

STUDY OF MARITAL DISCORD  
IN THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

by

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STUDY OF MARITAL DISCORD IN THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the level of marital discord (stress) within a group of married Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers and their spouses from a large RCMP detachment in the Vancouver area. The investigation of levels of stress in these marriages was carried out with the use of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI).

The MSI is a multidimensional self-report measure that identifies separately for each spouse the nature and extent of marital distress along several key dimensions of their relationship. These dimensions include Conventionalization, Global Distress, Affective Communication, Problem-Solving Communication, Time Together, Disagreement About Finances, Sexual Dissatisfaction, Role Orientation, Family History of Distress, Dissatisfaction With Children, and Conflict Over Childrearing. In each couple the husband and wife reported their subjective experience and appraisal of their marriage by answering "True" or "False" to each of the 280 MSI items.

Seventy-two couples received MSI questionnaire packages. Sixty-four individual responses were received, making it possible to match twenty-four couples.

The findings revealed that approximately thirty-seven percent of the total respondents reported low scores on the Conventionalization scale indicating moderate or higher levels of marital distress. Thirty-three percent of the respondents reported scores in the middle range which are frequently observed within the general population. Individuals scoring within this range may reflect strong positive feelings within the marriage. Thirty percent of the total respondents reported high scores. Respondents scoring on the MSI in this range may reflect a naive, uncritical appraisal of their marital relationship and are more likely to be reluctant or unable to deal with current or future difficulties within the marriage. Scores in this last group are rare, and also indicate an unpreparedness to seek help for their marriage.

Implications of the study include the need for police forces to address job-related stress and its carry over to marital relationships in a more systematic and therapeutic way, including help for recruits, officers and their spouses.

Recommendations for further research include the need for assessing other RCMP cohort groups to determine the extent of marital distress across a wider population.

## DEDICATION

To Louis Keith (Bud) Cottini (1943 to 1972)....good friend  
and a hell of a police officer.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Selma Wassermann, who gave me the confidence to explore my horizon.

To Pat for the emotional support and love.

To Jeff and Kim.

To my good friend Gion, who started me on the road to learning with his example.

To Jack, for having the patience to help put this thesis together.



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## Chapter 1

### PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

The phone rang at 7:30 AM, which is not unusual in the life of a police officer. The supervisor now on the line asked a very pointed question, which at first hearing did not seem to be out of the ordinary. "Have you seen Bud?" The inflection in his voice suggested that this was a little more serious than just trying to locate Bud. I informed him that Fred, my working partner at this time, and I had worked until 2 AM and then shut it down and went home so we had not run into Bud last night. My mind started to gallop. What could be wrong with Bud? Should I be more guarded in my responses lest I get Bud in deeper, what ever the problem is? My supervisor informed me that Bud had left a card game at approximately 2 AM and had not been heard from since. There was tension in his voice, and I heard him begin to panic about where Bud could have possibly gone. He hadn't yet talked to the Officer Commanding (O.C.) and we both silently worried about what the consequences would be when he had to. He told me to stay close to the phone until he decided what would be the next step.



Bud and I had worked as partners on the drug squad for almost two years. The section had been expanded and it was necessary that I take one of the new officers as a trainee for a year or so. Making this change was somewhat uncomfortable, as I had learned a lot from Bud. We had shared many experiences on the job and spent many hours travelling and reflecting on the past, present and the future.

I lay back in bed, thinking of what possibly could have gone wrong. Where could Bud have possibly gotten to? I made a call to an old reliable informant to see if he had been in touch with Bud. Perhaps Bud had been given some hot tip and was doing surveillance and couldn't move? The year was 1972 and official portable radios were not that good, even though men had already walked on the moon a number of times. I can't remember the rest of the morning but by the afternoon my supervisor was in a heightened state of anxiety. We met at the office and decided to comb the city and alert the highway patrol and detachments surrounding Saskatoon. Saskatoon City Police were also alerted.

Now, twenty years later, I remember that Saturday as being one of the longest days of my life. I remember reflecting on all the problems that Bud and I had faced together when we were partners, as I drove frantically around the city, making inquiries from every source possible. By nightfall there was still no trace of Bud. We had contacted every informant and source Bud had ever known and turned up nothing. The driving around helped to keep my mind from entertaining the worst case scenario, whatever that might be. I headed home after talking with Bud's wife. Helplessness is not a good feeling to try and sleep on.

On Sunday morning, I headed to the office, listening to the radio in my car, the airways crackling with guarded comments as though the Russians might be listening. Remembering that I had forgotten something, I quickly returned to my residence, and heard the phone ring as I entered. My supervisor, on the other end of the line gave me the news that Bud had been found in his police car and taken to University Hospital suffering from exposure.

I remember the next month being one of the most bizarre times of my life. My good friend was in the intensive care unit, and the only reports

coming out were that he was improving and starting to come around. Then slowly the truth began to surface. I learned that Bud was in a coma with severe brain damage and that his kidneys were barely functioning. I was asked to attend at the hospital in the hope that perhaps he would recognize my voice. Bud, his atrophied body barely hanging on to life, would hang in there for another few weeks recognizing no one. While I was driving in the city on routine investigations, I heard the OC come on the radio and report that Bud had just passed away.

## INTRODUCTION

The story presented above, in the form of a personal narrative, is unique in Canadian police annals primarily because it ended in death. Behind this event is, however, a more common story, all that was shared with the writer, of a young police officer, addicted to alcohol, addicted to work, who was wrestling with the emotional pain he was feeling; his growing guilt for not spending enough time with his wife and newborn son; the emotional conflict of wanting to have a healthy family life, yet, being hooked on the excitement and reputation of being a member of a Drug Squad. Bud, in the year before his death, had risked his career by making a

request for relief from the endless treadmill of drug investigation. The peer pressure for him to remain was, however, enormous, as was the "carrot" held out for his promotion, if he were to stay. These events create a picture of "life in the police force" and shed some understanding of the kinds of tensions and conflicts with terrible consequences, and, in this case, with death.

This narrative serves as an example and shows that a police officer is, despite all the trappings and the aura that goes with the job, very much a human being. But, when police officers put on their uniforms a barrier is created between them and the rest of world. Stratton (1978, pp. 58-62), suggests that for years both the public and law enforcement personnel envisioned the police as superior in controlling emotional or physical distress. This condition sets up police officers for viewing their marriage stress as just part of the occupational hazard, downplaying the significance of the stress, and setting up barriers between work and home. Unfortunately these barriers are often an implicit part of the marriage contract, creating a wall between two people who had promised to support one another through good times and bad. The true story of Bud, one example of many, illustrates the need for the police community to be more

proactive when dealing with stress in the lives of officers, particularly with those who are married.

What has been written on the subject of marriage in the police community seems generally to reflect common themes that contribute to discord and stress within the police marriage. A wife of a Baltimore city police officer has written (Newsweek/November 24, 1980), "During my husband's years on the street he changed from an open, warm, relaxed companion to a closed, bitter, tense man. The job and its attendant stresses slowly drained the peace, the contentment and the joy from our lives." Very little of this kind of information, however, is made public from within the police community. Because of the code of honour among police officers and the implicit rule that every officer has to be self sufficient in every way, when emotional difficulties occur, often it is too late to repair the damage done to potentially successful marriages.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study undertakes the examination of the stressors in marital relationships in the general population of a large Canadian police force as

assessed by the Multiple Satisfaction Inventory (MSI). While there is a small body of literature reporting on the incidence of marital discord in the United States police community, there are few studies that report on marital discord in Canadian police forces. In view of the high incidence of divorce and separation reported in the general population in Canada, it could be hypothesized that high stress related occupations such as police work would have a higher incidence of marital discord.

Dr. John Stratton (1975) reports that historical factors in the development of police officers establish them as high risks for marital discord. The public perception of police is that of a very special status job with danger and excitement at every turn. In the majority of cases, this is a male, "who looks for a woman that will support him in times of danger." The woman is typically one who is also looking for a man whose dedication to family and to civic duty is his backbone. These qualities are looked upon as ideals in contemporary society and are also held up as ideals in making the family "nest."

There is a considerable body of literature and empirical studies that provide information about the marital discord among the general Canadian

population. However, little research has been conducted in the Canadian police community. Stearns and Stark-Adamec (1989), conducted a study on the RCMP in which they investigated stress in RCMP officers in Saskatchewan, Canada. However, they report that the degree to which the job and individual's family responsibilities conflict is a relatively strong correlate of marital adjustment. They further report that dyadic cohesion tends to improve with respondents' increased age, perhaps reflecting increased maturity and experience in dealing with the potential conflicts between work and an intimate relationship.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the incidence of stress in the marriages of a selected group of Canadian police officers. While anecdotal evidence and police folklore seem to be in abundance in Canada, there are no studies of marital stress which would stand up to the rigor of methodological examination from an empirical perspective.

The police community tends to be a very close knit fraternity and this is well documented in the literature. In the past ten years there has been

a groundswell of interest in police work from an entertainment perspective. Police stories have captured public fascination with what is seen to be a very dangerous, living-on-the-edge type of vocation. Herman Goldstein (1977), writing on the life of the police officer, emphasizes the problem of motivating officers because routineness and lack of excitement dominate the police officer's life. This is in contrast to the police mystique held by the general public of high action-packed days. Goldstein speculates that the police community constitutes a societal subculture. He reports that this phenomenon is prevalent in other professions as well, such as the legal and medical professions. Goldstein claims that the subculture is a way of the members protecting themselves from public criticism. He cites five factors for the existence of the subculture:

- (1) The police see themselves as members of a group aligned against common enemies.
- (2) Officers are greatly dependent upon one another for help in difficult situations. If an officer wants to count on fellow officers when his own life is endangered, he cannot afford to develop a reputation for "ratting."
- (3) The police are vulnerable to false allegations. An officer can easily imagine himself accused of wrongdoing in a difficult-to-review incident. He hopes that his defense of fellow officers when so accused will result in their willingness to assist him should their situations be reversed.



- (4) Police officers are as aware as their administrators of the disparity between formal policy and actual practice. The feeling that it is necessary to cover up wrongdoing because the police have rationalized these as serving the public interest will not stand up to scrutiny.
- (5) An officer has no occupational mobility. He must anticipate continuing to work in the same place with the same people. He cannot ordinarily avoid an uncomfortable situation by transferring to another agency. He may even have to work, at some time in the future, under the supervision of an officer whose wrongdoing he observed.

(pp. 165 - 166)

This phenomenon of protecting one's identity and reputation lends itself to what Goldstein (1977) calls the "Blue Curtain." Within the community of police officers there is a sub-subculture in a number of the specialty branches. This is cause for an even more closely knit circle from which little can be divulged to the other branches, depending on their status. Although these may be legitimate concerns, the resulting attitudes and behaviors have serious consequences when interpersonal relationships, i.e. marriage, are involved. Spouses experience the "weight of the badge" in their lives throughout the course of their relationship. At various times this badge weighs heavily, while during other periods it is a source of pride and honor.

## DELIMITATIONS

The study was delimited by the following conditions and consequently caution should be observed in generalizing from the results:

1. No pretest was conducted on the population tested.
2. The population was not screened for previous marriages or for blended family circumstances.
3. Anonymous questionnaire responses are suspect as to their validity.
4. A very small sample size, not necessarily representative of the total population of the police force, was utilized for the analysis.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

The definitions of terms as they were interpreted for the purpose of this study are as follows:

**Blue Curtain:** A term used to describe the perception that police officers often experience. This perception is often grounded

in the cynicism which the officer grows to feel as a result of dealing with tragic and human negativity over a period of time. This curtain can also develop between the officer and spouse.

**Marital Discord:** The lack of harmony within a heterosexual marriage which can manifest in quarreling, and result in conflict between the married couple.

**Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI):** The MSI is a multidimensional self-report measure that identifies separately for each spouse the nature and extent of marital distress along several key dimensions of their relationship.

**Marriage:** A legal marriage as recognized by Canadian statute. It is generally accepted that other forms of dyadic relationships—cohabitation, whether male/female, male/male, or female/female—have found their way into the police community. Such arrangements, however, are still subject to discrimination in many police forces. Thus, any

attempt to derive data from such a group would be highly unreliable.

**Stress:** A physical, chemical or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension and may be a factor in disease causation.

In practical terms, STRESS is a mismatch between the demands in our lives and the resources we have to deal with those demands. This mismatch is often caused by changes either large or small; the nonspecific response of the body to any demand made upon it.

**Distress:** Harmful, unpleasant stress; to cause to worry or be troubled.

Chapter 1 has included the introduction, need for the study, purpose of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, definitions of terms and limitations of the study. Chapter 2 provides a review of related literature. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used to secure the population of subjects, the instruments and the data analysis procedures. Chapter 4 presents the data collected. Chapter 5 offers an analysis of the data, draws conclusions and implications, and makes recommendations for further study.

analysis of the data, draws conclusions and implications, and makes recommendations for further study.

## Chapter 2

This chapter looks at the literature on the phenomenon of stress in the average population of North America, stress in the police community, stress and its impact on marriage and stress in the marriages of police officers. Literature was examined on what stress is and its definition. The literature review is examined from four perspectives:

- (1) Stress: its definition and incidence
- (2) Job-related stress in marriage and family
- (3) Stress in the police community
- (4) Stress in police marriages

### 1. STRESS ITS DEFINITION AND INCIDENCE

Descartes (cited in Rahe, 1969) has been credited with the articulation of a dissociation between mind and body. The legacy of this split still hampers modern day conceptualizations of stress and its effects. Its extreme form is embodied in Pavlov's assertion, early in this century, of

simple physiological processes to explain complex behaviours (Rahe, R.H., same).

Other researchers found that mental functioning could not be so easily explained. As early as the nineteenth century, Bernard (cited in Russell & Beigel, 1990) referred to an adaptation syndrome which regulated the internal environment, both mental and physical, of the human body. Failure of adaptation could lead to disease or death. Cannon developed these ideas into the modern concept of homeostasis (cited in Russell & Beigel, 1990).

More recently, the Austrian-born researcher Hans Selye (1974) has suggested that stress is a mental and physical response to a disturbance in the homeostasis of mind and body. Selye points out that:

The word "stress", like "success," "failure," or "happiness," means different things to different people, so that defining it is extremely difficult although it has become part of our daily vocabulary. It is effort, fatigue, pain, fear, the need for concentration, the humiliation of censure, the loss of blood, or even an unexpected great success which requires complete re-formulation of one's entire life (p. 12).

Selye ascribes this difficulty in defining stress to the very nature of the stress response. When a demand is made on the body, it may respond in very specific ways. For example, cold produces shivering to generate more heat, heat produces sweating to cool us off, excess blood sugar leads to sugar combustion and excretion, muscular effort makes demands on heart action. But all demands--whether physical, mental, or emotional--produce a *non-specific* response as well. Selye defines stress as that non-specific response. Regardless of what caused the disturbance, the body must search for a way back to homeostasis:

From the point of view of its stress-producing or stressor activity, *it is immaterial whether the agent or situation we face is pleasant or unpleasant* [author's italics]; all that counts is the intensity of the demand for readjustment or adaptation. The mother who is suddenly told that her only son died in battle suffers a terrible mental shock; if years later it turns out that the news was false and the son unexpectedly walks into her room alive and well, she experiences extreme joy. The specific results of the two events, sorrow and joy, are completely different, in fact, opposite to each other, yet their stressor effect--the non-specific demand to readjust herself to an entirely new situation--may be the same (Selye, 1974, pp. 15-16).

Bourne (1990) ascribes panic, phobia, and anxiety disorders to "cumulative stress acting over time." Postulating that only a small



proportion of sufferers report these conditions, he estimates their prevalence at some ten percent of the population of the United States, adding up to 20 to 30 million cases.

Much stress is normal, and normal stress can be beneficial. Prolonged, unresolved stress, however, can lead to "emotional lability, depression, and guilt [which] may result in self-defeating behavior or suicidal actions. Psychoactive Substance Use Disorders are common complications" (DSM-III-R, p. 249). "[T]he list of physical sequelae of stress is endless. So too is the list of psychological symptoms. We may become irritable, anxious, fearful, tense, and depressed" (Russell and Beigel, 1990, p. 356).

Bausell and Damrosch's (1985) research indicated that when people are under high levels of stress they will tend not to do the things that maintain health or protect them from injury. Their study of some 1300 adults found that high levels of stress can interfere with persons' exercising regularly, controlling their weight and smoking habits, adequate sleep, and their judgment concerning driving after drinking and the wearing of seat belts. They suggest that stress "can be visualized as either an environmental (i.e., in terms of life events that are considered

universally stressful) or a personal (in the sense that large individual differences among people are possible with respect to their reactions to similar stressors) barrier to health seeking behavior." The absence of such behaviour can "lead directly to illness" (Bausell & Damrosch, (1985, pp. 197-198).

In view of such ill effects, a "significant trend toward stress avoidance on the part of many members of our society is currently being witnessed.... Such avoidance attempts are doomed to failure because forces beyond our control are producing a mounting rate of stressful life events.... [T]here is a gathering cloud of rising unemployment, inflation and pollution coextensive with decreasing productivity and standard of living" (Kobasa, Hilker, & Maddi, 1979, p. 595).

Although any aspect of daily life may lead to stress, much research has centered on the workplace as a major contributor. According to Dickerson, "[S]tress [in the workplace] will be the issue of the decade beginning in the year 2000" ( cited in Minter, 1991, p. 42).

Researchers Robert Karasek and Tores Theorell suggest that the work place is a major source of stress and will continue to be so. Their research suggests that four categories of work contribute to stress in an ascending order of severity:

**Active Jobs:** Heavy pressure to perform, but leeway allowed for problem solving. Examples: doctors, engineers, farmers, executives and other professionals. Hours may be long but are partly at the worker's discretion. Job provides chances to advance and to learn new skills. Initiative is part of job description.

**Low-strain jobs:** Self-paced occupations. Examples are tenured professors, carpenter, repairmen, successful artists, naturalists or any occupation with low demands and high decision latitude. (This idyllic category seems somewhat under-populated in this research, no doubt because few such jobs exist in an industrial society. Professors, carpenters, artists, and others can certainly experience high strain.)

**Passive jobs:** Low demands on skills and mental processes, little leeway for learning or decision-making. Examples: billing clerks, night watchmen, janitors, dispatchers, key-punchers. These jobs offer almost no latitude for innovation; sometimes worker skills actually atrophy.

**High-strain jobs:** Heavy pressure to perform but little control over decisions. Examples: assembly line workers, waiters, waitresses, nurses, police officers, telephone operators (The Wellness Encyclopedia, 1991, pp. 401 - 402).

Karasek and Theorell's research indicates that those in high-strain jobs exhibited the highest levels of psychological stress (including depression and exhaustion), and they took the most medications for depression (The Wellness Encyclopedia, 1991, pp. 401 - 402).

## **2. JOB-RELATED STRESS IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY**

The crossover effect of stress between job and family is affirmed in a multitude of research studies and articles. For example, Olson and

Markoff (1985) have compiled a list of 165 journal articles on employment and the family that appeared in a single year, 1984. While studies often do not claim competence in distinguishing what is cause and what is effect, the consensus describes a two-way street. In any event, the problem is so widely recognized that several authors have subscribed to a special term—spillover—to characterize the phenomenon (cited in Glowinkowski & Cooper, 1986).

The literature on the effect of specific job stressors on marital dysfunction is sparse. An exception which has been more extensively studied is job relocation, which is seen as placing a particular burden on family relationships (Brett, 1982; Burke, 1986; Duncan & Perucci, 1976; Munton, 1990; Pardine, P., Higgins, R., Beres, J., Szeglin, A. & Kravitz, R., 1981; Pinder, 1977; Pinder and Schroeder, 1987).

The direct perceived effect of the husband's job on the emotional well-being of his wife was addressed in a study of 1,383 married women living in an urban environment (Rook et al, 1991). The researchers found that "Husbands' undesirable job events were associated with elevated symptoms among their wives" and that these "adverse effects of the

husbands' job stressors were substantial in magnitude" (Rook et al, 1991, p.173 ).

### 3. STRESS IN THE POLICE COMMUNITY

While everyone is subject to stress in daily life, police officers are constantly confronted with additional stresses that are unique to their occupations and outside the range of the average human experience (Burgin, 1978; McCafferty, F.L., Domingo, G.D. & Palahunic, L. (1989). Somodevilla and his colleagues (1978, pp. 61-75) have called policing "the most emotionally hazardous job of all." According to Selye (1978), "police work .... ranks as one of the most hazardous professions, even exceeding the formidable stresses and strains of air traffic control." Terry (1981) cautions that research statistics may be misleading in placing police work as the foremost stress-producing occupation, but concedes that, all quibbles aside, the extent of the problem cannot be denied.

Stratton (1975) found "courts have gone so far as to grant police officers Workmen's Compensation benefits for disabilities such as alcoholism, nervous exhaustion, and even some neurotic and psychotic

diagnosis such as depression or paranoia when they have been attributed to stresses of the job" (p.44).

