DISHARMONY: PREMARITAL RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION

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by

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Abstract

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Using data from the RELATE Institute, this dissertation explores three aspects of premarital relationship dissolution: 1) the experience of breaking up; 2) the occurrence of positive breakups; and 3) a comparison of the factors that lead some couples to break up and others to stay together or marry. Premarital romantic partners completed a relationship evaluation instrument and were contacted eighteen months later to investigate changes in their relationship. If the respondents were no longer dating their time 1 partner, they were asked to complete a breakup instrument. Employing quantitative methods including OLS and logistic regression, the results indicate that a greater level of commitment between partners, such as cohabiting or engagement, leads to a more difficult breakup experience. One-sided relationships, where one partner is more committed, usually result in one-sided breakups. Forming a new relationship helps to overcome negative aspects of a breakup. Overall, breakups do not have long-term negative consequences for people, even if they get dumped. Most breakups can be considered positive, but most are not friendly.
The friendliness of a breakup is influenced most by the relationship quality and the difference in partners’ commitment levels near the end, and by the breakup method (e.g., a sudden decision by one partner, a fight, or a discussion with a joint decision). Years after a breakup, a person’s feelings about the ending of their relationship are influenced by the friendliness of the breakup, the passage of time, the likelihood that they will get back together with their former partner, and their own coping with the breakup.

Relationship dissolution occurs primarily because of dissatisfaction with the relationship and some individual partner characteristics, especially extraversion, difference in religious affiliation, and difference in substance use. Relationship progression to marriage is best predicted by age, financial considerations (income and materialism), and approval of the relationship by parents and friends. Cohabitation is important to both processes, as couples who live together are less likely to break up but also less likely to marry.
This is for my parents who taught me with their inquisitive and musical minds,

my advisor, David Klein,

and all the women with whom I formed a relationship that eventually dissolved.
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In classical music, the first movement of a sonata is typically written in sonata form. "The basic elements of sonata form are three: exposition, development, and recapitulation, in which the musical subject matter is stated, explored or expanded, and restated. There may also be an introduction, usually in slow tempo, and a coda, or tailpiece, but these optional sections do not affect the basic structure" (Encyclopedia Britannica). "Sonata form is used to create a drama by setting up a conflict between two keys in the exposition, working out this conflict in the development, and reaching a resolution at the recapitulation" (Dorak 2004). The recapitulation is resolved by bringing the two musical themes into a state of equilibrium.

Like the sonata form, premarital relationships create a drama by setting up a commitment between two people who interact and work through conflict as their relationship develops, resulting in a resolution (marriage or breakup). Resolution establishing equilibrium is marriage, and resolution because of disharmony is a breakup. Sometimes two people are introduced and begin dating immediately, but oftentimes partners know each other for a long time and a relationship slowly develops. The dissolution of a dissonant relationship enables individuals to form new relationships (like new compositions).

The following quotes are indicative of relationship disharmony:
"We kept trying to work things out, but we never really had smooth sailing. We should have broken up sooner." (25 yr old female)

"We were great friends and had a lot of fun together, but there were detrimental personality differences." (40 yr old male)

"[We] found out too late that we had serious differences in what we wanted out of our partner and the relationship. [We] fell into a lusty love and still care for the other just not "in love" any longer." (24 yr old female)

Premarital relationship dissolution is a common possibility for any person who is actively dating. I use the term disharmony to refer to breakups because it is a good representation of why relationships fail. Two people with different personalities and backgrounds often do not harmonize with one another. Like two melodies that sound terrible when played together, some relationships involve two people who simply do not blend well with each other. While they might be good separately, or with other partners, their interaction does not produce beautiful outcomes.

In this dissertation, I use the term "breakup" to refer to premarital dissolution and "divorce" to refer to marital dissolution. This dissertation is an exploration of the breakup process, from the moment a couple begins to experience dissatisfaction with their relationship to the breakup experience and the two partners moving on with their lives. Overall, this study is an examination of relationship disharmony and dissolution.

1.1 The Importance of Studying Premarital Breakups

While the prevalence, causes, and effects of divorce have been studied extensively over the last 50 years, relatively little attention has been given to premarital
relationship dissolution, or breakups. Because most people date and breakup with at least two or three partners before finding someone they want to marry (Whyte 1990), premarital relationships and breakups are more common (on average) than marriages and divorces for individuals in the United States. In addition, most marriages in the U.S. are preceded by a period of courtship or engagement during which time a couple may decide their relationship should not continue. So, it is much more likely that a premarital relationship will end than lead to marriage. Because of the focus on how romantic relationships form and progress, research about how and why those relationships dissolve is often overlooked in studies of premarital relationships. This dissertation will explore premarital relationship dissolution, or breakups. Specifically, it will explore the experience of breaking up, the prevalence of positive breakups, and the differences between couples who stay together or marry with those who break up.

Researchers continue to analyze how individuals select a mate, how premarital couples interact, and what leads them to marry, but the importance of the relationships that do not work out is rarely discussed as part of the mate selection process (Surra 1990; Whyte 1990). It is interesting that after partners spend time finding and getting to know each other, form a committed relationship, and share their lives with one another (even if only for a short period of time), many will decide that they do not want to interact with each another anymore. Some relationships endure for a long time (especially through marriage), but most do not last (Whyte 1990). In addition, some couples break up much faster than others (Felmlee, Sprecher, and Bassin 1990), and some are able to remain friends or still think positively about the relationship after the breakup (Busboom et al. 2002; Davis, Shaver, and Vernon 2003; Kellas et al. 2008).
This dissertation will address three main questions. First, what is the process and experience of breaking up? Exploring this first question will hopefully also lead to an understanding of the second question: how are some couples able to break up and still feel good about the relationship they experienced together? In other words, is there such a thing as a positive breakup, or do all breakups have some level of negativity that some couples are simply able to overcome? The third major question is: what are the differences between couples who break up and those who stay together and/or get married? Is it possible to predict which couples will break up? Each of these questions is important in understanding breakups and premarital relationships in general.

The breakup experience is affected by a number of issues. Some of these include: the status of the relationship (serious dating vs. engaged), the length of the relationship, problems with interaction (money, intimacy, abuse, etc.), satisfaction, and commitment. For example, the experience of breaking up may be quite different for individuals who are close to marriage compared to those who seriously dated for only a few weeks. Understanding what influences of relationship stability will help shed light on the process of breaking up, or why and how breakups occur. It also might help individuals alleviate some of the uncertainty that can accompany the breakdown of a romantic relationship as they know what to expect.

There are some factors which are particularly bad for a relationship. Two people may simply be a poor match, regardless of their interaction. In this sense, understanding the causes of dissolution may help some couples who would be highly likely to divorce to avoid marrying in the first place. In addition to relationship characteristics that are bad
from the outset, there may be some factors that contribute to dissolution as couples interact and spend time together.

Partners in a relationship share a portion of their lives with one another, and are influenced in some way through the relationship. When a romantic relationship ends, the close bond between two people is severed and they often have little or no further contact with each other. However, there are some couples who remain friends or think of the relationship as having been a good experience, even if it did not work out. These can be described as *positive breakups*. Understanding what factors result in a positive breakup may help individuals to maintain some connection, or help them break up without feeling guilty or hurting their partner in the long-term.

Comparing couples who break up with those who stay together and/or get married is also important for understanding premarital relationships. It is important to explore whether differences between partners lead to breakups, or whether their differences are not as important as the way they handle their differences. Some relationship characteristics or partner characteristics could increase the likelihood of a breakup. This type of analysis requires data from both partners in a relationship so that both individual and couple factors can be analyzed simultaneously. For example, age might play a role in breakups, with younger couples potentially having a higher chance of breaking up, but the difference in age between the partners might also be important in predicting long-term relationship stability.

Romantic relationships are the primary means through which most people get married. People usually have a number of premarital relationships before finding someone with whom they maintain a long-term relationship. Understanding the process
of breaking up is important to the mate selection process. Researchers often seek to understand how individuals narrow down the pool of potential partners and choose one person with whom they form a romantic relationship and eventually marry. But, there is little attention devoted to why and how partners dissolve romantic relationships, what happens to the relationship after the breakup, or whether dissolution enables people to form better relationships. The ending of a relationship depends on a number of characteristics that might only be apparent after a couple has broken up. In other words, understanding breakups helps to complete the picture of the mate selection process.

Using the methods outlined above, I explore these questions in an attempt to understand better the breakup experience. The data (described below) used for the analyses provide some new directions for the study of breakups. Although the breakup experience can be difficult or stressful, I am especially interested in how people move on following a breakup and whether they feel like they learned from the relationship.

Breakups can be viewed negatively, but I believe that in most cases they may be positive (especially in the long-term) because they help people establish better relationships. In this sense, I am not simply interested in whether partners remain friends following the breakup, but how they respond to a breakup and whether it prohibits them from forming new relationships.

In addition to the idea of positive breakups, I compare the dissolution and marriage processes. While some might suggest these are opposites on a continuum of mate selection, I analyze whether relationship dissolution is a different process altogether. I seek to confirm research which suggests that individual differences lead to a breakup while dyadic similarity and interaction leads to marriage. I also want to create
better predictive models of relationship stability by using data from both partners in a relationship.

1.2 Premarital Relationship Theories

Premarital relationships have been the focus of a vast amount of research over the last 60 years or more (for good reviews see Surra 1990; Cate and Lloyd 1988, 1992; Cate, Levin, and Richmond 2002; Regan 2003; Surra et al. 2007). Much of this attention has focused on mate selection, especially for marriage. While most studies do not directly address relationship deterioration or dissolution, premarital relationship theories indirectly suggest that the same factors which influence relationship development will also influence relationship deterioration. This type of focus is on relationship stability. Thus, while specific research about premarital relationship dissolution is uncommon, there is a large amount of research that is important in understanding the process of courtship and mate selection.

1.2.1 Compatibility

Starting in the 1950s, a few researchers theorized that people choose a partner based on the degree to which they match that person on a specific trait (Schellenberg 1960; Kerckhoff 1964). In other words, they are looking for a marital partner with whom they are compatible. The idea is that a single process, such as complementary needs or similarity in some characteristic (e.g. values, physical attractiveness, or socioeconomic background) can account for most of the variability in relationship stability (which couples stay together or get married and which couples break up) (Burgess and Wallin 1954; Winch 1958; Schellenberg 1960). This approach is generally called mate selection,
while homogamy is used to refer to a person choosing a spouse who is similar to them. To apply the theory to premarital relationships, I use the term similarity instead of homogamy. The main argument against similarity theories is that they are too simple and do not capture the complexities of mate selection. Another criticism is that people do not always consciously choose someone similar to them; oftentimes it just happens naturally because people tend to date partners in their same culture or social network (e.g. college students naturally date other students at their school). Even in situations where a person does choose to form a relationship with someone similar to them, they might look at multiple characteristics, rather than just one. Because of these limitations, there is limited empirical support for similarity theories. Similarity between romantic partners tends to occur because people often interact with those that are similar to them in the first place, or they become similar as they interact with one another over time (Cate and Lloyd 1988).

Researchers soon recognized that many factors can influence relationship stability simultaneously, and filter/stage models were theorized. These models "portray the selection of a mate as proceeding through a sequential series of stages, with each stage focusing on certain processes in decision-making concerning a possible marriage mate” (Cate and Lloyd 1992:36). So, individuals assess their compatibility using different criteria over time (Cate and Lloyd 1988) and progress toward marriage through a sequential process, or series of processes. It is assumed that the decisions at each stage may lead one partner to decide to breakup. In other words, if a couple do not match well at a certain stage, they will not progress and will eventually break up.
There are two main stage theories: Kerckhoff and Davis’s filter theory from the 1960s and Murstein's SVR theory from the 1970s. Kerckhoff and Davis's (1962) filter theory suggests that people filter potential mates first by social characteristics (religion, SES, etc.), then similarity of attitudes and values, and, lastly, personality complementarity. Using a similar approach, Murstein (1976) introduced the Stimulus-Value-Role (SVR) theory. He proposes that relationships begin to develop through external characteristics such as physical attraction and behavior (Stimulus stage). If each partner’s characteristics are attractive to the other partner, the couple begins to analyze their value consensus, or similarity of attitudes, interests, beliefs, and needs (Value stage). If the partners’ values are similar, they begin to assess roles, which are expectations about how each partner will function in marriage (Role stage).

It is interesting to note the similarities between Kerckhoff and Davis' filter theory and Murstein's SVR theory. Both models suggest that external characteristics are the first process by which people analyze potential partners. This is in line with the earlier similarity theories which suggest people have a limited number of potential partners, or "field of eligibles" (Schellenberg 1960), that is determined by external characteristics such as age, socioeconomic status, race, religion, or physical attraction. Both of these theories also suggest that attitudes and values are important as a second stage in the process. The only real disagreement between the two comes in the third stage, with Kerckhoff and Davis (1962) focusing on need complementarity and Murstein (1976) discussing role fit, or what roles partners will assume in the relationship/marriage. In general, filter theories are excellent examples of compatibility theories since they combine many of the early similarity processes into a multi-process sequential model.
Stage models, however, have been criticized for relying too heavily on individual factors and not accounting for couples that stagnate, digress, or skip stages. In addition, very little empirical support has been found for these models. One general criticism is that a certain sequence (or "path") might only apply to some couples, but perhaps most problematic is the idea that, in many instances, people are not aware of their partners' values, needs, or role preferences (indeed, just trying to determine what constitutes a value can be very tricky (see Bilsky and Schwartz 1994; Thornton and Young-DeMarco 2001). Like similarity theories, the primary criticism is that these models do not account for the complexity of relationship development. However, some of these criticisms may be over-simplifying stage theories (more about this will be discussed below). Compatibility theories do have important implications for relationship dissolution.

1.2.1.1 Relationship Dissolution from a Compatibility Perspective

In general, any theory about mate selection is an indirect theory of relationship dissolution "to the extent that it is possible to use them to describe the 'incompatible characteristics' of couples whose relationships terminated" (Cate and Llloyd 1988:415). Compatibility theories suggest that when couples confront incompatible characteristics, they are likely to break up. For example, partners may have similar backgrounds and be attracted to one another (thus achieving the first stage), but then breakup when they realize their values do not coincide (e.g. one partner wants to move in together while the other wants to get married).

Since the 1970s, the focus of compatibility has shifted from social characteristics and values to things like relationship satisfaction and commitment (see Levinger and
Rands, in Ickes 1985). This switch has been good in that it is more focused on couple interaction, but can also create more confusion as researchers rarely agree about how to define broad concepts like satisfaction and commitment. But, in a number of studies (Cate and Lloyd 1992), incompatibilities such as unequal levels of involvement or commitment (principle of least interest), low satisfaction, lack of communication, and low perceived similarity have predicted breakup (more about the specific factors will be discussed below).

Some of the questions that arise when viewing breakups from a compatibility perspective include: when does incompatibility become apparent and when does it lead to dissolution? If partners know they are dissimilar early on in the relationship, do they sometimes ignore it in the hope that it will get resolved later? Incompatibility has been shown to be important in predicting breakups, which is why these theories, while perhaps flawed, are still important in premarital dissolution research.

1.2.2 Exchange/ Interdependence

In the 1980s, social exchange theories began to emerge in relationship research. Exchange theories emphasize interaction between partners and suggest that commitment in a relationship develops when partners have a satisfactory exchange of rewards. So, relationship stability is dynamic (changes over time) and based on partners’ continual evaluations of the rewards and costs associated with the relationship. As long as partners perceive that rewards of being in the relationship outweigh the costs, their relationship will be stable. Therefore, the focus of these theories is more about what differentiates stable and unstable couples, or those that are satisfied or unsatisfied, rather than
examining the processes by which partners become more committed. These theories emphasize factors such as attraction, satisfaction, commitment, and investment.

Interdependence theories add two important dimensions to exchange theories. First, they differentiate between relationship stability and satisfaction. Second, they suggest relationship outcomes are influenced by external forces in addition to exchange (interaction) factors (Regan 2003). Rusbult’s investment model seems to be the most widely utilized interdependence theory, appearing in many studies into the 1990s. Rusbult (1980) proposes that commitment to a partner develops when satisfaction and investment are high, and alternatives to the relationship are few. Thus, satisfaction, alternatives, and investment directly affect commitment to the relationship, and commitment influences relationship outcome (Rusbult 1980; Sacher and Fine 1996).

Since exchange concepts such as commitment and satisfaction were introduced in relationship research, many different constructs have been proposed for each one. For example, commitment, or intention to maintain the relationship, has consistently predicted relationship stability (Cate et al. 2002). The trouble is that, like love, commitment is defined differently by most researchers (Surra and Hughes 1997). Interestingly, as many authors have attempted to identify the particular elements of commitment, many have provided support for Rusbult’s conception of commitment as composed of satisfaction, alternatives, and investment (Rusbult and Buunk 1993; Sacher and Fine 1996).

“There is considerable controversy over the utility of using satisfaction indices in the study of marriage” (Cate and Lloyd 1992:69) and most researchers do not agree on
what actually constitutes satisfaction. This is especially problematic if it is used as a component of commitment.

The primary criticism of exchange and interdependence theories is that partners do not estimate costs and rewards in their relationship. At its foundation, an exchange perspective suggests partners keep a tally of their interaction. In reality, most people are probably not that calculative when it comes to their relationships. And while interdependence theory does account for the influence of external forces on the relationship, the theory is still rooted in an individual's perception of how the relationship benefits them. It assumes people are very aware of what they want in a relationship and are seeking only what is best for them, rather than allowing partner interaction to change individual desires within the relationship.

1.2.2.1 Relationship Dissolution from an Exchange Perspective

The issue of relationship stability is central to social exchange models of relationships. In the early writings on exchange theory, Thibaut and Kelley (1959) outlined the role of comparison level for alternatives as a mediator of stability in relationships. According to the theory, when the best available alternative (a new partner, gaining independence, etc.) is perceived to be better than the current relationship, dissolution is likely to occur. (Cate and Lloyd 1988:419)

Thus, the focus is on other attractive alternatives to the relationship compared to how much satisfaction a person is receiving in the relationship. Kelley and Thibaut (1978) call these parameters *comparison level* and *comparison level for alternatives*. 

1
The comparison level is the individual's subjective expectation regarding what they want and feel they deserve from a relationship. The comparison level for alternatives includes all other available alternatives to the current relationship. (Battaglia et al. 1998:830)

So, a person weighs the costs and rewards of the current relationship against the costs and rewards of anything else, including other potential partners, not being in a relationship, etc. In some sense, it's as if the relationship is always hanging in the balance and breakup is always a possibility.

Levinger…added the concept of barriers to the exchange view of relationship dissolution. Barriers are those constraining forces which prevent dissolution of the relationship; in many cases, barriers are not recognized until an individual contemplates terminating the relationship. (Cate and Lloyd 1988:419)

Barriers to breaking up include social pressures to stay in the relationship, the difficulty of the breakup process, irretrievable investments, and unattractive alternatives (see Johnson, in Adams and Jones 1999).

1.2.3 Interpersonal Processes

Recognizing the complexity of romantic relationships, researchers began thinking of relationships as processes, and theorizing that numerous factors influence relationships simultaneously. For example, Murstein clarified his SVR theory to suggest that all three stages influence the entire course of the relationship, although one dominates the relationship at a time, depending on the interaction of the partners (Murstein 1987). This evolution of relationship theory led to the creation of interpersonal process models.

Process models of relationship stability began with social exchange theories, which emphasize interaction between partners (as noted above) and their dynamic
evaluations of the rewards and costs associated with the relationship. Interdependence theories extended this view of relationships as processes by discussing how commitment to a relationship develops over time as investments and satisfaction increase.

The interpersonal process framework acknowledges the importance of factors associated with the compatibility (similarity, etc.) and exchange frameworks (rewards, alternatives, etc.), but posits that the interaction between individuals in relationships to a large extent shapes the development of the relationship and choice of mate. (Cate and Lloyd 1988:420)

Thus, the emphasis is on interaction between partners, although this interaction is affected by—and also affects—individual attributes, relationship characteristics, and the social and physical environment. Change is continuous and there are no clearly defined stages of development, although some patterns might emerge (Surra 1985, 1987; Felmlee et al. 1990; Cate and Lloyd 1992).

Since no couples have identical interactions, couples have multiple pathways to marriage. Cate, Huston, and Nesselroade (1986) found three patterns or pathways: 1) prolonged, which involved conflict at every stage, ambivalence during serious dating, younger age when meeting partner, and whose parents were not eager for them to marry; 2) accelerated, typified by low conflict, older age, and parents' who are eager for the respondent to marry, and 3) intermediate, characterized by low conflict, initial hesitancy and slow movement to commitment, partners who have had more prior relationships, and were more likely to be in a serious relationship when they met their current partner.

Overall, they showed that interaction between partners (e.g., conflict, maintenance) and external factors (e.g., age at meeting partner, number of previous relationships, parental eagerness for respondent to marry) were important. The authors note that the individual
factor "ambivalence" was important, but this isn't a very strong "individual" variable since it involves a person's feelings about the relationship, so it could be considered an interaction variable.

Surra (1987), looking at reasons for changes in commitment (rather than chances of marriage), found the same three pathways but added a fourth called accelerated-arrested which is characterized by a downturn in commitment late in its progression. Over time, partners in an accelerated relationship became more interdependent (did more with each other than with members of their social networks) than those in intermediate relationships. But, those in prolonged relationships became less interdependent and maintained their social network activities.

So, the interpersonal process framework suggests that relationship progression might be due to processes between partners, interaction between partners and their social networks, and circumstantial or environmental factors.

Individual characteristics might play a role in relationship progression, but there is not much support for them. It is possible that the reason why individual attributes are rarely shown to be important in relationship studies is that potential partners who have undesirable individual characteristics have already been filtered out by the time a relationship forms. In order to truly capture this phenomenon it would require comparing individuals who have been randomly assigned as partners to others who have begun relationships. Random assignment would be necessary because even friendships are unlikely to form if people have undesirable personal attributes. For example, if someone is unkind or highly neurotic, potential partners might not be attracted enough to begin dating or even form a friendship. The only way that individual characteristics would
seem to matter is with traits that take time to learn about. If an undesirable trait is apparent to potential partners, that person may never be considered as a desirable partner. This concept would extend to handicaps, physical attractiveness, personality traits, etc. If this is true of individual characteristics, they would only be important in the early stages of relationship formation. This would make them difficult to study because it would require finding respondents who are just beginning to date, rather than identifying couples who are already in a committed relationship.

While interpersonal process theories focus on couple interaction, they discard the idea that there may be a sequence of influences on a relationship. For example, Elison and Klein (unpublished manuscript) found some support for a sequential influence of dyadic and family background characteristics on relationship progression. Although numerous factors may influence a relationship at the same time, some may be more important than others at different stages of the relationship.

