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UNIVERSITY... Of Alberta.....

DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS PRESENTED.. Ph.D......

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED. 1971.....

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
MARITAL ADJUSTMENT AND IRRATIONAL IDEAS

by



JOSEPH M. EISENBERG

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 1971

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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## ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine if a relationship exists between Ellis' conceptualization of irrational ideas and the marital relationship. It was hypothesized that individuals who experience marital difficulties demonstrate higher degrees of irrational thinking than individuals who do not experience such difficulties.

Subjects for this study were selected from two finite urban populations. One group consisted of married individuals being seen for marital counselling, while the control group consisted of married individuals not being seen for marital counselling. Two inventories were administered to the subjects in both groups: the Marital-Adjustment Inventory and the Irrational Ideas Inventory. The former provided a measure of marital adjustment, while the latter provided a measure of irrational ideas.

A 2 X 2 factorial analysis was conducted. The experimental group (individuals being seen for marital counselling) demonstrated higher scores on the measure of Irrational Ideas than did the control group (individuals not being seen for marital counselling). The experimental group also demonstrated lower levels of marital adjustment than did the control group. The additional finding that males in the experimental group indicated higher levels of marital adjustment compared with females in the same group was interpreted on the basis of the differences between males and females with respect to cognitive and perceptual orientation.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

**The writer wishes to thank his committee for their guidance and support in the development of this study and acknowledges the help of Larry Cash and Verne Sparks.**

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Marriage may be studied from three broad perspectives. The first perspective involves general demographic description of various aspects of marriage. Statistical description often consists of demographic data concerning such aspects of marriage as total number of marriages within a given age range, number of married couples with or without children, frequency of divorce within a given age range, frequency of remarriage after divorce for males as opposed to females, etc. Such descriptive data are frequently employed to identify general marital patterns or emerging trends. However, such data do not explain the reasons for general marital patterns or trends. For example, to say the number of teenage marriages increased between the years 1962 to 1968, does not indicate why they increased.

The second broad perspective for the study of marriages attempts to explain marriage dynamics of the marital relationship. Attempts are made to understand why and how individuals in the marital relationship behave as they do, emphasizing that such individuals are members of a unit or system and their behaviour a result of the relationship itself.

The third perspective, however, views the individuals as unique contributors to the marital relationship and not just components of a system. The emphasis in this perspective is placed on the personality dynamics of the individuals in the marriage. Thus, how the individuals behave in the marital relationship is seen not just as a function of the



relationship but also as a function of the personalities of the individuals. A husband and wife who argue a great deal do not argue simply because they are husband and wife. Their individual personalities contribute heavily to their behaviour in the relationship.

Although the third perspective emphasizes individual personality dynamics, the individual's behaviour is still seen in context of the marital relationship. This is not to imply that an individual behaves in the marital relationship independently of his behaviour outside the relationship. Rather, his behaviour in marriage is seen as an extension of his behaviour in general; it is a specific result of his general personality under the conditions of interpersonal relationships. If the individual has difficulty in his close interpersonal relationships outside of marriage, he also will tend to have difficulty within his marital relationship.

A theory of personality dynamics which seeks to explain an individual's difficulties in close interpersonal relationships should also be able to explain difficulties in his marital relationships. Ellis conceptualizes that the individual has difficulty in his close interpersonal relationships, because he holds irrational beliefs. If the individual's difficulty in his close interpersonal relationships is the result of his irrational beliefs, then the difficulty in his marital relationship should also be the result of his irrational beliefs.

If irrational ideas or beliefs are related to marital discord or difficulty, then it should be possible to demonstrate that individuals who have irrational beliefs or ideas also have a greater probability of having marital difficulty as compared to individuals who do not have irrational beliefs or ideas. This study attempts to explore the existence of this relationship between irrational ideas and marital difficulty.

## CHAPTER II

### RELATED LITERATURE

#### Rational-Emotive Psychotherapy

Albert Ellis' approach to psychotherapy is based on the central theme that man has the capacity to think rationally and irrationally (1962a, p. 36). Emotional upset and/or disturbed interpersonal interactions and self-defeating behaviour are seen by Ellis as primarily a result of irrational or illogical thinking.

Rational-Emotive Psychotherapy is based on the assumption that cognition and emotion are not independent; and emotional upset and disturbed interpersonal interactions result not from external events per se but rather from irrational, illogical thinking. What an individual tells himself about an external event, to a large degree, determines his emotional response. For example, if an individual tells himself that failing a school examination is an example of his stupidity and evidence of his failure as a human being, the possibility exists that he will become depressed and emotionally upset. If, however, the individual views failing an examination as an example of poor study habits or lack of understanding of the material on which he was tested, then he may see his performance as a series of mistakes and not a reflection of his stupidity and need not become emotionally upset.

Seeing oneself as a stupid person and failure for having failed an examination is based on the assumption that one's personal worth is determined by how well one performs on a given task. Judging worth by performance leaves one vulnerable to emotional upset whenever one does "fail" at a task.

Ellis suggests that there are eleven major irrational ideas or assumptions (see Appendix A) which are responsible for a majority of emotional upset and disturbed interpersonal interactions (1962a, p. 60-88). He also suggests that, unlike other animals, man is autosuggestible, since he is able to think, or talk to himself. Autosuggestibility often results in the individual reinforcing himself with ideas he has learned in the past. Ellis views autosuggestibility as resulting in emotional upset and disturbed interpersonal interaction when some ideas learned in the past include a few, if not all eleven, irrational ideas. As long as man keeps repeating irrational ideas to himself, he will likely remain emotionally upset and continue to have disturbed interpersonal interactions.

The derivative of irrational modes of thinking is seen by Ellis in the values and philosophies of society. Ellis believes that man is very suggestible, especially during childhood, and therefore can be easily persuaded, cajoled, and in some instances forced to accept and learn the use of irrational ideas without questioning their validity. In many cases, the conveyors of irrational ideas are parents.

The irrational ideas or philosophies within society are not seen as irrational or invalid by members of society if the logic entailed in each philosophy is accepted. If members of society choose not to accept the logic entailed in each philosophy, the philosophy is no longer valid for those members. An examination of the logic entailed in one irrational philosophy demonstrates this point. For example, the philosophy that an individual should work hard to achieve material wealth as a means of obtaining happiness and personal esteem is valid only if the individual accepts the idea that his happiness and esteem are obtained

by means of accumulating material wealth. If the individual chooses not to accept this means of obtaining happiness, it does not follow that he will be unhappy. There are many individuals in North American societies and in other societies who claim to be happy and yet do not believe or accept the idea of material wealth leading to personal happiness or esteem.

Ours, in other words, is a generally neurotizing civilization in which most people are more or less emotionally disturbed because they are brought up to believe, and then to internalize and to keep reinfecting themselves with arrant nonsense which must inevitably lead them to become ineffective, self-defeating and unhappy. Nonetheless, it is not absolutely necessary that human beings believe the irrational notions which, in point of fact, most of them seem to believe today; and the task of the psychotherapy is to get them to disbelieve their illogical ideas, and to change their self-sabotaging attitudes (1962a, p. 84).

The individual often so completely accepts the validity of irrational ideas, he may often not be aware that he is using them. The more he believes and accepts irrational ideas, the more difficult it is to change his irrational ideas, but Ellis staunchly maintains one can change beliefs and resulting emotions;

. . . it would appear that one may appreciably control one's emotions by controlling one's thoughts. Or, more concretely, one may control one's emotions by changing the internalized sentences, or self-talk, with which one largely creates these emotions in the first place (1962a, p. 52).

Ellis is not suggesting the individual should attempt suppression of all emotion, since emotional arousal has positive value. Emotional arousal is also not entirely the result of cognition, for example, arousal to the threat of attack and autonomic responses to external and internal stimuli.

An existence devoid of some degree of emotion - of some amount of striving, seeking, yearning, and desire, with all the usual risks attendant upon such cognitive - conative - emotional process - would be deadly dull and inhuman (Ellis & Harper, 1961a).

Rational-Emotive Psychotherapy (R-E T) thus provides a theoretical and applied framework from which the disturbed individual may develop constructive behaviour patterns by eliminating, to a large degree, irrational ideas. In so doing, R-E T strives to teach relatively more rational and logical philosophies and ideas so as to reduce sustained emotional disturbances and disruptive interpersonal interactions.

One area in which R-E T may be directly employed is marital counselling, since a major portion of marital counselling evolves around disruptive interpersonal interactions and emotional disturbances.

Marital counselling, however, is at times seen as a process distinct and different from psychotherapy, and as such, not falling under the jurisdiction of psychologists and psychiatrists (Kimble, 1959; Vincent, 1957). Thus construed, it becomes superficial counselling of marital relationships of so called normal individuals not requiring treatment by a psychotherapist. Viewing marital counselling as a superficial process ignores the fact that a major portion of marital counselling does evolve around emotional disturbances on the part of the individual involved in the marriage.