Richard and Fell (1975, p. 79) studied a sample of 168 police officers as part of a general population of 23,976 workers in a broad range of trades. They found that the police officers suffered a greater incidence of health-related problems, particularly in the area of cardiovascular, respiratory, and digestive ailments. Terry (1981) cites "direct empirical evidence" that the effects of police stress "include virtually every ailment from headaches and sinus attacks to shrinking thalmuses, spastic colons, and grinding teeth" (p. 65). Kroes, Hurrell, and Margolis (1974) indicate that no other occupation suffers from as high a combined Standard Mortality Ratio with respect to coronary disease, diabetes, and suicide.

Because suicide is so clear and extreme a response to stress, its incidence is a particularly significant indicator of the presence of stress. Reports of the incidence of police suicide for particular single years have differed widely from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, ranging from zero per 100,000 for Denver (Nelson and Smith, 1970) through eight per 100,000

for Los Angeles (Reiser, 1982) and a range of eighteen to 52 per 100,000 for St. Louis, Chicago, and San Francisco (Heiman, 1975) to 80 per 100,000 for New York City (Friedman, 1968) and as high as 203 per 100,000 for the state of Wyoming. By comparison, the national average rate of suicide in the United States in 1986 was 12.8 per 100,000. Thus, for the great majority of police jurisdictions, the rate was well above the average. In New York City, for example, Roberts (1975) finds that "officers are six-and-one-half times more likely to commit suicide than non-law enforcement citizens" (p. 227).

A great many authors have attempted to identify the distinctive factors in police work that tend to produce stress in police officers, and the lists that most of them have produced have large areas of agreement and overlap (Aldag & Brief, 1978; Axelberd & Valle, 1978; Barker, 1975; Baxter, 1978; Blanch, 1977; Eisenberg, 1975; French, 1975; Hageman, 1978; Haines, 1976; Hillgren & Spradlin, 1975; Jacobi, 1975; Kroes & Gould, 1979; Kroes et al, 1974; Potter, 1978; Reiser, 1972; Sandy & Devine, 1978; Shev, 1977; Singleton & Teahan, 1978; Somodevilla et al, 1978a, 1978b; Wagner, 1976)



Eisenberg (1975) suggests a framework that places the various causes of police stress in a structural perspective. He identifies six broad categories of stressors associated with police work and lists some significant stress-inducing factors for each:

**I. Intraorganizational practices and characteristics**

1. Poor supervision
2. Insufficient opportunities for advancement
3. Lack of positive reinforcement
4. Counter-productive departmental policies
5. Excessive paperwork
6. Inadequate equipment

**II. Interorganizational practices and characteristics**

1. Absence of a well-defined career horizon
2. Lack of communication across jurisdictions

**III. Criminal justice system practices and characteristics**

1. Unfavorable court decisions
2. Unwarranted courtroom demands on officers' time
3. Adversarial nature of parole system
4. Inadequate cooperation from correctional facilities

#### **IV. Public practices and characteristics**

1. Distorted media accounts
2. Public misconception and prejudice
3. Perception of underrepresented minorities

#### **V. Police work itself**

1. Shift work and changing schedules
2. People pain
3. Role conflict
4. Fear and danger
5. The need of hyperacute readiness
6. The sense of ineffectiveness
7. Hyperawareness of the consequences of right or wrong  
action

#### **VI. Officer personality and characteristics**

1. The ethnic minority officer
2. The female officer
3. The underachieving or underconfident officer
4. The nonconformist officer
5. The personality-disordered officer

James Auten (1981) writes of the effects of the paramilitary model on the police community and the effect this has on police officers. He suggests that this paramilitary model carries a rigid chain of command with strict adherence to organizational guidelines in the form of commands, directives, general orders for police, and procedures. He feels that this model is stubbornly maintained by police administrators in the belief that law enforcement is best served through its implacable application, even though such structure does not permit their primary agent, the police officer, to function effectively. Auten feels that such a structure eliminates the flexibility of the police officer's judgment. Likewise jettisoned are latitude of initiative and any use of discretion that may be required by the job of policing. "Rules" are developed to be applied to situations where rules are not appropriate and only serve to frustrate the police officer. Auten sees this as a source of a considerable stress on the police officer which can only impact on all phases of the officer's life.

A Canadian study of police officers attempts to show that certain personality types are more likely to suffer from the special stresses of police work. Using a sample of 586 men and women officers, the study

investigated the relationship between stress and burnout in police workers. Building on a model designed by Cherniss (1980), Burke and Kirchmeyer (1990) identified four primary career orientations in police officers:

(a) Self-investors are more involved in their personal lives outside work. Self-investors enter humanistic work simply as a "way to earn a living." They look to activities outside their careers to satisfy their important personal needs.

(b) Social Activists hope to bring about social and institutional change through their work. They can be called idealists or visionaries who see their work as a crusade to improve the status quo.

(c) Careerists seek extrinsic, conventional success through their work. This may include prestige, responsibility, financial security, and recognition from superiors. In pursuit of these extrinsic-type rewards, Careerists work hard and compete with others.

(d) Artisans seek intrinsic-type rewards, such as personal growth, professional development, challenge and the mastery of new skills. To them, prestige, recognition, power, promotion and competition with others are far less important than performing well against their own standards, skillful use of techniques, and independence (Burke & Kirchmeyer, 1990, pp. 28-29).

The researchers found that 39% of their sample indicated that the Careerist profile most closely represented their initial career orientation, 38% indicated that the Artisan profile most closely approximated their initial goal, 13% indicated identified with the Social Activist profile, and 10% with the Self-investor profile (p. 30).

Cherniss (1980) posits a clear relationship between a worker's career orientation, on the one hand, and profession chosen and job setting, on the other. He proposes that the poorer the match between goal and work setting, the greater the impact of potential job stressor on the worker. At the extreme, the negative impact amounts to what he calls "burnout," with associated debility in job performance and satisfaction, overall well being, and personal relationships.

Building on the Cherniss model in their research, the researchers (Burke & Kirchmeyer, 1990) found that, among police workers, the highest levels of stress and burnout occurred in the Social Activist group. Those who enter police work as a crusade to change the status quo may be especially susceptible to job stressors due to the mismatch between their values, expectations and out-looks and what policework actually involves. Careerists and Artisans felt significantly less stress than Social Activists did with bureaucratic interference and lack of fulfillment, possibly because these two career orientations better match the realities of police work. The research appears to show that those who begin their careers with the Artisan orientation are best equipped to meet the demands of a career in police work, and least susceptible to burnout and its debilitating effects (Burke & Kirchmeyer, 1990).

An area of stress in police officers that is only now beginning to receive wider attention is the phenomenon called Post-Traumatic Stress and Critical Incident Stress. The term Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has come into use to describe overwhelming stress as a result of work-related and other real-life incidents (DSM-III-R, p. 247).

McCafferty, Domingo and Palchunie (1989) maintain that although the term

is relatively new, the concept is not. The symptoms exhibited were previously seen and identified in battlefield soldiers, and referred to as "shelled-shock," "combat fatigue," "battle stress" and "gross stress reaction."

More recently, civilians involved in major catastrophes — earthquakes, fires, accidents, rapes, incidents of physical abuse — were understood to experience similar stress disorders. In his study of police officers' emotional reactions to stress following the San Ysidro Massacre (in which 21 persons were killed and 19 others wounded in a McDonald's restaurant), Michael Mantell (1984) found that six months after the incident, 50 percent of those officers present had experienced some PTSD. Twenty-nine cases were of minimal to moderate severity, and 22 were moderate to severe. Only 26 percent of the control group, comprised of 60 officers not involved in the incident, suffered from PTSD — 13 mild cases, and three severe ones (McCafferty et al, 1989).

#### 4. STRESS IN POLICE MARRIAGES

North American literature on marital stress in the police community pertains predominantly to experience in the United States. Hageman (1978) claims that "we have neglected to investigate the spouse's impact and to develop programs or open channels of communication that would enhance a symbiotic relationship with the police organization" (p.5).

Several authors cite police officers' reports that marital problems are one of the highest stress factors affecting them (Blackmore, 1978; Ward, 1979; Singleton & Teahan, 1978; Stratton, 1978; Eisenberg, 1975; Hurrell & Kroes, 1975; Somodevilla, 1978a; Hageman, 1978; Wallace, 1978; Potter, 1978; & Blanch, 1977).

Stress originating in the job and spreading to the family is less frequently dealt with. Reiser (1975) states:

Policemen's wives are also subjected to special tensions and problems which can significantly influence their husband's emotional stability, attitudes and effectiveness on the job. However, the officer's wife has long been overlooked as a resource having considerable impact on the police organization.



Historically the special circumstances that pertain to law enforcement marriages have been taken for granted by the male-dominated police community. Stratton has written extensively on the topic of police marriages. He notes: "Literature abounds with descriptions of coping mechanisms designed to help law enforcement personnel survive stress. The public has become aware of such pressures through television programs, movies and novels. But rarely considered are the family relationships of law enforcement officers and the amount of strain they undergo" (Stratton, 1975, pp. 44-45). He further states that in view of the trauma and degradation that police officers experience, they can become overly protective of their wives and families. Conversely, he goes on to state that "the job also teaches the officer to become extremely observant, and his adoption of a suspicious nature is seen as desirable. And, without intent, these characteristics carry over into the relationship with the wife and family" (Stratton, 1975, pp. 44-45). A similar point is made by Territo and Vetter (1981) when they say, "[W]hat the officer views as concern and love for his/her family can often be misinterpreted by the spouse and children as a lack of trust and confidence on the part of an authoritarian husband/wife who is not around most of the time" (p. 45).

Attempts have been made to organize spouses of police officers in an effort to educate them about the behaviour of police officers. One police spouse, Barbara Webber, co-wrote a "Handbook for Law Enforcement Wives" (1976). In a follow-up article in The Police Chief (January 1976, p.48), Webber states, "After our book was published, Donna Parker and I received many letters from police wives throughout the nation, the central theme of which was 'Thank God, somebody finally cares about us and our problems.'" This suggests that the issue of marital discord and stress in police marriages and familial relationships has been inadequately addressed and dealt with.

Blackmore surveyed 2,300 officers from 29 different police departments in the U.S. (cited in Terry, 1981) and found that 37% reported having serious marital problems. According to the 1970 U.S. Census, 22% of the police officers sampled have been divorced at least once, as compared to a national average of 13.8 percent. However, some contradictory evidence exists that the divorce rate in the police community is not as high as has been reported. For example, Kroes et al., (1974b) report that only 5% of the officers they interviewed were divorced. Terry (1981), citing Reiser's research of 1973, reports a

similarly low divorce rate in a sample drawn from the Los Angeles police force. Caution must be used in interpreting these studies because of the chronological distance between the 1970's and the 1990's.

However, it must also be remembered that the subject of marital discord or stress in police marriages has not been extensively researched. In a submission to the U.S. House of Representatives, Johnson (1991) submitted that the literature is entirely too sparse with regard to marital dyadic studies and suggested that stress research on the police community must make dyadic and family research a high priority.

Ellen Scrivner, director of the Psychological Services Division of the Prince George's County Maryland police department, synthesizes the research on problems in police marriages. She writes, "Unfortunately, the research literature on the interplay between police stress and family life remains sparse, and the minimal research findings from the 1970's may be less generalized today because the escalating crime rates in communities across the country may be changing the working environment of the police officer" (Scrivner, 1991, p. 6). Scrivner, in a second submission, reports on a 1984 U. S. national conference held to address the current state of

police psychological services. Sponsored by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I.), the conference heard 83 papers, covering topics from pre-employment screening of police applicants to police stress and stress management. Only four of the 83 papers presented addressed the topic of police family and marriage.

A painstaking search by the author in 1992 reveals very few further reports of research studies on police marriages since the 1984 F.B.I. conference. Of the reports that are available, the vast majority are anecdotal and/or specific to regional concerns. U.S. studies tend to be too narrowly delimited, each study usually being specific to only one of its many local police jurisdictions. Canadian studies by and large treat marital or dyadic stress as nothing more than a footnote to police stress in general.

Maynard and Maynard (1982, p. 302) investigated a random sample of 42 couples drawn from a large metropolitan police department in the midwest area of the U.S.A. Their study begins by pointing to the absence of policies oriented toward the protection of family life in the personnel or procedural manuals of most police departments in the U.S. They further

find that unofficial departmental policies often militate against family considerations in the carrying out of police responsibilities. A third factor emerges from their specific research:

Within the police department there is also a whole set of peer pressures, many of which have a direct impact on family life....Fifty-seven percent of the wives indicated that they get the impression that officers do not think that marriage and families are important. The department in which this study was completed has a 70% divorce rate within the first five years on the department.

Nearly 55% of the wives indicated that they perceived an attitude within the department itself that it is better to be single or divorced than married and have a family. A real paradox seems to exist in that the police department honors the value of having men with a stable family situation but is perceived as not encouraging marriage and family for its officers (Maynard & Maynard, 1982, p. 309).

The study goes on to list additional grievances on the part of the wives: 45% felt that the department expected them and their children to adapt to the conditions of the husband's job, rather than vice versa; 52% "had to give up job opportunities or personal plans because of the work schedule of their husbands"; 60% felt unable to plan too far ahead. Nearly all of the wives reported moderate to extreme distress at witnessing their husbands' discouragement in the face of job conditions and departmental

politics.

Stratton's research quoted above suggests that many spouses feel isolated and neglected by law enforcement agencies, and often are angry at the organization and at their spouses because of their failure to recognize the special difficulties created by marriage in the law enforcement family (Stratton, 1976). Graf (1986) states that police officers form a close-knit occupational social system which extends into their off-duty lives, often at the expense of their nonpolice relationships. This often results in a view of police officers as "cynical, suspicious, and authoritarian" (Violanti, 1983). Jacques and Mutchnick (1979) suggest that the attitudes of police toward their family lives are problematic and negative. They reason that police officers become so highly involved in their jobs that family life must inevitably take a back seat.

Marital discord has been seen as the by-product of a series of developmental events in a police officer's life. Depue (1981) uses a developmental psychology model to explain how a police officer, like a child or adolescent, moves through different growth periods in his/her career. He suggests that there is the applicant phase, the recruit and

training phase, the probationary period, the journeyman phase, the specialization, administrative advancement or veteran phase, and the period of preretirement. He suggests that these phases must be recognized and dealt with for successful adjustment to life as a police officer. He cites the probationary period as the time the officer is expected to work hard to prove competence and gain acceptance within the group. This new officer, he states, is often shocked when he/she tries to provide a service and finds out that there are actually citizens who hate and despise him/her.

Depue suggests that this is when the officer starts to become defensive. Frustration and peer pressure may then invite the new police officer to take short cuts or take the law into his/her own hands (Depue, 1981). Gradually a hard, negative orientation to life may develop and this attitude tends to be taken home to the family nest. As early as 1967 Niederhoffer was linking police officer cynicism with off-the-job functioning. According to Niederhoffer (1967), police officers suffer from an inordinate amount of cynical behavior (Niederhoffer, 1967). Without clear thinking a new police officer could do a lot of damage to a relationship or marriage should this defensive cynicism be allowed to

transmute into more overtly antagonistic behavior at home and on the job.

In an article appearing in The Globe and Mail, (Oct 15, 1991), Zbigniew Lipowski, a psychiatrist at the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry in Toronto, Ontario, states, "It appears that increasing the information input beyond the person's processing capacity is one of the major factors contributing to job pressure and dissatisfaction." Such pressure and dissatisfaction contribute heavily to the stresses of a police officer's marriage.

Police officers' traditional views of the role of women in marriage and society are touched on by Saunders and Size (1986) and Stith (1990). Saunders and Size found that, while most police officers verbally affirm that marital violence is criminal and unacceptable, in practice many of them have a tendency to blame female victims of marital violence for the abuse they suffer. Stith carries these conclusions further by suggesting that a **two-way** street exists between officers' handling of domestic violence cases on the job and their acceptance of violence as a normal part of their own home environment. Both studies conclude that pre-service and in-service training could significantly help in breaking the cycle of violence and victim-stereotyping. Stith puts especial emphasis



on the need for training materials and procedures that will enhance sensitivity to female victims and provide help for officers in their family lives.

A course of training in spousal/police relationships arguably might mitigate some of the stress in police families, but such an emphasis is rare in actual police practice. A search of the literature on police training in Canada has turned up only one official training program that addresses the spouse and family. This omission is certainly true of the country's two largest police forces. The R.C.M.P. have no program in their recruit training or their field training that deals with connecting the spouse to the police force or informing the spouse what the job of policing can entail (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 1989). Nor does the Ontario Police College address the spouse or cohabiting partner in any significant way (Ministry of the Solicitor General, 1987).

The only program extant in Canada that addresses the need for spousal involvement appears to be the program at the British Columbia Justice Institute. This program started as a five day course in 1981 for spouses of police officers trained at the institute. It has since been reduced to a

two day course and is offered at the end of the new officer's course of training (Ministry of the Solicitor General, 1991).

On the first day participants are introduced to firearms training and invited to fire a service revolver. This is often the most intimidating piece of equipment for a female spouse because of the potential danger to children. Spouses are then taken out in a police cruiser and allowed to drive the police tactical driving course.

The second day of the training is devoted to open discussions with a psychologist who is a former police officer. The psychologist is able to discuss general stressors particular to policing. Dysfunctional behaviours that are reported to be common among police officers' families are discussed. The program also introduces new spouses of the police community to spouses that have been married to police officers for some years.

Not surprisingly, in view of 19,000-odd separate police jurisdictions (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1984), U.S. totals differ from the Canadian ones. Of several programs in existence, perhaps the best described is the

work of John G. Stratton (1976), a departmental psychologist for the Office of the Sheriff, County of Los Angeles. He has designed a series of eight sessions held over an eight-week period. The classes cover:

Session 1—Orientation to sheriff's department - organization, structure, and functions of the Sheriff's department training procedures.

Session 2—Various functions within department divisions - special department programs - tour of custody division

Session 3—Law enforcement's role in the criminal justice system - tour of Sheriff's communications center.

Session 4—Marital and occupational pressures - resources available to department employees and spouses.

Session 5—Investigative techniques, gathering of evidence, ballistics - Sheriff's comprehensive rape program - methods of self-defense.

Session 6—Personal and home firearms safety - use of the firing range.

Session 7—Patrol ride-along.

Session 8—Review, summary and graduation.

(Stratton, 1976, p. 265)

Stratton reports that the feedback he receives from spouses attending these classes is extremely favorable. Spouses report they have been made to feel the importance of their role in law enforcement and that they now feel more identified with the department.

The precedence of the job demands over family life is addressed by Aharan (1984) in the only Canadian study of stress in police marriages. The study relies entirely on anecdotal material and makes no claim to empirical rigor. Aharan has counselled police officers from every part of British Columbia. Perhaps his most telling observation concerns the amount of time that police officers spend on the job above and beyond what their schedule calls for. In the case of married officers, this extra involvement comes at the expense of their family lives. Officers often believe that, to do well in police work, they must give up their days off and even their annual leaves to the job. Aharan goes so far as to say, "It is apparent that a good portion of the time spent on or around the job is

spent because the individual prefers to be there than elsewhere.... Many families seem to adjust by accepting the fact that they must always play 'second fiddle' to the force. For quite a few, however, it remains a continuing source of conflict and resentment" (pp. 13 - 16).

It cannot be overemphasized that the largest obstacle to awareness and improvement of this job stress—marital stress cycle is to be found in the attitudes of police themselves, both among the command structure and the rank and file. Stroud (1983), in his book on police officers The Blue Wall, includes a chapter on what he terms "casualties." In the book, he interviews a number of Canadian police officers from coast to coast. He records his talk with a police officer in the Vancouver area and reports on how this officer describes his work and his vehement denial of the frustrations of the job:

I get a pain in my hip pocket listening to the media go on and on wringing its little white gloves over Stress In The Force and The Burnt-Out Cop, as if we were a bunch of light bulbs. Sure the job's tough. There are lots of tough jobs. Try tree-topping, or brain surgery. Life is tough. But you have to keep the shit under control. You don't wander around the locker room moaning to your buddies about your angst and your cosmic role and your meaning-of-life shit. You do the job, you jump over the shit, you stay away from the sergeant, no offence Bradshaw, and you keep the stress part in only one part of your mind. It's like you have one small corner of your

head and in that corner, you are off the goddamned wall. You're a major wacko, a screamer. But it's only a small part. The other parts get pissed with the guys, go kiss the wife, thump the crooks, catch the bad guys, bullshit with the lawyers, and save your cash. That's how cops deal with stress. I'm sick of being made to sound like some kind of wimp in the papers. It's a tough job but I can do it (Stroud, 1983, p. 188).