1.2.3.1 Relationship Dissolution from an Interpersonal Process Perspective

From an interpersonal process perspective, breakups are viewed as a process rather than a specific event. So, the breakup process begins long before a couple has "the talk" or one partner stops contacting the other. In some sense, the breakup process may begin the moment a relationship stops progressing. In other words, the same dyadic, social context, and (possibly) individual factors that influence a couple to become more committed are also the same factors which can lead to their breakup. For example, positive daily communication with a partner could help the relationship progress, but if that communication begins to wane (e.g. if one partner reduces the number of daily
contacts) it could be an indicator that one partner is losing interest and, therefore, mark
the beginning of a breakup process. Viewing breakups as a process led researchers to
explore how couples actually accomplish a breakup, turning points in a relationship's
progression, and patterns in the breakup process (Baxter and Bullis 1986). More about
these concepts will be discussed below.

1.2.4 Universal Processes in Close Relationships

Surra et al. (2006) find that in the last decade, research on relationships has
focused more on what draws partners together in the first place. The authors note that
Research on how and why relationships progress toward deeper involvement or marriage
has disappeared in major social science outlets, including why relationships deteriorate
(Surma et al. 2007). Major theorists have recently tried to promote a shift from
relationship types to relationship dimensions that apply to all close relationships. Thus,
the dissolution of a friendship is grouped with a romantic relationship breakup, and
comparisons between relationship statuses are rarely drawn. However, Surra et al. (2007)
have argued that it is important to maintain distinctions between relationship statuses in
order to understand dating or premarital relationships. For example, while they might
have some similarities, it is important to know how friendship dissolution is different
from a broken engagement.

From this perspective, then, all close relationships might have similar dissolution
characteristics and they may even follow similar paths. However, this perspective is too
broad. Noting the complexities of premarital relationship dissolution, it would be foolish
to try to learn more about it by treating the dissolution of dating relationships the same as
friendships or marriages. In many instances (e.g., hetero- vs. homo-sexual), researchers
are interested in learning more about a specific group. Within romantic relationships, there are important differences between couples at various stages of the relationship process (e.g., dating, cohabiting, married) which means that it would be difficult to draw meaningful conclusions about how all relationships are influenced by the same factors. For example, the effect of cohabiting on a relationship is very different for friends, romantic partners, and spouses (Rhoades, Stanley, and Markman 2009). The breakup of a romantic relationship is influenced by different factors than the dissolution of a friendship or a marriage. In sum, it is important to maintain distinctions between relationships, even when discussing dissolution.

1.2.5 Interpersonal Filter Theory

While not explicitly tested in any of the chapters in this dissertation, I approach relationship dissolution using a combination of two relationship theories. In general, I take a filter/stage theory approach, but allow filter ordering to change, depending on the interaction of the couple, which can then include important elements of interpersonal process models. The interpersonal process approach emphasizes the interaction between the partners in the relationship and recognizes the complex intermingling of the individual partners' attributes, their relationship, and the society in which they live. This approach is useful in identifying factors that cause a breakup and influence how the breakup occurs (discussed in chapters 3 and 4), and for creating breakup models. I do not directly utilize compatibility and exchange theories because these theories assume that people seek partners with particular characteristics and actively calculate the costs and benefits of their relationships. In my view of relationship progression and dissolution, people are not so calculative. They tend to form relationships without much
consideration of their specific similarities, and rarely calculate overall costs and benefits. Instead, people seem to focus more on general feelings about the relationship, whether they enjoy interacting with someone, or whether the person fits well with their everyday life and existing relationships with family and friends. In addition, I do believe there is a sequence of influences on a relationship as it progresses to higher levels of commitment.

Filter/stage theories are particularly useful in understanding breakups and are used as a foundation for the breakup research presented here. For the most part, criticisms of filter/stage models seem to oversimplify their complexity. Apart from a lack of empirical support, the most common criticism seems to be that the sequence of stages does not apply to all relationships (in other words, that there is more than one path to marriage) (Cate and Lloyd 1988, 1992). Although this is a good point, it does not mean filter models should be discarded altogether. It is possible that within each filter or stage, the factors that influence a relationship might produce different "paths" to marriage. In this sense, there could still be room for multiple paths to marriage if each couple goes through a unique filtering process (leaving open the possibility that some patterns may emerge). The issue is sequence. If all couples go through a filtering process, but the sequence of filters varies, then multiple paths to marriage would result. But, this leaves the question of whether some filters are more important at different times as a relationship develops or deteriorates.

There is considerable support for the idea that partner similarity is important in relationship formation – most people find partners that are similar to themselves, at least in age, race, and socioeconomic status (Schellenberg 1960; Kalmijn and Flap 2001). But, since this similarity can be primarily accounted for by propinquity (Kerckhoff 1964), it
seems that similarity influences partner choice very early in a relationship, even if a couple are never aware of it. For example, most people date someone with a similar race and socio-economic status, but this may not be a conscious choice; most of the eligible partners with whom they interact probably have the same race and socio-economic status. So, it is likely that there is at least some order to the filters that determine which people form a relationship, but the ordering may be too specific in filter/stage theories.

This is exactly what Murstein (1987) addresses. He discusses the possibility that many different groups of factors may be important throughout the relationship, but that one group (e.g. stimulus) can be more important at a particular stage. Murstein suggests that, like interpersonal process theory, all factors influence a relationship simultaneously, but some are more important at different times. I refer to this phenomenon as layering. Thinking about a particular factor, such as physical attraction, will help to illuminate this concept. Physical attraction is an important factor early in a relationship (Buss et al. 2001). If there is not mutual attraction between partners, it is unlikely that they will ever begin a romantic relationship. In this sense, physical attraction could be considered a foundational layer. Once partners know they are attracted to each other, their relationship is influenced by new factors such as communication or conflict. But this does not mean that physical attraction is no longer important. It remains an influence on their relationship, but is dormant unless something causes a change in it (e.g. weight gain).

Filter theorists have tried to specify a sequence to the layers, but there may not be a specific sequence to the layering. The layering may be different for each couple. As noted above, however, certain characteristics are important early on in a relationship. Murstein called these early influences "stimulus" characteristics, while Kerckhoff and
Davis use the term "social characteristics." And it is possible that some relationship factors may be important at particular "turning points" in a relationship (Baxter 1986) or even cause changes in a relationship.

Combining the structure of a filter theory with the interpersonal process emphasis on partner interaction and different pathways of relationship progression, I utilize an interpersonal filtering model of relationship dissolution. This perspective emphasizes that a couple's relationship is influenced by many things simultaneously, but these influences probably vary in importance over the course of the relationship until a couple marries or breaks up.

To help illustrate this approach, I compare a couple's dating relationship to a couple attending a large outdoor concert event. At the annual summer event Taste of Chicago, for example, organizers set up many different musical stages throughout Grant Park. Each stage offers one type of music such as Pop/Rock, R&B, or Jazz. During the course of one day, many different musical acts perform on each stage. Visitors are free to enter the park at various points and times and experience the music on any of the stages, in any order they wish, for any amount of time. So, during the course of a day, a couple may decide to first hear a Blues musician, then walk over and hear a Hip Hop group on another stage, and end the day by listening to a Big Band jazz group perform. Or, alternatively, they may stay and listen to a number of groups perform on the same stage all day long, or simply hear one group for a few minutes and then leave. Ultimately, they decide together what is important to experience during their day together. Hopefully, they have a good time and enjoy music together. An interpersonal filter theory of relationship dissolution can be compared to this concert experience for a couple.
The different musical stages can be compared to filters that couples use to determine whether they should continue or make a stronger commitment to their relationship. Within each of these filters are numerous factors which may influence their relationship. These filters are like the different musical stages at the event. The musical groups which share a style of music and perform on the same stage throughout the course of the day are compared to the particular influences on the relationship. While this is certainly not a perfect analogy, it is meant to illuminate the interpersonal filter theory of relationship dissolution.

Some factors determine which couples will even come to the event in the first place, such as location, date, cost, foreknowledge of the musicians that will be performing, etc. These are like the similarity factors that influence whether partners will even meet each other and have the chance to form a relationship.

In this analogy, the couple is already dating exclusively. They come to the event to try to enjoy music together. Enjoying the music is equivalent to continuing to date. To have a positive experience at the event, both partners need to enjoy the music, or, at a minimum, one partner must be willing to listen to a group that their partner likes but which they might not choose if they were on their own.

Upon arriving at the concert, partners must choose a stage to begin listening. They may have similar musical tastes and enjoy music on one stage for the entire day. However, one or both partner(s) may not like what they hear on a particular stage, in which case they have four options: they can (1) move to another stage, (2) tolerate the music they do not like and wait for the next act to come out, (3) split up temporarily so each partner can visit a different stage, then reunite later in the day, or (4) leave the event
altogether. This is similar to a relationship, in which couples decide to stay together or break up based on different groups of factors (individual, dyadic, external, circumstantial). Couples who stay together are like couples who have similar musical tastes and enjoy the music together, even as they explore different stages (filters). A couple who leaves the event without enjoying music together is like a couple that breaks up. Couples who are not enjoying the music on a particular stage are like a couple who are somewhat dissatisfied with the relationship and look into their options.

While couples may not feel confident about every aspect of their relationship, they can still remain committed to each other. Like a couple who move to another stage to hear a different musical style, couples that do not match well on some group of characteristics may find that they enjoy being together in other ways. For example, a couple may find that they do not share similar leisure interests, so they choose to spend more time with friends and family so that they do not have conflicts about what to do together. Like couples waiting for the next act to come out, a couple may not enjoy discussing ideas with one another, but may experience mutually satisfying physical intimacy. In this sense, they tolerate discomfort on one dyadic interaction to enjoy another. Similar to the partners who temporarily split up to hear different groups perform at the same time, couples that have problems in a certain aspect of their relationship may choose to do certain things separately, but maintain their bond.

Many relationships do not reach all the stages/filters. Their incompatibility in one filter causes them to break up. For example, if a couple enjoy physical intimacy together, but do not like talking with each other, they are not likely to stay together. Some couples stay together because they do not take the time to explore different aspects of their
relationship or because of lust or fear of being alone, but these one-dimensional relationships will probably not last. In some sense, these relationships are like couples who show up to Taste of Chicago, and have some food, but never actually hear the music. In other words, they may be attracted to each other, but their interaction is not fulfilling.

Recognizing that a myriad of factors can influence a romantic relationship simultaneously, I give equal weight to all potential relationship influences in the following chapters. However, since social characteristics such as race, religion, and socio-economic status are part of the early stages of a dating relationship, they are not expected to have a strong influence on whether a relationship dissolves. The analysis in the following chapters focuses on the state of the relationship once it has become serious and toward the end of the premarital relationship process, as couples are dating exclusively and, in some cases, considering marriage. By this time, it is expected that most couples have decided whether they are physically attracted to each other, or whether differences in race, age, family background, or socioeconomic status are a concern. Once a couple has formed an exclusive, committed relationship, their interaction is the focus. They are still learning about their individual differences in personality or lifestyle, and whether they are ok with those differences in the long-term. They are discovering how their relationship will handle external influences such as familial and friendship bonds, physical distance, and work expectations. Any of these factors could be important in determining whether a relationship continues.
1.3 Relationship Dissolution Research

1.3.1 Factors Predictive Of Relationship Dissolution

The potential causes of relationship dissolution are discussed in the literature on relationship stability. These factors are typically grouped into three areas: individual, interaction/dyadic, and social/external (Surra and Hughes 1997; Cate et al. 2002). Individual characteristics can include intrapersonal-normative values, attitudes, and beliefs, in addition to personality features such as extraversion or kindness. Dyadic factors are those that exist because of the couple's interaction. Dyadic factors are usually the most important area of interest for studies on relationships, because they are directly related to the relationship. Dyadic factors include things such as commitment, love, and sexual intimacy. Social context is often split into social networks and external circumstances (Surra 1990; Larson 2003). Social context factors include concepts like age, race, education, physical distance, and approval of the relationship by family and friends. Family background characteristics are sometimes utilized in premarital relationship research, but they are used more often in studies of marital quality and divorce. These three or four groups provide the basis for most research on relationship stability. These factors are only briefly discussed below, but a more detailed discussion is included in chapter 4.

Individual factors have disappeared from most premarital relationship studies because (1) they have not been found to be important predictors of relationship stability (Cate and Lloyd 1992; Cate et al. 2002), or (2) their effect on a relationship is mediated through dyadic factors (Fitzpatrick and Sollie 1999). This highlights one of the difficulties of examining individual characteristics. While a concept such as kindness
may describe an individual, it can also be used in a dyadic sense if it is discussed in terms of kindness to partner, or differences in kindness between partners. In the rest of this dissertation, I treat individual factors as those aspects of a person that exist without the relationship, even if combining partners' scores may be considered a relationship characteristic.

Dyadic concepts such as love and commitment to the relationship are difficult to utilize because there is so much disagreement about how they should be measured, but they are common in relationship studies (Cate et al. 2002). In addition, dyadic interaction variables such as communication, sexual activity, time together, conflict, and comparing attractive alternatives to the relationship are important predictors of relationship stability (Felmlee et al. 1990; Surra and Longstreth 1990; Cate et al. 1993; Holman 2001:59). Forthcoming research by Jesse Owen, Scott Stanley, Galena Rhoades, and Howard Markman suggests a commitment inventory may be possible (Owen et al. forthcoming). In general, dyadic factors seem to be most useful when utilized separately rather than in a scale. Patterns of dyadic influence have frequently supported the idea of similarity between partners in a relationship.

Social support from family and friends predicts greater relationship stability (Meredith and Holman 2001). In addition, age and similarity in religious denomination, race, socio-economic status, and physical attractiveness are all related to couple permanence (Surra and Longstreth 1990), but “the effects of sociodemographic variables are generally small, and factor out of multivariate prediction models” (Meredith and Holman 2001:58).
1.3.2 Breakup Research

Until the 1970s, the dissolution of premarital relationship was rarely explored. As noted above, most research on premarital relationships focused on processes leading to marriage, and only indirectly addressed dissolution. The assumption is that a process which does not help a couple progress to a higher level of commitment will also lead to their breakup. Burgess and Wallin (1953) did some research on broken engagements and found that they "could be predicted by parental disapproval of the engagement, differences in leisure-time preferences, differences in religious faith, lower levels of affectionate expression, and less confidence in the happiness of the future marriage" (Cate and Lloyd 1992:84). This was one of the first studies to identify particular factors associated with breakups, even if they were specific to broken engagements. Aside from this study, however, there was not much research about premarital breakups until the seventies.

The next major study to focus on premarital breakups was Hill, Rubin, and Peplau's treatment in 1976. They conducted a two-year longitudinal study of relationships among college students and found a number of important predictors of breakup. Dyadic factors, including lower levels of intimacy and attachment, are good predictors of breakups. Couples who break up are also less likely to be in love or dating exclusively, and see less likelihood that they will marry. They have also dated a shorter amount of time. Another important dyadic predictor is equality of commitment or involvement. The partner with the least interest or commitment is more likely to end the relationship.
Hill et al. (1976) also find a number of demographic characteristics to be important predictors of breakups. Couples are more likely to stay together if they are similar in age, education, intelligence, and physical attractiveness (measured by others). They also find that external influences contribute to breakups. Things such as the ending of a school year or one partner getting a job in another location often make it difficult to maintain a relationship, or simply make it easier to breakup. "If one is able to attribute the impending breakup to external circumstances, one may be able to avoid some of the ambivalence, embarrassment, and guilt that may be associated with calling a relationship off" (Hill et al. 1976:148).

One of their most important contributions is the idea that there are two sides to every breakup. Very few breakups are truly mutual. Most couples report that one partner wanted to end the relationship at least somewhat more than the other. Thus, there are usually two roles: "dumper" and "dumpee." And partners usually have very different perceptions about the breakup. Their reports about dyadic factors are rarely in agreement, and most individuals have a tendency to report that they wanted the breakup, rather than their partner.

The question of who wants or initiates the breakup does have implications for the post-dissolution relationship. Couples are more likely to remain friends if the man initiates the breakup or when it is mutual. If the woman initiates the breakup, friendship afterward occurs less than half of the time. Hill et al. (1976) note Davis' (1973) finding that the word "friendship" is often a euphemism for "acquaintance" after a breakup.

Overall, Hill, Rubin, and Peplau draw attention to many different aspects of breakups. They look at various individual, dyadic, and external factors. They discuss the
mutuality of breakups, the possibility of friendship after a breakup, and the differences between partners' perceptions of the breakup. Their study was published about the time that research on divorce became a dominant topic in relationship research. However, it has been more than 30 years since their data was collected. The process of breaking up may be quite different today. Also, their findings were based on just 103 couples who had broken up, and all of the couples were college students.

1.3.3 Divorce Research

When the divorce rate peaked during the late 1970s, many researchers began examining why marital relationships end (Kitson 2003). This focus led to some research about premarital breakups, but few authors looked exclusively at breakup processes before marriage. A good example of this is found in the recent "Handbook of Divorce and Relationship Dissolution" (Fine and Harvey 2006). While the editors wanted to include research about premarital dissolution and encouraged authors to discuss it in their contributions, there is very little attention devoted to premarital breakups. Usually, if premarital relationship dissolution is addressed at all, it is through cohabitation. While cohabitation is common, it cannot account for all premarital breakups.

The lack of studies about premarital breakups is likely due to a number of things. First, most dissolution research in the last 30 years has focused on the high divorce rate and its influence on society. This is not surprising because divorce usually involves more people (especially children) and legal issues. Because premarital relationships do not involve a legal or other formal commitment, they rarely capture the attention of policymakers, religious organizations, or other interested parties. Unlike marriage and divorce, there are no official records kept of premarital relationship commitment or
dissolution, so it is much more difficult to identify couples who break up. Breakup research is only possible if dissolved relationships can be identified through other means, which usually involves following individuals or couples over time. In this sense, it is simply more difficult to collect data on premarital breakups than divorce. While much attention has been given to divorce (Fine 2006), some researchers have made excellent contributions toward understanding premarital breakups.

1.3.4 Premarital Breakups

Felmlee, Sprecher, and Bassin (1990) analyze relationship dissolution using hazard analysis. They find that significant predictors of the likelihood of a couple breaking up include: 1) less time spent together, 2) high comparison level for alternatives (interest in other people), 3) dissimilarity in race, 4) lower perceived support for the relationship from a partner's family and friends, and 5) a short duration of the relationship. Specific to social exchange theory, they find that comparison level for alternatives "was a more important predictor than investment and equity" (Felmlee et al. 1990:27). A number of studies have shown that equity, or the perception of what occurs within a relationship (e.g. fairness) has little influence on a relationship's outcome. Indeed, the authors find that equity, investment, and sexual intimacy were not important predictors of breakup.

Felmlee et al. (1990) use an excellent longitudinal research method to analyze breakups, but there is one primary concern with their study: they sampled college students and conducted the surveys over the course of a single semester, so the follow-up survey was conducted after only three months. Thus, while their study is a marked improvement over cross-sectional breakup analysis, they do not allow much time for
breakups to occur. In this sense, and considering that it has been over 20 years since this study was conducted, it would be desirable for more breakup research to use event history analysis or some other longitudinal method.

In 1992, Cate and Lloyd summarized premarital breakup research that had been published up to that point. They suggest that predictors of relationship dissolution can be grouped into three categories: social incompatibility (e.g., differences in age or education), low relationship quality (dyadic elements like love and communication), and social network influence (e.g., parental or friends' disapproval). The consensus is that uncertainty about the relationship and declines in satisfaction can lead to breakup. Specifically, uncertainty about the relationship stems from less communication with the partner, low support from the partner's social network, competing relationships (alternatives), change in personality or values, deception or betraying confidence, and conflict (for women, it is resolving conflict and for men it is how many times a conflicting issue was brought up).

Generally, partners identify dyadic issues when a relationship is growing, but talk about individual and external factors leading to the breakup. Couples who break up usually cite individual reasons (themselves or their partner) such as a trait or action (Cupach and Metts 1986). Individual reasons, such as feeling tied down or that the relationship has progressed too rapidly, led to rapid decreases in commitment. Overall, the most common reasons for breaking up are desire for autonomy, lack of commonalities, failure to listen and support the partner, lack of openness, infidelity, physical separation, inequity, and absence of romance (Baxter 1986).
Baxter (1986) offers some insights into positive breakups. Specifically, she suggests people use different strategies in breaking up, that vary along two dimensions: directness and other-orientation. "Directness refers to the extent to which the desire to end the relationship is explicitly stated to the partner" and "other-orientation refers to the degree to which the disengager attempts to avoid hurting the partner in the process of breaking up" (Cate and Lloyd 1992:90). Usually, the closer the relationship at the time of breakup, the more the initiator is direct and other-oriented. Direct strategies are also more likely when partners want to keep in contact, the breakup is mutual, and the reason for breakup is external to the relationship.

Baxter's findings may only be applicable to very young couples, however. She asked college students in introductory communications classes to write essays about why they broke up with their partner. These relationships had ended within the previous year. In addition, she only asked for essays from people who had initiated the breakup. So, overall, her accounts are only providing half the breakup story, and she assumes that there is no such thing as a mutual breakup.

Some authors have tested the possibility of breakup types, with moderate success. Loyer-Carlson and Walker (1990) identified three breakup types. These include 1) independence, where the relationship becomes too costly if more than casual; 2) disposition, where undesirable qualities are discovered in their partners; and 3) relationship problem, where the quality or nature of the relationship is a concern, which can include socio-demographic differences like socioeconomic status, religion, or geographic separation). They note that "persons in disposition break-ups have a significantly lower assessment of their alternative to the relationship" (Loyer-Carlson and
Walker 1990:2). Meredith (1998) finds some support for the independence and relationship problem types (according to my re-assessment of his disposition type). Battaglia et al. (1998) provide some additional support for three breakup types. In their attempts to define a breakup script, the three most commonly cited responses for the first step in the dissolution process are: lack of interest/notice other people, frustration/annoyance, and arguments. These are very similar to the three types presented by Loyer-Carlson and Walker. There were problems with the sample in all of these studies, however. Loyer-Carlson and Walker only use 48 college students' responses to create their types and Battaglia et al. use only 80 college students' responses to generate a breakup script. Nearly 60% of Meredith's sample is composed of Latter-day Saints. However, the findings from all three of these studies suggest that there may be three different kinds of breakups, specifically influenced by problems in the relationship, one partner's desire for independence, or frustration with a partner's attributes. It is not surprising that disposition is not a strong type because it is based on individual characteristics, which have been used consistently in relationship models but are rarely significant predictors of stability (as noted earlier). Also, many potentially annoying aspects of a person's personality are apparent in the early stages of a dating relationship, so these may simply determine which couples ever form a relationship in the first place.

