.40	1.78	5.06	4.65	2.10	5.02	5.27	4.58	4.66	3.76	1.53	3.84	1.72
<i>SD</i>	14.97	13.66	.90	.50	.79	.88	.62	.87	.87	.95	1.01	.70	.45	.75	.54

Note: \* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$

Table 2. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Husbands' Observed Positive Affect

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$												
Constant	4.90	.42	--	3.06	.70	--	3.14	.81	--	3.48	1.09	--	4.41	1.21	--
Marital duration	-.01	.01	-.13	-.01	.01	-.13	-.01	.01	-.13	-.01	.01	-.15	-.01	.01	-.20
Narrative duration	-.01	.01	-.07	-.01	.01	-.10	-.01	.01	-.09	-.01	.01	-.09	-.00	.01	-.05
Husband positive affectivity				.50	.16	.39**	.51	.16	.39**	.52	.17	.40**	.51	.16	.39**
Husband negative affectivity							-.06	.28	-.03	-.09	.29	-.04	-.09	.29	-.40
Wife positive affectivity										-.08	.16	-.06	-.14	.17	-.11
Wife negative affectivity													-.37	.21	-.22 †
$R^2$		.03			.17*			.17*			.18*			.22*	
<i>F</i> for change in $R^2$		.73			10.16*			.04			.21			2.95†	

Note: † $p \leq .10$ ; \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$

Table 3. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Husbands' Observed Negative Affect

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5		
	B	SE B	$\beta$												
Constant	1.66	.23	--	1.69	.40	--	1.53	.47	--	1.7	.63	--	2.11	.71	--
Marital duration	-.01	.00	-.14	-.01	.00	-.14	-.00	.01	-.11	-.01	.01	-.13	-.01	.01	-.17
Narrative duration	.01	.01	.28*	.01	.01	.28*	.01	.01	.28*	.01	.01	.28*	.01	.01	.31*
Husband positive affectivity				-.01	.09	-.01	-.02	.09	-.03	-.01	.10	-.01	-.02	.10	-.02
Husband negative affectivity							.11	.16	.09	.08	.17	.07	.09	.17	.07
Wife positive affectivity										-.05	.09	-.07	-.07	.10	-.10
Wife negative affectivity													-.14	.13	-.15
$R^2$		.08†			.08			.09			.09			.11	
$F$ for change in $R^2$		2.6†			.01			.47			.26			1.25	

Note: † $p \leq .10$ ; \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$

Table 4. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Husbands' Communication Skills

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5		
	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$									
Constant	5.27	.35	--	4.53	.61	--	4.67	.71	--	4.92	.96	--	5.97	1.04	--
Marital duration	-.01	.01	-.16	-.01	.01	-.16	-.01	.01	-.18	-.01	.01	-.19	-.01	.01	-.26†
Narrative duration	.01	.01	.11	.01	.01	.10	.01	.01	.10	.01	.01	.10	.01	.01	.16
Husband positive affectivity				.20	.14	.19	.21	.14	.20	.22	.15	.21	.21	.14	.19
Husband negative affectivity							-.09	.24	-.05	-.12	.26	-.07	-.11	.25	-.06
Wife positive affectivity										-.06	.14	-.06	-.12	.14	-.12
Wife negative affectivity													-.41	.18	-.30*
$R^2$		.03			.07			.07			.07			.15	
$F$ for change in $R^2$		.95			2.13			.15			.15			5.04*	

Note: † $p \leq .10$ ; \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$

Table 5. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Wives' Observed Positive Affect

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5		
	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	B
Constant	5.21	.40	--	5.04	.79	--	6.21	.93	--	5.54	1.06	--	5.53	1.21	--
Marital duration	-.01	.01	-.21	-.01	.01	-.20	-.02	.01	-.27*	-.02	.01	-.27*	-.02	.01	-.27†
Narrative duration	.00	.01	-.02	.00	.01	-.02	.00	.01	.04	.00	.01	.03	.00	.01	.03
Wife positive affectivity				.04	.16	.03	-.04	.16	-.03	-.07	.16	-.06	-.07	.17	-.06
Wife negative affectivity							-.47	.21	-.29*	-.45	.21	-.28*	-.45	.22	-.28*
Husband positive affectivity										.21	.16	.16	.20	.16	.16
Husband negative affectivity													.01	.29	.00
$R^2$		.05			.05			.12			.15			.15	
$F$ for change in $R^2$		1.40			.06			4.76*			1.68			.00	

Note: † $p \leq .10$ ; \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$

Table 6. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Wives' Observed Negative Affect