There are, however, two major causes of unhappy marriage relationships; fundamental incompatibilities between spouses such as differences in their interests or personalities and neurotic disturbances within either or both spouses which make them think and act as if there

were fundamental incompatibilities (Ellis & Harper, 1961b; Klermer, 1965; Saul, 1967). It may be that marital counselling is viewed as a superficial process dealing with the marital relationships of so called normal people when the counselling focuses on the first of these causes.

Incompatibilities due to the second major cause, neurotic disturbance, however, would require a trained psychologist or psychiatrist by definition of the nature of the disturbed marital relationship.

In dealing with fundamental incompatibilities between spouses, such as lack of mutual interests, the counsellor may help the individuals to learn to develop means of effectively dealing with differences as in helping them to learn open and direct means of interpersonal communication. If differences cannot be reduced to a level tolerable to both individuals, the counsellor may help them achieve a divorce which is not unnecessarily painful and permits amiable separation. Whether helping reduce actual differences or aiding in an amiable separation, he is still involved with the individuals' emotions and personalities, and it remains questionable whether counselling of this type is superficial.

As for marital unhappiness resulting from neurotic disturbances, one method which may be directly employed to deal with disturbances of a neurotic nature is R-E T.

As applied to marital problems, rational analysis largely consists of showing each spouse that his or her disturbed behaviour (in or out of marriage) arises from underlying unrealistic beliefs or philosophies. The client is then shown what these beliefs are and how they are producing individual and marital upset. Thirdly, he or she is given some understanding of how the irrational value system originally arose and how it is being (wittingly or unwittingly) sustained and reinforced. Finally, the counselee is helped to

replace his or her self-defeating ideas and attitudes with more effective philosophies. This change in the value system of the client is achieved not only by discussion in the counselling situation, but by his being induced to think for himself when he is outside the session and by fear-removing and hostility-dispelling actions that he is induced to take under the therapist's guidance (1961b, p. 25).

R-E T assumes most couples enter marriage with two general expectations, the hope for regular sexual satisfaction and the enjoyment of secure and intimate companionship and love. These two expectations are intimately related to each other and "to the general personality patterns and life expectations of the married partners (Ellis, 1961b, p. 17)". If the expectations are relatively open-minded and rational, the behaviour of the couple will tend to be relatively reasonable and undisturbed. However, if the expectations are prejudiced, unrealistic and illogical, the resulting behaviour, in or out of marriage, will tend to be disturbed and unreasonable.

Once neurotic patterns occur in marriage, the result is often that instead of facing and trying to minimize disappointments which result from normal frustrations and abnormal, unrealistic demands of the mate, the partner usually reacts in a manner which aggravates the situation and establishes a circular behaviour pattern (Ellis, 1966). The wife who acts in a totally uncommunicative fashion toward a husband who makes unreasonable demands of her may not be helping her husband to understand why she cannot satisfy his demands. In doing so, she probably increases the likelihood that he will act even more unreasonably. Disturbed individuals tend to respond anxiously or angrily even to relatively good life situations, since they have basically irrational or illogical philosophic

assumptions. The reaction is worse with difficult external pressures.

The foremost cause of disturbed interactions according to Ellis, then, is the totally unrealistic expectations resulting from irrational ideas which husbands and wives tend to have, not merely about others, but also about the marriage relationship itself. The marriage partners usually stubbornly cling to and absolutely refuse to work at eliminating their self-defeating value system (1966, p. 24). This is partly because they are not aware of their philosophical stand or partly because they have become convinced of the correctness of their position. Before change can take place, the spouses should not only honestly express their feelings to each other, but more importantly work hard at changing the irrational ideas that create and perpetuate these feelings (Human Development Institute, 1964).

Ellis thus presents an approach to psychotherapy which views cognition as a cause of man's emotional behaviour. Ellis' approach not only provides a therapeutic framework for dealing with irrational, self-defeating behaviour of the individual, it also provides a useful structure for dealing with disturbed and unhappy marital relationships. Given marital difficulties arise from neurotic disturbances on the part of either or both spouses, R-E T views the disturbed interaction as simply an extension of the disturbed individual and as such is dealt with accordingly. One is not required to seek distinct dynamics underlying disturbed marriage partners as opposed to disturbed, unmarried individuals, and therefore separate theoretical frameworks and procedures are not required.



### Review of Theories of Marital Discord

When applied to marriage counselling, R-E T tends to focus on an individual's learning experiences prior to the marriage. These learning experiences are seen as resulting in the acquisition of irrational ideas, and the disrupted marital relationship is one result of the married couple's adherence to irrational ideas. Approaches to the underlying issues in marriage counselling other than R-E T also deal with these foci and may be divided into two broad categories: those which see marital discord resulting from learned individual personality factors brought to marriage by the partners and those which see discord as a result of the marital relationship itself. The majority of approaches fall within the first category with R-E T being one example. While stress is placed on learning and personality dynamics in the first category, the importance of the marital relationship is not overlooked, but is not emphasized to the same degree as learning and personality dynamics.

Of those approaches classified in the first category, Freudian theory is the earliest attempt to present a comprehensive theory of personality (Freud, 1905). Freud's theory, however, does not provide a direct application to marriage counselling but must be inferred on the assumption of dealing with neurotic individuals (Bornstein, 1953; Hall, 1964; Freud, 1924, 1926, 1931; Fenichel, 1945). Until recently, adherents to psychoanalysis largely ignored marital discord in their writings but now appear to be showing interest in direct application of Freudian theory.

In such application, marital discord is usually seen as the result of neurotic behaviour by the individual marriage partners (Pincus, 1960). This behaviour results from personality development, and the actual choice of mate is one outcome of this neurotic growth (Eisenstein,

1956). Eidelberg (1956) further dichotomizes mate choice into the Anacritic, each partner providing what the other lacks, and the Narcissistic, partners being the same. He defines healthy choice as Anacritic, and neurotic choice as Narcissistic. While it is reasonable to assume neurotic development leads to neurotic behaviour and even neurotic mate choice, it is tenuous to assume healthy and neurotic mate choice may be categorized on the basis of the similarity or complementarity of spouses. This is evident when reviewing the recent work of Holz (1969). He found couples who adhere to a "traditional" ideology in terms of role-expectations (hierarchical conception of family relationships) reflects complementarity, while an "egalitarian" approach (Companionship) reflects similarity. Thus, individuals who are similar to each other, tend to have an egalitarian relationship and are not necessarily neurotic.

Dominion (1968), although taking somewhat the same approach as more orthodox neo-Freudians, does not emphasize the same psychoanalytic dynamics. He places heavy responsibility for marital breakdown on the spouses' personalities and also emphasizes specific interactions (p. 19). As in orthodox neo-Freudian approaches, the child is seen as passing through various developmental stages with successful negotiations of each stage required for healthy growth. Through different stages increased autonomy is learned as a result of greater amounts of self-control, and this occurs jointly with increased social contact. This increased contact continues through puberty and brings on sexual activity and identity, with the final phase involving separation from home and establishment of heterosexual relationships leading to marriage.

Marriage is a return to such a close and intimate union which allows the spouses to act as agents for further growth in their respective personalities as well as providing the requirements for procreation and the rearing of children. In order for the marital relationship to be stable, it is necessary that both spouses have reached a sufficient degree of emotional independence, trust, self-acceptance, ability to receive and donate themselves to each other and an absence of excessive anxiety and aggression. These are essential characteristics for any close relationship without which marriage is not possible. Marital failure is intimately associated with the presence of one or both partners who have partially or incompletely negotiated the various phases and the spouse is chosen as a means to complete growth which should have been completed prior to marriage or to supply vital personal needs missing during the period of development (p. 40).

Dominion thus points out a way in which personality development of the spouses may adversely affect the marriage relationship. He further contends, "Failure to achieve a minimum of emotional independence is one of the main causes of marital breakdown (p. 42)". If one or both spouses has not learned such independence, its absence restricts, inhibits, and makes the individual dependent on others for survival. Closely allied to such dependence is accompanying feelings of low self-esteem which may develop and further lead to unhappy marriage (p. 62).

The theoretical approach of Transactional Analysis (Berne, 1961, 1964) presents a view similar to Dominion's. The emphasis, however, within Transactional Analysis is on defense mechanisms (games). The form of marital interaction, the specific games played, is a result of learning and personality development, and the more neurotic such learning and development, the more discord and destructive behaviour is likely to result. While Berne emphasizes the nature of the interaction to a greater extent than does Dominion, they both emphasize that learning and

personality factors are of primary importance in understanding the dynamics of marital discord.

