MARITAL INTERACTION

References


Secondary Reference

Companion Documents
Georgia Marriage Q-Sort Manual 1991
Marital Interaction Instructions Grade 1
Interaction Record Sheets Grade 1


Description & Administration: 1 month, 24 months, Grade 1
Videotaped marital interactions were conducted with married or partnered couples during the HHS father visits at 1 month (n = 64) and 24 months (n = 53), and during a site-specific home visit at the end of Grade 1 as part of the site-specific battery of measures, using procedures described by Cox et al. (1989) that were designed to elicit behaviors that discriminate between low- and high-quality marriages.

1 month: The couple was instructed by audiotape to discuss two topics for 8 minutes each. For the first discussion, the couple was instructed to imagine that their economic situation was bad, and to discuss whose family they would live with, why, and what the consequences would be. For the second discussion, the couple was asked to discuss a major source of disagreement in their marriage/partnership and to make some progress toward resolving the disagreement.

24 months: At 24 months, the couple was instructed by audiotape to discuss two topics for 8 minutes each. The first topic was changes that have occurred in the relationship since becoming parents; the couple was instructed to discuss both positive changes and negative changes, and to come to an agreement about what the changes are. For the second discussion, the couple was asked to plan a family activity that (a) involved all members of the household, (b) they would actually do, and (c) would take at least several hours.

Grade 1: At Grade 1, there two parts to the marital interaction (see companion document Marital Interaction Instructions Grade 1). First, the couple constructed the story of the child’s birth (or courtship, if the partner was not with the mother at the time the study child was born). Complete details about this 5-minute procedure can be found in the instrument documentation for the Childbirth Narrative; the timing of prompts given to the couple is contained in the companion document Interaction Record Sheets Grade 1). In the second part of the interaction, the couple was asked to discuss (for 7 minutes) the economic situation topic that they also discussed at 1
month. The instructions for this discussion were presented to the couple on a card.

**Scoring: Wampler & Halverson (1990)**

The marital interactions were scored using the 43-item *Georgia Marriage Q-Sort*, developed by Wampler & Halverson (1990) to provide an observational measure of verbal marital interaction centered on various stimuli (e.g., plan something together, discuss a current issue or concern). Each item in the Q-set makes specific reference to a behavior and consists of an item title and more specific descriptive statements printed individually on cards. Following observation of the interaction, the rater sorts the Q-set items into piles with designations ranging from least characteristic to most characteristic of the interaction. Items are assigned to piles or categories in terms of their salience or relevance to the couple being described. The Q-sort then is correlated with a criterion Q-sort for an ideal couple (see companion document *Georgia Marriage Q-Sort Manual 1991* for item placement in the ideal couple sort).

In addition to the correlation with the ideal sort, eight cluster scores are calculated from the *Georgia Marriage Q-Sort* (Wampler & Halverson, 1990): Positive Affect ($\alpha = .74$), Negative Affect ($\alpha = .92$), Respect ($\alpha = .83$), Avoidance ($\alpha = .83$), Negotiation ($\alpha = .71$), Open ($\alpha = .74$), Husband Led ($\alpha = .80$), Wife Led ($\alpha = .78$). These scores are computed as the mean of the pile numbers associated with the items comprising each cluster. Pile 1 is least characteristic of the couple; Pile 9 is most characteristic. There are three Affect cluster scores, three Problem-Solving cluster scores, and two Leadership cluster scores.

Wampler & Halverson (1990) reported mean Spearman-Brown coefficients of reliability between two coders of .76 for sorts of 136 couples. These authors also presented evidence for the construct validity of the *Georgia Marriage Q-Sort* in terms of relations with questionnaire measures of marital adjustment.

Q-sorts of the site-specific marital interactions were conducted by viewing the videotapes of the interactions, then scored using the Q-Stat II software program. Item numbers are entered into the program by piles or categories. Scoring is accomplished by comparing the obtained Q-sort to a criterion sort for a construct of interest. The criterion sort describes the hypothetically “most x subject”. The Pearson correlation coefficient between the criterion sort for a construct and the subject’s Q-sort is the subject’s score on that construct and reflects the degree of congruence between the individual and the criterion. The criterion sort for the marital interactions is marital competence (see *Georgia Marriage Q-Sort Manual 1991*). Reviewers sometimes suggest applying Fisher’s $r$-$z$ transformation procedure to the correlations.

**Note:** The Grade 1 interactions were scored with the *Georgia Marriage Q-Sort* by one of Margaret Tresch Owen’s students, but the data are not available. See the instrument documentation for the *Childbirth Narrative* for information about coding of the first part of these interactions.