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1 Meredith (1998:26) suggests there is support for a disposition type from a clustering around factors such as "conflicting marriage ideas, sexual intimacy, religion, and background differences," but these actually describe the relationship problem type and have nothing to do with a partner's disposition.
1.3.5 Summary of Literature

In summary, there are a number of important things to consider from the existing literature. First, relationship dissolution is a complex process that is influenced by a number of individual, dyadic, and external factors. At an individual level, interest in someone else (comparison level for alternatives), declines in satisfaction, and a desire for autonomy are all factors that can contribute to a breakup, but individual factors, in general, have not been strong predictors of relationship stability. Differences in age, socio-economic status, race, religion, and location (long-distance relationships) are important socio-demographic predictors of breakup. And oftentimes, external factors play an important role in a breakup. These include parental or friends' disapproval of the relationship and relationship-changing events (e.g., the end of the school year or a new job).

Overall, though, dyadic factors are probably most important in understanding or predicting breakups. These factors include low levels of affectionate expression (intimacy or sexual activity), likelihood of future marital happiness, and communication (self-disclosure). Also important are equality of commitment, amount of time spent together, and length of relationship. Finally, conflict, deception, and infidelity contribute to breakups. When constructing breakup models, then, it is important to consider all of these factors.

Aside from these specific factors, the literature suggests that very few breakups are mutual. Usually, one partner initiates the breakup and one gets "dumped." Partners rarely agree about the breakup, suggesting that individuals look at relationships differently and that maintaining distinctions (e.g. between men and women, or "dumper"
and "dumpee") may be important. If mutuality is important for a positive breakup, there may be very few relationships that end well.

Some authors recommend that breakup researchers focus on more detailed predictors of relationship outcomes. “Ideally, survey research in the future will combine the assessment of compositional factors with more precise measurement of individual, relational, and social influences on mate selection” (Surra 1990:850). In a similar conclusion, Arriaga and Agnew say that “much would be gained from future research that further teases apart the subtle distinctions among (a) factors that contribute to the emergence of a stable, committed relationship; [and] (b) factors that lead to relationship persistence” (2001:1201). Studying relationship emergence is challenging because it is necessary to interview/survey individuals or couples before they meet through their first interactions and dates, or ask them very general questions about potential partners, rather than actual dating partners. This dissertation explores relationship persistence, or dissolution, instead of relationship emergence. The focus is on couples that are already in exclusive dating relationships, or who ended a serious relationship within the last two years. I will use the factors that have been shown to influence relationship stability to better understand the breakup experience, the possibility of positive breakups, and the likelihood of breaking up compared to staying together or marrying.

1.4 Difficulty of Obtaining Breakup Data

Another issue that arises from the literature is the difficulty of finding enough breakup cases to be studied. Most researchers have difficulty finding enough cases for breakup research. For example, Burgess and Wallin (1953) studied 1,000 engaged
couples, but only some of those actually broke up. As a result, most breakup studies involve a couple hundred cases or fewer. This is primarily due to the nature of relationship research. Ideally, researchers would analyze couples from the moment they meet until they break up or get married, but this is practically impossible. Obtaining a large nationally-representative sample is also unrealistic because there is no way to identify who forms a relationship. This might be possible for small populations of interest, like all the female students in the same university dorm, but would not work for something like the U.S. population. As a result, researchers usually use the only data that they can obtain, even with serious efforts.

1.4.1 RELATE Instrument

In order to investigate premarital relationship dissolution, I use RELATionship Evaluation (hereafter RELATE) data from the RELATE Institute, an organization that has been collecting information about couples for many years. Partners in romantic relationships complete an online instrument about their relationships and are sent a follow-up survey approximately 18 months later to understand more about changes in their relationship over time. If they are still with their partners at the follow-up, they are invited to take the RELATE survey again. If respondents are no longer dating their partners, they are asked a series of questions about the dissolution of their relationship. The breakup questionnaire was developed by David Klein (University of Notre Dame), Jason Carroll (Brigham Young University), and Cynthia Doxey (Brigham Young University). The respondents to this breakup instrument provide the basis for this dissertation.
RELATE was developed by the Marriage Study Consortium at Brigham Young University. It began as Marital Inventories (1980), which evolved into PREParation for Marriage Instrument (PREP-M) in the early nineties, and became RELATE in 1997. The dataset primarily contains information from partners in romantic relationships that is gathered via an online instrument. Partners complete the instrument separately and their responses are then matched with one another in the dataset. As a result, individuals can be analyzed separately or in conjunction with their partners (as couples).

RELATE has a number of strengths and some weaknesses. The RELATE Institute is a non-profit organization with the “goal of developing research and outreach tools that can be used directly with the public and to gather information about relationships. The institute members are a group of scholars, researchers, family-life educators, and therapists” that are focused on understanding and strengthening relationships (Loyer-Carlson and Busby 2002). As noted above, RELATE was the result of many years of research and development. Since the instrument was developed by a varied group of researchers, it has the benefit of being shaped by theory, research, and practical application in therapeutic settings. Most of the questions on the instrument have been developed and are revised through ongoing theory construction and research.

Since the instrument was placed online in 2000, more than 30,000 individuals have completed the instrument. The instrument has 270 items. Previous researchers have tested the existing scales for reliability and validity. Reliability of all but three scales is between .70 and .90 for internal consistency and test-retest, while factor analyses have established construct validity. Overall, the instrument is grouped into individual, family background, and relationship-specific questions.
RELATE has a self-selected/convenience sample of individuals or couples throughout the world. Utilizing a website, it enables couples to complete the instrument individually and then produces reports that the couple can use to discuss their relationship. The three main sources of respondents are college students, people participating in personal or family therapy, and word-of-mouth. However, RELATE continues to grow in use throughout the world as translation efforts are underway to make RELATE available in many different languages. Previous researchers using RELATE have selected a sample of the respondents stratified by race and religion to approach U.S. averages in these areas, and this method is utilized in chapter 4. However, the data will never be representative of a particular population of interest.

This highlights one of the inherent problems of online data collection such as RELATE. Internet convenience sampling (where people find the website through a number of different ways) is quite different from traditional survey sampling techniques. In general, most sampling strategies use random sampling of a population in order to generalize findings for that population. As noted above, the difficulty with relationship research is that a list of individuals currently dating, or couples in exclusive or engaged relationships, is nearly impossible to produce, unless focusing on a particular group. For example, in order to truly understand premarital relationships in the United States, a researcher would need a list of all individuals or couples in the U.S. who are dating or are currently in a premarital relationship at a given point in time. Since this is not possible to obtain, researchers utilize other methods. The RELATE Institute has made RELATE available online in order to increase the number of respondents and get a more diverse sample of relationships compared to other relationship surveys which usually sample
college students at a particular university, or even in a particular class. Thus, while an online convenience sample is not an ideal sampling method for survey research, it represents a good option for understanding diverse premarital relationships.

Even with a large number of cases, though, there are still biases in the data set. The main biases come from gender, age, socioeconomic status, religion, sexual orientation, and relationship status. For example, the RELATE dataset contains a large number of students and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. With a limited number of cases in the breakup set, it is not a good idea to drop cases. However, there are biases in any dataset, and since it is rarely possible to obtain a random sample of premarital relationships in any large population, these biases should not prevent analysis. The potential influence of the sample bias is discussed in each of the following chapters.

In April 2008, (which is the cut off point for data used in this dissertation) there were 227 instances in which both partners had completed the follow-up instrument (both partners never-married, with 200 still together and 27 broken up). So any longitudinal analyses, especially using multivariate models, with the goal of using data from both partners would be limited by the small number of cases. Perhaps most important is that couple data allow the researcher to look at differences between partners' responses, and see if those differences are larger for couples who break up. This type of partner comparison is only available with data gathered at time 1.

There are approximately 1,200 individuals who completed a follow-up instrument (taking RELATE a second time, or completing the breakup questionnaire). Approximately 200 of these individuals experienced a breakup from their partners. Very
few of the respondents' partners completed the follow-up survey. So, while it is possible to use data from both partners at time 1, it is only possible to look at individual data at time 2.

1.5 Chapter Structure

The first major component of this dissertation is an examination of the process and experience of breaking up. There is a wealth of information on the RELATE breakup questionnaire, which, until now, has not been analyzed. In chapter 2, I explore the breakup experience using descriptive and bivariate analysis of the breakup data. The goal of chapter 2 is to answer a number of questions about breakups before getting into predictive models. These include: What are the primary reasons why couples break up? What is the typical timeline for relationships that end (beginning, peak, and deterioration periods)? How do individuals cope with a breakup? Are there long-term negative effects of a break up? Chapter 2 focuses on differences in the breakup experience depending on characteristics such as relationship status (engaged vs. steady dating) or who initiated the breakup (or got "dumped"). I also analyze whether things such as cohabitation, friendship before the relationship began, or relationship problems make the breakup experience more difficult.

In the third chapter of this dissertation I explore whether breakups are ever a good thing, or positive. I did some preliminary analysis to create a positive breakup scale. I thought a positive breakup might be explained by mutuality (or who initiated it), how the breakup happened, the friendliness of the breakup event, and how a person feels now about the breakup. Testing all of these concepts (and more) for reliability, however, I
discovered that these are separate concepts. As a result, I introduce three different conceptions of positive breakups: problematic, friendly, and educational (with mutuality being a component of breakup friendliness). In order to examine what influences the positivity of a breakup, I use OLS regression to construct causal models of friendly and educationally positive breakups.

The fourth chapter is a predictive study of relationship outcomes. I use logistic regression models to predict which couples (at time 1) will breakup versus stay together, as well as the characteristics that predict which couples marry. The unique contributions of chapter 4 are the comparison of the marriage and breakup processes and the use of couples as the unit of analysis. All the variables used in the logistic regression models (except for relationship outcomes) are computed from both partners' responses at time 1.

The final chapter of the dissertation provides an overview of the breakup process and experience. The purpose of chapter 5 is to discuss general conclusions that can be drawn from the research findings presented in the previous chapters, as well as the contribution that the dissertation makes to the existing literature on relationship dissolution.
CHAPTER 2:  
THE PROCESS AND EXPERIENCE OF BREAKING UP

"He was a wonderful guy and boyfriend, but we just wanted two completely different things, and we grew up and grew apart. No regrets though." (22 yr old female)

"What concerns me the most about my ex-relationship is that I have not dated anyone since the break-up. It has been over a year now. I wonder how deeply I was affected by the break-up…" (28 yr old male)

"Communication was a big problem. We didn't do enough of it and we moved too quickly." (26 yr old female)

2.1 Introduction

Asking someone who has experienced a breakup to tell you why it occurred will likely yield a short response. "We just weren't right for each other," "He cheated on me," or "She had issues" are phrases you might hear. But, ask the same person to describe how the breakup occurred, or who initiated the breakup, and the story will likely get more complex. The process by which couples dissolve their relationships and the interaction the partners have following the breakup can vary significantly between couples and partners. A number of researchers have explored the ways by which couples accomplish a break up, and fewer studies have analyzed the post-dissolution relationship between former partners. This chapter will explore the dissolution process and examine
differences in the experience of breaking up. Specifically, I present a simplified model of the dissolution process, and test hypotheses related to the breakup experience.

Beginning in the 1980s, Duck (1982) and other researchers began thinking of relationship dissolution as a process rather than a discrete event. This process approach allows breakups to be analyzed as part of the process of relationship formation or mate selection. In other words, studying how couples become more committed and eventually marry also enables an analysis of how some relationships become less committed and break apart. Progression and dissolution are really part of the same courtship process, but have very different outcomes. However, a process approach to relationship dissolution suggests that different couples may have vastly different breakup experiences based on interaction and events leading up to the actual separation.

2.2 Literature Review

2.2.1 Baxter’s Typology of Breakup Strategies

Baxter (1984) was one of the first to explore the different ways in which couples breakup. She sampled college students in introductory communication courses (mean age 19.4) and asked them for retrospective accounts of a breakup that occurred in the last 12 months. Looking at breakups through a process approach, she finds that there are different breakup trajectories, rather than a single set of stages or steps to breakup. Baxter focuses on the Dyadic phase, which is "the process by which [partners] negotiate their un-bonding." Her eight breakup trajectories come from her respondents' detailing of relationship problems (Incrementalism or Critical Incident), decision to exit the
relationship (unilateral vs. bilateral), dissolution actions (indirect or direct), number of breakup attempts, attempted repair, and termination/continuation.

In analyzing breakups, Baxter suggests that there are two types of relationship problems: Incrementalism and Critical Incident.

Incrementalism involved the reported stockpiling of several relationship problems preceding the decision by at least one of the persons that the relationship should end. Relationships characterized by a Critical Incident involved a single reported relationship problem of major magnitude which erupted with little warning. (Baxter 1984:35)

Aside from these two types of relationship problems, Baxter suggests the dissolution process has the following components: (1) the mutuality of the breakup, or the unilateral (individual) vs. bilateral (mutual) desire to end the relationship; (2) the direct vs. indirect approach of the breakup attempt; (3) the number of breakup attempts (single vs. multiple) that one or both partners initiate; (4) whether there are any attempts at repairing the relationship; and (5) whether the relationship actually ends.

Taking all of these factors into consideration, Baxter suggests nine different breakup strategies. These nine types are first grouped by the mutuality of the breakup (or whether the decision to exit the relationship is made by one partner (individual) or both partners (mutual). The second grouping is whether the breakup strategy is indirect or direct. The strategies are summarized in Figure 2.1.

____________________________

2 I have changed the names of some of the criteria in order to simplify them (e.g. Pseudo-Desescalation has been renamed “Scale-back.”
When one partner decides to end the relationship, the indirect strategies include: Withdrawal, Scale-back, and Hurtful. "Withdrawal involved avoidance-based behaviours in which the disengager reduced the intimacy of contact and/or lessened the frequency of contact with the partner" (Baxter 1984). In short, it is avoidance. When a partner uses a scale-back strategy, he/she falsely expresses the desire to go back to just being friends or dating other people, when he/she really just wants to break up. The hurtful strategy is to treat one's partner badly so that he/she will decide to end the relationship, thus helping the partner who desired the breakup in the first place to avoid having to initiate the breakup. This hurtful strategy highlights the difficulty of making causal claims in breakup research. In a hurtful breakup, one partner's poor treatment of the other may be the primary cause of the breakup, while the partner who is being hurt may actually initiate the breakup. But, this does not account for the reasons why the first partner desired a breakup and, thus, began to act in hurtful ways. Ultimately, the "cause" of a breakup can vary (or be the same) for each partner, and can include many components.

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<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Individual</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Indirect</strong></td>
<td>Withdrawal</td>
<td>Fading Away</td>
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<td>Scale-back</td>
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<td><strong>Direct</strong></td>
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<td>&quot;The Talk&quot;</td>
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The individual, direct methods are: declaration and 'the talk.' A declaration breakup is "characterized by an explicit declaration to the other party that the relationship [is] over with no opportunity for discussion or compromise" (Baxter 1984). 'The talk' involves one partner expressing dissatisfaction and desire to breakup framed in the context of relationship problems.

Among the couples that Baxter studied, the primary reaction to an individual breakup decision was resistance. That resistance was either reward-oriented, where the partner tried to reverse the decision by altering his/her behavior (or making promises to alter his/her behavior), or cost-oriented, where the partner made threats or retaliated. If resistance was met, the disengager usually attempted again, but this attempt was usually indirect.

Mutual breakup strategies are not common. Dailey et al. (2009) report that "Most breakups are unilateral; typically 20% or less of respondents report their breakups were mutual (e.g. Hill et al. 1976; Sprecher 1994; Sprecher et al. 1998)." Like the individual strategies identified above, mutual breakups can be discussed as both indirect and direct methods. The two indirect strategies include Fading Away and Pretense. Fading Away is simply an "implicit understanding that the relationship ha[s] ended" where partners do not expect or desire any further interaction, while a breakup characterized by pretense is where "the two parties maintain the pretence of a continuing, if transformed, relationship, meanwhile intending total non-contact with one another" (Baxter 1984:40).

The direct approaches to a mutual breakup are Blame and Negotiated. A blaming breakup style involves conflict between the partners about why the breakup is necessary, even though both are agreed it should end. A negotiated breakup "involves explicit
communication between the parties which formally ends the relationship; however, unlike [Blame], this discussion is noticeably free of hostility and argument."

Baxter's categorization of dissolution strategies by mutuality and approach (indirect vs. direct) is particularly useful. The breakup strategies she identifies are an excellent summary of the differences in the breakup experience. Even though there are limitations to her study, like using a sample of college freshmen, these do not limit her identification of breakup strategies.

2.2.2 Lloyd and Cate: Attributions of Relationship Changes

In the Eighties, a number of researchers began using the Retrospective Interview Technique, which was developed by Huston, Surra, Fitzgerald, and Cate (see Duck and Gilmour 1981) to try to get a glimpse of relationship development across the entire course of a relationship, from the initial meeting to the breakup or marriage. The technique involves interviewing individuals who have recently ended a relationship (or married) and having them chart the entire course of their relationship by identifying the significant turning points and the estimated chances of marrying their partner at each point. The two main weaknesses of this approach are (1) it relies on memory recall, and (2) assumes that all individuals are interested in marrying. It is very likely that some respondents cannot recall all the changes in their relationship over time, especially as they become more removed from the relationship. Additionally, a person may understand/explain things differently months or years after a relationship has ended than they would when they are experiencing it. In other words, the information is only as good as the respondent's memory of the relationship. The method does have some
usefulness, though, as it provides a way to get a complete look at a relationship, and also captures the attributions that people give for their relationships ending.

Lloyd and Cate (1985) utilized this technique to analyze the attributions that individuals gave to changes in their relationship. Using Surra's four categories of relationship influences as a guide, Lloyd and Cate categorized all the respondents' attributions for their relationship turning points into four categories: (1) **Dyadic**, or "rooted in the interaction of the partners," which includes redefining involvement moments, conflict, self-disclosure, etc.; (2) **Individual**, which are "reasons that emanate from one partner's personal belief system, including timing or social-clock factors, standards for a suitable partner, relationship standards, and fear or attraction dispositions"; (3) **Network** reasons are those "that result from interaction with others and anticipated interaction with others," so friendships or attractive alternatives would be network factors; and (4) **Circumstantial**, which are factors that the couple has no control over, including "events related to jobs, health, accidents or any factor that is external to the partners and to their relationship."

Lloyd and Cate find that 43 percent of all the relationship change attributions are dyadic, 30 percent are individual, 15 percent are network, and 12 percent are circumstantial. There are some interesting details regarding which attributions are most relevant at which stages of a relationship. Most importantly for this study, Lloyd and Cate find that dyadic attributions are important when relationships are developing, but individual attributions are more frequently cited as the reasons for a relationship ending. They suggest that the increase in individual attributions may come from an increase in individual introspection as the relationship becomes more serious. Or,
it may be easier to explain the deterioration of a relationship in terms of 'my partner changed' or 'I just couldn't put up with that kind of behaviour any more' than it is to negate the positive interaction, the good times together or the intimate self disclosure that took place earlier in the relationship. (Lloyd and Cate 1985:428)

In addition, Lloyd and Cate (1985) find that networks are more likely to influence a relationship when it is ending rather than when it is building. In terms of who initiates a breakup, the authors find that people who initiate a breakup give more individual reasons, and people who have a mutual breakup or whose partner initiates the breakup are more likely to cite dyadic reasons. Their primary finding regarding gender differences is that in instances where their partner initiates the breakup, males are more likely to suggest the breakup was because of network or circumstantial reasons, rather than individual reasons. They suggest that men are more likely to believe that causes which are out of their control were the issue rather than that their partner broke up with them for individual reasons.

2.2.3 Battaglia et al.: Ordered Dissolution Script

Recognizing the many factors that can influence a relationship, Battaglia et al. (1998) identify an ordered script for relationship dissolution. Although they try to avoid calling it a process, their work is essentially an effort to identify a universal dissolution process. The problem with their approach is that they asked the respondents to

List the steps in which a couple (i.e. boyfriend/girlfriend) breaks up. Please list at least 20 (or in some cases 10) steps that would normally occur during the dissolution of a close relationship. Each step should be listed in the order it usually occurs.” (Battaglia et al. 1998:832)
This questions forces respondents to think there are twenty steps, when they might have initially only thought of a few. And, although they asked respondents to order the steps, there is only limited support for their final ordering of steps in a breakup script (e.g. some script elements in the final order were only listed by about 10-12% of respondents). There is also considerable overlap between all the elements, suggesting that many of them occur simultaneously, rather than in an ordered sequence. While their ordering is problematic, the script elements are useful in discussing the breakup experience.

Some of these script elements are redundant, however, and can be naturally grouped together. For example, "Act distant," "Physical distance/avoidance," and "Lack of communication" all suggest avoidance strategies. Also, "Talk with partner" and "Communicate feelings" are basically the same thing, and "Back together" and "Try to work things out" are both attempts at reconciliation.

Reassessing the authors' list of "most frequently generated script elements" through the use of a more inclusive approach (not requiring elements to appear in successive steps) provides a few interesting insights into the breakup process. The first elements that appear from their respondents' script generation mainly involve one partner becoming dissatisfied with the relationship. These include lack of interest, frustration/annoyance, and arguments, leading some to start noticing other potential partners. This dissatisfaction causes partners to assess the relationship and think about how they want to proceed, which often involves avoidance actions or considering other potential partners. In the authors' words,

One [partner] then begins to withdraw emotionally from the relationship before trying to work things out in an attempt to salvage the relationship. The lack of interest in the relationship
often resurfaces, but now an individual begins considering a final break. Next, the couple talks about the issues that make them feel dissatisfied with the relationship, and they agree to try to work things out one more time. […] Although the couple has agreed to try to work things out, they continue to notice alternative dating partners, which eventually leads to dating others while still dating each other. The cycle repeats itself one last time when the couple decides to get back together before considering breaking up for a second time. Before 'officially' breaking up, however, people tend to experience a sense of having moved on, that is, they emotionally detach themselves from their current partner and the relationship. Gaining a sense of 'closure' (i.e. move-on/recovery) may facilitate the final step of the relationship dissolution script, namely break up. (Battaglia et al. 1998:841)

Feelings of anger are common between the first and second attempts at reconciliation as couples discuss their relationship with each other and with friends and family members.

Battaglia et al. (1998) argue that relationship dissolution is a cyclical process. However, most couples do not experience all the stages of their script, especially if at least one partner is simply dissatisfied and does not see the point in trying to reconcile. As Baxter (1984) points out, many partners initiate a breakup without verbally communicating with their partner. And many couples do not have periods of avoidance followed by reconciliation. In short, there are many different breakup trajectories. So, while the script proposed by Battaglia et al. does not work as a universal process of relationship dissolution, it is helpful for discussing elements that are common in many breakups, or to identify a generalized process.

I extract a more simplified script from the work of Battaglia et al., which is that the breakup process (1) usually begins "when one person loses interest in either the partner or the relationship, and other people begin to become attractive alternatives as possible dating partners." This individual dissatisfaction leads to (2) a period of
assessment when the person considers a breakup and (3) avoids communication with his/her partner, before (4) trying to work things out. The dissatisfied partner will often (5) seek more input by communicating with their partner, and discussing their relationship with family and friends (and sometimes dating other people) before (6) emotionally detaching themselves from the relationship and (7) breaking up with their partner. This generalized model is useful for discussing breakups with many different trajectories.