Berne does, however, present a modified view of psychodynamics as compared to other neo-Freudians. Instead of an Id, Ego, and Superego, Berne divides man's psyche into the Child, Parent, and Adult. The Child and Parent are viewed by Berne as causing disruptive behaviour and the self-defeating use of games (defense mechanisms). The Adult is credited with the capacity to deal effectively and rationally with the environment and other individuals, although a given degree of Child and Parent is necessary in everyday transactions. The Child and Parent are needed, to some degree, so that spontaneity and forcefulness required during certain transactions may be included. This view is similar to the Freudian view that a certain degree of Id and Superego are necessary for healthy functioning. It is the Ego's role to mediate between the Id and Superego, as it is the Adult's role to mediate between the Child and Parent.

The specific games an individual has learned to play reflect the Parent and Child. The Adult is viewed in Transactional Analysis as capable of functioning without playing games. The non-game playing function of the Adult permits the individual to engage in transactions in a constructive and rational fashion.

Kubie (1956), also psychoanalytically oriented, attributes the major source of marital discord to the discrepancies between the conscious and unconscious demands each spouse makes on the other and the marriage. The unconscious demands are of an unrealistic, neurotic nature, such that the spouses could not possibly meet them. As Roth states (1955), "The simplest and most prevalent form of such irrational (marital) expectations occurs where one or both partners has more or less

marked feelings of inadequacy (p. 74)". Thus, there is the repetitive theme of neurotic learning and personality development leading to neurotic, self-defeating behaviour patterns within the marital relationship.

Even though differences exist between Freudian theory and R-E T (Ellis, 1962a, p. 316-320), Freudian theory and R-E T are not totally incompatible. R-E T consistently stresses the importance of learning in the development of neurotic, irrational behaviour patterns and the self-defeating nature of unrealistic expectations. It further emphasizes that while the marital relationship is important, it only reflects the personality development of those involved, so that if the relationship is disturbed, it is the result of what is brought to the marriage rather than a result of the marital relationship. Instead of attempting to review constructively the disturbed relationship, one or both parties reacts in a self-defeating, neurotic manner. This is the view taken by both Freudian theory and R-E T.

A non-psychoanalytic approach similar to the stance in R-E T is presented by Mudd and Goodwin (1963). They stress the importance of personality factors brought to marriage and see these factors resulting in the development of unrealistic preconceived ideals which initiate discord. If one or both of the partners feels the other must behave in a given fashion, discord is likely to arise when the given behaviour does not occur. Added to the likelihood of discord is the resistance on the part of the spouses to adjust their differences. Instead, they tend to stubbornly maintain the correctness of their positions.

Mudd and Goodwin argue for an adjustment to the reality of the individuality of each partner; a point strongly stressed by Silverman (1967). They also emphasize the disruptive aspects of romantic love, as

does Ellis (1962b), and point to the need for facing realities of marriage and ignoring unrealistic needs.

Prior to marriage, being in love is a state of mind that tends to idealize and overestimate the loved one, to overlook or minimize faults or flaws, and to satisfy the needs we all have for uncritical and all embracing love. When this goes on into marriage, reality must be faced, and unless each partner has the capacity for integrity and responsibility in the handling of frustration and the acceptance of differences, fidelity in all areas is threatened (Mudd and Goodwin, 1963, p. 971-972).

As the realities of marriage become more pronounced and unrealistic expectations become more obviously unfulfillable, the spouses may begin searching for another "all-giving" love. This point is experimentally supported by Rosenblatt (1967) who demonstrated that as the amount of romantic love decreases in a marriage, the likelihood of marital breakdown increases.

Mudd and Goodwin, in effect, propose an approach to marital discord based on subjectively defined needs an individual sees as necessary for a happy, successful marriage. Experimentally, there appears to be enough evidence to substantiate the importance of need satisfaction (Mathews and Mehanovich, 1963; McMillan, 1967; Tharp, 1963). These findings suggest that it is how the individual defines the situation and what needs are viewed as essential which determine in part whether the relationship will be disturbed. If the subjectively defined needs are realistic and satisfiable, the likelihood of discord is small. But, if the socio-psychological needs are unrealistic and unfulfillable, discord is likely to occur. Even if one or both partners enter marriage with unrealistic need expectations, the chances of marital discord arising

are reduced if the partners remain flexible and adjust to realities. However, if they also enter marriage with irrational ideas that turn need frustration into catastrophe and reason for blaming the spouse, marital discord results.

Allan Fromme (1967) conceptualizes the inability to meet and successfully deal with the issue of need flexibility as resulting from lack of both understanding and mature personality:

. . . more and more people keep getting married, largely independent of their understanding of what lies ahead of them and equally independent of their emotional readiness to face their own domestic future (p. 57).

The individual's happiness in marriage, to a large degree, is determined by the personality development before reaching marriage age. Although marriage affects the individual's happiness, the effect of the individual's happiness upon his marriage is usually much stronger. Thus, the individual's happiness may be tapped by marriage but never created by it.

Fromme sees marriage as a very grown up relationship requiring skills undefined by society and ground rules hardly ever specifically discussed; a point which has also been stressed by Neubeck (1967). It is not the individual's fault but rather society's lack of responsibility in effectively providing opportunities for learning marriage skills which results in ignorance. Since society tends to have a rather immature view of marriage, it is not surprising this view is passed on to its members. Society should help point out that marriage requires the adult to sit down and examine what is happening so as to correct mistakes and evaluate without losing control.

The marital relationship provides us with a kind of automatic transmission stepping up our

feelings into a higher rate of expression without our control . . . . The reason is that things which bother us quickly join forces, so that what we express involves much more than meets the eye. We take the whole thing out on each other and blame each other unknowingly, irrationally and with irresponsible abandon (Fromme, 1967, p. 65).

Fromme is stating a conceptualization very similar to the conceptualization in R-E T. There is awareness society fosters irrational and immature notions which the individual brings to the relationship. If the individual is not happy before marriage, it is unlikely he will be after. To deal effectively with the marital relationship requires much more rational and mature behaviour than is learned prior to marriage. To deal effectively the individual must stop clinging to irrational ideas and be prepared to learn from his successes and failures without catastrophizing and blaming.

An alternative therapeutic approach to R-E T in dealing with these issues is presented by Bassin (1967). His conceptualization consists of three main ingredients; integrity, responsibility and transparency. This approach views man as having the integrity to deal with his difficulties, the ability to take responsibility for his mistakes and shortcomings, and also the ability to be transparent. Man thus has the capacity to honestly deal with his difficulties through facing the realities and responsibilities of life and being emotionally open and flexible at the same time. Bassin draws on three separate theoretical stances and combines them into one approach (Glasser, 1965, Jourard, 1964; Mowrer, 1964). In doing so, he relies on the therapist to select procedures from each of the three stances.

While R-E T produces a conceptualization almost identical in part to Bassin's, it provides only one set of clearly delineated procedures.



These procedures are an extension of the theoretical framework of R-E T and need not to be altered to fit others. One may argue for greater flexibility in Bassin's approach, but the state of research into therapeutic effectiveness is not yet at the stage where one is able to exactly determine what aspect of a given theoretical approach facilitates constructive change, much less be able to combine different approaches (Truax and Carkhuff, 1967).

The ideas of Lederer and Jackson (1968) more closely parallel ideas from R-E T than do Bassin's. They see the underlying causes of marital discord resulting from, "American thinking and traditional American values concerning marriage", which are rusty, broken-down, and obsolete (p. 18). The individual learns values and behaviour patterns which are not suited for the present institution and tend to result in discord.

Love, honor and obey . . . 'till death do us part' is an unrealistic part of the Christian marriage vow, because it suggests that trust is static. In the mystique of the marriage ceremony, spouses assume that by saying 'I do', they have signed a rigid and unalterable pact, and therefore they expect trust from each other. Trust is not created by expectations. It develops as a result of mutual shared experiences which are clarified between spouses. The Christian marital vow is based on the fallacy that nothing will change . . . Trust is the result of a flexible, developmental bargain between spouses which endures, because it is able to accommodate change (p. 107).

In addition to unrealistic vows, society instills false assumptions concerning marriage and the marriage relationship:

- 1) The reason people marry is love
- 2) Most married people love each other
- 3) A satisfactory marriage necessitates the presence of love

- 4) Inherent behavioural and attitudinal differences between males and females cause marital trouble
- 5) A potentially difficult or unfulfilled marriage is automatically improved with the advent of children
- 6) Spouses who tell each other to go to hell have a poor marriage (Lederer and Jackson, 1968, p. 41-86).

Lederer and Jackson argue for a realization of the falsehood involved in these assumptions and the ways in which they may lead to marital discord. By facing the irrationality of these assumptions and viewing marriage more realistically, such discord should be reduced.

Lederer and Jackson view the marital relationship as a fluid system, such that what affects one part of the system affects others. The totality of marriage is a function of the spouses' behaviour usually results in changes in the other spouse's behaviour, which in turn results in additional changes. It is a circular pattern, influenced from within and without, leading to the system attempting to maintain balance. This overall view, then, is almost identical to R-E T concerning the specifics of the disruptive marital interaction as stated by Ellis (1966).