## Conclusion

Chapter Two reviewed the literature of stress from four increasingly specific perspectives. Section One dealt with the definition and incidence of stress in our society. It was seen that definitions differ and are sometimes hard to pin down. Section Two surveyed the impact of job and the workplace on marital dysfunction. Section Three investigated the incidence of stress in the police community. The causes and consequences of such stress were examined more specifically. Section Four focused on the relationship between the stresses of police work and the incidence of stress in police marriages. Recommendations for changes in training procedures were reviewed. It was seen that the literature on marital stress in police officers, especially as relating to the Canadian experience, was lamentably sparse.

Chapter Three will outline the research design and methodology used in the current study.

## Chapter 3

This chapter presents a description of the research, the methods and procedures employed in carrying out the investigation of marital discord (stress) in the police community. This study took place between April and September of 1991. The chapter includes a general description of the study, a description of the subjects, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures and a summary of the chapter.

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

The study was designed to assess the extent of marital discord (stress) among police officers and spouses in traditional heterosexual marriages within a detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Using the clinical research tool, Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI), the author gathered data from a selected group of police officers and their spouses. The police officers selected for study were regular members of the RCMP. The area policed by the selected group was a suburb of a large Western Canadian city. Some of the studied population of police officers commute to the detachment from other areas of the



region to be at their work site. The opportunity to work in a community but not have to live there has its benefits such as allowing the officer to live a more normal life without being known as the cop down the street. On the other hand living in the community can enhance the image of the police department and allows the officer to get to know people of the community, while the citizens come to see the officer as part of their community.

The study was conducted between April and September, 1991 and the investigator both gathered and interpreted the data. Ethics approval was sought and granted by the Simon Fraser University Ethics Committee (see Appendix A). As well permission was requested and received from the Officer Commanding "E" Division of the RCMP.

Seventy two couples received MSI questionnaire packages, (144 questionnaires) and accompanying letters of explanation. Sixty-four individual questionnaires were returned (approximately 44%). On the basis of these returns, analysis of the responses were tabulated and conclusions drawn about the extent of marital stress in the group.

The study is limited by the following conditions:

1. The investigator collected and analyzed the data.
2. There was no pre or post-test assessment of the data.
3. The data were gathered from among a particular RCMP sample and may not, therefore, be generalized across the entire RCMP population.
4. The data are also limited by the size of the returned questionnaires and must also be reviewed from that perspective.

## THE SAMPLE

In selecting the sample to be studied, the investigator, after discussion with the RCMP "E" Division psychologist (RCMP British Columbia), chose a department of the RCMP that would be prepared to participate. Initially the "E" Division psychologist attempted to obtain permission to use the group of officers involved in the drug investigation branch but this was met with a high level of resistance. Having exhausted this avenue, and with the permission of the officer commanding "E" Division, the author was able to find a detachment commander who would agree to allow the personnel under his command to be solicited for the

purpose of this research.

The detachment chosen is in a farming community with some light industry. The detachment area borders on other municipalities which have their own police forces. This often results in jurisdictional problems when investigations cross boundaries into other police force jurisdictions. The detachment is responsible for enforcing the Canadian Criminal Code as well as many federal statutes, for example, the federal narcotic control act and the federal food and drug act. The detachment is also responsible for policing the community and enforcing municipal bylaws such as parking and noise bylaws.

Police duties at the detachment are broken down into a number of sections/branches, e.g., (a) traffic enforcement, where members are assigned to enforcing the provincial traffic act and carry out this specific duty; (b) general duties, in which officers are responsible for carrying out investigations on complaints registered at the detachment whether they are of a Criminal Code nature or a municipal bylaw. Members carry out these duties in uniform; (c) a drug investigation branch that works in plain-clothes or out-of-uniform, investigating drug offenses; (d) a small

section of personnel that carry out investigation out-of-uniform and are referred to as the general investigation branch. They are generally referred to as detectives.

Through the cooperation of the clerical staff at the detachment, 72 married couples were identified from the total personnel of some 90 regular members of the RCMP stationed at the detachment. The personnel of the full detachment consists of 90% male and 10% female. The sample was taken at random and not targeted at any one group within the detachment. Of the 72 couples who received questionnaires, there were 64 questionnaire packages returned. Of these 64, twenty-four were couples. There were an additional sixteen returns in which only one spouse responded, consisting of 6 male and ten female respondents. The total possible number of responses from the female group was 72, and the author received a total of 34 female responses. The total possible male responses was also 72 and the author received a total of 30 male responses.

## DATA COLLECTION

The data for this thesis were collected by way of a three-part, self report questionnaire. The questionnaire package was mailed to each spouse separately and contained a stamped and self addressed envelope for each spouse to return his or her package anonymously to the author.

The package contained two letters. The first was a letter of introduction from the Commanding Officer of "E" Division (see Appendix B), explaining the need for the research and inviting participants to respond. The second letter (see Appendix C) was a detailed explanation from the division psychologist explaining why the study was being conducted. In this second letter were also the basic instructions for filling out the questionnaire. The investigator's name did not appear on any correspondence.

To increase the possibility of returns of the self-report questionnaire, follow-up mailings were conducted. One letter (see Appendix D) was mailed out two weeks after the initial package. A second follow-up letter was sent after three weeks. As predicted by Babbie (1989), the

questionnaire returns followed a sequence described in his writings.

Babbie (1989) states:

The effects of follow-up mailings will be seen in the response rate curves recorded during data collection. The initial mailings will be followed by a rise and subsequent subsiding of returns; the follow-up mailings will spur a resurgence of returns; and more follow-ups will do the same. In practice, three mailings (an original and two follow-ups) seem the most efficient ( p. 241).

The Part I of the questionnaire (see Appendix E) was designed by the investigator to collect demographic information with regard to age, sex, whether a member or spouse of the RCMP, number of children and number of years married. Part II included the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI), a description of which follows. Part III of the questionnaire was designed by the author (see Appendix F) for the purpose of gathering additional demographic information related to number of years married, number of times married, the branch of the police force worked in, whether there were blended families involved, if alcohol abuse was a factor in the marriage, and if so, the nature and extent of the alcohol abuse, whether the RCMP addressed marital distress adequately, and an open-ended question allowing the participant to make any additional comments that seemed relevant.

The Marital Satisfaction Inventory, Part II of the package sent to participants in the sample, contained the 280-question inventory with the necessary answer sheet. The response form also had attached to it a page showing an example of how to fill out the answer sheet. The noted inventory, answer sheet and example are not included in the appendix due to copyright laws.

The MSI was developed by Douglas K. Snyder in the latter part of the 1970's, and was first published as a psychological tool in 1981. Snyder (1981) writes in his manual for the MSI:

In most cases a couple does not need a psychological test to determine the presence or absence of marital distress. Indeed, the ability of a test to discriminate between distressed and non-distressed couples represents, by itself, a somewhat trivial accomplishment. ....One does require though an instrument capable of identifying the specific sources of conflict across a broad spectrum of marital interaction. ....The development of the MSI began as an attempt to provide a reliable and valid multidimensional self-report measure of marital interaction for use in both research and clinical settings (p.1).

The MSI development resulted in a 280-item inventory, involving eleven

eleven non-overlapping scales. Snyder states, "Test-retest reliability, internal consistency and discriminate validity were established for each of the MSI profile scales. Standardization of the inventory was conducted across two independent samples of married individuals from the general population" (p. 1). Further validation was carried out by Scheer and Snyder (1984) and was conducted with a non-clinical or non-distressed couple sample. The Scheer and Snyder study supported previous findings using distressed samples and addressed implications for further research and clinical use of the MSI.

The MSI is a multidimensional self-report instrument that identifies the nature and extent of marital distress along several key dimensions of the couples' relationship. The husband and wife report separately their subjective experience and appraisal of their marriage by answering "True" or "False" to each of the 280 items. Each individual's response is scored on the eleven scales of the inventory, including one validity scale, one global affective scale, and nine additional scales which identify affective communication, problem-solving communication, time together, disagreement about finances, sexual dissatisfaction, role orientation, family history of distress, dissatisfaction with children, and conflict



over childrearing. All scales are scored in the direction of discontent, so that high scores indicate high levels of dissatisfaction within the specific area.

The MSI was used in this research because it is an internally consistent measure with test-retest reliability, comprised primarily of behavioral or attitudinal statements regarding an individual's own experience in a marital relationship. Interpretations of MSI profiles would provide data on the nature of interactions between spouses. Snyder (1981) feels that the MSI may be incorporated into a broad range of therapeutic contexts regardless of the clinician's personal orientation (p. 7).

As previously mentioned the MSI scales are scored in the direction of discontent so that high scores indicate high levels of dissatisfaction within the specific area. Because the analysis requires a comparison between spouses (male and female) the scales are expressed in a T-Score format. The eleven MSI scales assess the following dimensions of marital stress:

## Conventionalization (CNV)

The Conventionalization Scale is comprised of 21 items assessing the tendency to report the marriage in socially desirable terms. In general, item content on the CNV scale reflects denial of even minor marital problems and a description of the marriage in an unrealistically positive way. Item content falls along three dimensions:

1. Reports of a "perfect marriage"
2. Reports of a "perfect mate"
3. Denial of consideration of marital alternative (Snyder, 1981, pp. 24 - 25).

Low scores on CNV (below 45T) are commonly associated with moderate or greater levels of marital distress and reflect a readiness to openly acknowledge existing difficulties in the relationship.

Moderate scores on CNV (45 - 60T) are frequently observed within the general population and, at the upper end of this range, may reflect strong positive feelings within the marriage. For couples seeking marriage counselling, scores in this range often indicate a guarded prognosis.

High scores on CNV (above 60T) reflect a naive, uncritical appraisal of the marital relationship. While such scores might reasonably be achieved by some individuals during periods of unusual marital harmony, there is reason to suspect on a clinical basis that persons with CNV scores in this range may be reluctant or unable to deal with current or future difficulties on an objective basis (Snyder, 1981, pp. 24 - 25).

CNV is strongly related to a number of scales on the MSI, particularly more global affective ones. It is stated in the Manual that CNV is useful as a covariate for research purposes (Snyder, 1981, pp. 24 - 25).

### **Global Distress (GDS)**

The Global Distress Scale (GDS) contains 43 items assessing overall marital satisfaction. Items deal with global marital discontent, desire for therapy, chronic disharmony and thoughts about separation or divorce. Results of the clinical validation study by Snyder show elevations on GDS to be related to a large number of clinical descriptors. Responses to these items have been found to align on two dimensions:

1. General unhappiness with the marriage

2. Uncertain commitment to the current relationship (Snyder, 1981, pp. 25 - 26).

Low scores (below 50T) are associated with closeness to one's spouse, commitment to the present relationship and the general absence of pervasive difficulties. Specific sources of discontent potentially reflected on other scales are likely to be perceived by the individual as having little bearing on the overall relationship.

Moderate elevations on GDS (50 - 65T) indicate the increasing likelihood of general dissatisfaction with the marriage and thoughts of separation or divorce. Moderate scores on GDS indicate sufficient distress to motivate individuals to seek marital counselling in the absence of such intense or pervasive anger as to interfere with the therapeutic process.

High scores on GDS (above 65T) reflect strong feelings of alienation and anger toward one's spouse, a long history of problems in the marriage and an increasing inclination toward separation or divorce. "Individuals with scores in this range may show only moderate commitment to "saving"

their marriage and are more likely to be rated by clinicians as having a guarded prognosis (Snyder, 1981, p. 25).

The GDS is highly reliable to detect global marital affect and provides a good index of change which can occur during therapy, as well as a screening measure of marital distress (Snyder, 1981, p. 25).

### **Affective Communication (AFC)**

The Affective Communication Scale (AFC) consists of 26 items assessing dissatisfaction with the amount of affection and understanding provided by a spouse. Snyder (1981) explains that this scale deals with the *process*, rather than the content, of verbal and nonverbal communication. Items in this scale fall into three categories:

1. Complaints of inadequate affection and caring from spouse
2. Experience of lack of empathy and understanding from spouse
3. Failure of spouse to self-disclose (Snyder, 1981, p. 26).

Elevations on AFC are related to a broad range of clinical criteria:

Low scores (below 50T) reflect a relationship characterized by open, affective expression and feelings of interpersonal closeness.

Moderate scores (50 - 65T) are likely to reflect moderate levels of distress within the relationship and may indicate motivation to work in therapy on finding better ways of enhancing intimacy and mutual self-disclosure.

High scores (above 65T) indicate a relationship characterized by extensive isolation and negative affect and rarely occur in the absence of high elevations on GDS (Snyder, 1981, p. 26).

Deficits in AFC are highly predictive of marital dysfunction and are nearly always observed among couples entering therapy. Scores on AFC are highly related to dissatisfaction with the quality and quantity of leisure time together (Snyder, 1981, p. 26).

### **Problem-Solving Communication (PSC)**

The Problem-Solving Communication Scale (PSC) is comprised of 38

items measuring general ineffectiveness at resolving differences. This scale assesses the level and chronicity of overt disharmony rather than underlying feelings of detachment or alienation. PSC items fall along four dimensions:

1. Minor disagreements become major arguments
2. Differences remain unresolved or are not discussed
3. Spouse is overly sensitive to criticism
4. Spouse is overly critical or punitive (Snyder, 1981, pp. 26 - 27).

Low scores on PSC (below 50T) reflect minimal levels of overt disharmony in the relationship. Both spouses are committed to resolving differences when they occur and appear reasonably effective in doing so.

Moderate scores on the PSC scale (50 - 60T) indicate there is an increased likelihood of ineffectiveness in resolving disagreements. Although overt disharmony may be relatively infrequent, when differences arise they are likely to be dealt with poorly and generalize into major, extended arguments. Certain areas of the relationship are likely to be "off limits" for discussion; either spouse may perceive the other as being overly sensitive or critical (Snyder, 1981, p. 27).

High elevations on the PSC scale (above 65T) show the same characteristics mentioned above, but they are likely to be more extensively present. Marital tension pervades the relationship. There is likely to exist a long accumulation of unresolved differences, so that any minor incident may precipitate a major crisis (Snyder, 1981, p. 27).

Results of the clinical validation study indicated that PSC shares some overlap with both AFC and GDS. It is useful when interpreting the PSC to conceptualize PSC as assessing more objective aspects of overt disharmony with AFC measuring more subjective experiences of disaffection and isolation (Snyder, 1981, p. 27).

### **Time Together (TTO)**

The Time Together Scale (TTO) contains 20 items reflecting feelings about the quality and quantity of leisure time spent together. The items reflect four factors:

1. Insufficient time together
2. Lack of common interests
3. Desire for spouse to participate more in respondent's own interests



4. Feelings that spouse does not enjoy time together (Snyder, 1981, p. 27).

Low scores on TTO (below 50T) reflect the individual's general satisfaction with both the quality and quantity of leisure time together. Spouses are likely to share several common interests and to seek each other's company in a wide range of activities.

Moderate scores on TTO (50 - 65T) indicate a lack of opportunity or perceived desire for shared leisure activity. Such elevations may stem in part from situational demands of employment or childrearing responsibilities. When accompanied by elevations on AFC however, moderate scores on TTO are increasingly likely to reflect feelings of isolation and alienation from the spouse.

High elevation on TTO (above 65T) indicates severe disruption of pleasant interactions and are nearly always accompanied by moderate or higher scores on AFC. For women in particular, high scores on TTO are associated with extensive dissatisfaction with the marriage and an inclination toward separation and divorce (Snyder, 1981, p. 27).

Along with AFC and PSC, the TTO scale completes the *affective triad*. Any one of these three scales considered by itself accounts for over half of the variance in global criteria of marital distress (Snyder, 1981, p. 27).

### **Disagreement About Finances (FIN)**

The Disagreement About Finances Scale (FIN) is comprised of 22 items assessing disagreement about the handling of family finances. The item content reflects four dimensions:

1. Poor management of finances by spouse
2. Financial insecurity as a major source of marital distress
3. Inability to discuss finances calmly
4. View of spouse as extravagant (Snyder, 1981, pp. 27 -28).

Low scores on FIN (below 50T) reflect the general absence of marital distress in the area of finances. Responsibilities are likely to be shared by both spouses. Financial strains incurred by the couple do not impact negatively upon the marital relationship.

Moderate scores on the FIN scale (50 - 65T) indicate the increasing importance of finances as an area of marital contention. Arguments about money are often frequent, and extended. They can center around the inadequacy of income to meet necessary expenses.

High scores on the FIN scale (above 65T) indicate the central presence of finances as major source of marital distress. Disagreements about money may be intensely emotional and may be a part of a broad range of concerns including expressions of affection and trust (Snyder, 1981, pp. 27 - 28).

Results of the clinical validation study suggest that the FIN scale may be related to issues regarding the wife's empowerment outside the home or inadequate attention of the husband to parental responsibilities. Disagreements about finances are frequent associated with a general inability to resolve differences effectively (Snyder, 1981, pp. 27 - 28).

### **Sexual Dissatisfaction (SEX)**

The Sexual Dissatisfaction Scale (SEX) contains 29 items assessing

dissatisfaction with sexual activity. SEX is one of the more heterogeneous scales found on the MSI. Its item content looks at five factors:

1. General dissatisfaction with the sexual relationship
2. Spouse lacks interest in sex
3. Own lack of enjoyment from intercourse
4. Sexual differences are left unresolved
5. Interest or involvement in extramarital affairs (Snyder, 1981, pp. 28 - 29).

Low scores on SEX (below 50T) indicate a generally positive attitude toward the overall quality of the sexual relationship. Low scores indicate that disagreements regarding the frequency or variety of sexual behaviors are likely to be infrequent and viewed as having little importance to the overall relationship.

Moderate scores (50 - 65T) indicate the increasing influence of the sexual relationship and an increased need for specific interventions in this area. Scores in this range may indicate dissatisfaction with either the frequency or variety of sexual activity, but are less associated with

the respondent's lack of sexual enjoyment than perceived disinterest on the part of the spouse.

High scores (above 65T) indicate severe disruption of the sexual relationship and an increased need for specific interventions in this area. Scores in this range are unlikely to have come from sexual complaints that have evolved exclusively from the more general marital difficulties. (Snyder, 1981, pp. 28 - 29).

Berg and Snyder (1981) found this scale to discriminate successfully between matched groups of maritally and sexually distressed couples. For example, wives who were sexually distressed revealed mean scores of 65T, whereas the general marital distress group had mean scores of 58T. For husbands, mean scores were 62T on the SEX scale and 56T in the maritally distressed group. Berg and Snyder outlined two criteria by which the clinician would be prudent to defer brief directive sex therapy in favor of more extensive marital therapy: (1) when the absolute level of global marital distress exceeds moderate proportions ( $GDS > 65T$ ), or (2) when the relative elevation of SEX to other clinical scales in the MSI reveals the couple to have primary distress around non-sexual aspects of

their relationship such as communication and intimacy (Snyder, 1981, pp. 28 - 29).

## **Role Orientation (ROR)**

The Role Orientation Scale (ROR) consists of 25 items reflecting marital and parental sex roles. Items are scored in the direction of non-conventionality and align on four factors:

1. Rejection of traditional marital roles
2. Rejection of the "homemaker" role for women
3. Belief in shared home responsibilities
4. Advocacy of career opportunities for women (Snyder, 1981, p. 29).

Low scores on ROR (below 45T) indicate a highly traditional orientation toward marital and parental sex roles. Both sexes are likely to ascribe to the notion of male dominance in decision making and as primary wage earner. Men are unlikely to share in housecare or child-rearing responsibilities; women invest themselves fully in their roles as wife and mother at home.

Moderate scores on ROR (45 - 55T) reflect a greater flexibility in sharing of traditional roles. Women with scores in this range are likely to espouse greater opportunities for women outside the home, although they may stop short of advocating complete role reversal; men are more likely to share decisions with their wives although they are likely to retain final authority in important decisions.

High scores on ROR (above 55T) indicate an increasingly unconventional view of marital and parental roles. Decision making is likely to be shared more fully, as are housecare and childrearing responsibilities. A wife's career gains status with her role as mother and may take preference over the maternal role. Husbands are likely to view their roles within the home as having equal priority to their own career opportunities (Snyder, 1981, pp.29 - 30).

In interpreting ROR, it is important to bear in mind that this scale assesses *role preferences*, not role conflict. It is useful to note the directionality of role orientations, with the potential for differences in attitude towards traditional or more nontraditional spousal roles.

Examples of the interpretation of ROR where one spouse may score low

and the other score high may indicate the potential for marital role conflict. This example is often tied to significant elevations on Conflict Over Childrearing and Dissatisfaction With Children scales (Snyder, 1981, pp. 29 - 30).

### **Family History Of Distress (FAM)**

The Family History of Distress (FAM) is comprised of 15 items assessing the childhoods of the respondents and the quality of marriages of their parents and extended family. This scale was included in the MSI to identify either unresolved conflicts evolving from the family of origin or the absence of adequate parental models and how this could contribute significantly to marital distress in the current relationship. The item content falls into five dimensions:

1. Parents' marriage dominated by discord
2. Reports of an unhappy childhood
3. Eagerness to leave home prior to marriage
4. Lack of closeness among family members
5. Marital disruption among extended family (Snyder, 1981, p. 30).