To provide a more complete picture of the dissolution process, I add Baxter's (1984) breakup strategies to my simplified script. This new model is a useful summary of the dissolution process because Battaglia et al. (1998) provide a general order/process of relationship dissolution, while Baxter provides more information about the breakup experience or event itself. My resulting model of relationship dissolution is:

1. Dissatisfaction [and reason for it]:
   a. Lack of interest/ Notice other people [attractive alternatives]
   b. Frustration/ Annoyance [partner attributes]
   c. Arguments [conflict]

2. Assess situation/ Consider breakup

3. Physical distance/ Avoidance/ Act distant/ Lack of communication

4. Try to work things out

5. Seek input [type]:
   a. Talk with partner/ Communicate feelings [dyadic]
   b. Talk with friends/family [external]
(c. Date other people [external])
(d. Get back together/ Try to work things out [dyadic])

6. Move on/ Emotionally detach

7. Break up
   a. Mutuality (individual vs. mutual desire to break up)
   b. Direct vs. indirect approach of the breakup attempt
   c. Number of breakup attempts initiated by one or both partners
   d. Reconciliation attempts
   e. Actual end of the relationship
   f. Breakup method – how it happened
   g. Blame (self/other orientation)
   h. Positivity of the breakup [discussed in next chapter]

8. Post-dissolution relationship

There are two instances in this process where a breakup can occur. Reconciliation attempts may fail, with a breakup occurring shortly thereafter, especially considering how long the partners have been dating. Partners may also initiate a breakup before attempting to reconcile. For example, a couple who have only been dating for a few weeks/months might not be serious enough for a dissatisfied partner to feel the need to communicate with their partner about why the relationship is not working. Thus, their avoidance actions become the beginning of the end, and they initiate a breakup when their partner wants to try to work things out. It is also highly likely that a couple will break up after a second attempt at reconciliation because many partners would not be
comfortable with a reduction of commitment, especially allowing their partners to date other people. So, while some couples might have multiple attempts at reconciliation, many will break up the first or second time they try to work things out.

### 2.2.4 Dailey et al.: On-Off Relationships

One of the few studies to address more specific breakup issues is the study by Dailey et al. (2009) of the differences between on-again/off-again couples (who break up and get back together at least once) and those couples who break up permanently the first time. They argue that relationship stability is more complex than just together vs. dissolved. Over the course of a relationship, couples frequently break up and reconcile. The authors find that at least 40% of all relationships are on-again/off-again (hereafter "on-off"), with an average of 2.5 renewals of the relationship, and the time apart usually lasting for 1 to 2 months before getting back together.

Of those that had an on-off relationship, 24% reported they had only broken up and reconciled once with that partner, 30% twice, 22% three times, and 24% four or more times.

They find that on-off relationship breakups are different from noncyclical (never broke up) relationship breakups in a number of ways. First, on-off partners reported a greater length of relationship before the first breakup (as opposed to those who broke up and did not get back together). On-off partners reported fewer positives and more negatives in their relationships. Specifically, more renewals led to less validation, and lower satisfaction and love. "Those reporting more renewals also reported more ineffective conflict and more aggression from their partners," in addition to more relationship uncertainty both before and after a breakup (Dailey et al. 2009:40).
The authors discuss potential reasons why partners might get back together. First, on-off breakups are almost always unilateral (initiated by one partner). But, "past noncyclical partners, in contrast, reported that almost half of their breakups were mutual decisions" (Dailey et al. 2009:43). Partners in on-off relationships have more uncertainty about the status of their relationship following a breakup, which may make it easier to get back together.

Dailey et al. (2009) also asked respondents the reasons for dissolution. The top four reasons their respondents indicated were: physical distance (18%), unbalanced needs or expectations (16%), third party/external forces (not alternative partners) (14%), and communication problems (14%). These were college students, so it is likely that many of them were describing relationships that started in high school, which would explain why physical distance is the top problem when they went to different colleges.

Their respondents also reported the dissolution strategies that were used in the relationship: direct dump [declaration] (25%), justifications/explanation ['the talk'] (24%), negotiated (17%), pseudo de-escalation [scale-back] (9%), blame (7%), avoidance [withdrawal] (6%), dating others [hurtful] (4%), relational talk trick [pretense] (3%), and fade away (3%).

While talking about breakups as a process is useful, some researchers have discussed the breakup process as continuing long after the couple have actually broken up (with no more attempts at reconciliation). However, once a couple decides to breakup and accomplishes the dissolution, their attempts to explain the breakup to their networks, come to terms with why the breakup occurred, or contact their ex-partner as a friend should not be considered part of the breakup process. The breakup event is the end of the
process. From then on, it is a post-dissolution process. Without treating the actual breakup as the end of the breakup process, it is possible to say a breakup never fully occurs, as any contact with or thoughts/expressions about the former partner could be considered part of the breakup process. While this is true in some sense (e.g. partners in relationships do influence the course of each others' lives), I think it is important to keep the post-dissolution process separate from the breakup process. Otherwise, the goal of the researcher should be to understand the entire relationship process, since the moment two people meet could be considered the beginning of their breakup because there is likely some consideration (even subconsciously) of whether they want to spend any more time with each other. In the next chapter, I explore some post-dissolution questions, but this chapter focuses on the process of breaking up (from the moment dissatisfaction influences one partner to begin considering alternatives) to the end of the relationship (when one partner stops making attempts to reconcile) and will identify differences in the breakup experience using many of the concepts in the existing literature. Questions related to positive breakups and differences between couples who break up and those who stay together are addressed in chapters 3 and 4.

2.3 Hypotheses

2.3.1 Gender

_Hypothesis 1. Women are more likely to initiate a breakup than men._ There is some evidence in the existing literature which suggests women may be more likely to initiate a breakup than men (Rubin, Peplau, and Hill 1981; Brand et al. 2007).
2.3.2 Relationship Status

*Hypothesis 2. Compared to serious daters, engaged couples experience more difficult breakups, with more problems and negative experiences.* Engaged couples are likely to start making preparations for their wedding once they become officially engaged. In making a decision to marry their partner, they have also become more committed, and a breakup may cause more distress than if they were not engaged (Fine and Sacher 1997).

2.3.3 Length of relationship

*Hypothesis 3. Longer relationships have a drawn-out breakup experience.* This may include a longer breakup process, bumpier decline, and more renewals (where couples break up and get back together). If people have been in a relationship for a considerable amount of time, they have invested a lot of time and effort into maintaining the relationship, so a breakup is not expected to be a simple matter. If initiating the breakup, they may try to avoid hurting their partner too much by being abrupt, or if their partner initiates the breakup a person may try to convince him/her that things will get better.

2.3.4 Cohabitation

*Hypothesis 4. Couples who cohabit have more difficult breakups.* This could include more relationship problems, lingering negative feelings, or fewer positives compared to negatives. Like being engaged, partners who cohabit are likely to have a higher investment in the relationship, especially on an economic level, as partners often cohabit to save money (Sassler 2004). So, when a cohabiting relationship ends, there are
often negative financial impacts on both partners, but especially on the woman (Avellar and Smock 2005).

2.3.5 On-again/off-again relationships [number of renewals]

_Hypothesis 5._ Individuals in on-off relationships (who broke up and got back together at least once) have more troubled relationships. They are expected to have lower relationship satisfaction, more relationship problems and more unequal commitment between partners. If a couple has already broken up one or more times, it is a good indicator that their relationship will not last.

_Hypothesis 6._ Respondents from on-off relationships are expected to be more ambivalent about their ex-relationships. They may especially think there is a higher likelihood of getting back together with their ex-partner.

2.3.6 Mutuality

_Hypothesis 7._ Couples who have mutual breakups have shorter, rockier relationships. This could include more problems, fewer positives, or lower satisfaction and commitment. Since both partners are in agreement that the relationship should end, they are not likely to have been dating long and are more likely to be experiencing problems in their relationship.

_Hypothesis 8._ Mutual breakups are friendlier, and respondents are able to move on quickly (more successful coping and more likely to form a new relationship). In general, if both parties agree that that the relationship should end, the partners will not be hindered from forming better relationships with new partners.
2.3.7 Initiated/Dumped

The view of the breakup should be quite different for respondents who initiated it compared to respondents whose partners initiated the breakup (Hill et al. 1976), but the negative aspects of the breakup will be the same for all respondents (since dumped respondents are expected to notice the negative aspects of the relationship stemming from their partner's dissatisfaction).

*Hypothesis 9. Respondents who are dumped have a more difficult post-dissolution experience than their partners who initiated the breakup.* This could include more trouble coping, negative feelings about the ex-relationship, or other indicators.

*Hypothesis 10. Respondents who initiate the breakup will indicate lower relationship satisfaction and lower positive relationship aspects, as well as greater differences in commitment and attractiveness.* If a partner is initiating the breakup, it should correspond with his/her dissatisfaction with the relationship or simply a lower interest overall (Felmlee 2001).

2.3.8 Current relationship

*Hypothesis 11. Individuals who have formed a new relationship will have an easier time overcoming the breakup.* Specifically, they will have fewer negative feelings about their past relationship, and their coping will be more successful. It should not matter whether a person initiated a breakup or was dumped. Forming a new relationship would help in either instance as individuals put a previous relationship behind them and (hopefully) feel that the new relationship is better than the previous one.
2.3.9 Time since breakup

*Hypothesis 12. As more time passes following a breakup, people experience fewer negative effects from the breakup.* While a breakup may be a difficult experience, the passage of time helps a person overcome the negative feelings they may have had at the time of the breakup. Over time, a person can find ways to cope (Kurdek 1997).

2.4 Method

2.4.1 Sample

The sample consists of 214 heterosexual individuals (139 women and 75 men) who were no longer in a relationship with the partners with whom they completed RELATE at Time 1. 86% of the respondents are White, along with 4% Asian, 3% Latino, and 2% Black. Two-thirds of the sample respondents were enrolled college students, with a majority of the respondents (59%) enrolled as undergraduates, and another 8% in graduate programs. Almost two-thirds (65%) earned less than $40,000 a year, and three-fourths (76%) earned less than $60,000. The sample also consists of one-third Latter-day Saints (34%), one-third Protestant (33%), 14% Catholic, and 12% who indicated no religious affiliation. Each respondent was either single or cohabiting with a partner at Time 1; none had ever been married. Fourteen of the respondents indicated that they (or their partner) had at least one child from a previous relationship, but only one couple had a child together. At Time 2, most of the respondents ranged in age from 19 to 40, with only one respondent aged 18 and one aged 52. Their average age was 25. At the follow-up, almost half (49%) of the respondents indicated that they were currently in a new relationship. Finally, 79% of the respondents indicated that they would be
describing the breakup of a serious dating relationship, 17% a broken engagement, and only 3% indicated they would describe the breakup of a casual dating relationship.

The presence of so many Latter-day Saint (LDS) individuals in the sample likely has an influence on some of the findings. After conducting some group comparisons, there is a significant difference between the Latter-day Saint respondents and those with other religions or no religion on a number of variables. For example, the LDS respondents are significantly less likely to have had sex or cohabited with their partners. They had also dated their partners for a much shorter amount of time, and had shorter relationships generally, but were more likely to be engaged compared to non-LDS individuals. These differences may influence the findings on some of the breakup variables. For example, compared to non-LDS respondents, LDS individuals have friendlier breakups and lower positive relationship aspects throughout their relationships. These differences are likely due to the differences in sex and cohabitation within their relationships since sexual intimacy likely increases relationship quality (positives) at every stage, and cohabitation makes breakups less friendly (this finding is confirmed in chapter 3). Since removing them from the sample would decrease the sample size by one-third, they are kept in the dataset for all analyses.

2.4.2 Procedure

As discussed in chapter 1, the breakup respondents come from a group of individuals who completed the online RELATE survey instrument, and respondents were introduced to the instrument primarily through academic courses, counseling, word-of-mouth, and Internet searching. After couples had completed the survey the first time, the partners were contacted about 18 months later and asked if they were still with the same
partner. If they had broken up, they were given a breakup instrument. If they were still
with their partner, they were asked to take RELATE a second time. Not surprisingly,
there were very few instances where both partners from a dissolved relationship
completed the follow-up survey. In most cases, only one partner responded to the
breakup survey.

2.5 Measures

2.5.1 Relationship Prior to Dating

One of the first questions respondents were asked was "How did you meet your
ex-partner?" The most common response was "Introduced by a friend or family
member," which was selected by 27% of the respondents. Another 16% met "at church
of a church sponsored event," and 13% met in class. In descending order of selection, the
rest of the respondents met "At a party or social event" (9%); "In public (in a store, one
campus, at a park, etc.)" (7%); "At work," or "In a club or extra-curricular activity" (6% each);
"On the Internet or dating service" (4%); and "At a bar or dance club" (4%). There
were only 2 couples (1%) who met on a blind date. 16 of the couples met in some other
way (respondent chose "other"). The ways the partners met is reflective of the sample
characteristics (many religious students), but it is interesting to note that most couples
were introduced by someone they know, and nine of the couples met on the Internet.

Respondents were also asked "How long did you know your ex-partner before
you started dating?" 21% of the respondents selected "We dated immediately," meaning
they did not know their partner until their first date. 29% chose "1 week to 1 month,
15% selected "2 to 3 months," 11% said "4 to 6 months," and 7% chose "7 months to 1
"14% of the respondents indicated that they had known their partner for "1 year to 5 years" before starting to date, and 4% said "More than 5 years." Converting the response categories to months, the average length of time partners had known each other before starting to date was 10 months.

2.5.2 Relationship

2.5.2.1 Length of relationship

The next question was "How long after you started dating did you and your ex-partner breakup?" The response categories were: "Less than one month," "1 month - 3 months," "4 months - 6 months," "7 months - 1 year," "1 year - 1½ years," "1½ years - 2 years," "2 years - 3 years," "3 years - 5 years," and "More than 5 years." After recoding the responses into months, the average length of relationship was about 23 months.

2.5.2.2 Kissing/ Sex

Respondents were also asked how soon they kissed their ex-partner and how soon they had sexual relations. Responses to the kissing and sexual relations questions ranged from 1=We kissed/had sex before we started dating to 8=We never kissed/had sexual relations.

23% of couples kissed before they started dating, and 88% of couples had kissed after a few weeks of dating. Only 4% of respondents indicated that they had sex with their partners before starting to date, and only about one-fourth had sex within the first few weeks of dating. One-third (34%) of the sample never had sexual relations with their partner (likely due to the number of highly religious respondents).
2.5.2.3 Cohabiting

Respondents were asked: "Did you and your ex-partner ever live together without being married (cohabit)?" 22% of the respondents indicated that they cohabited with their ex-partner at some point during their relationship.

2.5.2.4 On-again/off-again relationships [or frequency of breakups]

Exactly half of the respondents indicated at time 1 that they had never broken up and then renewed their relationship with their partner. 26% said that it happened rarely, and another 15% indicated that they had broken up and gotten back together "sometimes." 8% indicated that this on-again/off-again situation occurred "often" or "very often." If the category "rarely" can be interpreted as "once," it would suggest that about half of all relationships that eventually dissolve have done so previously. This supports the estimate from Dailey et al. that at least 40% of all relationships have been renewed at least once. Even if some of the "rarely" group has never broken up previously, at least one-fourth of the respondents had on-again/off-again relationships, which may be a good indicator of a troubled relationship.

2.5.2.5 Relationship trajectory

To try to ascertain the relationship trajectory, respondents were asked: "From the time you and your partner started dating until your relationship reached its peak, which of the following best describes the relationship?" The possible response categories were: Rapidly progressing, Gradually progressing, Barely progressing, Somewhat bumpy, and Very bumpy. They were also asked "From the time you and your partner reached the
peak of your relationship until the relationship ended, which of the following best describes the relationship?" with the same response categories, only substituting the word "declining" for "progressing." 84% of the respondents had rapidly or gradually progressing relationships leading up to the relationship peak. There was much more variation with relationship decline, however. Only 45% of the respondents had rapidly or gradually declining relationships leading to the breakup, while another 45% had bumpy decline (meaning there were periods of growth intermixed with the decline.

2.5.2.6 Chance of marriage

Likelihood of marriage was calculated by asking: "During the different periods of your relationship, what was the greatest chance you thought that you and your partner would someday get married? Choose one from each time period: 'In the beginning,' 'At the peak,' and 'Near the end.'" Not surprisingly, respondents indicated their chances at marrying were highest at the peak of their relationship (with only 5% feeling that their chances were less than 50%). And near the end of their relationships, only 34% thought there was at least a 50/50 chance of marrying their partner. What is surprising, however, is that, early in their relationships, about 42% of the respondents thought that it was at least 50% likely they would marry their partners.

2.5.2.7 Relationship quality

To get some idea of the overall relationship quality at different points, respondents were asked "How well do each of the following words describe your ex-relationship?" Using a four point scale (0=Not at all, 1=Somewhat, 2=Mostly,
they indicated the degree to which their relationship was fun, tense, happy, hurtful, jealous, discouraging, romantic, physical/sexual, comfortable, turbulent, and one-sided. They responded to all of these descriptors for their relationship "in the beginning," "at the peak," and "near the end." The positive (fun, happy, romantic, and comfortable) and negative descriptors (tense, hurtful, jealous, discouraging, turbulent, and one-sided) were summed into separate variables for each time period. Physical/sexual was not included because, depending on the respondent, it could be positive or negative. The resulting variables were: sum of positive relationship aspects in the beginning (mean=12.8), at the peak (mean=13.1), and near the end (mean=8.4); and sum of negative relationship aspects in the beginning (mean=9.0), at the peak (mean=10.1) and near the end (mean=15.7).

New difference variables were also calculated using the positive minus the negative summed scores at each of the three time periods. These variables represent the overall relationship quality for the three relationship times: in the beginning (mean=3.7), at the peak (mean=3.0), and near the end (mean=-7.3).

2.5.2.8 Satisfaction and Commitment

Relationship satisfaction was queried using a 5-point Likert scale with the range 1=Very Dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, 3=Neutral, 4=Satisfied, and 5=Very Satisfied. Respondents rated their satisfaction with the relationship "in the beginning," "at the peak," and "near the end." The mean for overall relationship satisfaction is: 4.2 in the beginning, 4.5 at the peak, and 2.1 near the end.
Commitment was measured in the same way as satisfaction, but partners were also asked to report what they though their partners' commitment level was at each of the three relationship stages. Since respondents were asked to estimate their partners' commitment level, new variables were created for differences in partners' commitment levels at each of the three stages. These variables range from 0=no difference in commitment to 4=major difference in commitment. The mean difference in partners' commitment at each of the stages is: 0.8 in the beginning, 0.6 at the peak, and 1.6 near the end.

2.5.2.9 Power

The survey asked respondents about power distribution in their former relationship. One question asked the respondent to indicate which partner had more power in various relationship aspects, or if they had equal power. "Power in a close relationship can be described as one person’s ability to influence the behavior of another. Who held the power in your relationship concerning the following issues? [Self, Partner, or Equal Power] a. Money; b. Education/Work; c. Religion; d. Social activities; e. Friends; f. Decision making; g. Physical intimacy; h. Emotional involvement." After answering these questions, they were asked: "How satisfied were you with the overall distribution of power in your relationship?" and responded on a 5-point Likert scale, with a mean of 3.0.

The responses to the questions about the equality of power in different aspects of the relationship were summed into one variable, ranging from 0=unequal power in all aspects to 8=equal power in each of the aspects. The mean equality of power is 4.4.
2.5.2.10 Attractive

In a similar method to the power question, the survey asked: "Who would you consider to be the “more attractive” of you and your ex-partner [Self, Partner, or Equal Attractiveness] in the following areas? a. Socially; b. Emotionally; c. Physically; d. Spiritually; e. Intellectually; f. Financially.” The equal attractiveness responses were summed to create a variable representing the equality of attractiveness, ranging from 0=partners not equally attracted in any aspect to 6=partners equally attractive in all aspects. The mean of this equal attractiveness variable is 2.4.

2.5.2.11 Problems

One of the more expansive questions, respondents were given a list of 32 potential relationship "problem areas that couples might have that lead to their breakup," and asked to "Please list how often each area was a problem in your relationship that lead to your breakup." The respondents were asked about areas such as communication, dealing with conflict, and intimacy/sexuality. [A complete list of all these problem areas is found in Table 2.3 below.] The possible responses were recorded using a Likert scale with the options 0=Never, 1=Rarely, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, and 4=Very Often. All of these variables were summed into a new variable representing the degree to which the problem areas contributed to the breakup. The mean of this new variable is 39.8. There were only 4 respondents who had scores lower than 10, and just six respondents who had scores higher than 75.

In addition to creating a degree of problems variable, each problem area variable was recoded into a dichotomous variable representing whether or not the problem was an
issue in the relationship: 0=Never or rarely and 1=Sometimes or more often. These
dichotomous variables were then summed to calculate a new variable representing the
total number of relationship problems (mean=12.4).

2.5.2.12 Changes in relationship before breakup

Respondents were asked: "Leading up to the breakup, how did positive aspects of
the relationship change?" They were also asked how the negative aspects changed. Most
respondents (41%) indicated that the positive relationship aspects "declined a lot" leading
up to the breakup, and 77% said they declined at least "a little." Almost identical
percentages were indicated with the negatives. 43% of respondents said the negative
aspects "increased a lot," and 78% said they increased at least "a little."

2.5.3 Breakup

2.5.3.1 Length of breakup

In addition to knowing the total length of the relationship, the respondents were
asked "How long after you and your partner started dating did your relationship reach its
"peak" (Provide the number of months.)" and "How long did your relationship stay at its
peak? (Provide the number of months.) The average time to the relationship peak was
6.4 months, and the average length of peak was 7.4 months. By subtracting the sum of
the previous two questions from the length of relationship variable, it is possible to create
a variable representing the length of breakup. In other words, the breakup process, or the
length of time from the beginning of the decline to the moment they actually broke up.
The average breakup (from the end of peak/beginning of relationship decline to the actual breakup) lasted 9.6 months.

2.5.3.2 Breakup Method

To get some idea of the breakup event, respondents were asked "How did the breakup happen?" and given the possible responses: "One partner suddenly made the decision," "We had a conversation and decided together," "There was a fight that ended the relationship," "We drifted apart," or "Other" (with a write-in option). Many of the write-ins were an attempt by the respondent to describe the cause of the breakup, rather than how it happened, but most could be recoded into the four main categories using information from other variables. The resulting variable suggests that half (50%) of the sample experienced a breakup in which "one partner suddenly made the decision," and another fourth (27%) "had a conversation and decided together." There were about 14% who said they drifted apart, but only 9% who broke up after or because of a fight.