The second broad category which deals with underlying issues in marriage counselling consists of approaches which view marital discord resulting from the specific relationship of marriage. Two approaches fall into this category: Dicks (1967) and Bach and Wyden (1969). Dicks defines marriage as a social relationship, individual and unique:

In the West, it is a voluntary and unique agreement between two persons at conscious or ego levels to enter into a contract to play certain roles (first of the many facets of a spouse, later of a

parent) in such a way as not only to satisfy many emotional and biological needs, each of the other and of their own but also to fulfill, or conform to a tolerable degree with, the requirements and woes of the cultural background in which they now form a constituent unit (p. 7).

Additionally, Dicks views mental disorders as mainly organized around marriage without necessarily invading or disturbing the relationship. Discord, then, is not the result of disturbed personality.

It may be possible for a disturbed individual not to involve his marriage in general mental disorders, but it appears difficult to see how a disturbed marital relationship does not involve disturbed individuals. The view that disturbed individuals are not involved in a disturbed relationship appears predicated on the notion that individual personality patterns and experiences do not play a role in interpersonal relationships. There is, however, no experimental support for the view that an individual can function totally independently of his personality and what he has experienced.

In defense of Dicks' views, one could argue that two people might have very healthy individual personalities, but experience disturbances in their interaction. This is indeed quite possible. One is then, however, dealing with disturbances within marriage which result from other than neurotic causes. If the causes are not neurotic, then one is dealing with one of the two major causes of unhappy marriage relationships mentioned earlier in this study: fundamental incompatibilities between spouses such as differences in interests or personalities of both individuals in the marriage.

If Dicks' approach referred only to this cause of unhappy marriage relationships, the argument that marital disturbances may occur between two healthy persons would support his position. However, his approach also suggests neurotic personality development may be part of the married couples individual personalities, so that he is also including the second major cause of unhappy marriage relationships: neurotic disturbances on the part of either or both spouses which make them think and act as if there were fundamental incompatibilities.

Dicks also ignores the issue of unconscious influences affecting the decision to voluntarily "enter into a contract". He implies such a decision occurs without the influence of factors the individual is incapable of verbalizing. The same implication implies with respect to the origin of the "many emotional and biological needs" and the motivation to fulfill those needs. Even if they arise only from the conscious, that conscious is in the individual and not the relationship, therefore, Dicks is not presenting an approach which eliminates the need for incorporating learning and personality dynamics. In his attempt to deal with marriage in which stress of failure in marital-role performance is the principal finding, he overlooks the underlying causes.

Taking a similar view to Dicks, Bach and Wyden find that stresses of the marriage relationship result from the type of interaction and not the partners:

As we studied the stresses of intimacy among our clients, however, we discovered that most of their problems were not within themselves but were inherent in the complexities of an intimate relationship. It was the intimate system that was out of balance. We therefore work with such people as couples and in general groups in order to restore their 'swing' and we do not treat them as 'patients' (1969, p. 34).

They subsequently state that the partners' inability to deal effectively with the "complexities of an intimate relationship" results from communicating indirectly, dishonestly, and at different levels. Certain questions, however, immediately come to mind. Given the marital relationship is complex and communication important, what is it which makes the partners unable to deal with those complexities? Is it the complexities per se? Why is there a lack of effective communication between partners? Is it because they can not or do not know how to effectively communicate?

The answers to these questions do not appear to be within the relationship. Many marriage partners do successfully deal with complexities and effectively communicate. Since marriage as a relationship is common to both successful and unsuccessful marriage, it appears it is something about the partners which results in difficulty. If the relationship called marriage caused the difficulties, then all married couples would need marriage counselling to help them solve their problems of ineffective communication. The procedures Bach and Wyden propose for dealing with complexities and ineffective communication are also common regardless of the marital situation, but it is the partners' ability to learn their use which appears to account for success in the relationship. Again, the greater importance of the marital relationship as opposed to learning and personality dynamics is not clearly established.

This discussion of the various theoretical approaches to marital discord indicates the important role individual personality dynamics have in a discussion of those factors which lead to unhappy marital relationships. This discussion also indicates the similarity and

compatibility between R-E T and other theoretical approaches.

Further support for the applicability of R-E T to marriage counselling lies in a discussion of the experimental support of the tenets involved in R-E T and the relationship of irrational ideas to marital relationships.

#### Review of Experimental Literature

Direct experimental support of Ellis' theoretical tenets has been accumulated from various studies. Taft (1968) found high school students classified as high in irrational beliefs based on an inventory purporting to measure irrational ideas also had higher scores on six measures of anxiety when compared to high school students classified as low in irrational beliefs. This finding is in accordance with the suggestion that irrational beliefs or ideas lead to emotional upset. It was also found that the diagnosis of neuroticism would be accurately based on the degree to which an individual adhered to irrational ideas: as the adherence to irrational ideas increased, so did the probability of neuroticism (Argabrite and Nordorf, 1968; Gustav, 1968; Hartman, 1968).

Ellis suggests that not only do irrational ideas result in emotional upset or disturbance, but also that behaviour based on irrational ideas is self-defeating and may result in disruptive interpersonal relationships. Zingle (1965) demonstrated that students high in irrational beliefs tend to be underachievers, and this finding was also supported by Conklin (1965). Hoxter (1967) demonstrated how irrational ideas may result in disruptive interpersonal relationships when he found that students who were behaviour problems in school demonstrated greater irrational tendencies than the students in his sample who were not

behaviour problems. Fox (1969) demonstrated that individuals in his study described as being authoritarian, closed-minded, uncritical in their thinking, and dogmatic were higher on a measure of irrational ideas than were individuals described as open-minded, critical in their thinking, and not dogmatic.

Theoretical support for the existence of a relationship between irrational ideas and marital discord has been presented above both from an R-E T framework (Ellis, 1962a, 1962b; Ellis, 1966; Ellis and Harper, 1961a, 1961b) and other theoretical approaches (Bassin, 1967; Berne, 1961, 1964; Dominion, 1967; Fromme, 1967; Kubie, 1956; Lederer and Jackson, 1968; Mudd and Goodwin, 1967). Inferential evidence may be drawn from various studies in support of some of Ellis' basic contentions involving the relationship of irrational ideas and marital discord.

One such contention is that individuals learn from their parents and society irrational, self-defeating ways of perceiving themselves and irrational behaviour patterns. Crotty's findings (1967) suggest individuals learn to think of themselves in this way as a result of parental and social teaching. Kerckhoff and Davis (1962) demonstrate that society also teaches individuals how to choose a dating partner and behave in the dating relationship. The stylized and self-defeating nature of such behaviour, especially in the early stages of the relationship, is revealed by Skipper and Nass (1966).

Ellis also strongly maintains that what an individual has learned to tell himself about an event or situation determines, to a large degree, whether or not an emotional response occurs as a result of the event or situation. What an individual tells himself also determines,

to a large degree, what type of emotional response occurs. Eastman's results (1958) lend support to this view, in that couples who were found to define their partners and themselves as unacceptable perceived their relationship and themselves as unhappy. Hoffman (1960) also clearly showed that unless pre-existing ideologies and personalities of participants viewed the mother's employment as upsetting to family structures and individuals, no upset resulted.

One characteristic of irrational ideas is their tendency to result in individuals behaving in an other-directed fashion. Support for this contention comes from Nelson (1967), who demonstrated that the more concern individuals showed for how others or society viewed a situation, the less concern they showed for their own view. Another effect of being other-directed was demonstrated by Freeman (1961). Women who were found to hate their husbands did not value their own behaviour but rather sought others to guide them. Freeman viewed behaviour of these women as resulting from poor learning experiences. These women felt they were powerless to change their world by their own means (implies Irrational Idea #9: "one's past history is an all-important determiner of one's present behaviour and that because something once strongly affected one's life, it should indefinitely have a similar effect" 1962a, p. 32), and only others (their husbands) were able to guide them in functioning effectively. (Irrational Idea #8: "one should be dependent on others and needs someone stronger than oneself on whom to rely" 1962a, p. 80). They thus placed themselves in such a position where other individuals had to find happiness for them, since they assumed themselves unable to do so. They were also in the position



of not having to accept responsibility for their lives, as others were in control, and this permitted them to blame others (husbands) for their unhappiness and unsatisfied needs.

It thus seems reasonable to interpret various experimental studies and theoretical approaches from an R-E T framework, but this is not necessarily the only point of consideration. The plethora of conceptualizations relating to the dynamics of the marital relationship provide the therapist with a wide variety of foci and therapeutic procedures. Each conceptualization also appears to deal with a somewhat specific marital situation and yet implies general applicability. Such applicability, however, is not supported with clearly delineated, generalized conceptualizations or procedures. For example, demonstrating an individual's unrealistic expectations of marriage does not necessarily facilitate communication within marriage; increasing communication does not explain why or how the individual acquired self-defeating behaviour patterns; convincing him of the uniqueness and individuality of his spouse does not insure his constructive personality change. R-E T, however, provides a conceptual framework encompassing a wide variety of individual and interpersonal disturbances paralleled by clearly defined generalized therapeutic objectives and procedures for attaining those objectives (Ellis, 1962a).