Low scores on FAM (below 45T) reflect a family of origin characterized by warmth and harmony. Parents are unlikely to have had frequent, open disagreements and instead are described as having provided positive models for expression of affection and resolution of differences.

Moderate elevations (45 - 65T) indicate significant distress in the parents' marriage. Disruption of the respondent's relationship with at least one parent is common.

High levels of FAM (above 60T) denote significant disruption in the family of origin and may be tied to such events for the respondent as their parents' divorce or separation, considerable alienation from parents, siblings or both. Marital disruption among extended family members is common (Snyder, 1981, p. 30).

Intercorrelations with other scales show that individuals' scores on FAM are strongly associated with their current level of dissatisfaction with their own children (Snyder, 1981, p. 30).

## Dissatisfaction With Children (DSC)

The Dissatisfaction With Children Scale (DSC) contains 22 items dealing with children. Unlike previous scales, DSC does not directly address the relationship of the couple, but instead assesses for each spouse separately the overall satisfaction with the parent-child relationship. The items used in this inventory fall into 4 categories:

1. Children are inconsiderate or disrespectful
2. Lack of common interests or activities with children
3. Disappointment with children
4. Dissatisfaction with demands of child rearing (Snyder, 1981, pp. 31-32).

Low scores on DSC (below 50T) indicate a generally positive relationship between the respondent and his or her children. Children are viewed as contributing to the overall happiness of the marital relationship and to the individual's own personal fulfillment. Children are unlikely to present difficulties in behavioral management or to exhibit more general symptoms of psychological distress.

Moderate elevations on the DSC (50 - 65T) reflect increasing disappointment or dissatisfaction either with the children themselves or with the general demands of childrearing. One or more children may be described as being emotionally or behaviorally disturbed and marital distress may be viewed as evolving in part from childrearing difficulties. For wives, dissatisfaction with children often relates to financial stress precipitated by costs of childcare or disruption of their own employment. For husbands, elevations on DSC frequently reflect the experience of children as an intrusion into the marital relationship.

High scores on the DSC (above 65T) indicate extensive disruption of the parent-child relationship. One or more children may be viewed as needing professional counselling. An extensive psychological evaluation of problematic children is frequently indicated (Snyder, 1981, pp. 30 - 31).

DSC is only moderately predictive of global criteria of marital distress. However Snyder and Gdowski (1980) found that elevations on the DSC scale were predictive of a broad range of psychopathology in children including general maladjustment, poor social skills, delinquency, anxiety and depression (Snyder, 1981, pp. 30 - 31).

## **Conflict Over Childrearing (CCR)**

The Conflict Over Childrearing Scale (CCR) is comprised of 19 items assessing perception of conflict over childrearing practices. Items are aligned along the following four factors:

1. Childrearing conflicts are a major source of marital discord
2. Disagreement about discipline
3. Unfair sharing of childrearing responsibilities
4. Spouse is uninterested in children (Snyder, 1981, pp.31 - 32).

Low scores on CCR (below 50T) reflect generally positive interactions between spouses regarding their children. Both spouses are likely to participate in childrearing tasks and in reaching decisions regarding discipline and their children's privileges and responsibilities.

Moderate scores (50 - 65T) reflect the increasing importance of childrearing in contributing to overall marital distress. Individuals with scores in this range report extensive conflict around parental roles and are likely to perceive little support or agreement from their spouse in childrearing tasks. Among women in particular, elevated scores on CCR

may reflect the feeling that childrearing has interfered with their own individual lives.

High scores on CCR (above 65T) indicate a significant shift in the severity of these same characteristics from being moderately to extensively present. Specific training in parenting skills may be indicated, particularly in the relative absence of more generalized marital distress (Snyder, 1981, pp.31 - 32).

The CCR is a good predictor of global criteria of marital distress. It can often determine the extent to which conflicts over child rearing evolves from difficulties specific to one or more children in comparison with general role conflicts or deficits in problem solving. It should be noted that couples with no children stop after answering item 239, as indicated in the test booklet mailed to each subject (Snyder, 1981, pp. 31 - 32).

## DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

The self report questionnaires that were returned (in self addressed envelopes) to the writer were collected through the RCMP Health Services. The inventories were hand scored by the author using the scoring keys. MSI keys are aligned on the score sheet and then calculated by counting the number of items for that scale answered in the scorable direction. The total raw score for each scale is marked directly on the answer sheet in the designated space (Snyder, 1981, p. 4). The answer sheet is designed to show the validity and global affective scales in the left-hand columns and the nine additional scales reflecting specific areas of marital interaction in the right-hand columns. Each column is labeled at the top with the name of the scale and at the bottom with the scale abbreviation used. T-score equivalents appear vertically on each side of the graph.

Each of the 144 questionnaires mailed out had been number coded so each questionnaire could be matched to the respective spouse when returned. Each MSI was scored following the above noted procedures.

## INTERPRETATION

Snyder (1981) offers the following overall strategy for MSI profile analysis:

1. Determine the extent of conventionalization or defensiveness present in the individual's profile by noting the elevation of the Conventionalization (CNV) scale.
2. Evaluate the overall level of marital distress. This can be determined by inspecting both the Global Distress (GDS) scale on the left side of the profile as well as the general elevation of remaining clinical scales to the right.
3. Assess the general quality of communication and leisure time together using the Affective Communication (AFC), Problem-Solving Communication (PSC) and Time Together (TTO) scales.
4. Inspect the profile for specific sources of marital distress using the Disagreement About Finances (FIN), Sexual Dissatisfaction (SEX), Dissatisfaction With Children (DSC), Conflict Over Childrearing (CCR) and Role Orientation (ROR) scales.
5. Examine the Family History of Distress (FAM) scale for the historical context of marital and family disruption.
6. At any time during profile analysis the user may wish to inspect individual responses to MSI items or check the similarity of the profile with the group mean profiles of defined clinical norms (pp. 8 - 9).

The data were analyzed within the limitations of a single researcher. The design of the study did not include pre and post-testing of the selected police population as this was not considered necessary in obtaining reliable data. Interpretation involved searching the profiles for *commonly observed test patterns*. This approach yielded information not observed by a simple linear scanning of the profile, and instead allowed for the relative differences in elevation between scales and the prominence of individual scales or scale combinations in the overall profile to be compared. This approach is based on the premise that the interpretation and empirical correlates of a given scale at a specified elevation may be altered in clinically meaningful ways by the relative elevations of other scales. The data and analysis of data are tabulated and presented in Chapter 4.

This chapter presented a description of the research and the methods and procedures used in carrying out the investigation of marital discord/stress in a detachment of the RCMP. The study used a self report, three-part questionnaire for data collection. A number-coded questionnaire was mailed to 144 subjects (husbands and wives) and 64 completed questionnaires were returned. Part I of the questionnaire



asked for demographic information, i.e., age, sex, whether a member of the force or not, and number of children. Although the demographics of RCMP police detachments may vary from region to region within Canada, the detachment used in this investigation is not unusual.

Part II of the questionnaire was the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI), a 280 inventory of questions that required the participant to answer "True" or "False". This chapter explained each of the eleven scales of analysis on the MSI. Part III of the questionnaire sought information from the participants about the number of years in the RCMP, number of times married, branch of the force employed, and also asked a number of questions, some closed and others open ended. This chapter outlined the matching procedure for returned questionnaires. This chapter also included an explanation of how the data have been analyzed. Chapter 4 presents the findings, and the analysis of data.

## Chapter 4

### PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

It was the purpose of this investigation to examine, through the use of a psychometric tool, the incidence of marital discord (distress) in a selected population of married police officers. The psychometric tool, the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI), was used to assess levels of marital discord. The area of Canada in which this study was conducted was in the Western Provinces. The population selected for the study was a Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) detachment in that area.

As noted in Chapter Three, the sample consisted of seventy-two couples at this detachment and each officer and spouse was mailed a package containing a three-part questionnaire. The first part (Part I) sought demographic information (see Appendix A). The second part (Part II) contained the MSI and the necessary answer sheet. The third part (Part III) contained questions pertaining to opinions about how the RCMP handled marital discord (distress) (see Appendix B). Part III also contained questions pertaining to number of times married, whether the current marriage blended children from previous marriages, and whether alcohol

was a negative factor in the marriage. Part III also included a number of open-ended questions.

As noted in Chapter Three, one hundred and forty-four packages were mailed out to male and female participants. Sixty-four packages or 44% were returned for analysis. From these sixty-four packages the investigator was able to match twenty-four married couples. The investigator was able to match these couples from the matching numbers on the MSI answer sheets.

The responses to the questions on demographics show that the average age of the female respondents was 37 years with a range of 22 years to 49 years. The average age of the male respondents was 38 years with a range of 21 years to 50 years. The average years of marriage for the respondents was 13 years with a range of four months to 24 years. The average number of years' service for members of the RCMP was 15 years with a range from 6 months to 31 years. The average number of children per couple was 2 children with a range of 0 children to 4 children.

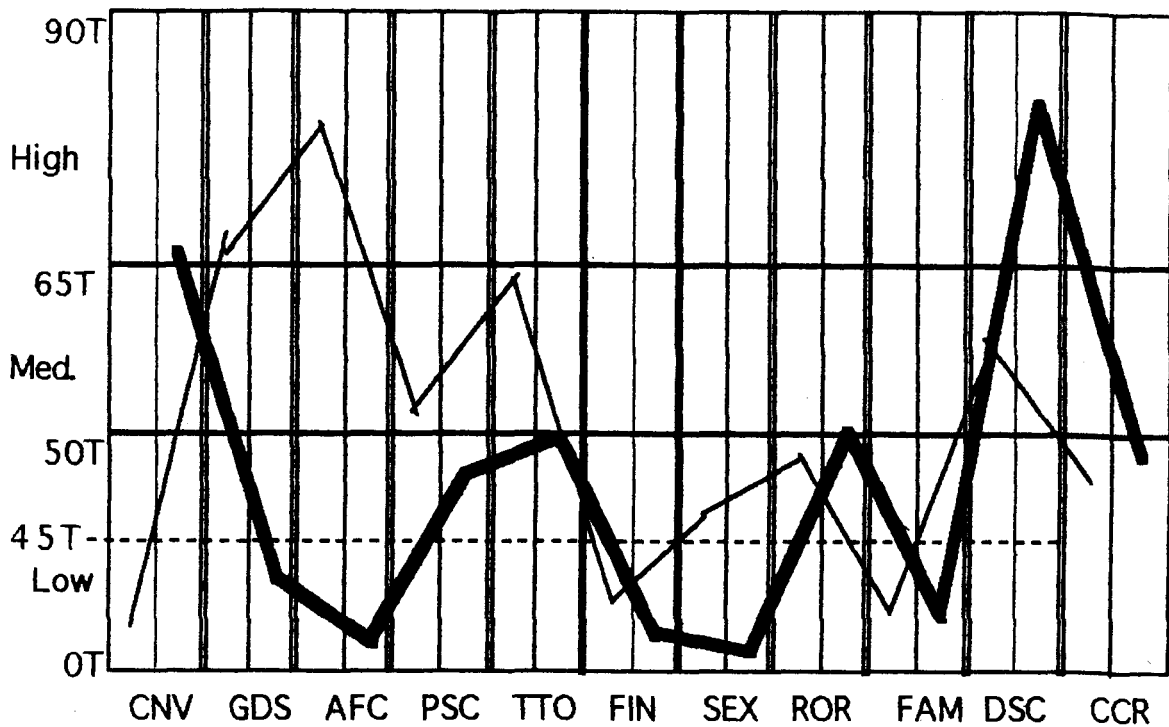
The data collected were analyzed as recommended by the MSI author D.K. Synder (pp. 8 - 9 MSI Manual) by using the MSI Conventionalization scale (CNV) as the first indicator of marital distress. The CNV scale is comprised of 21 items assessing the individuals' tendency to report the marriage in socially desirable terms. In general, item content on the CNV scale reflects denial of even minor marital problems with tendencies to distort the appraisal of their marriage in a socially desirable direction. High scores on the CNV scale (above 60T) reflect denial of even minor marital problems and give a description of the marriage in an unrealistically positive manner. Low scores on the CNV scale (below 45T), are commonly associated with a readiness to openly acknowledge existing difficulties in the relationship.

### **LOW SCORES ON CNV SCALE**

Nine couples in the sample show scores in the low classification and these data are presented in Tables 1 through 9. The data in the tables reveal that five of the nine couples appear to have serious marital problems in their marriages. For example, the couples represented in Tables 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8 all indicate high levels of dissatisfaction within

these marriages.

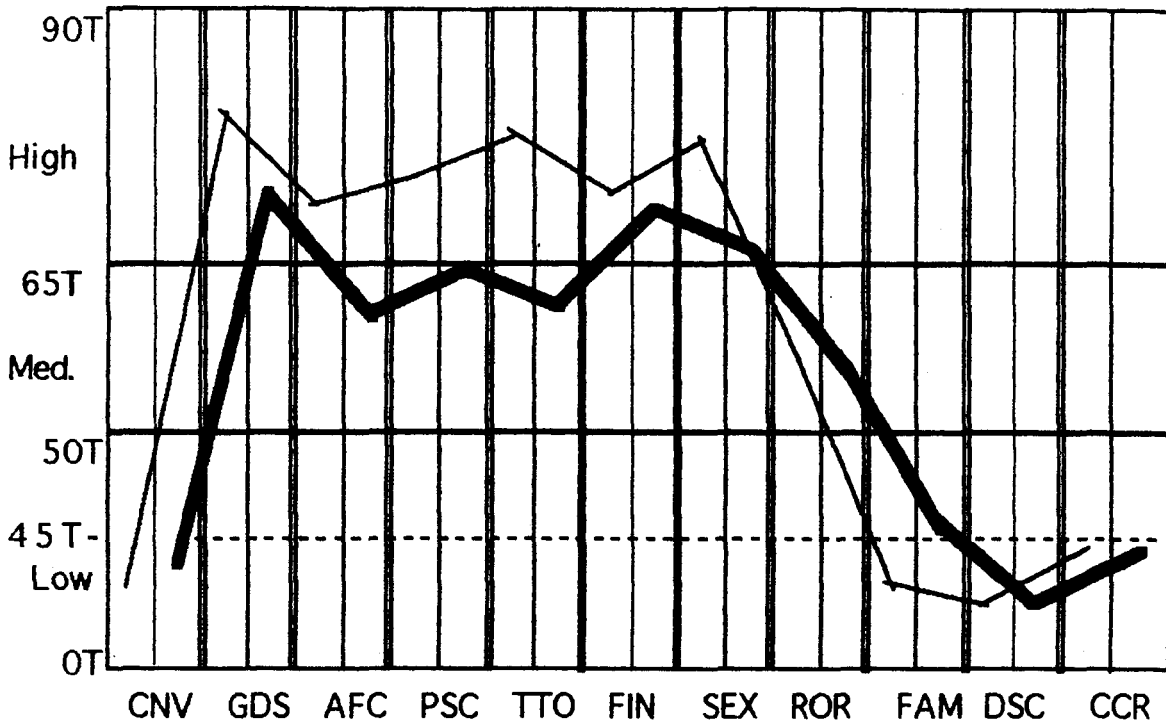
**Table 1**  
**Couple #1**



Wife: Low = Below 45T  
 Husband: Medium (Med.) = 45T to 65T  
 High = Above 65T

**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem-Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing

Table 2  
Couple #2

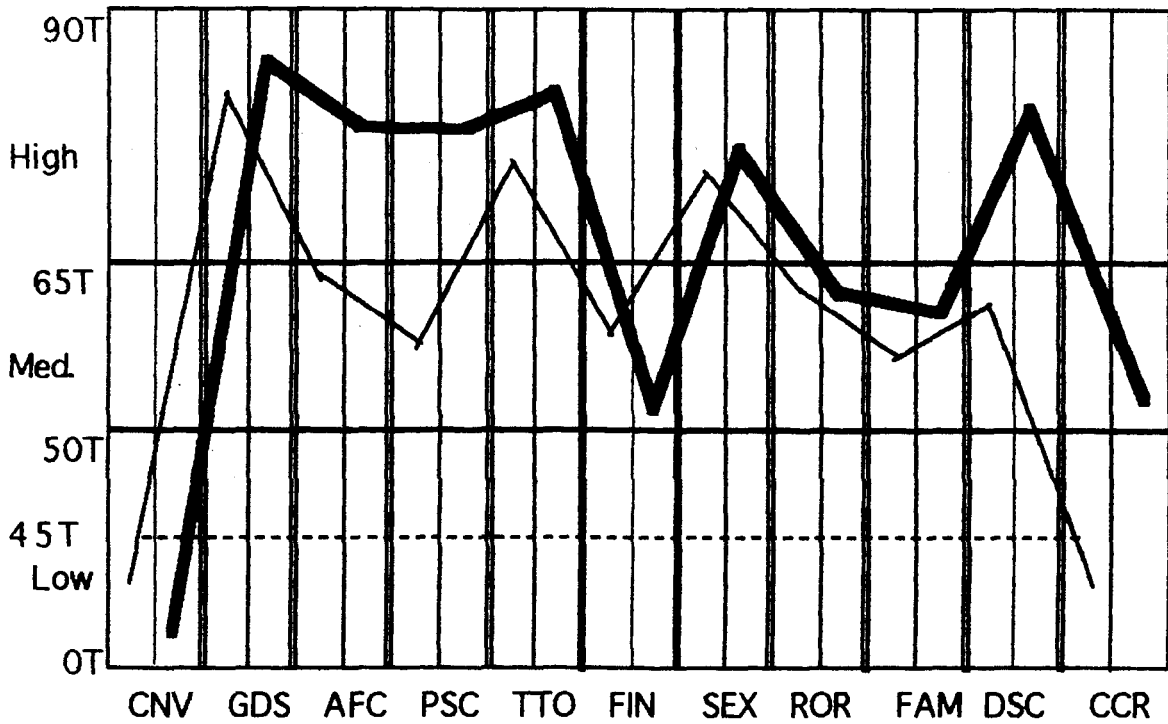


Wife: Husband:

Low = Below 45T  
Medium(Med.) = 45T to 65T  
High = Above 65T

**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem-Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing

Table 3  
Couple #3

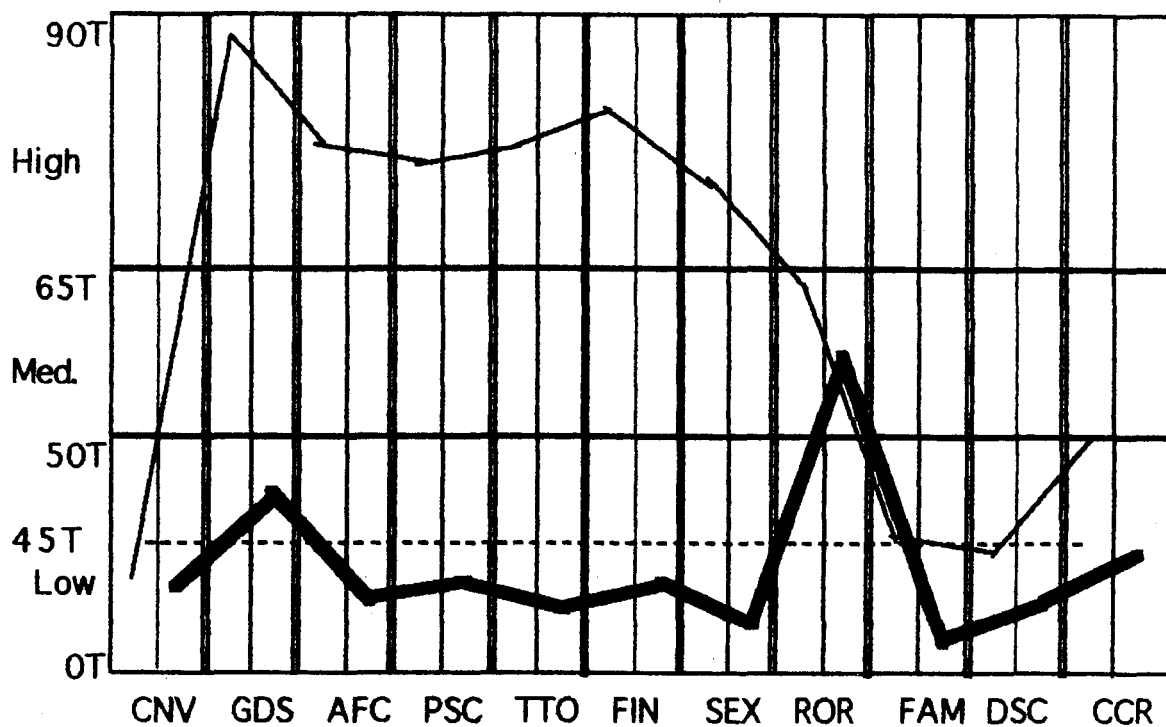


Wife: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Husband: \_\_\_\_\_

Low = Below 45T  
 Medium(Med.) = 45T to 65T  
 High = Above 65T

**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem-Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing

Table 4  
Couple #4

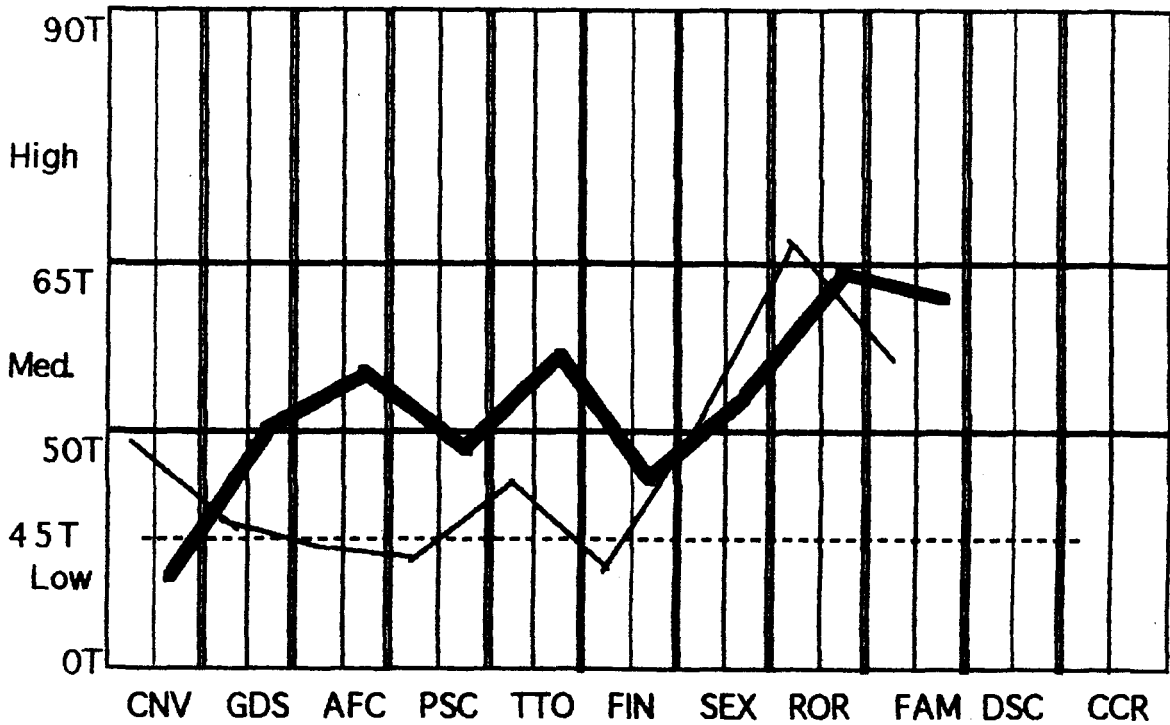


Wife: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Husband: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Low = Below 45T  
 Medium (Med.) = 45T to 65T  
 High = Above 65T