2.5.3.3 Initiating the breakup

The idea of initiating a breakup can actually be quite complex. Often, people may think of causing and initiating a breakup as the same, but they are quite different. Causing a breakup involves blame, while initiating implies a decision. The differences between the two are very subtle, and can often overlap. For example, unfaithfulness of one partner could be suggested as the cause of the breakup, but it is difficult to say who initiated the breakup. It is possible that the cheating partner decided he/she wanted to end the relationship and so proceeded to seek physical intimacy from another person with the
recognition/hope that his/her current partner would decide to breakup. In this type of situation, it is difficult to say who initiated the breakup because the partner who cheated may have made the decision to breakup, but instead of vocalizing the desire to breakup he/she decided to try to cause a breakup through actions (the “hurtful” breakup strategy). As a result, it is nearly impossible to know exactly who initiated the breakup, but this question is useful in determining the mutuality of the breakup, and it is assumed that situations like the example above are rare.

For the question "Who initiated the breakup?" respondents were given a 5-option scale: 1="I did entirely," 2="Mostly I did, but my partner contributed somewhat," 3="We mutually decided," 4=Mostly my partner, but I contributed somewhat," 5="My partner entirely."

About one-third of the respondents replied that they initiated the breakup, and another 25% said that they primarily initiated the breakup with only some input from their partner (58% initiated the breakup themselves). Only 28% indicated the breakup was completely or mostly initiated by their partner. Another 14% said the breakup was a mutual decision.

This variable is useful in a couple of ways. First, it shows the degree to which the respondent initiated the breakup (recoded 1=I did entirely/mostly; 2=mutual; 3=my partner entirely/mostly. Second, it can also be used solely as a measure of mutuality, which is recoded as 0=not mutual at all (I or my partner initiated alone), 1=somewhat mutual (mostly me or my partner initiated, but the other partner contributed somewhat), and 2=mutual (we decided together) with a mean of 0.7.
2.5.3.4 Friendly

The respondents were queried about the friendliness of the breakup. The question was "Would you describe the breakup as friendly?" Responses ranged from 0=Not at all to 3=Entirely. The mean is 1.4. This issue has received recent scholarly attention (Schneider and Kenny 2000; Busboom et al. 2002; Kellas et al. 2008) and will be explored in detail in the next chapter.

2.5.3.5 Blame

Different from initiating the breakup, respondents were asked about who was to blame for the breakup. Specifically, the question was "If you were to place blame on someone for the breakup, it would be on:" "Me entirely," "Mostly me, but somewhat my partner," "Mostly my partner, but somewhat me," "My partner entirely," "Another person," "Nobody", or "Unsure." The most common response was "Mostly my partner, but somewhat me" (32% of respondents). The responses were recoded into a new variable with four categories: Neither of us (26% of respondents), Me (23%), Partner (42%), and Unsure (9%). Those who chose "Me entirely" were grouped with those who said "Mostly me," and "My partner" with "Mostly my partner."

2.5.3.6 Getting back together

Respondents were asked: "What is the likelihood that you and your ex-partner will get back together? Please circle a number" [With increments of 10 being shown on a percent scale]. There was very little variation in this variable. More than three-fourths of the respondents (77%) said 0 or 10%, and 91% indicated it was less than 50% likely they
would get back together with their partner. However, 20 of the respondents (9%) said it was at least 50% likely they would get back together.

2.5.4 Post-Breakup

2.5.4.1 Time since breakup

While it was noted above that respondents were asked if they were in a new relationship (almost half were), another important question for analysis is "How long has it been since your breakup?" The different time ranges were recoded into weeks, but should not be analyzed too closely, since the highest number of respondents (40%) were in the last group "More than 1 year" and their responses were coded "80" weeks. This variable will still be useful in calculating whether there are differences between people who have had more time to deal with their breakup compared to those who broke up more recently. The mean of this variable is 49.9.

2.5.4.2 Current feelings

Respondents were asked a number of questions about their post-dissolution experience and feelings. The first of these was: "How do you feel now about the ending of your relationship?" and the respondents were given a Likert scale range of 0=Never, 1=Rarely, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, and 4=Very Often to respond to the following feelings: Hurt, Angry, Comfortable, Confused, Disappointed, Happy, Relieved, Sad, Guilty, Learned from the experience, Regretful, and Other (with write-in option). The more positive feelings (comfortable, happy, relieved, learned) were summed into one variable (mean=11.5), and the remaining negative feelings were also summed
(mean=9.3). A difference variable was calculated using the two summed variables (positive feelings minus negative feelings); so that higher scores indicate the respondent now has more positive feelings about the relationship. The range of this new variable is -22 to 16, with a mean of 2.3.

2.5.4.3 Coping

"How would you describe your own coping with the breakup?" was asked with the responses 1=unsuccessful, 2=somewhat unsuccessful, 3=not sure, 4=somewhat successful, and 5=successful. Respondents were also asked "What activities help you to cope with the breakup? (Check all that apply.) The most common coping activity was "Talking to friends about it" (81%), followed by "Thinking privately about it" (78%), "Talking to family about it" (65%), "Dating other people" (61%), "Crying or emotional release" (53%), "Exercising" (51%), "Praying or other forms of spiritual communion" (51%), "Becoming more involved with work or school (49%), "Listening to music" (47%), "Talking to a therapist or counselor" (22%), "Talking to a religious leader" (18%), "Eating comfort foods" (18%), "Drinking alcohol or using drugs" 15%), or some other way (8%).

2.5.4.4 Contact with ex-partner

To get some idea of the frequency of contact and the settings which it occurs, the question was asked: "Since the relationship broke up, how often have you had contact with your ex-partner?" Respondents were asked to use the scale 0=Never, 1=Rarely, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, and 4=Very Often to indicate the amount of contact with their
ex-partner in the following settings: email, phone, at parties/bars, in class, go to lunch/dinner, sexual contact, studying, with friends, at church, and other settings. The responses to these questions were summed to create a frequency of contact variable with a mean of 5.7. With a mean of just less than 6 for the frequency of contact, former dating partners do not have much contact with each other following their breakup. The most frequent settings for contact are by phone and email. The rest of the possible contact methods had average scores between "never" and "rarely."

The survey also asked them to indicate who initiates the contact, and how comfortable they are having contact with their former partner (both now and immediately after the breakup) using a 5-point Likert scale (with 5=very comfortable). Most respondents (54%) indicated that they and their partner (both) initiated contact with each other. Another 16% said their partner initiated any contact, and 9% said they initiated it. 10% of the respondents had no contact with their ex-partners at all. Immediately after the breakup, 70% of the respondents were at least somewhat uncomfortable seeing their ex-partners, but that number drops to 33% who are uncomfortable seeing their ex-partners now (at the time they completed the breakup survey).

2.5.4.5 Changed something

One of the last questions respondents were asked was: "If you could have changed something about this relationship, what would it be? (Check all that apply.) The categories (and the percent of respondents who selected them) are: Break up sooner (45%), Move slower/be friends for a longer time (32%), Find out more about my partner (27%), Date other people more (26%), Get help with relationship problems (26%), Be
nicer to my partner (25%), Be more assertive with my partner (25%), Not have become sexually involved so quickly (24%), Be myself and act more naturally (21%), Never date this person (16%), and Other (13%).

Interestingly, the most common response for wishing something could have been changed in the relationship was "break up sooner." Almost half of the respondents selected it, suggesting that many people do not end relationships as quickly as they would like, or wish their partner would have broken up with them sooner. One potential explanation is that they wish it would have ended faster so they could have moved on to something better, especially if they are in a new relationship that is better than the previous one.

2.5.4.6 New relationship

The last question on the breakup instrument is "Are you currently in a relationship with a new partner?" (1=yes, 0=no). Exactly half of the sample respondents were in new relationships at time 2.

2.6 Results

Descriptive statistics for all the quantitative variables listed above are shown in Table 2.1. Hypothesis testing was conducted using chi-square, T-test, analysis of variance, and bivariate regression methods (not shown here). Unless otherwise indicated, any reported results are significant at the 0.05 level.
TABLE 2.1

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

OF INDIVIDUALS WHO BROKE UP WITH THEIR PARTNER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Descriptive Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not White</td>
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<td>Early Relationship</td>
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<td>Months knew partner before dating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
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<td>Months from start dating to peak</td>
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<td>Months at peak</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Chance of marriage - Beginning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chance of marriage - At peak</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chance of marriage - Near end</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Positives - Beginning</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Positives - At peak</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Positives - Near end</td>
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<td>Sum of Negatives - At peak</td>
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<td>Sum of Negatives - Near end</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Commit - Near end</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# TABLE 2.1 (CONTINUED)

| Commit difference - Beginning | 0.81 | 0.95 | 0 | 4 |
| Commit difference - At peak   | 0.60 | 0.77 | 0 | 4 |
| Commit difference - Near end  | 1.59 | 1.29 | 0 | 4 |
| Distribution of power         | 3.01 | 1.20 | 1 | 5 |
| Equality of power             | 4.37 | 2.11 | 0 | 8 |
| Equality of attractiveness    | 2.38 | 1.65 | 0 | 6 |
| Relationship problems degree  | 39.84| 18.79| 4 | 106|
| Relationship problems sum     | 12.44| 5.94 | 1 | 29 |

**Breakup**

| Length of breakup in months   | 9.61 | 11.31| 0 | 73 |
| Weeks since breakup           | 49.86| 27.20| 1 | 80 |
| Breakup method - Sudden decision | 0.50 | 0.50| 0 | 1 |
| Breakup method - Conversation  | 0.27 | 0.44| 0 | 1 |
| Breakup method - Fight         | 0.09 | 0.29| 0 | 1 |
| Breakup method - Drifted apart | 0.14 | 0.35| 0 | 1 |
| Initiated - Respondent         | 0.58 | 0.50| 0 | 1 |
| Initiated - Mutual             | 0.14 | 0.35| 0 | 1 |
| Initiated - Partner            | 0.28 | 0.45| 0 | 1 |
| Mutuality of breakup           | 0.68 | 0.71| 0 | 2 |
| Friendliness of breakup        | 1.35 | 1.03| 0 | 3 |
| Blame - Neither of us          | 0.26 | 0.44| 0 | 1 |
| Blame - Respondent             | 0.23 | 0.42| 0 | 1 |
| Blame - Partner                | 0.42 | 0.49| 0 | 1 |
| Blame - Unsure                 | 0.09 | 0.29| 0 | 1 |
| Likelihood of getting back together | 2.20 | 2.11| 1 | 11 |
| Friendliness of breakup        | 1.35 | 1.03| 0 | 3 |

**Post-Breakup**

| Sum of positive feelings now   | 11.54| 3.62| 2 | 16 |
| Sum of negative feelings now   | 9.28 | 6.30| 0 | 28 |
| Feelings now (pos. minus neg.) | 2.27 | 9.05| -22| 16 |
| Coping success                | 4.15 | 1.02| 1 | 5 |
| Sum of contact with ex         | 5.74 | 5.04| 0 | 26 |
| Comfort seeing ex after breakup | 2.23 | 1.34| 1 | 5 |
| Comfort seeing ex now          | 3.21 | 1.34| 1 | 5 |
| New relationship               | 0.49 | 0.50| 0 | 1 |

SOURCE: RELATE Institute
NOTE: n=214
2.6.1 Gender

There are no significant gender differences between any of the relevant breakup variables. Women and men are equally likely to initiate the breakup. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is rejected. Overall, the men and women in this sample have similar breakup experiences.

2.6.2 Relationship Status

Respondents indicated their relationship status at both Time 1 and 2, and it is interesting to note that at Time 1 their relationships were categorized in just two groups: serious/steady (85%) or engaged (15%). At the follow-up, however, a third group emerges, with 3% of respondents reporting that they were only casually dating their partner (with 79% serious and 17% engaged). This shows that a few of the relationships did progress to engagement, but a few regressed to a casual dating relationship. Comparing the groups yielded some interesting findings. It should be noted that casual daters were seriously dating at time 1, so comparisons are only made between time 1 statuses (engaged vs. serious).³

As hypothesized (hypothesis 2), engaged respondents do experience more difficult breakups than serious daters. In particular, engaged individuals experience fewer positives and more negatives near the end of the relationship, and also more negatives at the peak of the relationship. Engaged couples also have significantly more problems—and a higher degree of problems—than serious daters.

³ Comparisons of the three groups are not possible anyway, because there are only 7 cases where couples regressed to casually dating.
Serious daters are more likely to have gradual relationship decline, while engaged individuals have rapid or very bumpy decline, characterized by lots of ups and downs. Overall, engaged individuals are older and are significantly more likely to have cohabited with their partners than serious daters. Surprisingly, engaged couples have a much shorter length of time at which the relationship stayed at its peak.

2.6.3 Length of Relationship

There is very strong support of hypothesis 3: longer relationships do tend to have longer breakups, and also a higher number of renewals (breaking up and getting back together). Every month the relationship lasts increases the length of relationship decline about 0.4 months. In addition, couples who experience rapid relationship decline tend to date for about 14 months, whereas couples with gradual decline average about 25 month relationships. This suggests that couples who remain in relationships for longer periods of time are more likely to have a drawn-out breakup. Further support for this hypothesis comes from the finding that the most common thing respondents would have changed about their former relationship is to “break up sooner.” Also, renewals increase the length of relationship. Each time a couple break up and get back together lengthens their relationship by almost 5 months.

2.6.4 Sex/Hooking Up

23% of couples kissed before they started dating, and 88% of couples had kissed after a few weeks of dating. Only one couple never kissed. Sexual relations were quite different. Only 4% of respondents indicated that they had sex with their partners before starting to date, and only about one-fourth had sex within the first few weeks of dating.
At least one-third (34%) of the sample never had sexual relations with their partner (likely due to the number of highly religious respondents).

These data provide support for the finding that hookups rarely result in relationships (Glenn and Marquardt 2001), as there were very few couples (4%) who had sex before starting a relationship. The high number of couples who kissed "before they started dating" is likely due to the question wording. If the question had been worded "we kissed before our first date," the number would likely be much lower, as the word "dating" can imply that they are in an exclusive relationship.

Respondents who had sex with their partners report more relationship problems (average of 10.3 problems for those who never had sex vs. 13.7 for those who did), and those problems occur more often. In addition, partners who never had sex currently feel more positive and less negative about their ex-relationship than those who had sex (for the respondents who had sex, the positives and negatives almost balance each other out (mean=0.6), while those respondents who never had sex feel much more positive overall about their ex-relationship (mean=4.7)). Partners who never had sex also have much friendlier breakups.

2.6.5 Cohabiting

22% of the respondents indicated that they cohabited with their ex-partner at some point during their relationship. Compared to those who never cohabited, respondents who lived with their partners have significantly more negative feelings about the relationship now (but not fewer positives). In addition, cohabiting partners had more relationship problems, and experienced them more often than those who did not cohabit. Cohabiting breakups are also less mutual. These findings provide good support for
hypothesis 4. Interestingly, cohabitators did not report higher satisfaction at the peak of the relationship, nor did they report higher chances of marrying their partner.

2.6.6 Number of renewals [on-again/off-again relationships]

In support of the hypotheses, respondents who broke up with their partners and got back together again “sometimes” or more often describe the peak of their relationship with more negative terms compared to those who never got back together with their ex-partner. There is almost no support for hypotheses 5 and 6, however. Respondents in on-off relationships do not report significantly lower satisfaction or more relationship problems, nor do they suggest their relationships had unequal commitment between partners. Especially surprising is the finding that, compared to respondents who had no renewals, the on-off relationship respondents do not think there is a greater chance of getting back together with their former partner.

2.6.7 Mutuality

Respondents who indicated they had a mutual breakup were older, on average, than respondents who had a one-sided breakup. This suggests that with more relationship or life experiences, people are more likely to discuss a possible breakup with their partner, instead of simply initiating it themselves or waiting for their partner to make the decision. Mutual breakups also had lower negative relationship aspects at the peak and near the end. Perhaps the most important finding is the fact that couples who had mutual breakups had more equal commitment between the partners at all stages of the relationship. In other words, one-sided relationships (where one partner was more committed than the other) usually result in breakups that are initiated by one partner.
There was no support for hypothesis 7. First, couples who have mutual breakups do not have shorter relationships, nor do they report lower satisfaction and commitment.

Providing only partial support for hypothesis 8, couples who mutually decide to breakup have much friendlier breakups and are more comfortable seeing their partner afterward, but are actually less likely to be in a new relationship. Surprisingly, mutual breakups do not make it easier to move on, since respondents who had mutual breakups are significantly less likely to be in new relationships (at the follow-up) and do not report feeling more positive about the breakup now. Related to the previous finding, couples who have mutual breakups have a somewhat higher chance of the getting back together (about 10% higher chances) compared to when only one partner initiates the breakup, which is one reason why they are less likely to be in a new relationship. It seems that the mutuality of the breakup does not have a significant influence on the post-dissolution lives of the partners (aside from making contact with one another less awkward).

2.6.8 Initiated/Dumped

Respondents who were dumped estimated their chances of marrying their partners higher than those who initiated the breakup, but the difference was only observed near the end of the relationship. Dumped individuals also have a more difficult time coping with the breakup (even though they report being at least somewhat successful with it). However, dumped respondents do not have more negative feelings about their relationship now. So there is very little support for hypothesis 9. Getting dumped does not have long-term negative consequences for those who experience it. They are just as likely as those who initiate a breakup to form new relationships and avoid lingering negative feelings about their former relationship.
There is support for hypothesis 10, however. Respondents who initiate the breakup report lower satisfaction at the peak of their relationship, as well as fewer positives and lower commitment to the relationship near the end. Initiators do not report more inequality of attractiveness between their partner and themselves, though.

Surprisingly, the reported difference in commitment between the partners is not significantly different for those who initiated the breakup and those who were dumped. This suggests that those who get dumped are aware of their partner's lower satisfaction and lack of commitment.

Interestingly, among those respondents who report that their partner initiated the breakup, 53% blame their partner for the breakup, while only 15% blame themselves. Among those respondents who initiated the breakup themselves, 41% still place blame on their partners, while 28% blame themselves. Respondents with mutual breakups were most likely to say that "neither of us" was to blame (47% of the time). This suggests that there is more of a tendency to blame one's partner for the breakup, regardless of who initiated it, but responses from both partners would be required to know for sure.

2.6.9 Current relationship

Overall, individuals who had formed new relationships had more one-sided breakups and have less contact with their ex-partners. Interestingly, they also report more (and a higher degree of) problems in their former relationship. They are also significantly more successful in coping with their breakup. And, overall, they have more positive and fewer negative feelings about their ex-relationship now.

In contrast, individuals who have not found new partners have more contact with their ex-partners and have significantly more negative feelings about their former
relationship, such as hurt, confusion, and sadness. These findings provide strong support for hypothesis 11.

2.6.10 Time since breakup

There is support for hypothesis 12. Similar to the effect of forming a new relationship, respondents who have had more time pass since their breakup are significantly more likely to have a new relationship, and also feel more positive about the ending of the relationship. For every week that passes, a person's feelings about the ending of their relationship increase by 0.09.

2.6.11 Breakup trajectory

Rapid relationship decline is likely a result of rapid relationship growth. Of those respondents that experienced rapid relationship decline, 73% of them also had rapid relationship growth, while 19% had gradual relationship growth. Of those that had bumpy relationship decline, 22% also had bumpy relationship growth, with 48% having rapid growth. Those who experienced gradual relationship decline were equally likely to have rapid (47%) or gradual (46%) relationship progression. In general, half (49%) of all couples experience rapid relationship growth, but among couples that experience rapid relationship decline, almost three-fourths of them also had rapid growth. Gradual and bumpy relationship decline did not come primarily from rapid growth. Rapid relationship decline is more likely to occur following rapid relationship progression.

2.6.12 Relationship Quality

Overall, the positive aspects of failed relationships tend to outweigh the negative aspects until the relationship begins to decline. This makes sense, even considering that
there were only 4 positive indicators (fun, happy, romantic, and comfortable), compared
to 6 negative ones (tense, hurtful, jealous, discouraging, turbulent, and one-sided),
because many of the negative aspects are not felt in a relationship until it begins to
decline. As indicated in the mean scores, relationship quality tends to decline across the
course of a failed relationship, but there is also more variation (higher standard deviation)
as the relationship progresses. Couples tend to be happiest at the beginning when their
relationship is new, and relationship quality only drops slightly at the peak.

2.6.13 Blame

While the question about blame may have been worded better by asking who was
to blame for the failure of the relationship (rather than the breakup), it does provide some
intriguing insights into relationship dissolution. As noted above, the responses were
recoded into a new variable with four categories: Neither of us (26% of respondents), Me
(23%), Partner (42%), and Unsure (9%). According to this categorization, people are
much more likely to place blame on their partners. About a quarter of the respondents
said neither partner was to blame, and quite a few said they were "unsure" about placing
blame. This suggests that at least one-third of the respondents' breakups were not caused
by either partner. This could mean that there were external circumstances that caused the
breakup, or that the respondent was not comfortable with blaming someone for a
relationship that was simply a poor match, or something else.

It is difficult to make any solid conclusions about blame, however, as the
following example illustrates. If a respondent was in a relationship that she was
uncertain about, and expressed to her partner the desire to date other people, she might
respond that she (herself) was to blame for the breakup. But, if she wanted to maintain a
relationship with her partner (while dating others or not) and her partner was not ok with a reduction in commitment, then she might respond that her partner was to blame for the breakup.

2.6.14 Problems

Couples in this sample had an average of 12 problem areas which contributed to their breakup. There were ten problem areas that were cited by at least half of the respondents (listed in descending order of frequency): communication (82% of respondents), time spent together (72%), dealing with conflict (71%), commitment level differences (63%), costs were greater than rewards (61%), one or both of us changed (57%), different life goals (56%), intimacy/sexuality (54%), personalities not compatible (54%) and one or both partners wanted independence (53%). The full list of problems areas leading to the breakup can be found in Table 2.2.

Looking at the mean scores for the degree to which the problem area was an issue in the relationship, the ordering of importance changes very little. Only the top eleven problem areas was an issue in the relationship at least sometimes. These top eleven problems are in the same order as the top eleven in the list [above] of problem areas that were ever an issue in the relationship, which is not surprising since they were calculated using the same variables.
TABLE 2.2

PROBLEMS CONTRIBUTING TO BREAKUP
SELECTED BY INDIVIDUALS WHO BROKE UP WITH THEIR PARTNERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems leading to breakup</th>
<th>Percent Selecting</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>communication</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>Dyadic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time spent together</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>Dyadic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dealing with conflict</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>Dyadic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commitment level differences</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>costs were greater than rewards</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one or both of us changed</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different life goals</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intimacy/sexuality</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Dyadic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personalities not compatible</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one or both partners wanted independence</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>differences in family background</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loss of love</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Dyadic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parents</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>geographical separation</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Circumstantial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>differences in leisure interests</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>roles (who does what)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Dyadic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conflicting ideas about marriage</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parents' or friends' disapproval</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>who's in charge</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Dyadic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>financial matters</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Dyadic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>differences in education aspirations</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loss of physical attraction</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partner was interested in someone else</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was interested in someone else</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religious differences</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>substance/chemical abuse</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abuse (physical, emotional, sexual)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Dyadic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rearing children</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Dyadic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weight</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Circumstantial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>having children</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Dyadic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age difference</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Circumstantial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>birth control</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dyadic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: RELATE Institute
Some patterns emerge in the relationship problems data. First, it is interesting to look at groups of problem areas using the categories that Lloyd and Cate (1985) discuss for relationship turning points, namely, 1) dyadic, 2) individual, 3) network, and 4) circumstantial. While Lloyd and Cate concluded that people are more likely to cite individual and network reasons for relationship dissolution, it is impossible to explore that finding here because the respondents were never asked to rank the problem areas. However, there are other conclusions that can be drawn from the data.