**Marital Competence**

Higher positive correlations (scores) indicate that the couple’s behavior is more similar to the hypothetically most competent or ideal couple.

\[
1 \text{ month } (N = 64) \\
\text{Correlation} = \text{MARIT1} ; M = .21, SD = 0.40, \text{range} = -0.70 \text{ to } 0.83 \\
\text{z score} = \text{MARIT1Z} ; M = .25, SD = 0.46, \text{range} = -0.87 \text{ to } 1.19
\]
24 months (N = 53)
Correlation = \text{MARIT24}; M = .19, SD = 0.43, range = -0.62 to 0.78
z score = \text{MARIT24Z}; M = .23, SD = 0.51, range = -0.73 to 1.05

Positive Affect (Affect Cluster)
Mean of 3 items: 1, 3, 6. Higher scores indicate greater evidence of positive affect during the interaction.

1 month = \text{MAR1PA}
N = 64, M = 5.66, SD = 1.16, range = 2.33 – 7.67, \alpha = .62

24 months = \text{MAR24PA}
N = 53, M = 6.09, SD = 1.40, range = 3.00 – 9.00, \alpha = .72

Negative Affect (Affect Cluster)
Mean of 10 items: 2, 5, 12, 13, 23, 24, 33, 38, 39, 40. Higher scores indicate greater evidence of negative affect during the interaction.

1 month = \text{MAR1NA}
N = 64, M = 4.56, SD = 1.53, range = 2.20 – 7.60, \alpha = .90

24 months = \text{MAR24NA}
N = 53, M = 4.53, SD = 1.58, range = 2.20 – 7.90, \alpha = .89

Respect (Affect Cluster)
Mean of 6 items: 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15. Higher scores indicate greater evidence of respect for each other during the interaction.

1 month = \text{MAR1RES}
N = 64, M = 5.42, SD = 1.53, range = 2.00 – 7.50, \alpha = .85

24 months = \text{MAR24RES}
N = 53, M = 5.53, SD = 1.69, range = 2.00 – 8.33, \alpha = .86

Avoidance (Problem-Solving Cluster)
Mean of 8 items: 7, 21, 22, 25, 27, 35, 36, 43. Higher scores indicate greater evidence of avoidance of the discussion topic during the interaction.

1 month = \text{MAR1AV}
N = 64, M = 3.92, SD = 1.14, range = 2.13 – 6.75, \alpha = .67

24 months = \text{MAR24AV}
N = 53, M = 3.98, SD = 1.25, range = 1.75 – 6.75, \alpha = .76

Negotiation (Problem-Solving Cluster)
Mean of 5 items: 26, 28, 30, 31, 32. Higher scores indicate greater evidence of working toward a solution to the problem under discussion during the interaction.

1 month = \text{MAR1NEG}
N = 64, M = 5.35, SD = 1.64, range = 1.40 – 8.60, \alpha = .66

24 months = \text{MAR24NEG}
N = 53, M = 4.77, SD = 1.56, range = 1.40 – 7.60, \alpha = .77
Open (Problem-Solving Cluster)
Mean of 7 items: 4, 18, 29, 34, 37, 41, -42. Higher scores indicate greater evidence of openness and communication with each other during the interaction.

1 month = MAR1OPN
N = 64, M = 5.74, SD = 0.93, range = 2.86 - 7.29, α = .52

24 months = MAR24OPN
N = 53, M = 5.70, SD = 1.10, range = 3.43 – 7.29, α = .63

Husband Led (Leadership Cluster)
Mean of 2 items: 16, 20. Higher scores indicate that the husband or male partner led the discussion during the interaction.

1 month = MAR1HL
N = 64, M = 5.59, SD = 2.00, range = 1.50 – 8.50, α = .66

24 months = MAR24HL
N = 53, M = 5.59, SD = 1.69, range = 1.00 – 9.00, α = .75

Wife Led (Leadership Cluster)
Mean of 2 items: 17, 19. Higher scores indicate that the wife or female partner led the discussion during the interaction.

1 month = MAR1WL
N = 64, M = 5.27, SD = 1.84, range = 1.50 – 9.00, α = .50

24 months = MAR24WL
N = 53, M = 6.33, SD = 1.50, range = 2.00 – 9.00, α = .74

Interobserver Reliability
At 1 month, a second observer completed a Q-sort for 14 of 64 couples (22%). At 24 months, 6 of 53 couples (11%) were scored by a second observer. Spearman-Brown coefficients were computed using Q-Stat II for the arrays of scores assigned to a particular couple by the two observers, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients were computed for the composite of the two sorts, as shown in the table on the next page. Wampler et al. (1989) and Gjerde (1986) identify .30 as the minimum acceptable level of Spearman-Brown agreement for Q-sort data from two coders.

Analysis Data Sets
SS1MO
SS24MO

Raw Data Sets
1-month sorts: MARIT1
24-month sorts: MARIT24

Q-Stat II Program & Data Files
The Q-Stat II program and data files for individual subjects are included on the data CD. These data files use the original subject IDs that include the hospital identifier as the second digit (1 or 2). Note that Q-Stat II is a DOS program and can be started by clicking on the QSTAT2.EXE file in the program folder.
1-month sorts: Folder MARITAL1
24-month sorts: Folder MARITAL24

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