**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem-Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing



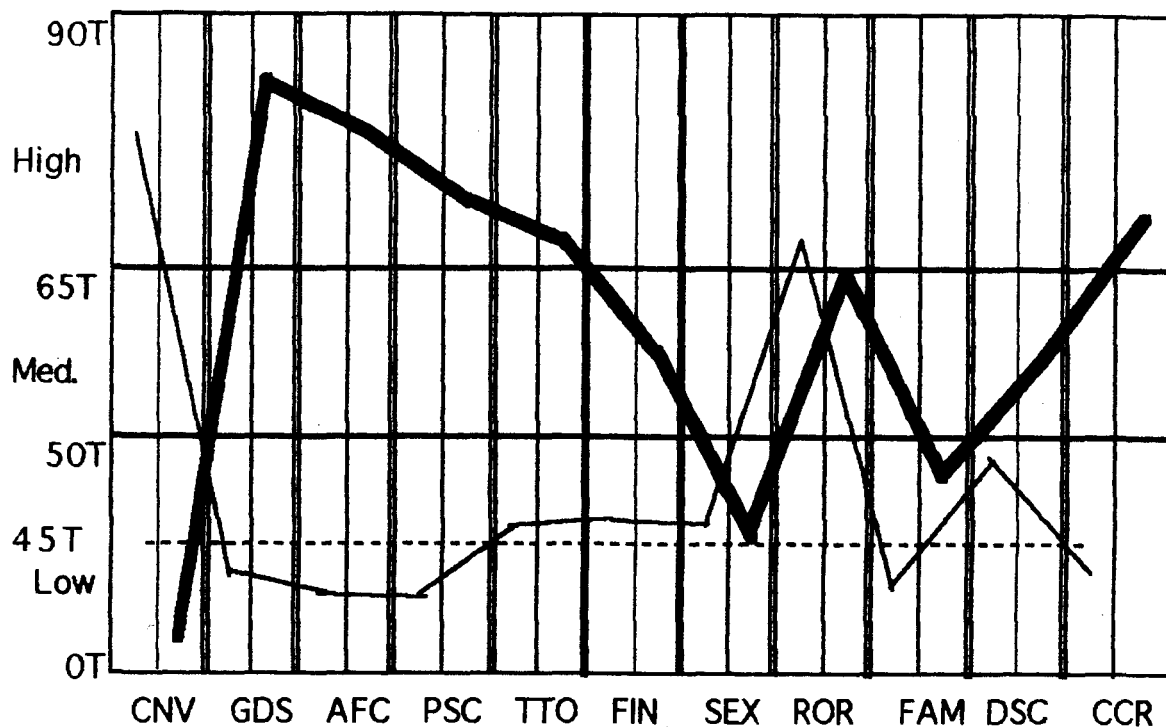
Table 5  
Couple #5



Wife: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Husband: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Low = Below 45T  
 Medium(Med.) = 45T to 65T  
 High = Above 65T

**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem - Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing

Table 6  
Couple #6

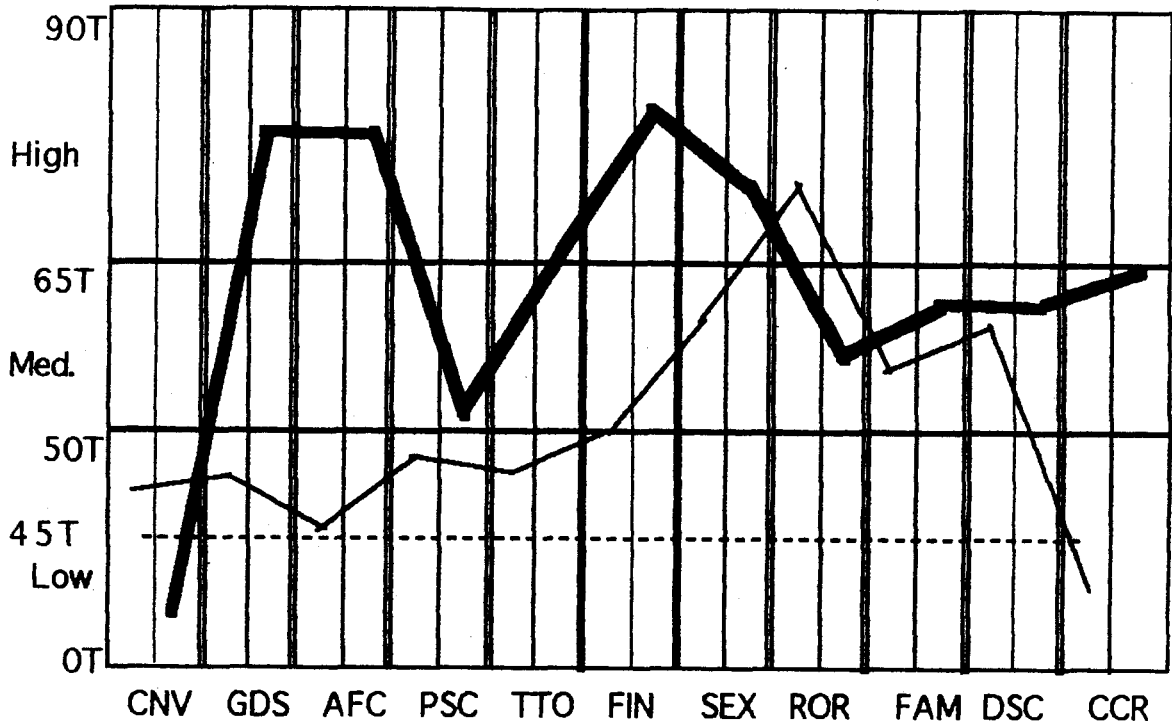


Wife: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Husband: \_\_\_\_\_

Low = Below 45T  
 Medium(Med.) = 45T to 65T  
 High = Above 65T

**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem-Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing

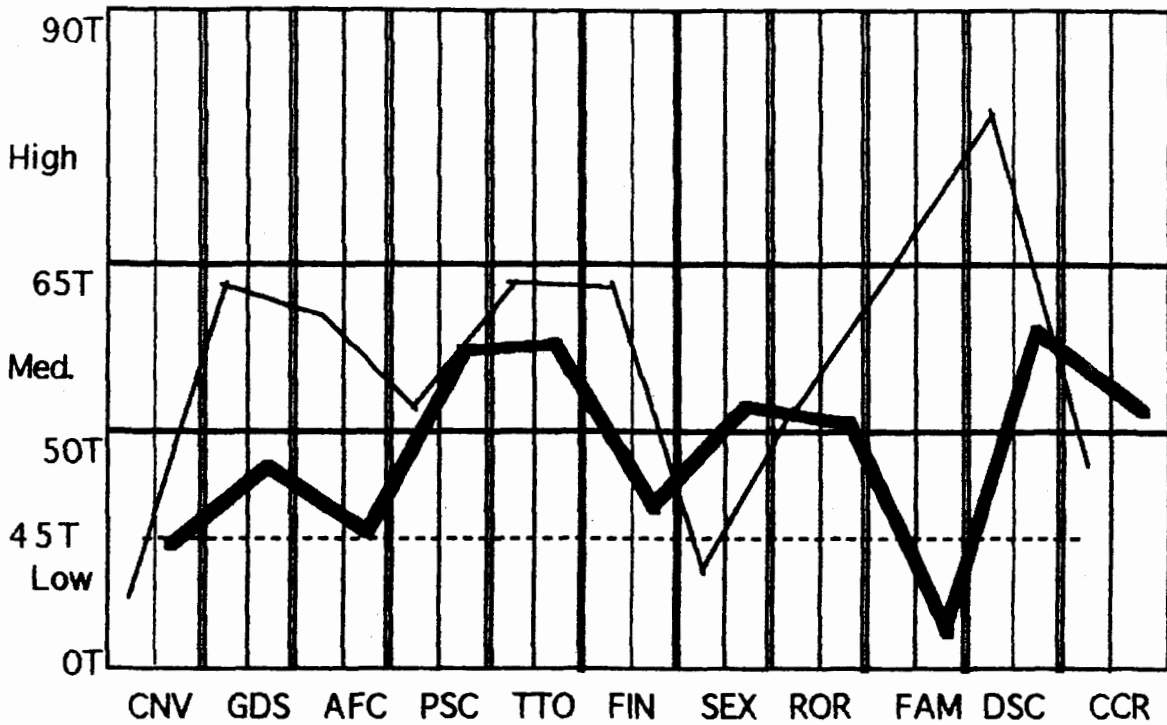
Table 7  
Couple #7



Wife: —————  
 Husband: —————  
 Low = Below 45T  
 Medium(Med.) = 45T to 65T  
 High = Above 65T

**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem-Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing

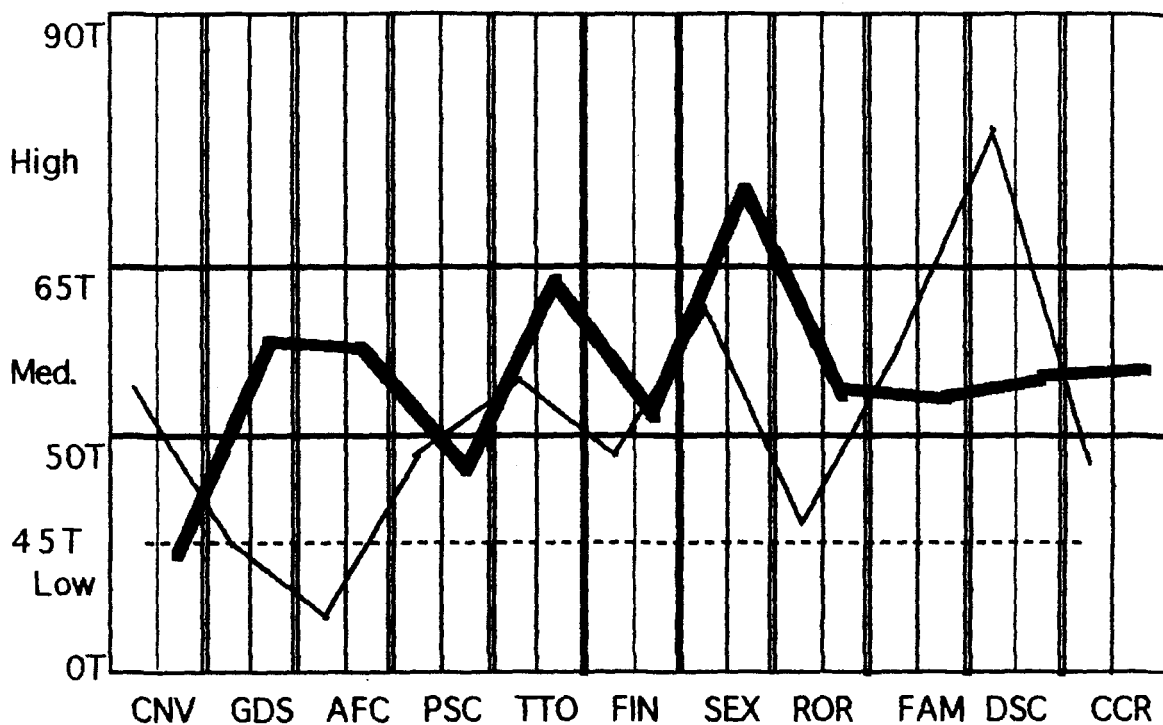
Table 8  
Couple #8



Wife: \_\_\_\_\_ Low = Below 45T  
 Husband: \_\_\_\_\_ Medium(Med.) = 45T to 65T  
 High = Above 65T

**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem-Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing

Table 9  
Couple #9



Wife: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Husband: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Low = Below 45T  
 Medium(Med.) = 45T to 65T  
 High = Above 65T

**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem-Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing

The standardization of the MSI was conducted across two independent samples of married individuals. On the one hand Snyder (1981) developed standards for the MSI from a population of clients who were entering into marital therapy or a clinical sample. This standardization is the basis for the MSI in its present form which was used in this investigation. However, further validation of the MSI was conducted by Scheer and Snyder in 1984. The population used by Scheer and Snyder was a non-clinical random sample of married couples. Results showed high reliability and high validity with the results obtained from the clinical group.

The analysis of the data from respondents scoring in the Low CNV category (below 45T), which indicates marital distress, shows that both spouses in the majority of couples also show high scores in a number of other categories. For example, for Couples #2, and #3, the CNV score is well below 45T, while scores for the GDS, AFC, PCS, TTO, FIN, and SEX range from moderate to high.

Further interpretation suggests that both these marriages appear to be in great difficulty. Both marriages score in the High category for GDS

(Global Distress), which suggests increasing inclination toward separation or divorce.

It should be noted that in the cases of couples #1 and #6 (see Tables 1 and 6), the profiles indicate opposite scores in the CNV category of the wife and husband. The interpretation of these scores based on the MSI Manual suggests that one spouse is experiencing and reporting the relationship from a Low score perspective, which indicates that there are moderate or greater levels of marital distress. The other spouse is reporting from a High CNV score perspective, which would suggest a naive, uncritical appraisal of the marital relationship.

In both couple #1 and # 6 profiles, the spouse scoring in the Low CNV category goes on to report high levels of distress in a number of other categories. In couple #1, (see Table 1), the husband reveals in the majority of MSI categories a general naive, uncritical appraisal of the marriage. In contrast, he does show a extremely high level of distress with the Dissatisfaction With Children (DSC) scale. The interpretation of this high DSC score based on the MSI manual, suggests that this indicates extensive disruption of the parent-child relationship. However, this

scale alone is only moderately predictive of global marital distress. The pattern of scoring in the remaining MSI scales does show a consistent pattern of naive, uncritical appraisal of the marital relationship.

In couple # 6 (see Table 6), the husband scores low on the CNV scale indicating willingness to admit to marital distress. Further analysis of the husband's responses shows extremely high scores on the Global Distress (GDS), Affective Communication (AFC), Problem-Solving Communication (PSC), Time Together (TTO) and Conflict Over Childrearing (CCR) scales. These high elevations suggest a very distressed marriage from the husband's perspective, especially on the perspective of the GDS scale. The GDS scale suggests that there is a high probability that this score reflects strong feelings of alienation and anger towards his spouse. The MSI manual indicates that the profile seen in couple #6 (see Table 6) shows an increasing inclination toward separation or divorce.

The wife in couple #6, on the other hand, reports a very high score on the CNV scale (73T) and consistent with the prognosis of the MSI Manual, shows very low scores in all other scales of the MSI. This suggests a very naive, uncritical appraisal of the marriage. It could be speculated



that because of the lack of communication that the husband feels, he is not letting his spouse know what he is feeling or thinking and she seems to be quite content with this behavior.

Two other profiles in the this group of Low CNV responses presented by couples #5 and #9 (see Tables 5 and 9) show one spouse indicating Moderate or Low levels on the CNV scale. Moderate and Low levels in a number of MSI scales can give an appearance of a relatively sound marriage. In couple #9's profile, the husband is reporting a willingness to acknowledge distress in a number of the MSI scales. He is especially distressed with his sex life. However, his spouse is reporting from the CNV scale that she is quite happy with the relationship except for moderate dissatisfaction with her sex life and considerable distress with (Dissatisfaction with Children) her children. It could be speculated that she is not willing to acknowledge this frustration and therefore it is likely to be cause for high levels of distress in the marriage.

In couple #5's profile, a similar situation is seen. The husband reports a Low CNV, acknowledges distress, while the wife's report of a Moderate CNV score indicates content. However, the husband's elevated levels on

the AFC, TTO, and SEX scales further affirm stress in the relationship, while the wife's scores maintain the position of contentment. On the FAM scale both partners acknowledge stress.

#### Anecdotal Comments From The Low CNV Responses

**Wife:**

I find that my husband feels insecure about seeking help. (It's not Macho) Although I can't speak for all the other men.

**Husband:**

Regular counselling should be in place on a routine basis so not to apply added pressure and to prevent problems before they get out of hand.

**Husband:**

I have put in 17 years, I work hard, I could now use a little support because I have the children and I don't feel I'm getting it. I am a Constable. What benefits are there to seniority or dedicated service?

**Wife:**

Speaking from a wife's point of view I feel that the main problem with us and with many of other members marriages is the RCMP member attitude of superiority and their "cold" reactions in serious matters. I never felt that I was truly respected for my role in our marriage. Policemen are extremely difficult to get close to. They

seem to shut down emotionally. My husband and I are now seeking a divorce as we could not rectify our differences. This is my husband's second marriage and divorce.

I honestly feel from speaking to many other police wives in troubled marriages that something has to be done to improve the attitudes of most policemen. We all agreed that it must be something instilled in the members during training. They seem to be "holier than thou" and very intolerant of others who are not as perfect. I speak from much experience as I have a father, two brothers, two uncles and one brother-in-law in the force.

Husband:

Services are there-- people however only seem to use them when it's too late!

Husband:

The force depends on the supervisor who in most cases can't recognize the stressors and in the remainder of cases doesn't want to bring this topic up or deal with it. This supervisor only deals with the issue when he/she has to.

Wife:

Our marriage difficulties are due to lack of showing love (hugs, snuggle, affections, kisses etc.). As well as my requests are not heard. Very frustrating.