The most commonly cited problem areas (with the highest means) are dyadic. These include communication, time spent together, and dealing with conflict. But, of the next seven problem areas, six of them are individual characteristics, such as commitment level differences and costs were greater than rewards. This suggests that for most couples, the troubling aspects of their relationship come from their own interaction, and differences between partners, rather than other reasons. Many of these relationship problems, such as commitment level differences, can be considered both individual and dyadic. It is also interesting to see that no network or circumstantial factors were problem areas for more than half of the sample. Thus, while dyadic factors may be the most commonly cited, there are many more individual factors which can cause problems for relationships that eventually dissolve.

These findings are quite different from Hill et al. (1976) but somewhat similar to Meredith and Holman (2001). In Hill et al.'s study (1976) the three most commonly cited relationship problems are becoming bored with the relationship, differences in interests, and each partner's desire for independence. Thus, Hill et al. find that individual problems are the most relevant. However, in Meredith and Holman's (2001) study, the most
commonly cited problems are breakdown in communication, decrease in mutual feelings of love, and differences in backgrounds. These are primarily dyadic characteristics. Oftentimes, individual and dyadic influences are difficult to separate, especially when an individual feeling is related to the relationship. For example, the problem "decrease in mutual feelings of love" in the Meredith and Holman study could become an individual variable if the word mutual is removed (as it is in the RELATE breakup data, which is worded "loss of love").

2.6.15 Current feelings

It is interesting to discover that, after breaking up, respondents currently had more positive feelings about the ending of their former relationship than they had negative feelings. This is especially surprising considering that the sum of positive feelings variable only includes four variables, and the sum of negative feelings variable has seven. With so many more potential negative feelings, it would be expected that the negatives would far outweigh the positive feelings, but the data do not support it. The average person in the sample feels at least somewhat more positive (than negative) about the relationship now (looking back retrospectively). This is a result of the positive elements far outweighing the negatives in the individual variables. The mean scores in descending order are: learned from the experience (3.3), comfortable (2.9), relieved (2.7), and happy (2.6). Thus, these four positive variables offset any current negative feelings of disappointment (1.7), sadness (1.6), hurt (1.3), guilt (1.2), regret (1.2), confusion (1.2), and anger (1.0). The reasons for these positive feelings are unclear, but it does provide some evidence that, across a variety of failed relationships, most people do not suffer long-term negative consequences.
This idea can be further explored in the questions about relationship experiences. Overall, the highest agreement (3.9) was reported for the statement "From what I experienced in my ex-relationship, I think close relationships are safe, secure, rewarding, worth being in, and a source of comfort." The other positive statement "I feel at peace about anything negative that happened to me in my ex-relationship" had a mean score of 3.6, indicating that most respondents agreed. On average, most respondents disagreed with the following statements: "There are matters from my ex-relationship experience that I am still having trouble dealing with or coming to terms with" (mean=2.8), "There are matters from my ex-relationship experience that negatively affect my ability to form close relationships" (2.5), and "From what I experienced in my ex-relationship, I think close relationships are confusing, unfair, anxiety-provoking, inconsistent, and unpredictable" (mean=2.2). Ultimately, all the variables estimating the respondents' current feelings about the relationship suggest that most people are able to move on after a breakup, and that lingering negative feelings are rare.

2.6.16 Coping

In response to how they would describe their (and their partners') coping with the breakup, respondents said their own attempts to cope with it were, on average, more successful than their partners' (own mean=4.2, partner mean=3.4; statistically significant difference). Their partners' score is problematic because, unless they are in frequent contact with their ex-partner [which is rare] they would not know how he/she is coping.

Coping activities primarily involved interacting with others (talking with friends and family, and dating new people) and personal introspection (with possible crying).
About half of the sample also tried to keep active through exercise, prayer, work, and music.

2.7 Summary of Findings and Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to present findings from the RELATE longitudinal breakup data in order to better understand the breakup process. Hypothesis testing is also conducted to gain insight into the breakup experience and how it can affect individuals over time.

Half of the respondents had only known their partners for a month or less before they started dating. The average length of time that a relationship lasted before breaking up was 23 months. These findings suggest that the average total relationship process, from first meeting to break up, lasts about two years.

The breakup process usually begins with at least one partner becoming dissatisfied with the relationship. The findings from the RELATE breakup data suggest that dissatisfaction is usually rooted in the partners’ interaction, rather than coming from something external to the relationship. As shown in Table 2.2, the top four most common problem areas which led to the breakup were: communication, time spent together, dealing with conflict, and commitment level differences. Commitment level differences can be interpreted as one partner still being attracted to other people, or one partner being more attracted than the other.

In the current sample, men and women have similar breakup experiences. This could be due to sample biases. Differences between the breakup experiences of men and women may be more noticeable with a larger sample. However, the fact that there were
no significant differences observed on any variables in the dataset suggests that some of the gender stereotypes related to breaking up may be incorrect. For example, women may be just as likely as men to initiate a breakup, and men may be just as influenced by their friends' opinions of their partners as women are. In general, since relationships involve both a man and a woman, the troubling aspects of a relationship are likely to be experienced by both partners, even if one is less committed to the relationship than the other.

Engaged couples and couples who cohabit experience more difficult breakups than couples who are still dating or who never cohabit. This is not surprising considering the increased level of commitment. Also, couples who have been dating for a longer period of time experience more drawn-out breakups.

Couples who break up and get back together do not have lower satisfaction or commitment, and they are not more likely to get back together. This suggests that on-off couples experience less formal breakups in their relationships where they may suspect they will get back together, which are different from a final breakup.

Mutual breakups do tend to be friendlier, but they do not have lower satisfaction or commitment. The primary distinguishing characteristic of mutual breakups is that, compared to one-sided breakups, the partners have more equal commitment to the relationship at all stages. This is not surprising, but the finding that individuals who experience mutual breakups are less likely to be in new relationship is quite surprising. Rather than encourage them to form a new relationship, partners who mutually decide to break up tend to remain single.
Initiators of a breakup are usually less committed and have lower satisfaction with the relationship. Interestingly, though, people who get dumped tend to overcome the breakup just as well as those who initiate it.

Forming a new relationship has a significant effect on how a person feels about the ending of their previous relationship. People who are able to move on and find a new partner feel much better about their breakup. Individuals who do not form new relationships are more likely to contact their ex-partner and continue to feel bad about the breakup. And while a mutual breakup might be friendlier, it does not necessarily help people to move on and find someone new.

Time is a good healer. As more weeks pass following a breakup, people feel better about the ending of their relationship. There do not seem to be many long-term consequences of a breakup. Overall, people tend to get over their breakups relatively quickly. Approximately 18 months after their breakup, the average person in the sample feels at least somewhat more positive (than negative) about the relationship now. While the breakup event might not be a fun experience, most respondents seem to think that the ending of their relationship was a good thing, or at least somewhat educational. For example, one respondent said "He is marrying someone else, so I really don't talk to him anymore and I'm not sad about it anymore, but if I had filled out this questionnaire when the break up was more recent, my answers would have been much different."

These findings regarding the long-term effects of breaking up should encourage people who are reluctant to form relationships for fear of rejection. For example, Glenn and Marquardt (2001) suggest that some young people today are hooking up in order to avoid the potential heartache that can come from a breakup. While there may be
temporary hurt, people still feel more positive about the ending of a relationship that they feel negative. Whether they are relieved to be out of a bad relationship or comfortable with the idea that their ex-partner was not right for them, a breakup is not all bad.

In fact, there is an important educational element from the dissolution of a relationship. As people date and break up with potential marriage partners, they learn what they like in a partner and also what other people like and dislike about themselves. Breakups allow people to move on and form potentially better relationships (using the information they have gleaned from their previous one). Without ever forming an exclusive relationship and experiencing a breakup with someone, a person misses out on valuable information that is important for choosing a marital partner.

The primary purpose of this study is exploratory in nature. Since the RELATE longitudinal breakup data have never been used in any analyses, I wanted to understand it better and see what types of analyses were possible. There is a lot of good information about the process and experience of breaking up, which I have attempted to explore. The data offer many different possibilities for analyzing relationship dissolution, some of which are pursued in the following chapters.

2.7.1 Limitations of the Research

The primary weaknesses of this study include the sample and the bivariate analyses. One-third of the sample respondents are Latter-day Saint individuals whose relationships are somewhat different from the relationships of the rest of the respondents. LDS couples are less likely to have sex and cohabit, and they are also more likely to be engaged. However, their presence in the sample does not mean that any findings are irrelevant. LDS couples experience breakups just like everyone else. Differences in the
breakup experiences of LDS vs. non-LDS individuals are mainly due to differences in sexual values and dating norms. According to RELATE data, Latter-day Saints are far less likely to engage in sexual relations with their partner and much less likely to cohabit.

Another weakness of this study is the bivariate level of analysis. The primary purpose of this study was to explore the RELATE longitudinal breakup data so that more detailed multivariate analyses could be conducted with some knowledge of the breakup process and experience. This chapter is a preliminary investigation of most of the RELATE breakup data (a few of the questions on the instrument are not discussed here). This preliminary analysis was very helpful in constructing multivariate models in the following chapters. One example of this was in ruling out a particular method of analysis. In my early breakup research, I intended to explore the timing of breakups using event history analysis. However, after analyzing all the questions presented in this study, I determined that an event history analysis is not possible because it is impossible to calculate, with required accuracy, when couples actually broke up.

2.8 Conclusion

The most common relationship problems that contribute to the dissolution of a relationship are: communication, time spent together, dealing with conflict, commitment level differences, and costs outweighing rewards. Interestingly, these support two general types of breakups. The first three can all be typed as relationship problems, while commitment level differences suggests an independence breakup.

In general, most people are able to move on quickly following a breakup. The most difficult breakups occur when couples are engaged or cohabiting, suggesting that

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suggest that a greater level of commitment leads to a more difficult breakup. While the passage of time and forming a new relationship to help people move on, relationship dissolution does not seem to have a lasting negative influence on people.
CHAPTER 3:

POSITIVE BREAKUPS

"This was my first time being in a relationship. Most everything that happened [was] a first. It was definitely a learning experience. Though because I was, and maybe still am, so naïve, I hesitate to move very quickly. It was worth it in experience." (27 yr old female)

"I learned a lot, hopefully I'll apply what I learned in my next relationship." (24 yr old male)

"My ex and I still see each other and are still friends. I have dated a few people, but he is in pretty much the same state as when we broke up. I still wonder if he might want to get back together." (24 yr old female)

Breakups are generally good, even though they may cause temporary hardships. Hopefully, breakups help people establish better relationships in the long run. With this reasoning, breakups are an important part of forming relationships. If one partner in the relationship is not happy, then neither partner will be truly satisfied in a relationship. In some sense, then, every breakup before marriage is a good thing because they help people to find someone with whom they can establish a long-term relationship. While this is obviously not the case for every breakup, this chapter explores the idea of positive breakups.

The dissolution of romantic relationships can be considered positive in a few different ways. First, it is possible that the relationship is not good for one or both of the
partners and, if the couple were to stay together or marry, would likely lead to unhappiness or even divorce. This would include relationships in which one partner is abusive or neurotic, or has bad habits or personal problems, but could also include couples who simply do not communicate well or whose life goals are not compatible.

A second definition of a positive breakup is simply one that is friendly or mutual. This is directly related to the breakup event. In this instance, the partners communicate their feelings openly, discuss their future as a couple, and ultimately decide together that it is better for them to go their separate ways. This kind of mutual breakup is positive because there are no hurt feelings and the partners are less likely to get back together (Dailey et al. 2009).

A third way of thinking about a positive breakup is when partners recognize their breakup is a good thing, but still view the relationship as a positive or educational experience. They have few or no regrets about having dated each other. In other words, they continue to have positive feelings about the relationship after it ends because they realize that it helped them learn or grow. In this situation, the breakup is positive because it allows the individuals to move on and apply what they have learned in new (and hopefully better) relationships.

These three positive breakup perspectives can be labeled 1) poor match, 2) friendly, and 3) educational. The three conceptions are not mutually exclusive (which is why they are not “types”), as each deals with a different aspect of the relationship. A poor match refers to the relationship itself, a friendly breakup refers to the breakup experience, and an educational breakup involves thinking back about the relationship following a breakup. As a result, some couples could potentially experience all three
kinds of positivity from their breakup. This chapter will address the latter two (friendly and educational breakups), specifically exploring whether the friendliness of the breakup experience and current feelings about the ending of the relationship are influenced by the same factors. The first type of positive breakup (poor match) will be covered in the next chapter, which explores the distinguishing characteristics of couples who break up and those who stay together.

3.1 Literature Review

There is some research about positive breakups, but most authors have focused on whether ex-partners are able to remain friends following their breakup. While some might consider this a fourth type of positive breakup, remaining friends following a breakup is more the result of a positive breakup, rather than being a type of positive breakup. How couples interact following a breakup can vary widely, but these studies do show that a couple's post-dissolution relationship is influenced by the breakup experience. Some couples are able to maintain a friendship following their breakup, but the prevalence of its occurrence is difficult to determine.

In early research on breakups, Davis (1973) suggested that being "friends" after a breakup usually means "acquaintances." Some early studies suggest that a majority of ex-partners are able to remain friends (Wilmot et al. 1985). More recent studies conclude that friendship following a breakup is "common," at least among college students (Schneider and Kenny 2000; Busboom et al. 2002). Dailey et al. (2009) find that at least 40% of all relationships are on-again/off-again relationships, suggesting that some couples maintain contact enough to eventually get back together. But, because of a lack
of representative data, most authors have focused on the quality of relationship/friendship that ex-partners are able to maintain following a breakup, rather than whether they are friends or not.

For example, Metts, Cupach, and Bejlovec (1989) find that ex-partners are much more likely to maintain a friendship following their breakup if they were friends before they ever started dating. They also find that communication during a breakup is also crucial to post-dissolution friendship. Specifically, for those who initiated the breakup, a withdrawal strategy and feeling like their partner was taking advantage of them were negatively associated with being friends after a breakup. For those who were broken-up-with, their partners using a positive tone during the breakup helped to maintain a friendship, but their partner being hurtful or manipulative made it less likely they would maintain a friendship.

Metts et al. group variables into two categories: those associated with the 1) relationship prior to its decline, and 2) the disengaging period. In this sense, the two primary determinants of whether partners are able to be friends following a breakup are their friendship before dating (Lee 1984), and the breakup strategy (e.g. Withdrawal, Blame, etc.) (Metts et al. 1989). It is unclear whether who initiates the breakup (man or woman) has an effect on friendship (Schneider and Kenny 2000).

Baxter (1986) also offers some insights into positive breakups. Specifically, she suggests people use different strategies in breaking up, that vary along two dimensions: directness and other-orientation. "Directness refers to the extent to which the desire to end the relationship is explicitly stated to the partner" and "other-orientation refers to the degree to which the disengager attempts to avoid hurting the partner in the process of
breaking up” (Cate and Lloyd 1992). Usually, the closer the relationship at time of breakup, the more direct and other-oriented a partner is. Direct strategies are also more likely when partners want to keep in contact, the breakup is mutual, and the reason for breakup is external to the relationship.

Meredith and Holman (2001) use longitudinal data to compare couples who broke up premaritally with couples who married and divorced, stayed in low-satisfaction marriages, or stayed in high-satisfaction marriages. As discussed in the "poor match" positive breakup above, they suggest that "It is clear that those who broke up premaritally were wise to do so. They were much more similar premaritally to the divorced/separated group and the married-low satisfaction group than to the married-high satisfaction group” (2001:73). Indeed,

Individuals who break up a relationship that has the makings of a poor-quality marriage tend to have at least a marginally adequate resource base from the family of origin, to have a personality and attitudes that value autonomy and independence, and to recognize that the interactional processes in the relationship are not good. (Meredith and Holman 2001:74)

However, they also suggest that these individuals do not necessarily form better relationships after a breakup. People who break up may have individual backgrounds which prevent them from forming relationships that lead to highly satisfied marriages.

Adding to the work on post-dissolution friendship quality, Schneider and Kenny (2000) find that friendships between former romantic partners are different from platonic friendships. Former partners usually have a lower quality of friendship, fewer benefits, and greater costs from friendship, but also more romantic desires than with platonic
friends. They note that ex-partners are often forced to maintain a friendship out of convenience or necessity (e.g. being part of the same social circle).

Although using a very limited number of interviews, Foley and Fraser (1998) find that "individuals in post-romantic relationships avoid talking about their past relationship, reasons for the break-up, and new romantic relationships. The topics they do discuss include work and mutual friends." In other words, ex-partners are often forced to maintain a friendship in order to maintain social network ties, and they may keep significant aspects of their lives hidden from each other.

Busboom et al. (2002) argue that ex-partners remain friends to maintain resources. They find that friendship quality is influenced by resources received (including love, status, services, information, goods, and money), satisfaction with received resources, and barriers. Ultimately, the more resources a person receives and the higher their satisfaction with those resources, the more likely they will remain friends. Barriers to post-dissolution friendship include: lack of support from family and friends for the post-dating friendship, involvement in a new relationship, and use of a neglectful dissolution strategy.

Most of these studies provide support for Davis' (1973) conclusion that post-dating friendships are really just acquaintances because, while it may be possible or common, friendship between former partners can be very awkward and is often maintained out of necessity. And there are a few things that make friendships between ex-partners unlikely, including a difficult breakup experience (e.g. hurtful, one-sided), one partner forming a new relationship, and the absence of friendship prior to dating (Busboom et al 2002; Schneider and Kenny 2000; Metts et al. 1989).
Aside from these types of studies on post-dissolution friendship, there is almost no current research on the actual breakup experience. From the moment when researchers began to view breakups as a process, their attention shifted away from the breakup event, and turned primarily to breakup processes and trajectories and friendship quality following a breakup. In like manner, the issue of how people cope with a breakup has been largely ignored.

In this chapter, I analyze positivity in the breakup event as well as how people adjust to the dissolution over time. Specifically, I explore whether the factors that influence the friendliness of the breakup event are similar to those which help people feel positive about the dissolution of the relationship later on. The focus will not be on the friendship between ex-partners, but rather on: 1) the respondents' current feelings about their former relationship (educational breakup), and 2) the friendliness (friendly breakup) of the breakup event (the point at which the partners have a breakup talk and go their separate ways, or the time when they consider the relationship dissolved because their partner will have no further contact). This type of analysis has not been conducted before, which is probably due to the difficulty of obtaining data from individuals whose relationships have ended, especially many months after the breakup.

3.2 Hypotheses

The first group of hypotheses involves variables that might have an influence on both the friendliness of the breakup and the current feelings about the relationship.
3.2.1 Friends before dating

As indicated in the existing literature, being friends before dating increases the likelihood that dissolved couples will maintain a friendship following a breakup. There is not a variable in RELATE that directly asks whether partners were friends before beginning to date. So, hypothesis 1 is that partners who knew each other before dating will have friendlier breakups than those who started dating soon after meeting, but less positive feelings about their relationship ending (since their post-dissolution relationship may be more complicated).

3.2.2 Cohabiting

Living together creates more complications during a breakup since at least one partner has to find a new place to live and dividing up shared assets may be difficult. So, cohabitation will result in less friendly breakups, but have no effect on how respondents currently feel about the relationship ending (hypothesis 2). This absence of influence on their feelings about the relationship ending is expected because, by the time of the follow-up, they have had some time to overcome temporary hardships caused by breaking up while living together.

3.2.3 Instability

Hypothesis 3. A higher number of breakups and renewals (getting back together) will result in more negative feelings about the ending of the relationship. Previous breakups (with the same partner) should not affect the friendliness of the breakup, however, because partners who have broken up before are probably somewhat accustomed to it and are, therefore, more likely to breakup without drama.
3.2.4 Relationship quality

The quality of the relationship at the peak and near the end is a potentially important influence on current feelings about the breakup and how friendly it was, respectively. Since friendliness is only applicable to the breakup event, it is only expected to be influenced by relationship quality near the end of the relationship. Positive feelings about the ending of the relationship are more likely influenced by relationship quality at the peak, rather than near the end, because respondents are able to think about the overall relationship rather than simply how it ended (as with the friendliness of the breakup). In both cases (at the peak and near the end), higher relationship quality might make the breakup come as a surprise, and thus be less friendly and more difficult to get over.

Hypothesis 4 is that higher relationship quality (more positives and fewer negatives) near the end of the relationship will result in less friendly breakups, and higher relationship quality at the peak will result in less positive feelings about the ending of the relationship.

3.2.5 Difference in commitment

The degree to which the partners differ in their commitment to the relationship is likely to influence whether the breakup is friendly because of situations where one partner is much more committed than the other. If partners have about the same level of commitment (whether high or low) then a breakup will likely have similar implications for each of them. But, if one partner is much more committed to the relationship, the imbalance may make a breakup more hurtful (less friendly).
Hypothesis 5 is that greater differences in commitment near the end of the relationship will lead to less friendly breakups. Differences in commitment are not expected to influence a person's current feelings about the ending of the relationship.

3.2.6 Breakup Method

How the breakup occurred (a sudden decision by one partner, a conversation with a mutual decision, a fight, or drifting apart) will influence the friendliness of the breakup, but not the respondent's current feelings about the relationship ending. The reason for this is that the breakup method is believed to have only short-term consequences. Over time, people come to terms with the dissolution of their relationship. Thus, the particulars of the breakup event are not expected to influence how people currently feel about the ending of their relationships. Specifically, a sudden decision by one partner or a fight that ends the relationship are expected to produce less friendly breakups, and a conversation in which the partners decide to breakup is expected to be more friendly (hypothesis 6).

3.2.7 Degree of relationship problems

Some couples have problems that disrupt their relationship in a major way. Couples who have a high degree of relationship problems (whether through a lot of little problems that add up or a few issues that have a huge influence on their interaction) may also have problems breaking up. Having serious problems may also make it easier to understand why a breakup occurred, thus helping a person to come to terms with the relationship ending. Or, they may simply be glad the relationship is over so they do not have to deal with the problems any more.
Hypothesis 7 is that couples who have a higher degree of relationship problems are expected to have less friendly breakups, but more positive feelings about the relationship ending.