While R-E T tends to provide a more generally applicable tool, the view that laboring under irrational ideas tends to result in a disturbed marital relationship, although appearing viable, still is in need of direct experimental support. This study is an attempt to explore the relationship between irrational ideas and marital discord. The question

asked in this study is--do individuals who are having difficulties with their marital relationship adhere to irrational ideas to a greater extent than do individuals not having such difficulties?

### CHAPTER III

#### METHOD

##### Subjects and Analysis

Subjects were drawn from two finite populations of married individuals within the city of Edmonton. One sample was composed of individuals drawn from various agencies and referred by individual therapists involved in marital counselling, for example, Catholic Family Services and psychiatrists. This source was designated the Agency (A) sample. A second sample, designated the Non-Agency (N-A) sample, was drawn from married individuals in the city of Edmonton who were not being seen for marital counselling. These two samples were used in an attempt to obtain as wide a range as possible of the degrees of marital adjustment.

The Agency sample was comprised of fifty-two (52) subjects, and ninety-eight (98) subjects comprised the Non-Agency sample. Of the fifty-two (52) subjects in the A sample, forty-six (46) were husband-wife couples, while three (3) males and three (3) females were included who had not come to counselling with their spouses. Attempts were made to select husband-wife pairs, so that comparisons could be made between a husband's and a wife's responses to the various measures employed in this study. Of the ninety-eight (98) subjects in the N-A sample, ninety-six (96) were husband-wife pairs with two (2) females being included without their husbands.

The age range for the combined samples was from 17 to 72 years. The age range for the N-A sample was 24 to 72 years, but 17 to 47 years for the A sample. Couples in the N-A sample were older than couples in the A sample. The mean age for couples in the N-A sample was 44 years,

while the mean age in the A sample was 31 years. Number of years married for the combined samples varied between two (2) and fifty-three (53). All couples but two were married only once (one from each sample), and only one female subject from the N-A sample, was separated. The majority of subjects were Caucasian, and of varying Protestant sects. One couple was Negro, and a relatively small number were Catholics and Jews.

Although attempts were made to keep the two samples demographically comparable, this proved to be difficult with respect to age range. The nature of the samples contributed to the difficulty of minimizing the age range difference. The likelihood of dissolution of the marital relationship is greatest within the first five years of marriage as compared to the sixth through twentieth year of marriage (Dominion, 1968). Couples having marital difficulties are more likely to come for counselling concerning these problems early in marriage. If the problems are not solved to mutual satisfaction, the likelihood of the marriage continuing is small.

The experimental design of this study consisted of two analysis with one for each of the two inventories used. In both instances, a 2 X 2 factorial arrangement was employed with two groups, agency and non-agency, and both sexes. In addition to this analysis, Pearson product-moment and point bi-serial correlations were conducted on selected variables. The reason for using point bi-serial correlations was the dichotomous nature of some of the variables, for example, sex and whether or not employed.

## Materials

Two inventories were used in this study: a measure of irrational ideas and a measure of marital adjustment.

### A. Irrational Ideas Inventory

The measure of Irrational Ideas (see Appendix B) was the latest version of an inventory developed by Zingle (1965) and consisted of sixty (60) items derived from Ellis' delineation of eleven (11) irrational ideas (1962a, p. 60-83): eight (8) items derived from irrational idea number one; four (4) items from number two; eight (8) items from number five; six (6) items from number six; seven (7) items from number seven; six (6) items from number eight; two (2) items from number nine; six (6) items from number ten; five (5) items from number eleven. The reliability and validity of this instrument had been previously experimentally established. Zingle originally reported test-retest reliability of .80 on a 122-item form and a range of content validity from .75 to .85 based on the intercorrelation of his item classification and the labeling of items by three (3) judges according to beliefs purported measured by each item. Conklin (1965) reported test-retest reliability of .73 on a 25-item form and established a degree of construct validity in confirmation of the hypothesis that underachievers are high in irrational beliefs as compared to average and overachievers. Construct validity was further demonstrated by Hoxter (1967) who found the correlations between the Irrational Ideas Inventory and the Personal, Social, and Total adjustment scales of the California Test of Personality to be -.51, -.65, and -.62 respectively. Further, Davies (1970) reported test-retest reliability of from .74 to .78 and a relatively high degree

of construct validity in his findings that emotionally disturbed individuals indicated significantly higher Irrational Ideas Inventory scores (higher amounts of irrational beliefs) than did individuals who were not emotionally disturbed.

B. Marital-Adjustment Inventory

The 15-item inventory used to measure marital-adjustment (Locke and Wallace, 1959) was developed through extended research (Locke, 1947, 1951; Locke and Karlson, 1952; Locke and Williamson, 1958) (see Appendix C). A reliability value had been established as .90 based on the split-half technique corrected by the Spearman-Brown formula, and its construct validity was established by testing known groups, (mean adjustment score for well-adjusted couples, 135.9 and 71.7 for mal-adjusted couples). Of the many tests purporting to measure marital adjustment or discord, evidence of both reliability and validity was reported only on the Locke and Wallace inventory. Because of the extended experimental development and data indicating reliability and validity, the Locke and Wallace inventory was chosen for use in this study.

Procedures

Subject selection varied for the two samples.

A. Agency Sample

For subjects in the agency sample, the following procedure was used. Various social service agencies and private practitioners doing marital counselling were contacted by the experimenter and appointments made for the co-operation of the agency or private practitioner in having clients complete the two inventories. The only limitations specified by

the experimenter as to which clients were suitable for the study were that the clients have been in counselling no more than two weeks and who would voluntarily complete both inventories. The arbitrary time limitation of having been in counselling no more than two weeks was employed, because, if counselling was effective, greater marital adjustment should result the longer counselling had been in progress. Therefore, differences between the agency and non-agency samples would be less if such a time limitation were not included. Once the representative of the agency or the private practitioner agreed to co-operate, copies of each inventory were left to be completed. At two week intervals, the experimenter checked by telephone with the agencies or private practitioners as to how many of the inventories were completed.

Questions arose at one agency as to the purpose of the inventories and the study itself. The experimenter returned to this agency and answered any questions. Another difficulty encountered by the experimenter in collecting data for the A sample was the lack of co-operation on the part of the staff at various agencies. While agency-staff members appeared unconcerned with the actual data collection. As a result of the lack of co-operation from agency-staff members, it was not possible to collect as much data in comparison to the N-A sample. At the end of two months, the experimenter returned to each agency and private practitioner to retrieve completed and incompleted inventories. The incompleted inventories were not included in the analysis.

B. Non-Agency Sample

Subjects for the non-agency sample were selected in a semi-

random fashion from Henderson's Directory (1969) which lists, for a given city, the names, marital status and spouse's name if applicable, occupations, and addresses of all individuals with a registered address. The experimenter randomly turned to a page between the numbers one and nine hundred and nineteen (919) in the directory and with his eyes closed permitted his index finger to fall on the name of a couple. After the first couple had been selected, every 500th name of a couple was chosen. If the 500th name was not that of a husband and wife, the 501st name was selected. A total of 100 couples was selected in this fashion and an introductory letter sent to each (see Appendix D) provided they had a telephone listing in the Telephone Directory or with the Directory Assistance Operator. No letter was sent to a couple who did not have a telephone listing. The reason for requiring a telephone number was that approximately one week after mailing the letter, the experimenter contacted each couple by telephone to enlist their cooperation in completing the two inventories. Any questions the couple had concerning the study were answered at that time. Of the 100 couples contacted, 50% chose to participate in the study.

A non-response bias may have been introduced into the study as a result of using the Telephone Directory and as a result of the percentages of couples who did and did not participate in the study. It may well have been that couples who did not choose to participate were experiencing marital difficulty and did not wish this known. It may also have been that couples who chose not to participate were of differing socio-economic classes as compared to couples who did participate. The demographic statistics were not available to make such comparisons, nor was it possible to determine the state of this marital relationship of



couples who did not participate.

One difficulty encountered by the experimenter in eliciting subject participation was the suspicion on the part of the couple concerning the legitimacy of the study. Many couples viewed the initial letter as a "sales trick" or as an effort on the part of a criminal to gain entry into their home. It was requested by the experimenter that couples confirm his identity and the legitimacy of the study by contacting the University of Alberta, Department of Educational Psychology and/or the Police Department.

Once the co-operation of a couple was elicited, an appointment was made, at the couple's convenience, for the experimenter to go to their home so as to have the inventories completed.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

Due to the large difference in N's between the Agency (A) and Non-Agency (N-A) samples, two F max tests of homogeneity of variance were conducted as preliminary analysis on both inventories (Winer, 1962). The observed F max value, A sample versus N-A sample, for the Irrational Ideas (I-I) Inventory was 1.029 and 1.128 for the Marital-Adjustment (M-A) Inventory. Because both of these values are greater than the tabled value at the .05 and .01 levels of significance with  $K = 2$  and 97 degrees of freedom, the hypothesis of homogeneity of variance was rejected. As a result, 52 Ss were randomly drawn from the N-A sample for the completion of the analysis.