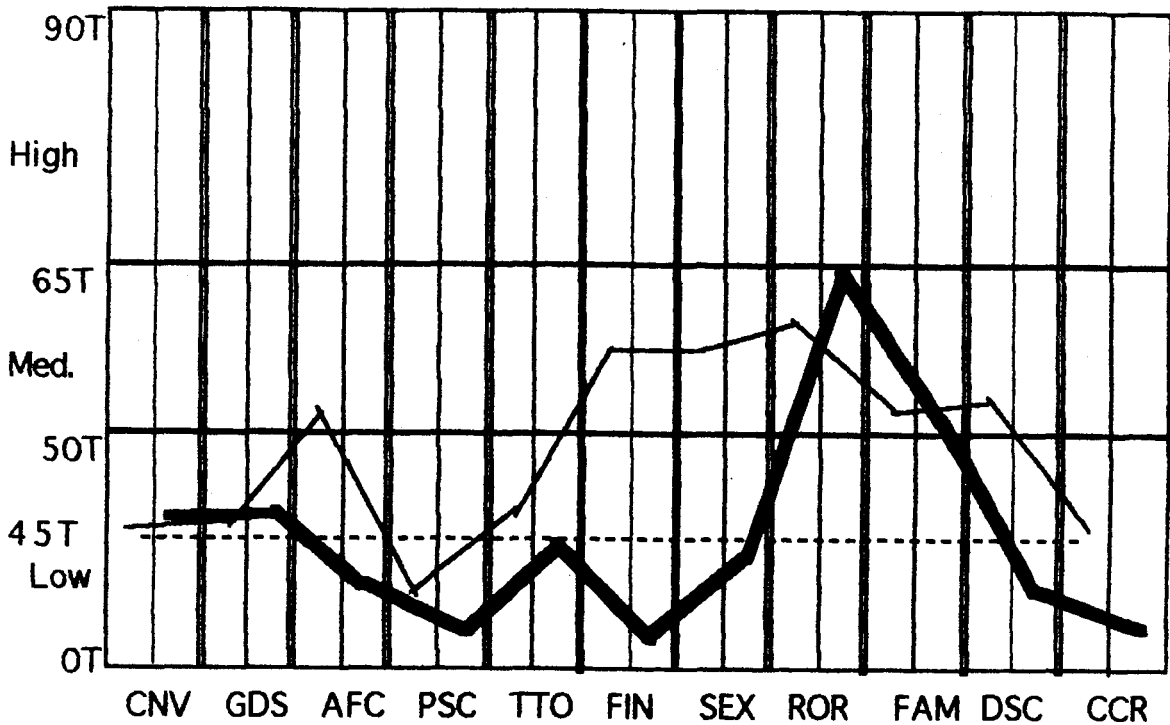
Husband:

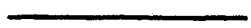
I do not believe that most of management takes any cognizance of marital distress.

## MODERATE SCORES ON CNV

Moderate scores on the CNV scale (45T to 60T) are frequently observed within the general population and, at the upper end of this range, may reflect strong positive feelings within the marriage. This is not intended to suggest that there are no areas of the marriage that are of concern to one or both spouses. However, based upon the data provided by the respondents, it is assumed that these marriages are enjoying a high degree of normalcy. These data are presented in Tables 10 through 17, for couples #10 through #17.

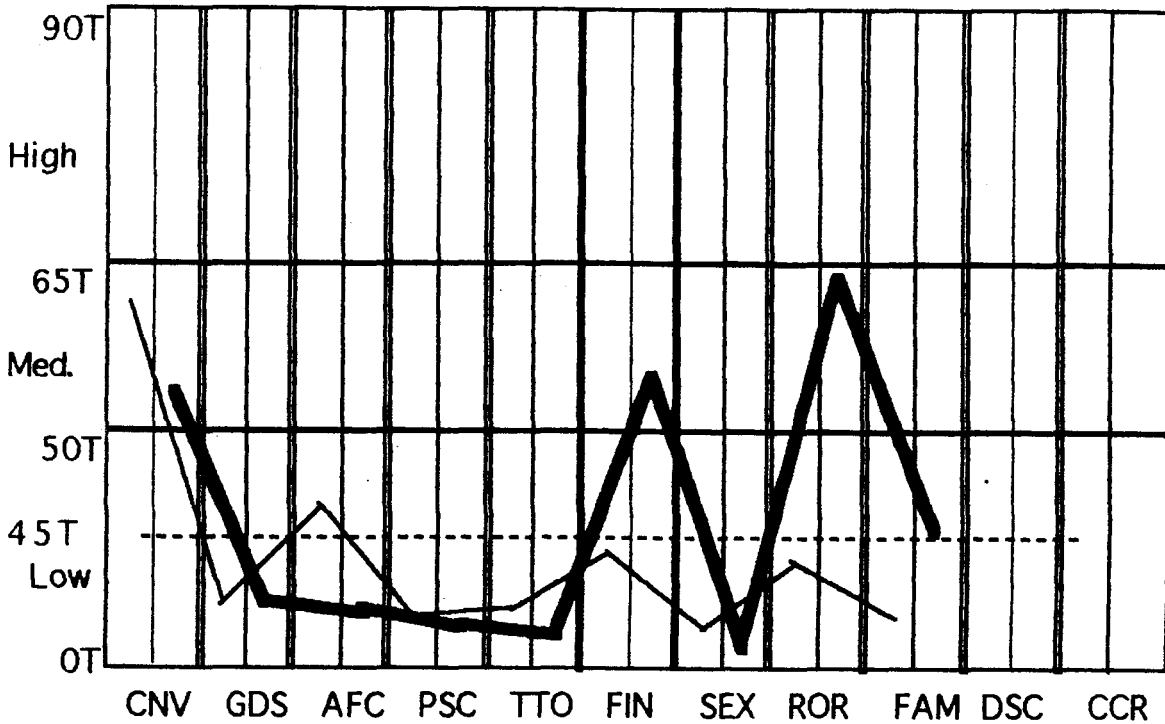
Table 10  
Couple #10





Wife:  Low = Below 45T  
 Husband:  Medium (Med.) = 45T to 65T  
 High = Above 65T

**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem-Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing

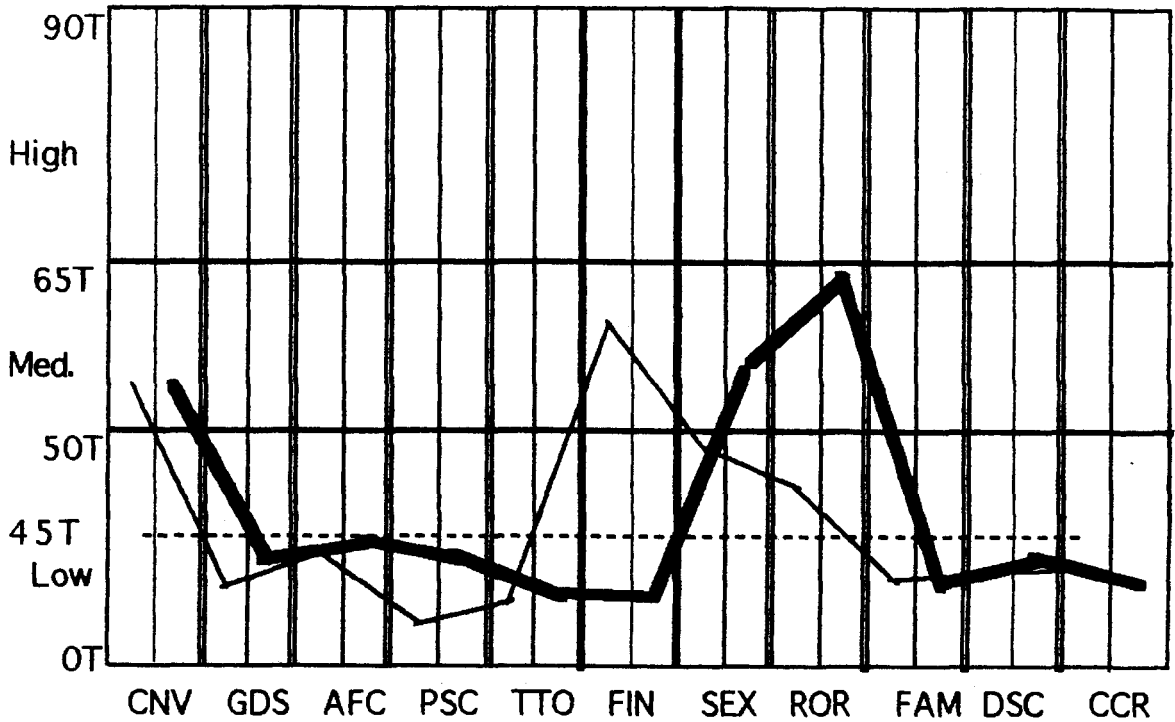
Table 11  
Couple #11



Wife:  Low = Below 45T  
 Husband:  Medium(Med.) = 45T to 65T  
 High = Above 65T

**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem-Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing

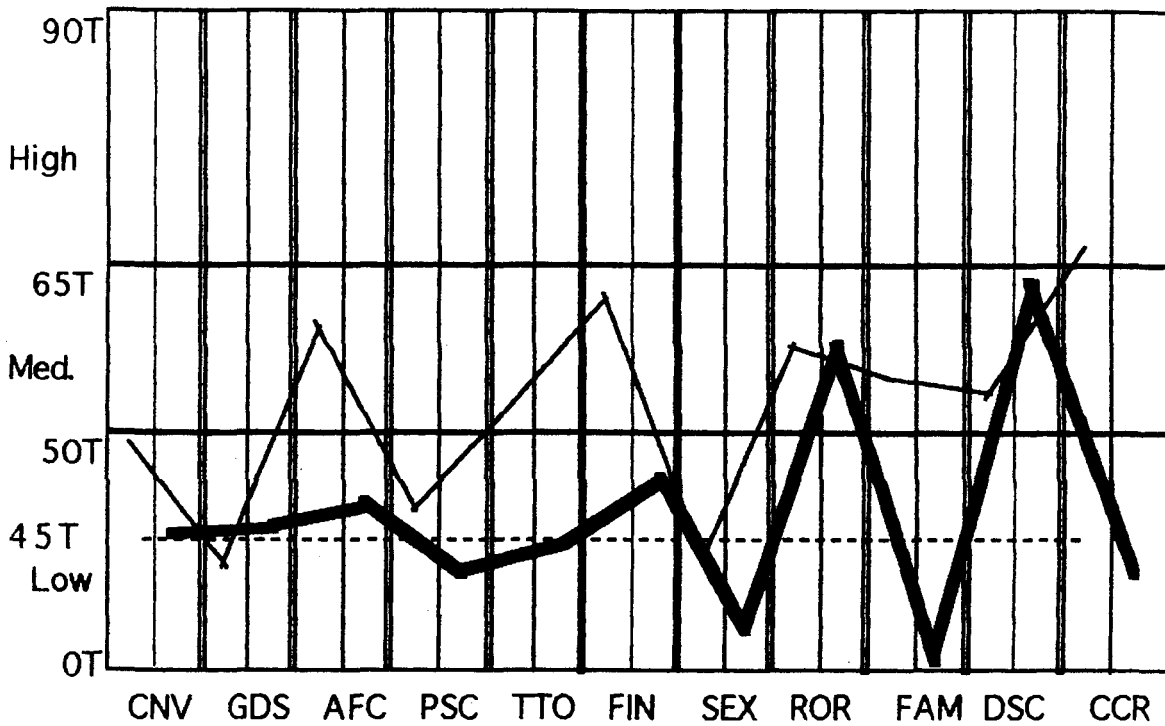
Table 12  
Couple #12



Wife:  Low = Below 45T  
 Husband:  Medium(Med.) = 45T to 65T  
 High = Above 65T

**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem-Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing

Table 13  
Couple #13

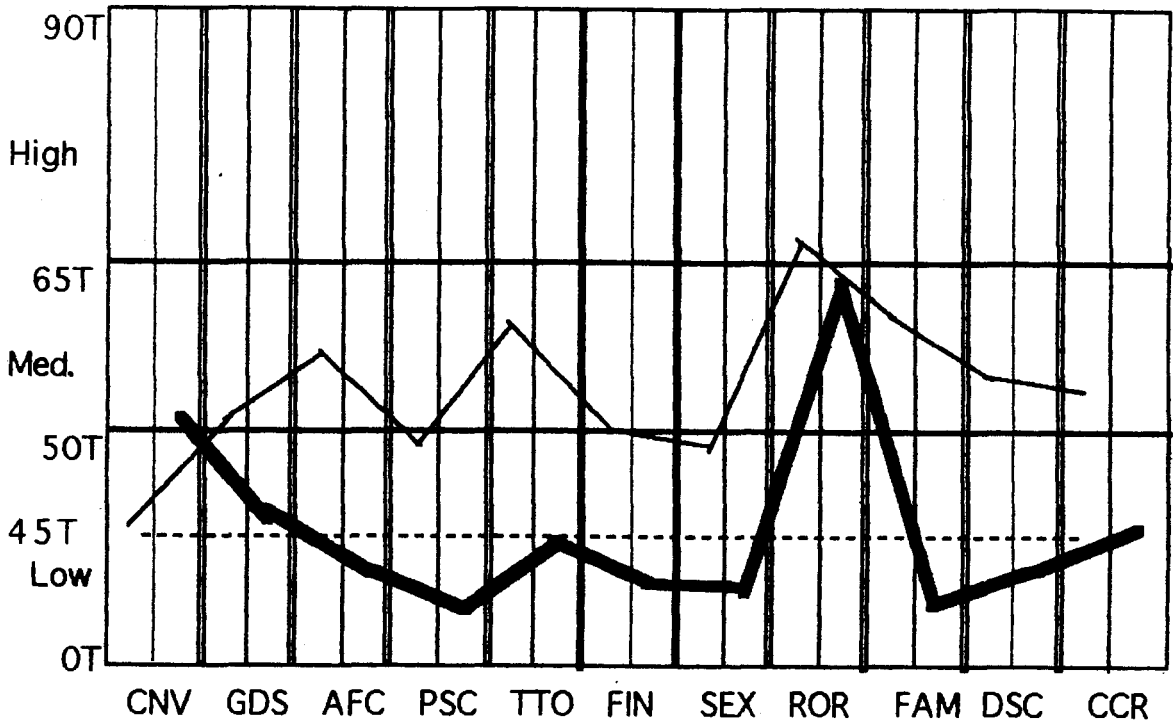


Wife: \_\_\_\_\_ Low = Below 45T  
 Husband: \_\_\_\_\_ Medium(Med.) = 45T to 65T  
 High = Above 65T

**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem-Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing



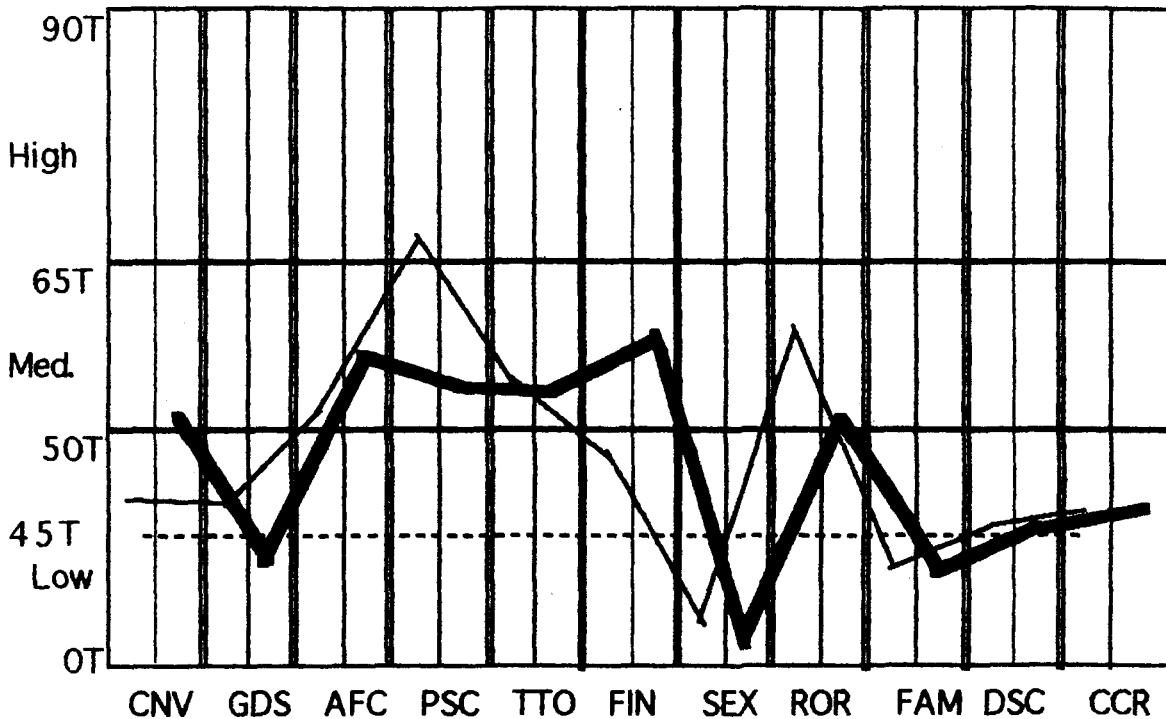
Table 14  
Couple #14



Wife: \_\_\_\_\_ Low = Below 45T  
 Husband: \_\_\_\_\_ Medium(Med.) = 45T to 65T  
 High = Above 65T

**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem-Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing

Table 15  
Couple #15

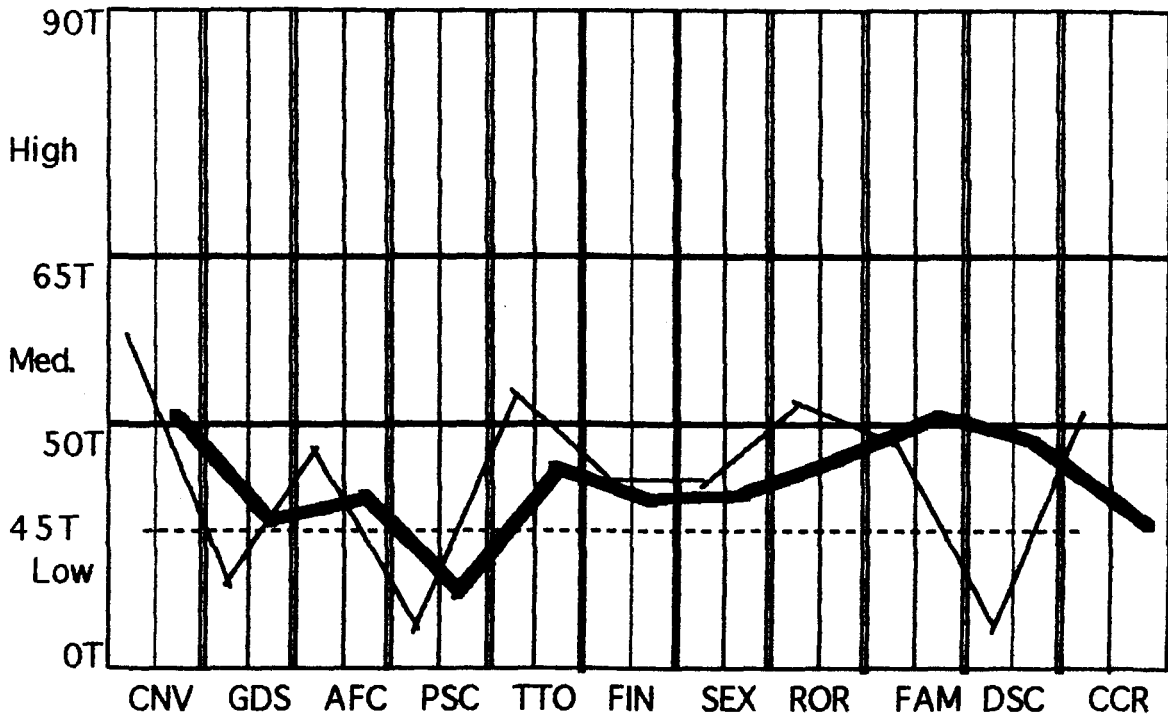


Wife: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Husband: \_\_\_\_\_

Low = Below 45T  
 Medium(Med.) = 45T to 65T  
 High = Above 65T

**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem-Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing

Table 16  
Couple #16

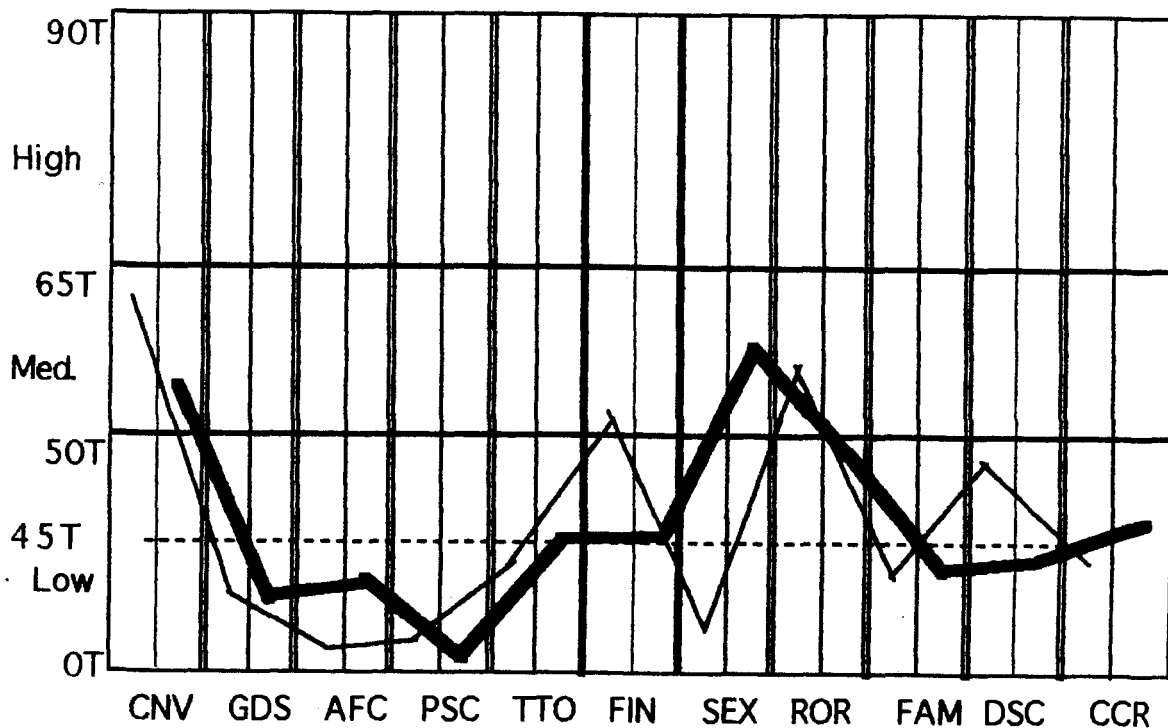


Wife: —————  
 Husband: —————

Low = Below 45T  
 Medium(Med.) = 45T to 65T  
 High = Above 65T

**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem-Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing

Table 17  
Couple #17



Wife: Low = Below 45T  
 Husband: Medium(Med.) = 45T to 65T  
 High = Above 65T

**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem-Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing

For couples to fall into this category of "normalcy" it is necessary for them to score between 45T and 65T on the CNV scale. The other scores, with the exception of ROR, e.g. GDS, AFC, PSC, TTO, FIN, SEX, FAM DSC and CCR, would, under most circumstances fall below 50T. The exception of the ROR score is that this scale assesses role preferences, not role conflict, and can point to the differences in traditional and nontraditional marital and parental sex roles.