The remaining hypotheses are only relevant to a respondent's current feelings about the relationship (not to the friendliness of the breakup) because the questions assume that some time has passed since the breakup (e.g. weeks since breakup cannot affect the friendliness of the breakup because the breakup has already occurred. While the passage of time may slightly alter the respondent's memory of the breakup, it is assumed that people remember whether their breakup was friendly or not).

3.2.8 Friendliness of the breakup

With one dependent variable potentially affecting the other, the friendliness of the breakup may be important in how a person currently feels about the ending of the relationship. Hypothesis 8 is that a friendlier breakup will help a person to feel more positive about the relationship dissolving.

3.2.9 Likelihood of getting back together

If the chances that a couple will get back together are high, it would seem that the breakup was pointless and that at least one partner may be upset that it ever ended. So, in instances where the likelihood of renewing the relationship is high, respondents will report lower positive feelings about the ending of the relationship (hypothesis 9).

3.2.10 Weeks since breakup

As noted above, the passage of time may help individuals to come to terms with the ending of their relationship (whether it was friendly or not), which may make them
more likely to feel ok about it ending. With time, people are expected to feel better about
the relationship ending. If the breakup was difficult, the passage of time should help
them move on, and if they were glad to end it, they should feel even better now. (As
reported in the previous chapter, the most frequently cited change respondents wish they
could have made about their ex-relationship was to end it sooner.) In short, more weeks
since the breakup will result in more positive feelings about the ending of the relationship
(hypothesis 10).

3.2.11 Coping

It is obvious that the more successful people are in coping with a breakup, the
more positive they should feel about the ending of the relationship (hypothesis 11).

3.2.12 New relationship

Forming a new relationship probably makes it easier to forget a previous one. So,
the final hypothesis (12) is that respondents who have formed a new relationship will
report more positive feelings about the ending of their former relationship.

3.3 Method

3.3.1 Sample

The sample consists of 195 heterosexual individuals (123 women and 72 men)
who are no longer in a relationship with the partners they completed RELATE with at
Time 1. 86% of the sample respondents are White, along with 4% Asian, 4% Latino, and
2% Black. About 5% of the sample had nationalities outside the United States (although
most were residing in the U.S. when they completed the survey). More than two-thirds of
the sample respondents were currently enrolled college students, with a majority of the respondents (62%) currently enrolled as undergraduates, and 8% in graduate programs. Almost two-thirds (66%) earned less than $40,000 a year. The sample also consists of one-third Latter-day Saints (LDS) (34%), one-third Protestant (33%), 13% Catholic, and 13% who indicated no religious affiliation. Each respondent was either single or cohabiting with a partner at Time 1; none had ever been married. Eleven (6%) of the respondents indicated that they (or their partner) had at least one child from a previous relationship, but only one couple had a child together. At Time 2, most of the respondents ranged in age from 20 to 40, with only one respondent aged 18, 19, and 52 respectively. The average respondent age was 25. At the follow-up, half (49%) of the respondents indicated that they were currently in a new relationship. Finally, 79% of the respondents indicated that they would be describing the breakup of a serious dating relationship, 18% a broken engagement, and only 3% indicated they would describe the breakup of a casual dating relationship.

The presence of so many Latter-day Saint (LDS) individuals in the sample likely has an influence on some of the findings. After conducting some group comparisons, there is a significant difference between the Latter-day Saint respondents and those with other religions or no religion on a number of variables. For example, the LDS respondents are significantly less likely to have had sex or cohabited with their partners. They also dated their partners for a much shorter amount of time, and had shorter relationships generally, but were more likely to be engaged compared to non-LDS individuals. These differences may influence the findings on some of the breakup variables. For example, LDS individuals have friendlier breakups and have lower
positive relationship aspects throughout their relationships. These differences are likely
due to the differences in sex and cohabitation within their relationships since sexual
intimacy may increase relationship quality (increase positives) at every stage, and
cohabitation may make breakups less friendly (this finding is confirmed in chapter 3).
Since removing them from the sample would decrease the sample size by one-third, they
are kept in the dataset for all analyses.

3.3.2 Procedure

As discussed in chapter 1, the breakup respondents come from the online
RELATE survey, and respondents were introduced to the instrument primarily through
academic courses, counseling, word-of-mouth, and Internet searching. After couples
completed the survey, both partners were contacted about 1 year after they first
completed RELATE and asked if they were still in a relationship with the same partner.
If they had broken up, they were given a breakup instrument. If they were still with their
partner, they were asked to take RELATE a second time. Not surprisingly, there were
very few instances where both partners from a dissolved relationship completed the
follow-up survey. In most cases, only one partner responded to the breakup survey, so
the use of couple data is not possible for this study.

Missing data is not a serious concern for any single variable since the highest
number of missing values was five, and this only applied to two of the variables. Nine of
the variables in the final models had at least one missing value. Two of these variables,
"how did the breakup happen?" and "who initiated the breakup?," were recoded into
dummy variables so the missing values are part of the reference group. For the remaining
six variables, the mean was imputed for missing cells, except for cohabitation where
missing cells were imputed with the mode (0=never cohabited). Mean imputation was utilized because of the small number of missing values. If there was more than one missing value on many variables, I would have utilized an imputation method that estimated missing values.

Multicollinearity is not a problem in the multivariate models. None of the tolerance measures is very low (none of the variance inflation factors is greater than 2.5).

In the early stages of this research, I intended to construct a positive breakup scale. I conducted a preliminary analysis with the intention of creating a positive breakup scale. Specifically, I thought mutual initiation, friendliness, and positive feelings about the relationship now would collectively indicate which breakups were positive and which were not. However, these three concepts did not have good reliability.

For another check, I conducted a more thorough analysis of the possibility of a positive breakup scale using nine items. These included: 1) the absence of negative feelings near the end of the relationship, 2) whether positive aspects did not decline a lot or stay low or 3) whether negative aspects did not increase a lot or stay high leading up to the breakup, 4) whether the breakup occurred by having a conversation and deciding together, 5) whether the breakup was mutually initiated, 6) the friendliness of the breakup, 7) nobody was to blame, 8) positive current feelings about the breakup, and 9) successful coping with the breakup. There are no strong correlations between any of the items (0.49 is the strongest correlation between a pair of the items, but most of them are below 0.30). When they are scaled without standardization, the highest alpha possible is 0.58, and this includes just four of the variables (neither is to blame, mutually initiated, friendly, and decided together). With more items included, the reliability is much lower.
Even with standardization, it was not possible to get an alpha above 0.66. This confirms my earlier finding that a positive breakup scale is not really possible. There are simply different ways of thinking about positivity in dissolution. Most of these concepts are different, especially because some ask respondents to describe their relationship at different times. "Near the end" of the relationship, "leading up to the breakup," the moment of the breakup experience, and reflecting back on the dissolved relationship.

After discovering the conceptual differences, I thought I would have three dependent variables (mutual, friendly, and current feelings), but mutual breakups can be explained almost completely by one concept: "we had a conversation and decided together." The variability in mutual breakups can be explained almost completely by whether or not the couple decided to break up through a conversation, compared to one partner making the decision and then informing his/her partner. There is a close connection between breakup type and initiation. After discovering this, I narrowed the focus to two dependent variables.

3.4 Measures

Descriptive statistics for the variables used in this study can be found in Table 2.1 (in the previous chapter).
3.4.1 Dependent Variables

3.4.1.1 Friendliness of the breakup

The respondents were queried about the friendliness of the breakup. The question is "Would you describe the breakup as friendly?" with responses 0=Not at all, 1=Somewhat, 2=Mostly, and 3=Entirely. The mean of this variable is 1.3.

3.4.1.2 Current feelings about the ending of the relationship

The second dependent variable in this study is "How do you feel now about the ending of your relationship?" and the respondents were given a Likert scale range of 0=Never, 1=Rarely, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, and 4=Very Often to respond to the following feelings: Hurt, Angry, Comfortable, Confused, Disappointed, Happy, Relieved, Sad, Guilty, Learned from the experience, Regretful, and Other (with write-in option). The more positive feelings (comfortable, happy, relieved, learned) were summed into one variable (mean=11.5), and the remaining negative feelings were also summed (mean=9.3). A difference variable was calculated using the two summed variables (positive feelings minus negative feelings); so higher scores indicate the respondent currently has more positive than negative feelings about the relationship. The range of this new variable is -22 to 16, with a mean of 2.3. With this scale, it is possible for someone to feel neutral about the breakup (which would be close to zero).
3.4.2 Independent Variables

3.4.2.1 Friends before dating

Respondents were also asked "How long did you know your ex-partner before you started dating?" 22% of the respondents selected "We dated immediately," meaning they did not know their partner until their first date. 28% chose "1 week to 1 month," 13% selected "2 to 3 months," 11% said "4 to 6 months," and 7% said "7 months to 1 year." 14% of the respondents indicated that they had known their partner for "1 year to 5 years" before starting to date, and 5% said "More than 5 years." The categories were recoded into months, so the average number of months partners had known each other before starting to date is 10 months.

3.4.2.2 Cohabiting

Respondents were asked whether they ever lived [cohabited] with their former partner (1=yes, 0=no). Only 22% of the respondents indicated that they had ever cohabited.

3.4.2.3 Instability [On-off relationships]

Relationship instability is estimated from the frequency of breakups question at time 1, "How often have you broken up or separated and then gotten back together?," and is coded 0=Never, 1=Rarely, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, and 4=Very Often. Forty-three (22%) of the respondents indicated that they had broken up and gotten back together with their ex-partner at least "sometimes." Thus, almost one-fourth of the respondents had on-again/off-again relationships.
3.4.2.4 Relationship quality

To get some idea of the overall relationship quality at different points, respondents were asked "How well do each of the following words describe your ex-relationship?" Using a four point scale (0=Not at all, 1=Somewhat, 2=Mostly, 3=Entirely), they indicated the degree to which their relationship was fun, tense, happy, hurtful, jealous, discouraging, romantic, physical/sexual, comfortable, turbulent, and one-sided. They responded to all of these descriptors for three stages of their relationship: "in the beginning," "at the peak," and "near the end." The positive (fun, happy, romantic, and comfortable) and negative descriptors (tense, hurtful, jealous, discouraging, turbulent, and one-sided) were summed into separate variables for each time period. Physical/sexual was not included in either scale because, depending on the respondent, it can be positive or negative. The resulting variables were: sum of both positive and negative relationship aspects in the beginning, at the peak, and near the end. Difference variables were calculated using the positive minus the negative summed scores at each of the three time periods. These variables provide a measure of relationship quality at each of the three relationship stages: in the beginning (mean=3.8), at the peak (mean=3.1), and near the end (mean= -7.4).

Respondents do indicate their satisfaction with the relationship at each of the three stages (in the beginning, at the peak, and near the end), but these variables had very little correlation with either of the dependent variables, so only relationship commitment was utilized.
3.4.2.5 Difference in commitment

Commitment to the relationship was queried with the questions "How committed were you to this relationship?" and "How committed overall do you think your partner was to this relationship? Choose one in each time period." Respondents indicated their commitment and estimated their partner's commitment to the relationship "in the beginning," "at the peak," and "near the end" using a 5-point Likert scale with the range: 1=Very Dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, 3=Neutral, 4=Satisfied, and 5=Very Satisfied. Since respondents were asked to estimate their partners' commitment level, new variables were created for difference in the partners' commitment at each of the three stages. These variables range from 0=no difference in commitment to 4=complete difference in commitment (one partner completely committed and one not at all committed). The average difference in commitment at the end of the relationship is 1.6.

3.4.2.6 Breakup Method

To get some idea of the breakup event, respondents were asked "How did the breakup happen?" and given the possible responses: "One partner suddenly made the decision," "We had a conversation and decided together," "There was a fight that ended the relationship," "We drifted apart," or "Other" (with a write-in option). Many of the write-ins were an attempt by the respondent to describe the cause of the breakup, rather than how it happened, but most could be recoded into the four main categories using information from other variables. The resulting variable suggests that exactly half (50%) of the sample experienced a breakup in which "one partner suddenly made the decision," and another fourth (26%) "had a conversation and decided together." There were also
14% who said they drifted apart, but only 9% who broke up after a fight. This variable was converted into dummy variables for analysis, with reference group "drifted apart."

3.4.2.7 Degree of relationship problems

One of the more expansive questions, respondents were given a list of 32 potential relationship "problem areas that couples might have that lead to their breakup," and asked to "Please list how often each area was a problem in your relationship that lead to your breakup." [A list of all the problems can be found in chapter 2]. The responses were recorded using a Likert scale with the options 0=Never, 1=Rarely, 2=Sometimes, 3=Often, and 4=Very Often. All of these variables were summed into a new variable representing the degree to which problems contributed to the breakup. The mean of this variable is 40.

3.4.2.8 Likelihood of getting back together

Respondents were asked: "What is the likelihood that you and your ex-partner will get back together? Please circle a number" [With increments of 10 being shown on a percent scale]. There was very little variation in this variable. More than three-fourths of the respondents (77%) said 0 or 10%, and 9 out of 10 indicated it was less than 50% likely they would get back together with their partner. However, 20 of the respondents (9%) said it was at least 50% likely they would get back together.

3.4.2.9 Weeks since breakup

"How long has it been since your breakup?" The time ranges for this question were recoded into weeks, but since the highest number of respondents (42%) were in the
last group "More than 1 year" (coded "80" weeks) the variation is limited. However, this variable should still be useful in estimating whether there are differences between people who have had some time to deal with their breakup and those who broke up more recently.

3.4.2.10 Coping

"How would you describe your own [partner's] coping with the breakup?" was asked using the scale 1=unsuccessful, 2=somewhat unsuccessful, 3=not sure, 4=somewhat successful, and 5=successful. This variable has a mean of 4.2.

3.4.2.11 New relationship

One of the last questions on the breakup instrument is "Are you currently in a relationship with a new partner?" (coded 1=Yes, 0=No). Exactly half of the sample respondents were in new relationships at time 2.

3.4.3 Control Variables

The following variables are used as controls because, while they may have a significant effect on how positive a breakup is, they represent factors that individuals in relationships cannot change in order to make their breakup more friendly or to feel better about it later. For example, even if age has a significant positive influence on the friendliness of a breakup, it does not mean that an individual would be better off waiting until he/she is older to break up with their partner. This is the case for all the control variables in the model. Their effects may be important for positive breakup outcomes,
and they may mediate the influence of other variables in the model on positive breakup outcomes, but they are not helpful for individuals in dating relationships.

These variables include: age, gender (female), race (nonwhite), and religion (Latter-day Saint). A dummy variable was also created for individuals who were engaged when they broke up (35 respondents). Aside from these, there were three other control variables.

3.4.3.1 Length of relationship

The length of relationship measure comes from the question "How long after you started dating did you and your ex-partner breakup?" The response categories were: "Less than one month," "1 month - 3 months," "4 months - 6 months," "7 months - 1 year," "1 year - 1 ½ years," "1 ½ years - 2 years," "2 years - 3 years," "3 years - 5 years," and "More than 5 years." After recoding the responses into months, the average length of relationship was about 23 months.

3.4.3.2 Income

An individual's income was asked with the wording "Your current personal yearly gross income (before taxes & deductions)" and categories 1=None; 2=Under $20,000; 3=$20,000-$39,999; 4=$40,000-$59,999; and continues in twenty thousand increments until 10=$160,000 or above.

3.4.3.3 Breakup Initiator

"Who initiated the breakup?" has the categories "I did entirely," "Mostly I did, but my partner contributed somewhat," "We mutually decided," "Mostly my partner, but I
contributed somewhat," and "My partner entirely." This question was recoded into three groups (I/Mostly I, mutual, and Partner/Mostly partner) and then dummy variables were created for "I initiated" and "Mutually initiated."

3.5 Results

3.5.1 Bivariate Analysis

Bivariate correlations of all the variables listed above (and utilized in the models below) are listed in Table 3.1. Each dependent variable was regressed on all of the independent variables separately. The results of these zero-order regression models are found in Appendix A.

When the dependent variables are regressed on the variable indicating the length of time partners knew each other before dating, hypothesis 1 is rejected. The length of time partners knew each other before they started dating has no effect on the friendliness of the breakup or their current feelings about the relationship.

There is also no support for hypothesis 2. Surprisingly, cohabitation has no effect on the friendliness of the breakup. However, it does influence how respondents currently feel about the relationship (although it only approaches significance; p=.06). Individuals who cohabited with their partners have more negative feelings about the ending of the relationship.
### TABLE 3.1

**CORRELATIONS OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLES FOR POSITIVE BREAKUP OLS REGRESSION MODELS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Relat. quality - At peak</th>
<th>Relat. quality - Near end</th>
<th>Commit diff. - Near end</th>
<th>Breakup method - Sudden decision</th>
<th>Breakup method - Conversation</th>
<th>Breakup method - Fight</th>
<th>Breakup method - Drifted apart</th>
<th>Relationship problems degree</th>
<th>Friendliness of breakup</th>
<th>Cohabited</th>
<th>Chance getting back together</th>
<th>Weeks since breakup</th>
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<tr>
<td>Relat. quality - At peak</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commit diff. - Near end</td>
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<td>1.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Method - Conversation</td>
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<td>0.167&quot;</td>
<td>-0.584&quot;</td>
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<td>Method - Drifted apart</td>
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<td>0.007</td>
<td>-0.398&quot;</td>
<td>-0.233&quot;</td>
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<td>0.339&quot;</td>
<td>0.286&quot;</td>
<td>0.302&quot;</td>
<td>0.474&quot;</td>
<td>-0.220</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>-0.283&quot;</td>
<td>-0.195&quot;</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabited</td>
<td>-0.048</td>
<td>-0.083</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>-0.038</td>
<td>0.028</td>
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<td>Chance get back together</td>
<td>0.212&quot;</td>
<td>0.305&quot;</td>
<td>-0.126</td>
<td>-0.122</td>
<td>-0.026</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>0.167&quot;</td>
<td>-0.235&quot;</td>
<td>0.120</td>
<td>0.195&quot;</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Weeks since breakup</td>
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<td>0.028</td>
<td>-0.011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coping success</td>
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<td>-0.173&quot;</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>-0.110</td>
<td>0.119</td>
<td>-0.013</td>
<td>-0.022</td>
<td>0.179&quot;</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>-0.359&quot;</td>
<td>0.150&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>New relationship</td>
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<td>-0.066</td>
<td>-0.059</td>
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<td>-0.006</td>
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<td>-0.090</td>
<td>-0.285&quot;</td>
<td>0.317&quot;</td>
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<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.060</td>
<td>-0.011</td>
<td>0.062</td>
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<td>0.178&quot;</td>
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<td>Length of relat. in months</td>
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<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.089</td>
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<td>-0.022</td>
<td>0.280&quot;</td>
<td>0.313&quot;</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latter-day Saint</td>
<td>-0.120</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.081</td>
<td>-0.036</td>
<td>-0.119</td>
<td>-0.059</td>
<td>-0.200&quot;</td>
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<td>0.096</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.054</td>
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<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>-0.071</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>-0.013&quot;</td>
<td>-0.012&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yearly gross income</td>
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<td>-0.076</td>
<td>-0.020</td>
<td>-0.059</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.093</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>-0.048</td>
<td>-0.216&quot;</td>
<td>-0.111&quot;</td>
<td>0.121</td>
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<td>Initiated - respondent</td>
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<td>-0.204</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>0.140</td>
<td>-0.188&quot;</td>
<td>0.069</td>
<td>-0.057</td>
<td>0.156&quot;</td>
<td>-0.204&quot;</td>
<td>0.038&quot;</td>
<td>-0.159&quot;</td>
<td>0.052</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initiated - mutual</td>
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<td>0.095</td>
<td>-0.205&quot;</td>
<td>0.369&quot;</td>
<td>0.479&quot;</td>
<td>-0.077</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>-0.120</td>
<td>0.305&quot;</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>0.145&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initiated - partner</td>
<td>0.061</td>
<td>0.162</td>
<td>0.122</td>
<td>0.138</td>
<td>-0.146&quot;</td>
<td>-0.010</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>-0.093</td>
<td>-0.012</td>
<td>-0.103&quot;</td>
<td>0.060&quot;</td>
<td>-0.058</td>
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### TABLE 3.1 (CONTINUED)

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<th>Engaged</th>
<th>Length of relationship in months</th>
<th>Latter-day Saint</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Not white</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Yearly gross income</th>
<th>Initiated - respondent</th>
<th>Initiated - mutual</th>
<th>Initiated - partner</th>
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<td>New relationship</td>
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<td>Engaged</td>
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<td>0.058</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of rel. in months</td>
<td>-0.075</td>
<td>-0.150*</td>
<td>-0.016</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latter-day Saint</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>-0.138</td>
<td>0.140</td>
<td>-0.394*</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>-0.010</td>
<td>0.201*</td>
<td>0.101</td>
<td>-0.060</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not white</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>-0.067</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>-0.071</td>
<td>0.128</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.179*</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>-0.058</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>-0.140</td>
<td>0.128</td>
<td>1.53*</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly gross income</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>-0.038</td>
<td>0.207*</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>-0.082</td>
<td>0.705*</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>-1.14</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiated - respondent</td>
<td>0.226*</td>
<td>0.201*</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>0.092</td>
<td>-0.053</td>
<td>-0.044</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>0.134</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiated - mutual</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>-0.157*</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>0.164*</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>-1.186*</td>
<td>0.082</td>
<td>0.451*</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiated - partner</td>
<td>-0.263*</td>
<td>-0.094</td>
<td>-0.088</td>
<td>0.074</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>-0.063</td>
<td>-0.029</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>-0.735*</td>
<td>-0.260*</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE:** RELATE Institute

*p<.05,  **p<.01
Hypothesis 3 also has no support at the zero-order level, as the number of previous breakups has no influence on a person's current feelings about the ending of their relationship. As expected, previous breakups have no effect on the friendliness of the breakup.

There is some support for hypothesis 4. Higher relationship quality at the peak does result in less positive feelings now about the ending of the relationship. Higher relationship quality near the end does influence the friendliness of the breakup, but in the opposite direction. Interestingly, a higher quality of relationship leads to a friendlier breakup. It is also important to note that relationship quality at the peak also has a significant influence on the friendliness of the breakup, and relationship quality near the end is a significant factor in current feelings about the ending of the relationship. So, both variables should be used in the multivariate model.

At the bivariate level, hypothesis 5 is supported. Greater differences in commitment near the end of the relationship do lead to less friendly breakups. And differences in commitment have no significant influence on a person's current feelings about the ending of the relationship.