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5		
	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$
Constant	1.95	.29	--	2.36	.57	--	1.44	.66	--	1.73	.76	--	1.05	.85	--
Marital duration	.01	.01	.114	.00	.01	.09	.01	.01	.16	.01	.01	.16	.01	.01	.24†
Narrative duration	.00	.01	-.05	.00	.01	-.04	-.01	.01	-.10	.00	.01	-.10	.00	.01	-.10
Wife positive affectivity				-.10	.11	-.11	-.03	.11	-.04	-.02	.11	-.03	.03	.12	.04
Wife negative affectivity							.37	.15	.32*	.37	.15	.32*	.36	.15	.31*
Husband positive affectivity										-.09	.11	-.10	-.13	.12	-.15
Husband negative affectivity													.34	.20	.23†
$R^2$		.01			.03			.12			.13			.17	
$F$ for change in $R^2$		.39			.72			5.91*			.64			2.76†	

Note: † $p \leq .10$ ; \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$

Table 7. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Wives' Communication Skills

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5		
	B	SE B	$\beta$												
Constant	4.92	.39	--	4.30	.76	--	4.48	.93	--	3.78	1.06	--	3.69	1.22	--
Marital duration	.00	.01	.04	.00	.01	.07	.00	.01	.06	.00	.01	.05	.00	.01	.06
Narrative duration	.00	.01	.02	.00	.01	.02	.00	.01	.03	.00	.01	.02	.00	.01	.02
Wife positive affectivity				.15	.15	.13	.13	.16	.12	.11	.16	.09	.11	.17	.10
Wife negative affectivity							-.07	.22	-.05	-.06	.21	-.04	-.06	.22	-.04
Husband positive affectivity										.22	.16	.18	.21	.16	.18
Husband negative affectivity													.05	.29	.02
$R^2$		.00			.02			.02			.05			.05	
$F$ for change in $R^2$		.06			.92			.11			1.85			.03	

Note: † $p \leq .10$ ; \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$

Table 8. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Couples' Balance/Reciprocity

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5		
	B	SE B	$\beta$												
Constant	4.84	.44	--	3.80	.85	--	4.48	1.03	--	4.20	1.19	--	4.72	1.36	--
Marital duration	-.01	.01	-.07	.00	.01	-.03	.00	.01	-.06	.00	.01	-.07	-.01	.01	-.10
Narrative duration	.00	.01	-.04	.00	.01	-.04	.00	.01	-.01	.00	.01	-.01	.00	.01	-.01
Wife positive affectivity				.25	.17	.19	.20	.18	.16	.19	.18	.15	.15	.19	.11
Wife negative affectivity							-.27	.24	-.16	-.27	.24	-.15	-.26	.24	-.15
Husband positive affectivity										.09	.18	.06	.12	.18	.09
Husband negative affectivity													-.26	.32	-.12
$R^2$		.01			.04			.06			.07			.08	
$F$ for change in $R^2$		.22			2.06			1.30			.23			.65	

Note: † $p \leq .10$ ; \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$

Table 9. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Couples' Engagement/Interpersonal Skills

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5		
	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$
Constant	5.76	.39	--	5.30	.76	--	6.57	.88	--	5.31	.96	--	5.65	1.01	--
Marital duration	-.02	.01	-.32*	-.02	.01	-.30*	-.02	.01	-.36**	-.02	.01	-.37**	-.02	.01	-.40**
Narrative duration	.01	.01	.16	.01	.01	.16	.01	.01	.22†	.01	.01	.20†	.01	.01	.20†
Wife positive affectivity				.11	.12	.09	.02	.15	.02	-.03	.14	-.02	-.06	.15	-.05
Wife negative affectivity							-.51	.20	-.31*	-.48	.19	-.30*	-.48	.20	-.30*
Husband positive affectivity										.39	.14	.31**	.41	.15	.33**
Husband negative affectivity													-.17	.26	-.08
$R^2$		.11*			.11†			.20**			.30**			.30**	
$F$ for change in $R^2$		3.41*			.49			6.23*			7.23**			.40	

Note: † $p \leq .10$ ; \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$

Table 10. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Couples' Fun/Enjoyment

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5		
	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	B
Constant	5.20	.47	--	4.95	.92	--	6.37	1.08	--	5.13	1.20	--	4.87	1.37	--
Marital duration	-.01	.01	-.21	-.01	.01	-.20	-.02	.01	-.26*	-.02	.01	-.27*	-.02	.01	-.25†
Narrative duration	.00	.01	.03	.00	.01	.03	.01	.01	.09	.01	.01	.08	.01	.01	.08
Wife positive affectivity				.06	.18	.04	-.04	.18	-.03	-.09	.18	-.06	-.07	.19	-.05
Wife negative affectivity							-.57	.25	-.30*	-.55	.24	-.29*	-.55	.24	-.29*
Husband positive affectivity										.38	.18	.26*	.37	.19	.25*
Husband negative affectivity													.13	.33	.05
$R^2$		.04			.04			.13			.19*			.20†	
$F$ for change in $R^2$		1.25			.10			5.26*			4.58*			.15	

Note: † $p \leq .10$ ; \* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$