Although couples #10 to #17 are reporting scores in the Moderate range on the CNV scale (see Tables 10 to 17), it appears from the data collected, that except for the ROR scale, there are a number of MSI scales that are only marginally close to the Moderate category. In other words, scores in the Moderate range are not consistent across the profiles. For example, in Tables 10, 13, 14, and 15 the wives in the AFC scales are scoring well into the Moderate category in comparison to Tables 12 and 16 where the wives are scoring in the Low category. The wives in Tables 11 and 17 are also very close to scoring in the Moderate category. This is in contrast to only one husband who has indicated that he has moderate levels of discontent on the AFC scale.

Within the TTO scale as well, one-half of the wives scoring in the Moderate CNV category had elevated scores on the TTO scale. Tables 13, 14, 15 and 17 show the wives in these couples indicating scores in the Moderate level on the MSI. More significant is the number of wives that scored in the Moderate category on the CNV scale but scored in the Moderate category on the FIN scale. Tables 10, 12, 13, 14, and 16 show wives scoring well into the Moderate category suggesting that there is an increasing concern with financial matters within the marriages. The MSI Manual suggests that scores in the Moderate category on the FIN scale indicates that arguments about money are common and frequently extend beyond the adequacy of income to meet necessary expenses. The MSI Manual also suggests that for women in particular, elevations on FIN may reflect strong disagreement with their husband's fiscal priorities. While the collective AFC scores for the husbands points to "things being quite satisfactory with open affective expression and feelings of interpersonal closeness," (author's quote) the results on the AFC scale show the males in these marriages are or may not be aware of the possible growing discontent of their wives with regard to how they communicate or do not communicate their affective expression and feelings of affection and interpersonal closeness.

A similar pattern appears in the elevated score for wives on the TTO scale. Although the wives' scores on the TTO are marginally below the cut-off score for the Moderate TTO category, the possibility exists that the wives have a growing or higher degree of concern about the lack of opportunity or perceived desire for shared leisure activity with their husbands. This is supported by Aharan's (1984) research that husband police officers spent inordinate amounts of time at their work place. Aharan reports that police officers believe that to do well in police work they must give up their days off and even their annual leaves to the job.

Aharan suggests that:

It is apparent that a good portion of the time spent on or around the job is spent because the individual prefers to be there than elsewhere.... Many families seem to adjust by accepting the fact that they must always play "second fiddle" to the police department (p. 13).

Once again caution must be taken with these interpretations because the GDS score was below the score of 50T, indicating that specific sources of discontent potentially reflected on other MSI scales are likely to be perceived by the individual as having little bearing on the overall relationship. Notwithstanding the wives in this study do exhibit some concerns about their relationships.

## Anecdotal Comments From The Moderate CNV Responses

Thirty-three percent of the couples responding to the MSI reported scores on their CNV in the Moderate category. Moderate scores at the upper end of the scale may reflect strong positive feelings within the marriage. However, lower scores on this CNV scale in the Moderate category may indicate a guarded prognosis. Respondents may be reluctant to disclose marital difficulties or may describe them only in a general, non-specific manner. A sample of comments made to open-ended questions by couples who scored in this category follows:

### Husband:

The force does not consider a spouse to have any value whatsoever. The force does not respond to needs of a spouse or family member. A spouse is rarely included in force training programs such as stress management or E.A.P. work.

### Wife:

Research proves sexual gratification is not important to a good marriage. Part II dealt a great amount of questions to the quantity and quality of sex. Perhaps more questions should have dealt with: (1) politics in the force (2) moving away from immediate family (3) spouse's career treated as second rate (4) loss of collateral when transferred (5) children being moved from school to school (6) male oriented activities which usually involve alcohol (7) the danger involved in spouse's occupation.



I feel Part II was a way to "pass the buck" on the problems of marriage happiness. The above-mentioned reasons are much more valid. All marriages have stress caused by children. I am thankful for a great marriage in spite of my husband's career.

**Author's Note:** It is interesting to note that this person, although reporting a great marriage, scored in the high Moderate category on the MSI in Affective Communication, Disagreement About Finances, Family History Of Distress, Dissatisfaction With Children and in the High category on the MSI in Conflict Over Childrearing. This was in contrast to her husband reporting in the Low category in all the aforementioned categories.

**Wife:**

My husband feels my job is a "Jobette." Something to keep me from nagging. But boy does he ever love my paycheck. I believe in doing my share at the workplace yet he feels I should look the other way. Not my line of thinking.

**Husband:**

Marital distress is still considered as a personal problem that should be looked after by the member and if it is not done successfully it is viewed as a weakness in the member. The force does not tolerate weakness or a sign of weakness in its members.

**Wife:**

Research of this nature is long overdue! I would hope the results of the study will provide adequate counselling for members and spouses without jeopardizing the member's career. Emphasis particularly on General Duty, Drug Squad and undercover positions. Published results would be of interest.

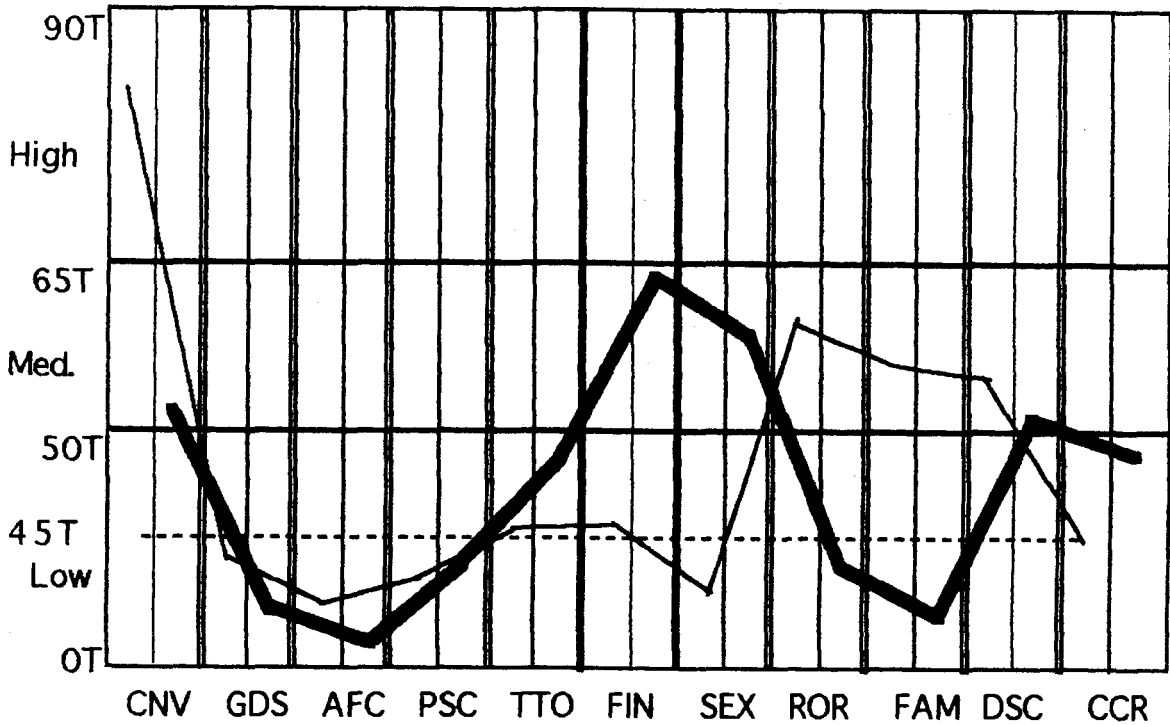
Husband:

This member was involved in a serious motor vehicle accident, which hospitalized the member for 11 weeks. My wife received no consultation from the force which caused additional distress.

### HIGH SCORES ON CNV SCALE

High scores on the CNV scale (above 60T), reflect a naive, uncritical appraisal of the marital relationship. There is reason to suspect with scores in this range that the respondent may be reluctant or unable to deal with current or future difficulties within the marriage. In couples #18 through #24, (see Tables 18 through 24) one or both partners fall into this group.

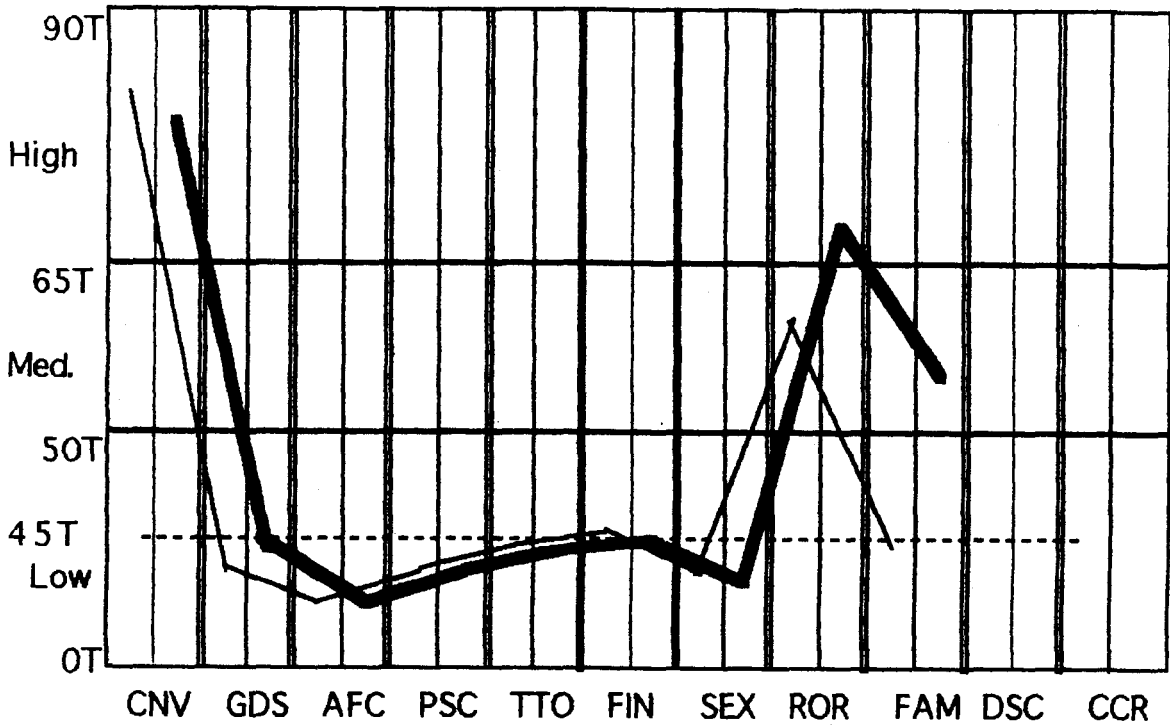
Table 18  
Couple #18



Wife: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Husband: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Low = Below 45T  
 Medium(Med.) = 45T to 65T  
 High = Above 65T

**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem-Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing

Table 19  
Couple #19

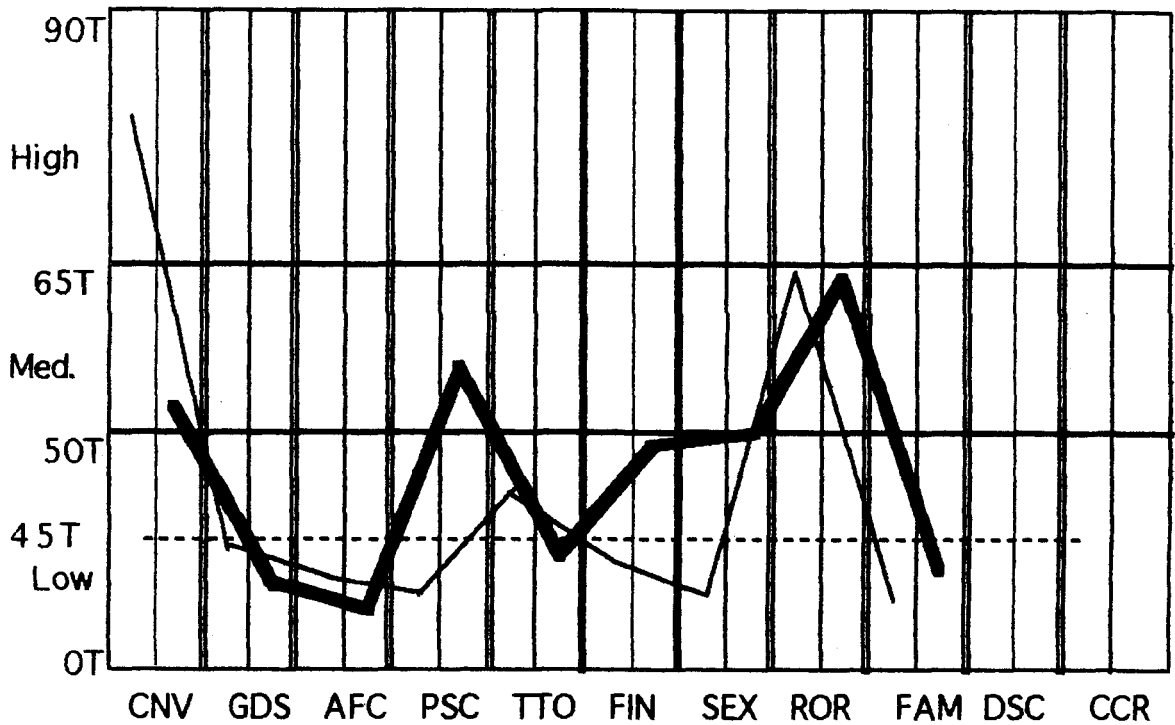




Wife: —————  
 Husband: —————

Low = Below 45T  
 Medium(Med.) = 45T to 65T  
 High = Above 65T

**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem-Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing

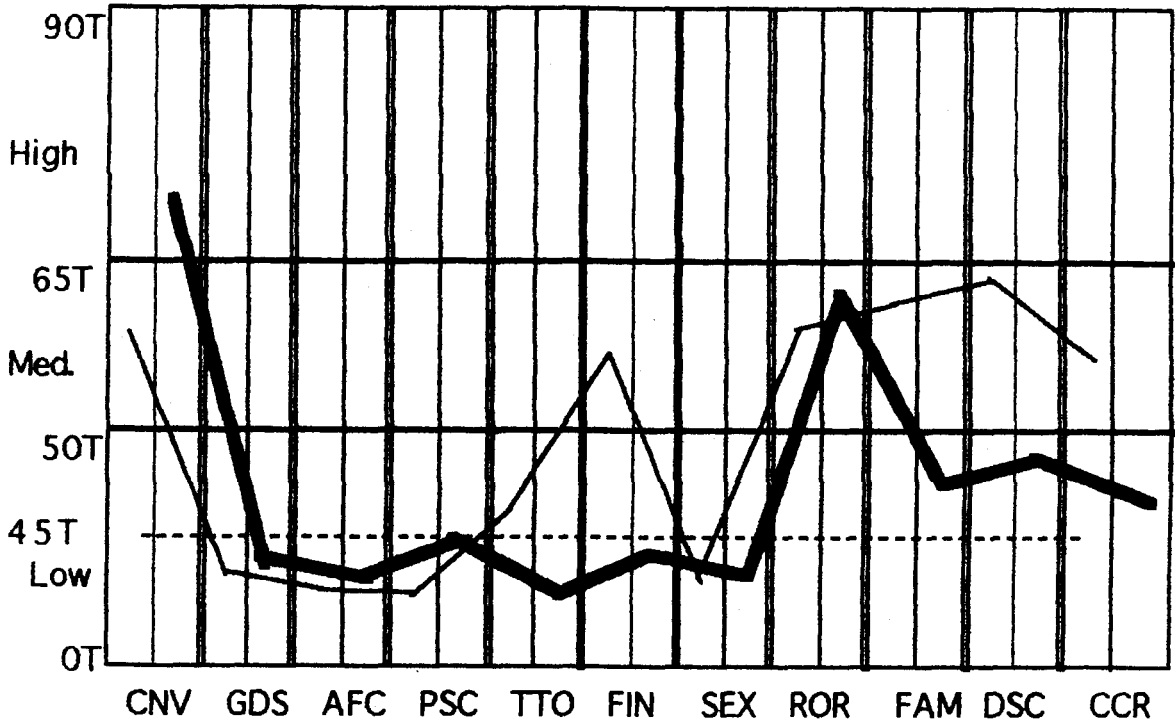
Table 20  
Couple #20



Wife:   
 Husband:  Low = Below 45T  
 Medium(Med.) = 45T to 65T  
 High = Above 65T

**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem-Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing

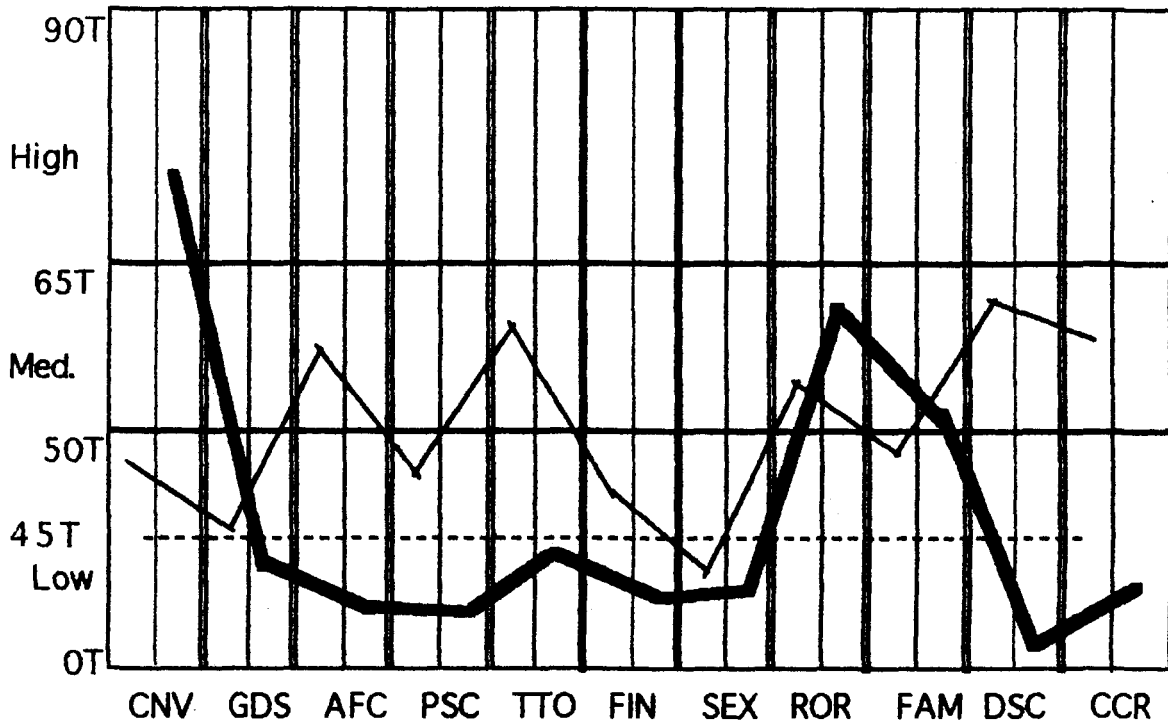
Table 21  
Couple #21



Wife: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Husband: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Low = Below 45T  
 Medium(Med.) = 45T to 65T  
 High = Above 65T