The analysis of variance on the M-A Inventory indicated a significant difference with respect to the level of adjustment for the A and N-A samples and the interaction between A and N-A and sex of subject (See Table 1).

Table 1

Summary of Analysis of Variance. Marital-Adjustment Inventory

Source	df	MS	F
Sex of Subject (A)	1	1619.833	2.916
Agency vs. Non-Agency (B)	1	30779.512	55.397+
A x B	1	2369.453	4.265*
Error	100	555.452	

\* significant at  $\leq .05$

+ significant at  $\leq .01$

Table 2 shows the direction of these differences. A higher level of adjustment was demonstrated for the N-A sample as compared to the A sample regardless of sex, but males in the A sample indicated a

higher level of adjustment than did females in the same sample.

Table 2  
Means For The Marital-Adjustment Inventory

Males	102.196
Females	93.642
Agency	80.462
Non-Agency	115.212
Males-Agency	89.520
Females-Agency	72.074
Males-Non-Agency	114.395
Females-Non-Agency	116.038

Note - The higher the value, the greater the level of marital-adjustment.

Given that the N-A sample demonstrates higher levels of marital adjustment than the A sample, according to the hypothesis of this study, the A sample should show higher levels of irrational thinking on the I-I Inventory. The results of the analysis on the I-I Inventory did, in fact, demonstrate such a relationship, in that the two samples were significantly different on the I-I Inventory (See Table 3) in the predicted direction. (See Table 4)

Table 3  
Summary of Analysis of Variance: Irrational Ideas Inventory

Source	df	MS	F
Sex of Subject (A)	1	1235.697	3.070
Agency vs. Non-Agency (B)	1	1964.085	4.208*
A x B	1	126.229	.313
Error	100	402.500	

\* significant at  $\leq .05$

Table 4

## Means For The Irrational Ideas Inventory

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Males	197.353
Females	190.302
Agency	189.635
Non-Agency	197.885
Males-Agency	194.360
Females-Agency	185.259
Males-Non-Agency	200.231
Females-Non-Agency	195.538

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Note - The higher the value, the greater the level of rational thinking.

A further analysis of the I-I Inventory was conducted to determine if a differential contribution to the difference between samples was made by any of the 11 categories of irrational ideas. This analysis yielded no significant differences.

Even though both inventories yielded results in the predicted directions, the correlation between both measures, however, was zero. Both were totally independent of each other.

It was felt question number one of the M-A Inventory (see Appendix C, page 63) might yield a separate measure of the marital relationship other than adjustment since it was supposed to indicate marital happiness and not just adjustment. The correlation between question one and the M-A Inventory was .32, but the correlation between question one and I-I Inventory was zero.

It appeared the nature of husband-wife responses on the I-I Inventory might be related to the M-A Inventory such that either the male's adjustment level or the female's adjustment level might be related

to their level of rational thinking. This, however, was not supported. Both correlations between the male's and the female's adjustment level and the I-I Inventory were zero. The correlation between husband and wife I-I scores was only .13. However, a .70 correlation was found for the level of adjustment on the M-A Inventory for husbands and wives.

To see if this latter finding was influenced by years married, a division of from 17 to 37 and 38 to 72 years of age was made for each of the samples and correlations conducted between age and level of adjustment.

The results presented in Table 5 appear to indicate a high correlation of age and level of adjustment in the younger group for the N-A sample and the older group in A sample. However, inspection as to the number of pairs comprising each correlation led to a modification of this finding. By collapsing the breakdown over A and N-A, the resulting correlations between the two age groups of 17 to 37 and 38 to 72, and the M-A Inventory were .75 and .71 respectively (See Table 6). This, thus tended to indicate neither group differentially contributed to the original correlation of husband-wife M-A levels.

Table 5  
Correlations of Two Age Groups in the Agency and Non-Agency  
Samples to Marital-Adjustment

	<u>Age</u>	
	<u>17-37</u>	<u>38-72</u>
Agency	.54 n=16	.86 n=5
Non-Agency	.92 n=7	.62 n=19

Table 6  
Correlation of Two Age Groups to Marital-Adjustment

<u>Age</u>	
<u>17-37</u>	<u>38-72</u>
.75	.71

A series of point bi-serial correlations between sex and the M-A Inventory and the I-I Inventory yielded essentially zero values. Essentially the same zero values were found when the M-A Inventory and the I-I Inventory were correlated with employment status (whether subjects were employed or unemployed at the time the inventories were completed). The highest correlation was  $-.19$  between employment status and the I-I Inventory. Attempts at finding non-linear relationships between variables, both continuous and dichotomous, proved fruitless.

A multiple linear regression analysis using age, employment status, sex, I-I and M-A Inventories, and question one from the M-A Inventory was conducted to see which of these variables best predicted the criterion of A or N-A. The particular regression model used compared prediction based on all variables to that of prediction based on subtraction of selected variables from the full model (See Appendix E for specific models and quantitative results). While the full model had the greatest predictive ability, subtraction of any of the variables, except question one, produced a significant reduction in that ability. Of the two inventories, the subtraction of the M-A Inventory had the greater effect of reducing predictive ability. Forty-six percent of the variance was accounted for with the full model, but only forty-two

percent with the subtraction of the M-A Inventory. With the subtraction of the I-I Inventory, there was only a two percent loss of variance, and subtracting both inventories resulted in a six percent loss. The greatest loss of predictive ability, twenty-one percent, occurred with the combined subtraction of the M-A Inventory, question one, and sex. This appeared to be a result of an accumulative effect, in that subtracting the sex variable produced no significant loss, yet the subtraction of question one and the M-A Inventory resulted in a twenty percent loss.

Age produced almost a ten percent loss of predictive ability by its subtraction. However, an inspection of the age distribution between the A and M-A samples indicated the age range of subjects in the A sample to be 17 - 47 years, but 24 - 72 years in the M-A sample. In addition the regression analysis was conducted on 145 Ss with the largest number of subjects falling in the latter age range.

### Conclusion

The A sample demonstrated significantly lower levels of marital adjustment on the M-A Inventory as compared to the M-A sample. Further analysis revealed significantly higher levels of irrational thinking for the A sample as compared to the M-A sample. These significant differences did not appear to be influenced by the other variables measured in the study: age, sex, or employment status.

This study therefore appears to demonstrate that individuals who are having difficulties with their marital relationship and are going for marital counselling indicate greater adherence to irrational ideas than do individuals not having such difficulties. It is not possible to say at this point that, in general, individuals having mari-

tal difficulties demonstrate greater adherence to irrational ideas than do individuals not having such difficulties, since no correlation was found between the M-A and I-I Inventories.



## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The M-A Inventory clearly selected the A sample as less adjusted than the N-A sample, however, an interaction was found between sex and samples. This interaction indicated males in the A sample saw their marital relationship as being more adjusted than females in the same sample. As to why there was even a slight difference between males and females in the A sample, one possible explanation may involve differences between males and females in cognition and perception of the marriage. For example, evidence in the literature indicates females to have greater concern for interpersonal relationships (McDonald and Gynther, 1965), more accurate perception of family situations (Marshall and Mowrer, 1968), greater attempts at problem solving after frustration (Yonge, 1964), and more self-revelation (Jourard and Richman, 1963) than do males. The women in the A sample thus may have had greater concern for the marital relationship, more accurate perception as to the nature of the relationship, and greater willingness to reveal that nature as compared to men.

One could also possibly argue the difference between levels of adjustment for males and females in the A sample as having resulted from either sex being influenced by pressures to respond in a socially desirable fashion. Hawkins (1966) found social desirability not to be a factor in the M-A Inventory, so that such an argument would lack support.

The hypothesized relationship between Irrational Ideas and marital discord was supported. The M-A Inventory demonstrated the samples

clearly differed as to the level of marital-adjustment, and the I-I Inventory indicated the A sample to be functioning on a significantly more irrational level than the N-A sample.

While the I-I Inventory scores were significantly distinguishable between the A and N-A samples, it may be possible to increase the discriminatory ability of the inventory. One means for increasing the discriminatory ability of the I-I Inventory would involve a change in the wording of the inventory items. In its present form, it is applicable to a wide variety of situations. The individual to whom it is administered is not sensitized to any specific situation by virtue of the inventory items. Even with this lack of sensitization, the inventory proved capable of discriminating between samples. It may prove even more sensitive to the marital situation if the items are worded to focus on the marriage per se. Harper (1969) presents a formulation of the Irrational Ideas with just such a focus. His delineation differs from Ellis' only in the specific wording of each Irrational Idea. Ellis states, for example, the Irrational Idea that -

certain people are bad, wicked, or villainous  
and that they should be severely blamed and punished for  
their villainy (1962a, p. 65).