**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem-Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing

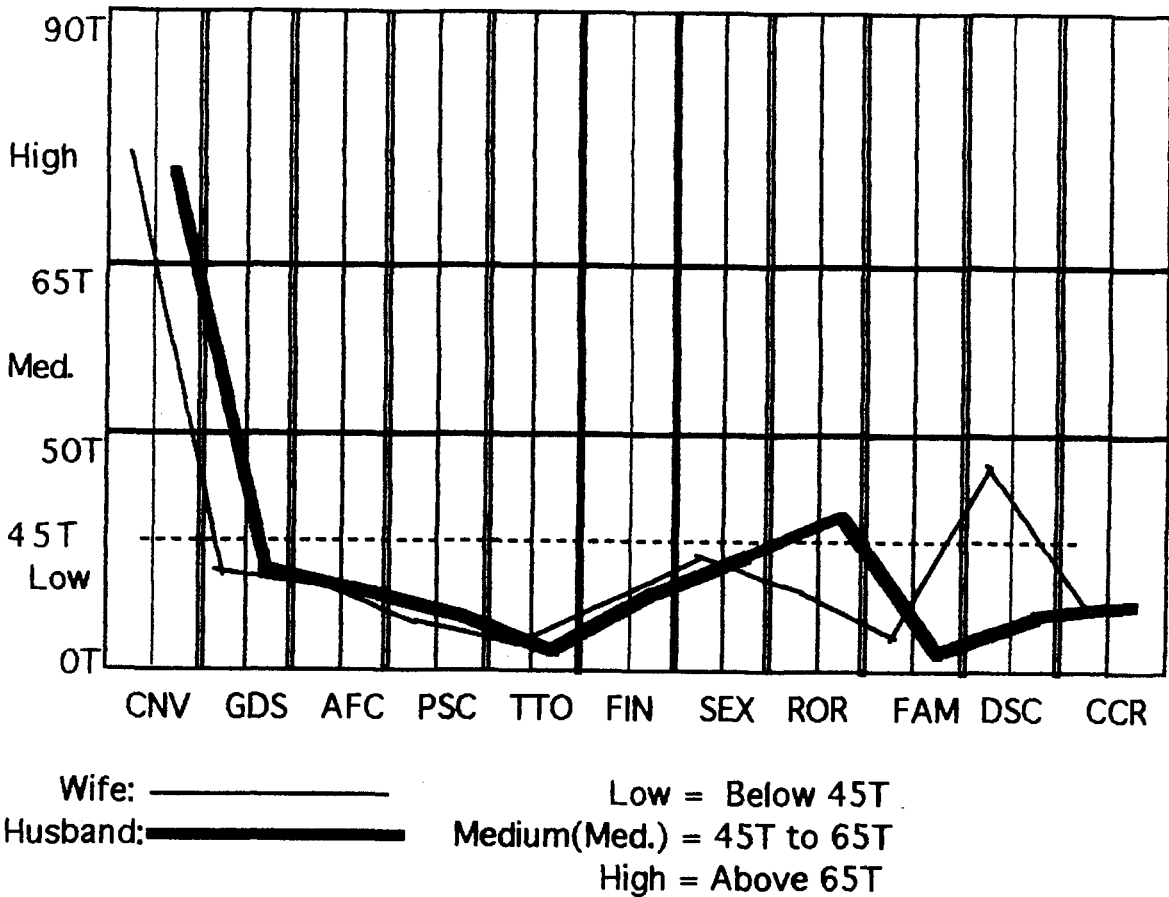
Table 22  
Couple #22



Wife: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Husband: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Low = Below 45T  
 Medium(Med.) = 45T to 65T  
 High = Above 65T

**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem-Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing

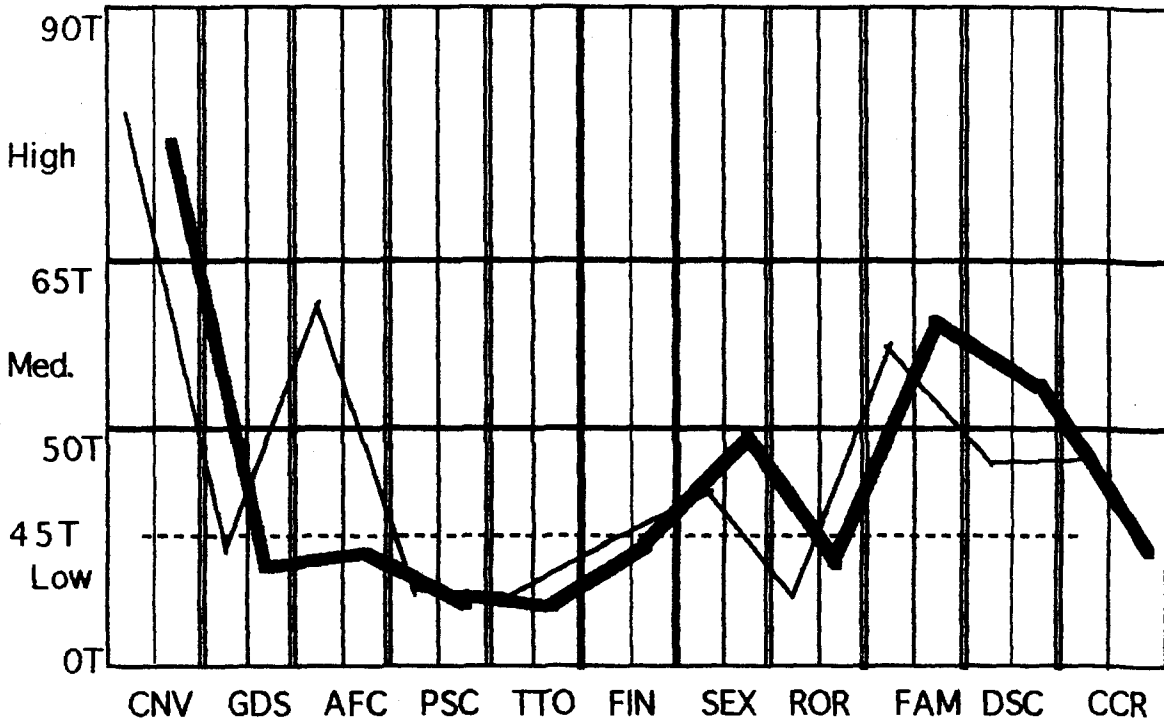
Table 23  
Couple #23



**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem-Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing



Table 24  
Couple #24



Wife: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Husband: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Low = Below 45T  
 Medium(Med.) = 45T to 65T  
 High = Above 65T

**MSI Category Legend:** CNV - Conventionalization, GDS - Global Distress, AFC - Affective Communication, PSC - Problem-Solving Communication, TTO - Time Together, FIN - Disagreement About Finances, SEX - Sexual Dissatisfaction, ROR - Role Orientation, FAM - Family History of Distress, DSC - Dissatisfaction With Children, CCR - Conflict Over Childrearing

In the sample studied, thirty percent of the couples show at least one spouse reporting high CNV scores on the MSI. In three of the seven couples (see Couples #19, #23, and #24), both the husband and wife show high scores. In four of the seven couples (see Couple #18, #20, #21 and #23), one spouse reported a CNV score at the moderate level. However, none of those four or any of the others in this group had moderate or high elevations on the Global Distress scale. This low GDS score suggests feelings of closeness to one's spouse, commitment to the present relationship, and the general absence of pervasive difficulties in the relationship seen in the CNV profile.

Further analysis reveals that two couples (see Couples #18 and #24) had one spouse score in the High CNV category, suggesting a naive, uncritically favourable appraisal of the marital relationship while also scoring moderate levels of distress in the FAM, DSC scales. While one spouse is reporting High CNV scores, in Couples #18, #20, #21, and #22 the other spouse is reporting a Moderate score, indicating contentment in the relationship, while showing elevated levels in the Moderate category in AFC, TTO, SEX, FAM and DSC scales.

## Anecdotal Comments From The High CNV Responses

Respondents in this study in which one or both spouses scored in the High category on the MSI constituted thirty percent. While MSI scores in this category might reasonably be achieved by some individuals during periods of unusual marital harmony, there is reason to suspect on a clinical basis, however, that persons with CNV scores in this range may be reluctant or unable to deal with current or future difficulties on an objective basis. The following is a sample of comments from husbands and wives who scored High on the CNV scale:

Wife (Member):

Like most government agencies it can't be bothered to assist in personal matter of its employees.

The fact that members married to each other have double the stress factor due to shift work, the job itself, and for couples with children, daycare, etc. That there are no concrete policies on postings for married members and the uncertainty of being transferred to different locations can be a stress factor as well. It seems each detachment makes its own rules for married members. Some detachments allow members married to each other to work in the same office and other detachments don't allow it. Where is the consistency in that? I'm not saying that it is better to have the couple in the same detachment, but if a couple does not wish transfers, why should they be transferred because of the fact they are married? This is a concern for all people involved.

**Wife:**

They don't take the families' concerns into account on transfers, the amount of time the member is expected to be away from his family. Sometimes the stress of waiting for decisions that affect the member and family can go on for months.

**Husband:**

I have never been in a position to call upon the force for marital assistance and because it is a very private ordeal I have never discussed it with anyone who has experienced marital distress. My gut feeling however, is that the force (Staffing & Personnel Branch) does not fully consider a member's marital concerns when involved in transfer planning.

### **PART III OF QUESTIONNAIRE**

Part III (see Appendix B) of the questionnaire package asked the respondents for additional information about the marriage. The questions and responses are presented below:

Have you blended children from previous marriages or from being a single parent into this present marriage?    **Yes**      **No**

From the 24 couples' responses, there were no blended families from the present marriage or from past marriages.

The next question asked of the respondents was:

Is (has) alcohol abuse or substance abuse been a problem in this relationship within the last year?    Yes            No

The female spouses response to this question was: one hundred percent answered this question with a NO answer. The male spouses answered ninety-nine percent NO and one percent (one person) YES. The table that was presented in the questionnaire to determine the frequency and type of alcohol being consumed did not receive adequate response to be able to make comment on.

The next question asked of the couples was:

Do you feel the force addresses marital distress adequately?

The response to this question by the female respondents was ninety-nine percent NO and one percent YES. The male respondents answered with seventy-one percent indicating NO and twenty-nine percent indicating YES.

## SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of this study on marital discord show that there is a high incidence of marital discord (distress) in at least 37% of the population studied, and suspicion of marital discord in another 30% of that population, as revealed in CNV scores. Other scales as well as anecdotal comments were also indicators of marital discord in this group. In approximately one-third of the sample, one or both partners scored in the High category (above 65T) on the CNV scale, suggesting a naive, uncritical appraisal of the marital relationship, as well as a closeness to one's spouse. These conflicting data cast suspicion on the health of these marriages and that suspicion is further aroused by elevated scores on various other dimensions of the scale.

Approximately one-third of the couples studied reported that they thought their marriages were quite adequate and showed scores on the CNV scale in the moderate range. This was also supported by the low scores on the GDS scale. However, closer examination revealed strong differences between husbands and wives on a number of scales. Wives in this group of marriages, although reporting moderate levels on the CNV

scale and low scores on the GDS scale showed elevated levels of difference on the AFC and TTO scales. On the FIN scale wives scored on average in the moderate category. The pattern for these three scales, AFC, TTO, and FIN suggests that the husbands in these relationships indicate that their marriages are quite fine. However, when interfaced with the wives' results it would appear that the wives have some concern or conflict with their husbands as shown on three of the eleven scales.

This chapter presented the findings from the study of marital distress among twenty-four couples of a RCMP detachment. The chapter also interpreted the results of these findings. Chapter Five presents a summary of the findings, draws conclusions, examines implications and makes recommendations for further research.

## Chapter 5

### FINDINGS

This study gathered data about the incidence of marital distress in a selected group of married police officers at an RCMP detachment. Seventy two couples received copies of a three-part questionnaire that required them to supply demographics, complete the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI), and respond to questions about aspects of their relationship. From sixty-four individual responses, it was possible to match twenty-four couples. These twenty-four couples became the sample studied.

This chapter summarizes the findings from the study, draws conclusions based on the data gathered, and examines implications of the study. It also makes recommendations for further research.

In light of the high incidence of divorce and separation reported in the police community, it was not surprising to find marital distress in 37% of the couples and the suspicion of distress in 30% of the couples responding.



The hypothesis that high stress-related occupations such as police work would have a high incidence of marital discord was not fully supported in the responses on the MSI scales, however, the anecdotal comments of the respondents tended to reveal stress. Among the twenty-four couples who responded to the questionnaire, there appears to be marital distress in nine of the marriages and the suspicion of marital distress in seven of the marital profiles. Areas of reported discord included overall dissatisfaction with the marriage in general, inadequate expressions of affection and caring, lack of empathy and understanding from spouse, ineffectiveness in resolving differences, insufficient time together, disagreement about finances, sexual dissatisfaction, problems with role orientation, lack of closeness among family members, dissatisfaction with children, conflict over childrearing and an inclination to be unrealistic about the nature and extent of the interpersonal dynamics in the relationship. In the remaining third of the sample, the eight couples' responses, while falling into generally "normal" levels, tended to reveal, upon closer examination, incidence of strong differences between partners in assessing their relationship, with wives more often expressing concern with husbands, husbands tending to indicate their marriages were "quite fine" and the data pointing to likely unrealistic appraisal of the marital

conditions. Among these eight couples, there is reason to believe, from the data, that life at home is far from harmonious.

Anecdotal accounts drawn from the sixteen couples who reported either severe or moderate dissatisfaction add additional weight to the findings of marital stress. Reports of "help needed" and not available, of "many other police wives in troubled marriages," of "police officers' refusal to seek help," of "inability to recognize stressors," of "avoidance," of "lack of ability to show affection," and "inadequate resources for marital and personal counselling," and "the stress of the job," indicates serious concern for these relationships.

Anecdotal comments from the eight couples whose scores fell in the "normal" ranges on the MSI scales tend to suggest lives that are far from harmonious. Lack of respect in the force for wives, distress with children, sexism, and need for counselling were mentioned as conditions which interfere with marital harmony.

The conclusion drawn from the study is that marital distress exists to a considerable extent in nine of the marriages studied. It also appears

that stress is likely to exist, in seven of the marriages studied. Even if these latter seven marriages are not included in the total picture, the incidence of stress in 37% of the studied population is sufficient to alert authorities to a problem that warrants thoughtful and serious attention. Because of the limited nature of the sample and the inappropriateness of generalizing from the sample, it is difficult to know if these levels of stress exist in other police officers' groups. The data in this study point to the need for additional data.

### **IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

There are several implications which may be drawn from the study:

1. The data point to acknowledgement of the existence of job-related stress in police work that is both concomitant to, and contributing to marital stress. It may be important, in recruitment, training and inservice training with police officers, to address job-related stress and its carry-over to marital relationships in a more systematic and therapeutic way.

2. In and among the data are numerous references to the need for special programs that address interpersonal relationships among the police community. To be effective, such programs would, of necessity, have to be run by qualified personnel, and provide serious and sustained effort in dealing with these problems.

3. The data reveal instances of "denial" -- that is, respondents who are unable to realistically perceive the marital disharmony that exists in their homes. Such denial is not only psychologically unhealthy for the individual, it is also likely to be a problem or become a problem in the relationship. The availability of therapeutic treatment may be an important dimension in overcoming the individual's need to deny, and in building more nourishing interpersonal relationships.

4. Individuals in the study have pointed dramatically to the "need for help" -- both for officers and their wives. Counselling services for both short and long term treatment seems to be indicated.

5. With number of the marriages in the sample "in difficulty," the need for marriage counselling seems also to be indicated. Such counselling

services may not only serve to keep some marriages intact, but may also have direct and substantial payoff for a more effective on-the-job performance. Such counselling in other instances has been successful and found to be both effective, as well as cost effective.

6. Police officers who are in "high stress relationships" would be expected to find their on-the-job performance inevitably affected by that stress. Supervisors might be more alert to these symptoms and perhaps trained to identify them, and to urge referrals for therapeutic treatment.

7. Finally, it appears appropriate that special programs be made available for spouses of police officers in which they might find mutual, collegial support, guidance, and help with specific problems. Spouses who feel alone, alienated and "left out" and who have very little understanding of the nature of the job, are more likely to experience and contribute to the stress in the relationship.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Several suggestions are made for further study. For example:

1. What is the incidence of marital stress in other RCMP detachments?

Are the findings comparable?

2. What is the relationship of marital stress and on the job performance?

3. To what extent does the job of police work contribute to marital stress?

4. What aspects of police work contribute more to marital stress?

5. How do police officers perceive counselling, as a method of treatment?

**APPENDIX A**  
**ETHICS APPROVAL**

# SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

VICE-PRESIDENT, RESEARCH



BURNABY, BRITISH COLUMBIA  
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April 23, 1991

Mr. Terence W. Brennen  
Faculty of Education  
Simon Fraser University  
Burnaby, B.C.

Dear Mr. Brennen:

**Re: Study Of Marital Discord In The Royal Canadian  
Mounted Police**

This is to advise that the above referenced application has been approved on behalf of the University Ethics Review Committee.

Sincerely,

William Leiss, Chair  
University Ethics Review  
Committee

cc: P. Winne  
S. Wassermann



**APPENDIX B**  
**LETTER of INTRODUCTION CO "E" Div.**

**Dear Participants,**

**The police community is often confronted with concerns relating to a spectrum of health issues. One of the more frequent occurrences is the distress accompanying marital problems or break-up. To date little research has been conducted on the subject of marriage in the police community.**

**I would hope, with the help of your participation in this research being conducted by the Health Services Branch, that a better understanding of marriage among members families will be realized. It is important for the future well being of members and their families.**

**Thank you for your cooperation.**

**D.K. Wilson, Deputy Commissioner  
Commanding Officer, "E" Division**

**APPENDIX C**  
**LETTER from DIVISION PSYCHOLOGIST**

Dear Participant,

Marriage researcher's report high levels of distress in the North American population. In Canada one in three marriages fails and in the United States 50% fail. These statistics have no boundaries and permeate all professions including the police profession.

Although much has been written on Stress in our everyday working life, little has been researched or written about the stresses of the police officers marital relationship. It is for this reason that the Health Services Branch would like to solicit your help by asking you to participate in our own RCMP study..

You can participate as a couple anonymously or you are free to decline participation if you so choose. The answer sheets will be tabulated and then destroyed. The results of this study will be used to enhance the broad spectrum of training for members and their spouses.

## **Instructions:**

Enclosed you will find a booklet of questions with seperate answer sheets for each partner to complete. I would ask that each of you complete the answer sheets on your own, then mail seperately your completed ANSWER SHEETS Part I, Part II and Part III in the Postage Paid addressed envelope.

**Remember to mail only the Part I, Part II and Part III Answer Sheet in the self addressed envelopes.**

Thank you for your cooperation.

Dr. E. Kramer,  
Regional Psychologist  
RCMP "E" Division

**APPENDIX D**  
**FOLLOW-UP LETTER to RESPONDENTS**

Dear Participant,

I am writing just to remind you of the questionnaire that you recieved in the mail. I would appreciate if you could take the time to complete the questionnaires, specifically the three parts, Part I, Part II with the answer sheet and Part III. Please return these completed questionnaires in the postage paid self addressed envelope supplied to you.

If you have already completed and returned the noted questionnaires, then disregard this notice.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Dr. E. Kramer  
Regional Psychologist  
R.C.M.Police "E" Division

**APPENDIX E**  
**PART I OF QUESTIONNAIRE**

## Part I

### Demographic Information

Please fill in the blank or circle the appropriate answer.

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: Male Female

Member: Yes No

Number of Children: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years Married: \_\_\_\_\_



**APPENDIX F**  
**PART III OF QUESTIONNAIRE**

## Part III

### Additional Information:

The following questions would assist in completing the overall picture of our research. Your anonymity is still preserved. However, you may choose not to complete this section or parts within.

Number of years service: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of times married: \_\_\_\_\_

Branch of Force (Ex.; General Duties, G.I.S. etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle the appropriate answer:

Have you blended children from previous marriages or from being a single parent into this present marriage:      Yes      No

Is (has) alcohol abuse or substance abuse been a problem in this relationship within the last year:      Yes      No

Would you like to comment: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

**During the last 12 MONTHS about how often did you drink:**

	5-7 Days per Week	1-4 Days per Week	1-3 Days per Week	1 or more days past 12 months	No days past 12 months
(a) Beer (8 or more bottles, cans or glasses, approx. 3 litres or more in a SINGLE DAY.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Wine (8 or more glasses approx. 1 litre in a SINGLE DAY.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Liquor (8 or more drinks approx. a mickey of liquor in a SINGLE DAY.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Do you feel the Force addresses marital distress adequately?**

Yes No

**Would you care to comment?**

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**Are there any other areas of distress in your marriage that you feel you would like to comment on that have not been addressed:**

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