Harper applies this to the marital situation by restating this Irrational Idea as -

She hit me, so I hit her. Or; he lost his  
temper and called my mother an old bag, so I felt I  
had a perfect right to let him know that his sister  
is just a plain tramp. Or; she deliberately poured the  
liquor down the sink, so I took a pair of scissors and  
cut up all her evening gowns. I'd do it again, too,  
because I believe in an eye for an eye. (1969, p. 112)

This is not to imply the present form of the I-I Inventory is not an effective instrument, but rather the theoretical framework of R-E T appears suitably flexible for application to a wide variety of specific situations. Ellis' delineation of irrational ideas tends to be of a generalized nature. What is being suggested is to simply make the wording of the Irrational Ideas more specific and concrete, and thus perhaps increase precision for a specific situation.

Not only did the I-I Inventory distinguish between the A and N-A samples, it also tended to function independently of sex and whether or not Ss were employed. Thus, whether the Ss were males or females, employed or not, the I-I Inventory varied significantly only as a function of the sample. This further supports Ellis' contention of the ubiquity and persuasiveness of Irrational Ideas (1962a, p. 61).

It might have been expected, that since husband-wife N-A scores correlated to a fairly high degree, .70, husband-wife I-I scores might have also demonstrated a fairly high correlation, especially since both inventories distinguished the same samples. The .13 observed correlation for the I-I scores did not meet this expectation. What I-I score a husband received was not related to that of his wife, and vice versa. The lack of correlation between mean husband-wife I-I scores and husband N-A or wife N-A scores also indicated a lack of systematic variation. While such a relationship might have been expected on the basis of part of the statistical analysis, theoretically such an explanation was unfounded.\*

\* Personal communication with Albert Ellis

Therefore, if one partner had a high degree of irrational ideas, this in no way suggested that the other partner should, or did, possess irrational ideas. However, if one partner possessed irrational ideas, it did mean there was an effect on the marital relationship.

The data tend to lend support to this view, in that for 22% of the couples in the A sample, both the husband and wife's I-I scores were above the mean I-I score for the N-A sample, and in 56% of the cases, either the husband or wife's I-I scores were above the mean I-I score of the N-A sample. However, 22% of both husband and wife's scores were not above the mean I-I score for the N-A sample.

Further, the observed zero correlation between the I-I and M-A Inventories indicated both to be independent measures, even though they indentified the same samples. Both therefore appeared to be measuring two independent components within the same sample. Within the regression analysis, the observed higher predictive ability of the M-A Inventory as compared to the I-I Inventory may have resulted from the items in the M-A Inventory being specifically geared to the marital relationship, while the items in the I-I Inventory were of a more general nature. The regression analysis, however, permits prediction only within the present study, and the observed predictive ability of either inventory holds for the present samples. To test predictive ability of both inventories independently of this study, similar samples matched to those variables used in the present study need to be selected, both inventories administered, and prediction of A/N-A made based on weights derived from the present study.

However, the present study was not conducted to test the predictive or comparative predictive ability of the instruments. The M-A Inventory was employed only as an aid in defining both samples. The I-I Inventory was employed as a test of the level of rational-irrational functioning between both samples in order to see if the predicted relationship between irrational ideas and marital discord could be experimentally demonstrated.

Given the predicted relationship of irrational ideas and marital discord has been experimentally demonstrated, further issues for consideration remain. As was mentioned above, it may be possible to increase the discriminatory ability of the I-I Inventory by making it more specifically oriented toward marriage. A comparative study would then be needed to test the effectiveness of the modified form. Once precision has been developed with specific reference to marriage, the issue of predicting the A versus N-A samples may be investigated. Locke and Wallace (1959) have also developed a Marital-Prediction inventory which purports to measure potential marital success or failure, and it would be interesting to compare this inventory with a modified form of the I-I Inventory.

Regardless of whether predictive ability of an I-I Inventory can be developed, there is still the question as to whether R-E T provides a more effective means of therapeutic treatment as compared to other approaches. Granted a relationship between Irrational Ideas and marital discord has been experimentally demonstrated, it does not necessarily follow R-E T presents the best means for dealing with irrational ideas, even though it does provide specific objectives and

procedures for obtaining those objectives. There remains the issue of experimentally demonstrating which therapeutic approach provides faster and greater constructive personality change of people having marital discord. It is not a question of whether counselling or therapy is effective, but rather which form is more effective (Truax and Carkhuff, 1967).

In general, R-E T tends to assume middle-class values. It ignores differences in value systems between white collar and blue collar marriages with respect to normative and behavioral patterns. It may therefore be necessary to determine and control the nature of one's samples regarding socio-economic class. This was not done in this study and may have confounded the results.

The age difference between the A and N-A samples may also have confounded the results. Careful effort should be made to control for age as a variable in research of this nature. By controlling for both socio-economic class and age, it may be possible to reduce the possibility of response-bias. However, the nature of the population which does not choose to participate should also be investigated to gain information as to how participants and non-participants may vary.

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## APPENDIX A

### IRRATIONAL IDEAS

#### Irrational Idea No. 1:

The idea that it is a dire necessity for an adult human being to be loved or approved by virtually every significant other person in his community.

#### Irrational Idea No. 2:

The idea that one should be thoroughly competent, adequate and achieving in all possible respects if one is to consider oneself worthwhile.

#### Irrational Idea No. 3:

The idea that certain people are bad, wicked, or villainous and that they should be severely blamed and punished for their villainy.

#### Irrational Idea No. 4:

The idea that it is awful and catastrophic when things are not the way one would very much like them to be.

#### Irrational Idea No. 5:

The idea that human unhappiness is externally caused and that people have little or no ability to control their sorrows and disturbances.

#### Irrational Idea No. 6:

The idea that if something is or may be dangerous or fearsome, one should be terribly concerned about it and should keep dwelling on the possibility of its occurring.

#### Irrational Idea No. 7:

The idea that it is easier to avoid than to face certain life difficulties and self-responsibilities.

**Irrational Idea No. 8:**

The idea that one should be dependent on others and needs someone stronger than oneself on whom to rely.

**Irrational Idea No. 9:**

The idea that one's past history is an all-important determiner of one's present behaviour and that because something once strongly affected one's life, it should indefinitely have a similar effect.

**Irrational Idea No. 10:**

The idea that one should become quite upset over other people's problems and disturbances.

**Irrational Idea No. 11:**

The idea that there is invariably a right, precise, and perfect solution to human problems and that it is catastrophic if this perfect solution is not found.

I-I Inventory is scored by assigning values one through five for A through E. All items are scored A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4, and E=5 except for items 5, 8, 16, 35, 44, 46, and 54. These items are scored A=5, B=4, C=3, D=2, and E=1. The total score is the sum of all items.



1	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
2	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
3	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
4	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
5	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
6	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
7	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
8	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
9	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
10	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
11	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
12	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
13	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
14	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
15	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
16	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
17	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
18	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
19	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
20	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
21	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==

22	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
23	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
24	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
25	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
26	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
27	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
28	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
29	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
30	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
31	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
32	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
33	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
34	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
35	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
36	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
37	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
38	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
39	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
40	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
41	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
42	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==

43	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
44	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
45	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
46	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
47	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
48	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
49	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
50	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
51	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
52	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
53	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
54	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
55	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
56	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
57	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
58	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
59	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==
60	A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5
	==	==	==	==	==

## APPENDIX B

## ADULT I-I INVENTORY

Read each of the following statements and decide how much you agree or disagree. Show your answer on the separate answer page. Use the code shown below.

	A	B	C	D	E
A. I strongly agree	==	==	==	==	==
B. I agree	==	==	==	==	==
C. Undecided	==	==	==	==	==
D. I disagree	==	==	==	==	==
E. I strongly disagree	==	==	==	==	==

## NOTE

Answer all the questions. (Mark only one choice for each question).

There are no right or wrong answers.

There is no time limit.

If you wish to change, be certain to erase the undesired answer completely.

Because the inventory is to be machine scored, a soft pencil should be used.

1. Jeers humiliate me even when I know I am right.
2. I worry about situations where I am being tested.
3. The best way to teach a child right from wrong is to spank him when he is wrong.
4. I must learn to "keep my head" when things go wrong.
5. I think I am getting a fair deal in life.
6. I worry about eternity.
7. I am happiest when I am sitting around doing little or nothing.
8. I prefer to be independent of others in making decisions.
9. If a person is ill-tempered and moody, he will probably never change.
10. I get very upset when I hear of people (not close relatives or close friends) who are very ill.
11. Crime never pays.
12. My family and close friends do not take enough time to become acquainted with my problems.
13. People who do not achieve competency in at least one are are worthless.
14. We are justified in refusing to forgive our enemies.
15. I frequently feel unhappy with my appearance.
16. I feel that life has a great deal more happiness than trouble.
17. I worry over possible misfortunes.
18. I often spend more time in trying to think of ways of getting out of something than it would take me to do it.
19. I tend to look to others for the kind of behaviour they approve as right and wrong.
20. Some people are dull and unimaginative because of defective training as a child.
21. Helping others is the very basis of life.

22. School promotions should be for intellectual merit alone.
23. It is very important to me when I do a good job to be praised.
24. I find it difficult to take criticism without feeling hurt.
25. It is terribly upsetting the way some students seem to be constantly protesting about one thing or another.
26. It is impossible at any given time to change one's emotions.
27. I tend to worry about possible accidents and disasters.
28. I need to learn how to keep from being too assertive or too bold.
29. To co-operate with others is better than doing what you feel should be done.
30. Sympathy is the most beautiful emotion of man.
31. People who criticize the government are either ignorant or foolish.
32. I wish that more affection were shown by members of my family.
33. When a person is no longer interested in doing his best, he is done for.
34. I get very angry when I miss a bus which passes only a few feet away from me.
35. My place of employment and/or my neighborhood provide adequate opportunity for me to meet and make friends.
36. I can walk past a grave yard alone at night without feeling uneasy.
37. I avoid inviting others to my home because it is not as nice as theirs.
38. I prefer to have someone with me when I receive bad news.
40. The good person is usually right.
41. Sometimes I feel that no one loves me.
42. I worry about little things.
43. Riches are a sure basis for happiness in the home.

44. I can face a difficult task without fear.
45. I usually try to avoid doing chores which I dislike doing.
46. I like to bear responsibilities alone.
47. Other peoples problems frequently cause me great concern.
48. It is sinful to doubt the bible.
49. It makes me very uncomfortable to be different.
50. I get terribly upset and miserable when things are not the way I would like them to be.
51. I find that my occupation and social life tends to make me unhappy.
52. I am afraid in the dark.
53. Many people that I know are so unkind or unfriendly that I avoid them.
54. It is better to take risks and to commit possible errors, than to seek unnecessary aid of others.
55. I get disturbed when neighbors are very harsh with their little children.
56. I find it very upsetting when important people are indifferent to me.
57. I have sometimes had a nickname which upset me.
58. I have sometimes crossed the street to avoid meeting some person.
59. When a friend ignores me, I become extremely upset.
60. My feelings are easily hurt.

## APPENDIX C

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

SEX: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

SINGLE, \_\_\_\_\_ MARRIED, \_\_\_\_\_ SEPARATED, \_\_\_\_\_ DIVORCED, \_\_\_\_\_ WIDOWED, \_\_\_\_\_

OCCUPATION: \_\_\_\_\_

CHURCH PREFERENCE: \_\_\_\_\_

## Attendance:

- a) Once a week \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Once a month \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Special holidays \_\_\_\_\_
- d) Once a year \_\_\_\_\_
- e) Not at all \_\_\_\_\_

ETHNIC BACKGROUND (Irish, German, Ukrainian, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

## MARITAL-ADJUSTMENT TEST

- 1) Check the dot on the scale line below which best describes the degree of happiness, everything considered, of your present marriage. The middle point, "happy" represents the degree of happiness which most people get from marriage, and then gradually ranges on one side to those few who are very unhappy in marriage, and on the other, to those few who experience extreme joy or felicity in marriage.

.						
<hr/>						
Very Unhappy		Happy			Perfectly Happy	
		Almost		Almost		
Always		Always	Occasionally	Frequently	Always	Always
Happy	Happy	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree

- |   |     |      |      |      |      |      |
|---|-----|------|------|------|------|------|
| 2) Handling Family Finance.....                     | ... | .... | .... | .... | .... | .... |
| 3) Matters of Recreation.....                       | ... | .... | .... | .... | .... | .... |
| 4) Demonstration of Affection.....                  | ... | .... | .... | .... | .... | .... |
| 5) Friends.....                                     | ... | .... | .... | .... | .... | .... |
| 6) Sex Relations...                                 | ... | .... | .... | .... | .... | .... |
| 7) Conventionality (right, good or proper conduct). | ... | .... | .... | .... | .... | .... |
| 8) Philosophy of Life                               | ... | .... | .... | .... | .... | .... |
| 9) Ways of dealing with in-laws...                  | ... | .... | .... | .... | .... | .... |



Items 10 through 15 Underline Your Choice

- 10) When disagreement arises, they usually result in; husband giving in, wife giving in, agreement by mutual give and take.
- 11) Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together? All of them, some of them, very few of them, none of them.
- 12) In leisure time, do you generally prefer: to be "on the go", to stay at home? Does your mate generally prefer: to be "on the go", to stay at home?
- 13) Do you ever wish you had not married? Frequently, occasionally, rarely, never.
- 14) If you had your life to live over, do you think you would: marry the same person, marry a different person not marry at all?
- 15) Do you confide in your mate: almost never, rarely, in most things, in everything.

**APPENDIX D**

**H.W. Zingle, Ph.D.,  
Director,  
Clinical Services,  
University of Alberta.**

**Dear:**

We are presently conducting research on Marriage and have randomly selected your name from our list of families in the Edmonton area. The research is designed to provide useful information for marriage counselling. Part of the research involves obtaining information, of an impersonal nature, from couples who are not seeking help from social agencies with regard to marital discord.

The information is obtained from two questionnaires which take approximately one half hour to complete. All information is strictly confidential and nothing personally identifiable is obtained.

My research assistant, Mr. Joseph Eisenberg, will be contacting you by phone within two weeks to make an appointment to see both of you. At the time of the call, he will answer any questions you may have.

Your co-operation will not only be appreciated, but will help us to help those couples who are having marital problems.

Thank you very much.

**Sincerely,**

**H.W. Zingle, Ph.D.,  
Director,  
Clinical Services.**

## APPENDIX E

## LINEAR REGRESSION MODELS

Variables	1 AGE	2 OCCUP	3 SEX	4 NA-A	5 I-I	6 M-A	7 #1
Model 1	$X_4 = X_1 + X_2 + X_3 + X_5 + X_6 + X_7$						
Model 2	$X_4 = X_1 + X_2 + X_3 + X_6 + X_7$ Omit $X_5 = I-I$						
Model 3	$X_4 = X_1 + X_2 + X_3 + X_5 + X_7$ Omit $X_6 = M-A$						
Model 4	$X_4 = X_1 + X_2 + X_5$ Omit $X_3 = \text{Sex}, X_6 = M-A, X_7 = \#1$						
Model 5	$X_4 = X_1 + X_2 + X_3 + X_5 + X_6$ Omit $X_7 = \#1$						
Model 6	$X_4 = X_2 + X_3 + X_5 + X_6 + X_7$ Omit $X_1 = \text{Age}$						
Model 7	$X_4 = X_1 + X_2 + X_3 + X_7$ Omit $X_6 = M-A, X_5 = I-I$						
Model 8	$X_4 = X_1 + X_2 + X_5 + X_7$ Omit $X_3 = \text{Sex}, X_6 = M-A$						
Model 9	$X_4 = X_1 + X_2 + X_7$ Omit $X_3 = \text{Sex}, X_5 = I-I, X_6 = M-A$						
Model 10	$X_4 = X_1 + X_2 + X_3 + X_6$ Omit $X_5 = I-I, X_7 = \#1$						
Model 11	$X_4 = X_1 + X_2 + X_3 + X_5$ Omit $X_6 = M-A, X_7 = \#1$						

F Ratio 1 Model 2/Model 1

F Ratio 2 Model 3/Model 1

F Ratio 3 Model 4/ "

F Ratio 4 Model 5/ "

F Ratio 5 Model 6/ "

F Ratio 6 Model 7/ "

F Ratio 7 Model 8/ "

F Ratio 8 Model 9/ "

F Ratio 9 Model 10/ "

F Ratio 10 Model 11/ "

SUMMARY TABLE: LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS

F RATIO	F	D. F. NUMERATOR	D. F. DENOMINATOR	SQUARED MULTIPLE CORRELATIONS FULL MODEL	SELECTED MODELS	PROBABILITY .05
1	6.0562	1.	139.	1 0.46533	2 0.44204	0.01508
2	10.0657	1.	139.	1 0.46533	3 0.42662	0.00186
3	55.8829	1.	139.	1 0.46533	4 0.25034	0.00000
4	1.6906	1.	139.	1 0.46533	5 0.45883	0.19564
5	22.6986	1.	139.	1 0.46533	6 0.37802	0.00000
6	7.4648	2.	140.	1 0.46533	7 0.40832	0.00083
7	5.8194	2.	140.	1 0.46533	8 0.42088	0.00373
8	4.0527	2.	140.	1 0.46533	9 0.43438	0.01945
9	4.2185	2.	140.	1 0.46533	10 0.43311	0.01663
10	27.2868	2.	140.	1 0.46533	11 0.25691	0.00000