There is also good support for hypothesis 6. How the breakup occurs has a significant influence on how friendly it is. Both a sudden decision by one partner and a fight that ends the relationship have a significant negative relationship on the friendliness of the breakup, while a conversation makes a breakup much friendlier. Surprisingly, a conversation in which partners decide to break up also has a significant influence on how they currently feel about the relationship, but, as expected, a sudden decision or a fight do not.
There is very little support for hypothesis 7 at the zero-order level. While a higher degree of problems does make a breakup significantly less friendly, the effect is very small. And the degree of problems does not influence how a person feels about the breakup now.

At the bivariate level, there is support for hypotheses 8 through 12. A friendlier breakup, more time since the breakup, and successful coping all help a person to feel more positive about the ending of their relationship. If there is a high likelihood that they will get back together, though, they will have less positive feelings about the breakup. Finally, respondents who are in a new relationship do report more positive feelings about the breakup of their previous relationship.

3.5.2 Multivariate regression

Only variables that were significant predictors at the zero-order level were included in the multivariate models. Each dependent variable was first regressed on the group of significant variables, and then controls were added to see if the effects were still important. While cohabitation was not a significant predictor of a friendly breakup, it is included as a control in the friendly model in order to make comparisons with the positive feelings model.

Table 3.2 shows the results for the friendly breakup model. This model reveals that friendly breakups are primarily a result of two things: difference in commitment between the partners and the breakup method. Perhaps not surprising, the most important predictors of breakup friendliness all involve the ending of the relationship, or the state of the relationship near the end. A good example of this is relationship quality.
TABLE 3.2

OLS REGRESSION MODEL ESTIMATING
FRIENDLINESS OF BREAKUP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship quality - At peak</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship quality - Near end</td>
<td>0.03*</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commit difference - Near end</td>
<td>-0.16*</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakup method - Sudden decision</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakup method - Conversation</td>
<td>0.60**</td>
<td>(0.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakup method - Fight</td>
<td>-0.75**</td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship problems degree</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Variables</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabited</td>
<td>0.34*</td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of relationship in months</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not white</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>(0.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly gross income</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latter-day Saint</td>
<td>0.40**</td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiated - respondent</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>(0.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiated - mutual</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>(0.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.96**</td>
<td>(0.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>195</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R squared</td>
<td>0.349</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: RELATE Institute
*p<.05,  **p<.01
Relationship quality near the end of the relationship has a significant positive influence on the friendliness of the breakup, but the effect is very small. As expected in hypothesis 4, relationship quality is only an important predictor when the estimate is "near the end" rather than "at the peak" (although the direction is reversed). If relationship quality near the end increases by one unit, there is an increase of 0.03 in the friendliness of the breakup.

A much stronger predictor of friendly breakups, however, is the difference in commitment between the partners. For every one unit increase in the difference between the partners' commitment near the end of the relationship, the friendliness of the breakup decreases by 0.16.

Breakup method has the largest influence on the friendliness of a breakup. Depending on how the breakup occurs, the friendliness can alter significantly. For example, if a couple has a conversation and decides to break up together, the friendliness of the breakup increases by 0.60 (as compared to those who simply drift apart). But if they have a fight or if one partner suddenly decides to break up, the friendliness decreases by 0.75 or 0.34, respectively. These findings confirm hypothesis 6. Clearly, how the breakup occurs has a significant influence on whether it is friendly or not.

While the degree of problems in the relationship is a significant predictor of breakup friendliness in the bivariate model, it is not significant once other variables are added to the model (so hypothesis 7 is rejected). In addition, once the control variables are added to the model, there are no changes in the effects of the independent variables. A couple of the control variables do have some influence on the friendliness of the breakup, specifically cohabitation and religion. Going against hypothesis 2, it appears
that cohabiting couples may have friendlier breakups. Latter-day Saint couples may also have friendlier breakups. This is discussed below.

Predicting a respondent's current feelings about the relationship is more complex. The results of the model predicting current feelings are presented in Table 3.3. Positive feelings about the breakup tend to be most influenced by the friendliness of the breakup and experiences or feelings after the relationship ends. There are a couple of influential factors that come from the relationship itself, though.

First, individuals have significantly less positive feelings about the breakup if they cohabited with their partner. Cohabitation makes partners feel more negative about the ending of the relationship, reducing their current feelings score by 2.75. Second, the relationship quality at the peak of the relationship makes a difference in how people feel about the breakup. For every one unit increase in relationship quality at the peak, there is a corresponding decrease of 0.35 in how a person currently feels about the ending of the relationship.

A respondent's current feelings about the ending of their relationship are also influenced by the friendliness of the breakup and the person's experiences after the breakup.

The friendliness of the breakup is one of the most influential factors in how people feel about the ending of the relationship. For every one unit increase in the friendliness of the breakup, a person's current feelings about the ending of the relationship increase by 1.35. The more friendly a breakup is, the more positive a person feels about the breakup months later.
### TABLE 3.3

**OLS REGRESSION MODEL ESTIMATING CURRENT FEELINGS ABOUT THE ENDING OF THE RELATIONSHIP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabited</td>
<td>-2.75*</td>
<td>(1.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship quality - At peak</td>
<td>-0.35**</td>
<td>(0.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship quality - Near end</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakup method - Sudden decision</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>(1.44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakup method - Conversation</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>(1.64)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Breakup method - Fight</td>
<td>-0.37</td>
<td>(2.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendliness of breakup</td>
<td>1.35*</td>
<td>(0.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chance getting back together</td>
<td>-1.12**</td>
<td>(0.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks since breakup</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping success</td>
<td>3.55**</td>
<td>(0.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New relationship</td>
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<td>(1.07)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Engaged</td>
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<tr>
<td>Length of relationship in months</td>
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<td>Not white</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yearly gross income</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latter-day Saint</td>
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<td>Constant</td>
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<td>R squared</td>
<td>0.49</td>
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</table>

**SOURCE:** RELATE Institute

**NOTE:** Dependent variable is positive minus negative feelings about the breakup  
*p<.05, **p<.01
If a person feels that they will get back together with their ex-partner, they will have more negative feelings about the breakup. For every one unit (10 percent) increase in the likelihood of getting back together, a person's current feelings about the ending of the relationship decrease by 1.12. So, a person who feels there is a 50% chance that they will get back together with their partner is going to have almost 7 points lower feelings about the ending of the relationship. This suggests that if a person feels like they will get back together with their ex-partner, they may wonder why they ever broke up, and probably feel hurt or confused about why the relationship dissolved.

The variable with the largest influence on a person's feelings about the breakup is coping. If a person has been at least somewhat successful in coping with the breakup, they are going to have much more positive feelings about the ending of the relationship.

The passing of time also helps people to feel better about the breakup, although the weeks since breakup variable only approaches significance (p<.10). Every week that passes means a person will feel 0.04 more positive about the breakup. This means that, compared to a person who broke up only one week ago, a person who has a year to think about the breakup will feel much more positive (an increase of 2.08) about the ending of the relationship.

As hypothesized (H6), breakup method is not important to how a person feels about the breakup, but, surprisingly, neither is finding a new partner. People who form new relationships are not likely to feel better about the breakup than those who have not found a new partner.

When control variables are added to the model predicting current feelings about the relationship, there are no significant changes in the findings. Perhaps worthy of note
is that the dummy variable indicating a conversational breakup method approaches significance in this expanded model. This means that if a couple discuss their relationship and decide together to breakup, they may feel better about the breakup months later.

3.6 Discussion

As discussed early in this chapter, a positive breakup can be thought of in at least three different ways: poor match, educational, and friendly. Poor match breakups are positive because the partners are simply not good together. A breakup can also be positive if the actual breakup event is friendly. Breakups are also positive if people feel like they learned from the relationship (educational). This study is an attempt to identify the factors that lead to both friendly and educationally positive breakups.

Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 are rejected. The amount of time partners know each other before dating does not predict positive breakups. Hypothesis 2 is rejected since cohabitation may actually make breakups friendlier, and it also reduces a person's overall feelings about the breakup. Also, on-off relationships (with high instability) are no more or less likely to dissolve in a positive way.

Hypotheses 4, 5, and 6 are confirmed. Higher relationship quality (more positives than negatives) near the end of the relationship does lead to more friendly breakups, and higher quality at the peak leads to more positive feelings about the breakup later on. If partners have different commitment levels near the end of the relationship the breakup will be less friendly. Breakup method is also an important predictor of friendly breakups.
A sudden decision by one partner, or a fight make a breakup less friendly, while a conversation where partners mutually decide to break up is much friendlier.

Since the degree of relationship problems does not influence the friendliness of the breakup or the current feelings about the relationship ending, hypothesis 7 is rejected. Also, forming a new relationship does not influence a person to feel more positive about the ending of their previous relationship, so hypothesis 12 is rejected.

There is strong support for hypotheses 8 through 11. A person's current feelings about the ending of their relationship are highly influenced by the friendliness of the breakup, the likelihood that they will get back together with their former partner, and their own coping with the breakup. The passage of time even helps people to feel better about the breakup.

The friendliness of a breakup is influenced most by the state of the relationship near the end and how the breakup actually happens. Overall, it seems that most breakups are not friendly. The average breakup in this sample is only somewhat friendly, and if one partner is more committed, or if one partner decides to end the relationship rather abruptly, the breakup will probably not be friendly. These findings provide support for the idea that an unbalanced relationship (where one partner is less committed) increases the chances of an unfriendly breakup. So, it seems that the principle of least interest also applies to breakups. But, at the same time, the friendliness of the breakup is not influenced by who initiates it. Whether one or both partners initiate the actual breakup, how it occurs will determine the friendliness.

The finding about breakup method is particularly important to friendly breakups. In general, much of the negative aspects of a breakup can be avoided if a person initiates
a breakup through a conversation. While a conversation may not always be possible (e.g. if a partner is abusive), a breakup can be a much friendlier experience if the partners can talk it out. Even if one partner wants the relationship to continue, it is far better for them to hear their partner proclaim why they want to end the relationship than it is for them to just break up with no explanation. In reality, a sudden decision by one partner, with no conversation is likely done to avoid hurting someone's feelings and having to state the real reason for the breakup. For example, if a person feels that they are just not physically attracted to their partner, a conversation about why they are initiating a breakup may be very awkward. But, even in this instance, it may be better to simply state that their feelings of attraction have diminished than to simply break up with their partner with no explanation.

One of the negative aspects of a sudden breakup decision (with no conversation) is that it limits the educational aspect of a breakup for the partner who wants to stay in the relationship. If their partner never explains why they are breaking up with them, then they have no information to utilize in future relationships. Even with something as sensitive as physical attraction, it may be better for a person to know that their partner is no longer attracted to them than to wonder what happened. If they know attraction was an issue in their previous relationship, they can utilize that information in a forming a new relationship.

The finding that LDS couples have more friendly breakups could be due to the fact that a casual dating culture still exists among Latter-day Saints. The LDS view of marriage enduring beyond the grave may also be important here, because if the choice of a spouse has eternal consequences, LDS individuals who experience a breakup (whether
they initiate it or not) may be more willing to believe that they will find someone that is a better match for them.

More than a year after a breakup, there are some things which have a lingering affect on a person's feelings about the dissolution of the relationship. In general, it seems that the dissolution of a relationship in which at least one partner feels confident about a future together makes the breakup more difficult to come to terms with. For example, cohabitation increases negative feelings about the breakup. It is possible that at least one partner thought that living together would lead to marriage, and is still struggling with the breakup as a result. In a similar way, the better a relationship was at the peak, the more difficult it is for a person to get over it. Breakups seem to be more difficult for people to get over when they feel like the relationship was really good and they feel like there might still be hope of reuniting. Friendly breakups and the passage of time also help people to feel better about the breakup more than a year later.

In the early stages of this study, I thought that a model predicting mutual breakups might be important, but after some preliminary investigation, I found that a mutual breakup can be determined primarily by the negative aspects of the relationship at the peak and near the end, and by the difference in commitment at the peak and near the end. Since commitment difference and mutuality are basically measuring the same concept, it is no surprise that they are related. The partner with the lower commitment is more likely to break up with the other, and the breakup will not be mutual.

Friendly breakups are not much more complicated than mutual breakups. The friendliness of a breakup mainly comes from circumstances at the end of the relationship. For example, if a breakup results from a mutual decision, it will likely be much friendlier.
However, friendliness of the breakup has an influence on how people feel about the breakup some time later. If a friendly breakup is important in how a person moves on after a breakup, then it is good to have a friendly breakup. The main issue, though, is whether a couple can choose to break up in a friendly way. If one person decides to break up, a friendly breakup may be impossible since one person can feel rejected. The main thing people have control over is how they feel about the breakup, and whether they learn from it. In this sense, even if the breakup is not friendly, they may learn how to avoid being hurtful when breaking up with a partner. Thus, a positive breakup is something that people can choose if they allow it to educate them for future relationships.

3.6.1 Strengths, Limitations, and Implications for Future Research

The main contribution of this study is the discussion and testing of positive breakup types. A number of researchers have studied friendship between ex-partners (Metts et al. 1989; Schneider and Kenny 2000; Busboom et al 2002), but not the friendliness of the breakup itself, or the factors that make breakups more difficult to overcome. This information may be useful for counselors or individuals who may be struggling with how to help people/themselves move on following a breakup.

Another advantage is the use of multivariate models where the effects of many independent variables can be separated. In particular, it is interesting to see that the socio-demographic control variables, which frequently have an influence in sociological studies, are not important for positive breakups.

There are some weaknesses, however. First, the sample for this study is not representative of any population. In particular, the group is highly religious, and has a large percentage of Latter-day Saint respondents. While LDS individuals may have
friendlier breakups than individuals of other denominations, their presence may be creating some other biases in the results, even beyond simply controlling for their presence through the use of a dummy variable.

Another problematic aspect of the study is that the dependent variable measuring current feelings about the breakup is somewhat difficult to interpret. As a scale variable, the concepts that make up the positive and negative aspects cannot be distinguished. So, a higher score on the scale simply means a generally more positive feeling about the ending of the relationship. It is assumed that the positive or negative feelings associated with a breakup can be educational. It is also assumed that a positive breakup is an outcome, but it may also be a cause of something else. This model assumes one-way causality, but the dependent variables may actually be a cause of some of the independent variables, especially the likelihood of getting back together and coping with the breakup.

Future research on positive breakups could explore whether positive breakups make a difference in forming new relationships. If a breakup is friendly or educational, do individuals fare better on the next relationship? While Meredith and Holman (2001) suggest that they fare worse, especially on later marital quality, their study needs to be confirmed. It would also be interesting to explore whether there are breakup patterns. Do breakup experiences build upon one another, eventually leading to a good relationship, or are breakups truly independent of relationship formation.

3.7 Conclusion

The friendliness of a breakup is influenced most by the state of the relationship near the end and how the breakup actually happens. Most breakups are not friendly. An
unbalanced relationship (where one partner is less committed) decreases the friendliness of a breakup. In contrast, higher relationship quality (more positives than negatives) near the end of the relationship leads to friendlier breakups. Regardless of who initiates the breakup, how it occurs is the primary determinant of its friendliness. A fight or a sudden decision by one partner makes a breakup less friendly, while a conversation in which partners mutually decide to break up is much friendlier.

Some things have a lingering influence on a person's feelings about a breakup. In general, the dissolution of a relationship in which at least one partner feels confident about a future together makes the breakup more difficult to come to terms with. In a similar way, the better a relationship was at the peak, the more difficult it is for a person to get over it. A person's feelings about the ending of their relationship are highly influenced by the friendliness of the breakup, the passage of time, the likelihood that they will get back together with their former partner, and their own coping with the breakup.
"We were acquainted with each other for years, but were not friends before dating. A foundation of friendship would have been beneficial. He was ready for marriage, I was not. I was afraid and emotionally unstable. He married about 6 months after our break[up]." (24 yr old female)

"If he could have stopped smoking pot, we probably [would] never have broken up. However, both of us began drifting apart and choosing different things in life." (32 yr old female)

"The relationship didn't turn bad as such, it was just that he wanted to get married and I wasn't sure it was the right thing to do. I loved him but things weren't quite right. He was very jealous which was suffocating at times." (31 yr old female)

There is a substantial amount of research about relationship stability. While the focus of this research is sometimes on instability (dissolution or breakup) (Dailey et al. 2009; Cate and Lloyd 1992; Felmlee, Sprecher, and Bassin 1990; Hill, Rubin, and Peplau 1976), the question is the same: what factors influence some couples to stay together and others to break up? Most researchers group potential predictors of relationship stability into three categories: individual, dyadic, and social/external (Cate and Lloyd 1992; Surra and Hughes 1997; Cate, Levin, and Richmond 2002). Individual characteristics can include intrapersonal-normative values, attitudes, and beliefs, in addition to age, race, and education. Dyadic characteristics are those that exist through the couple's interaction,
and are, by far, the largest area of interest for most researchers. Social context predictors are sometimes split into two groups: social networks and external influences, or family background and demographics (Larson 2003; Surra 1990). These three (or four) groups provide the basis for most of the research done on relationship stability.

While relationship stability is simply the idea of whether a couple stays together or breaks up, there are implications for the concept of staying together. In essence, the concept of instability suggests relationship change; the couple is together now, but they may break up. The idea of change in stability is rarely explored at the same time (e.g., a couple are happy together and progress toward marriage). While some characteristics are predictive of stability, they are likely different from those which strengthen a relationship (rather than simply keeping it intact). Using data gathered from both partners in a relationship, this chapter will analyze the characteristics that are predictive of premarital relationship dissolution, and contrast those with the factors that are predictive of relationship progression to marriage.

Breakup studies have rarely been conducted with couple data, so the dissolution of the relationship is only seen from one partner's perspective. Using both partners' responses should provide a more complete picture of relationship dissolution, especially being able to analyze differences between partners, rather than simply one partner's estimate of the relationship. For example, one partner may be quite satisfied with the relationship while the other is feeling dissatisfied. Depending on which partner is asked about the relationship, satisfaction may not be predictive of breakup. But combining the scores of the two partners would suggest the couple has only a moderate level of relationship satisfaction, and they would stand out from a couple where both partners...
were highly satisfied with the relationship. So, the primary goal of this study is to analyze relationship stability using couple data, and compare the processes of relationship progression and dissolution.

4.1 Literature Review

Until the 1970s, premarital breakups were rarely explored. As noted above, most research on premarital relationships focused on processes leading to marriage, and only indirectly addressed dissolution. It was assumed that in knowing what influenced couples to progress could also lead to their breakup (if the characteristic was not present). Burgess and Wallin (1953) did some research on broken engagements and found that they “could be predicted by parental disapproval of the engagement, differences in leisure-time preferences, differences in religious faith, lower levels of affectionate expression, and less confidence in the happiness of the future marriage” (Cate and Lloyd 1992:84). This was one of the first studies to identify particular factors associated with breakups, even if they were specific to broken engagements. Aside from this study, however, there was not much research about premarital breakups until the seventies.

In 1976, Hill, Rubin, and Peplau finished a two-year longitudinal study of relationships among college students and found a number of important breakup predictors. Their study confirmed some of the generally assumed predictors of breakup: couples who break up are less likely to be in love or dating exclusively, see less likelihood that they will marry, and have dated a shorter amount of time. In addition, they found that dyadic factors, including lower levels of intimacy and attachment, are good predictors of breakups.
One of their most important contributions is the idea that there are two sides to every breakup. Very few breakups are truly mutual. Most couples report that one partner wanted to end the relationship at least somewhat more than the other. Thus, there are usually two roles: "dumper" and "dumpee." And partners usually have very different perceptions about the breakup. Their reports about dyadic factors are rarely in agreement, and most individuals have a tendency to report that they wanted the breakup, rather than their partner.

Hill, Rubin, and Peplau's study was an important foundation for subsequent research on premarital breakups. However, it has been more than 30 years since their data was collected, and the process of breaking up may have changed. Also, their findings were based on just 103 couples who had broken up, and all of the couples were college students. They do highlight the need for using couple data (with responses from both partners in the relationship), without which a complete picture of the breakup is not possible. Attridge, Berscheid, and Simpson (1995) confirm that using data from both partners is more predictive of stability than just one partner's responses.

In 1990, Felmlee, Sprecher, and Bassin's explored relationship dissolution using hazard analysis. They find that the likelihood of a couple breaking up is influenced by 1) amount of time spent together; 2) comparison level for alternatives (interest in other people); 3) dissimilarity in race; 4) perceived support for the relationship from a partner's family and friends; and 5) the duration of the relationship. Looking at social exchange theory, they find that comparison level for alternatives "was a more important predictor than investment and equity."
Felmlee et al. (1990) use an excellent longitudinal research method to analyze breakups, but there is one primary concern with their study. They sampled college students and conducted the surveys over the course of a single semester, so the follow-up survey was conducted after only three months. Thus, while their study is a marked improvement over cross-sectional breakup analysis, they do not allow much time for breakups to occur. A breakup study, especially one using longitudinal data, should produce better results if the follow-up is done at least a year after the first survey.

In 1992, Cate and Lloyd summarized the research about breakups that had been published up to that point. They group predictors of relationship dissolution into three categories: 1) *social incompatibility* (e.g. differences in age or education); 2) *low relationship quality* (dyadic elements like love and communication); and 3) *social network influence* (e.g. parental or friends' disapproval). They summarize that declines in satisfaction and uncertainty about the relationship can lead to breakup. Specifically, uncertainty about the relationship stems from less communication with the partner, low support from the partner's social network, competing relationships (alternatives), change in personality or values, deception/betraying confidence, and conflict (for women, it is resolving conflict and for men it is how many times a conflicting issue was brought up).

Cate and Lloyd (1992) conclude that, in general, partners identify dyadic issues when a relationship is growing, but talk about individual and external factors leading to the breakup. Respondents from couples who break up usually cite individual reasons (themselves or their partner) such as a trait or action (Cupach and Metts 1986) as being the cause. Individual reasons, such as feeling tied down or that the relationship has progressed too rapidly, lead to rapid decreases in commitment, and eventual dissolution.
In sum, conducting research on premarital relationship dissolution can benefit from using couple data, so that the breakup is not viewed solely from the one who initiated the breakup or the one who was broken-up-with. Longitudinal data is required to predict who will break up, but it is good to get follow-up responses at least a year or more after the initial survey in order to allow changes in relationships to occur. Finally, predictors of relationship dissolution can be discussed in four categories: social context, individual, dyadic, and external.

4.2 Factors Predictive of Relationship Stability

4.2.1 Social Context

Demographic factors were some of the earliest identified predictors of relationship dissolution. For example, Hill et al. (1976) found that couples are more likely to stay together if they are similar in age, education, intelligence, and physical attractiveness (as measured by others). Many other studies have confirmed these findings. Similarity in values, attitudes, beliefs, physical attractiveness, educational aspirations, intelligence, race, religion, and SES factors are all related to couple permanence (Felmlee et al. 1990; Meredith and Holman 2001:58; Wang, Kao, and Joyner 2006). By combining research from numerous studies, Meredith and Holman note that “Of all social contextual factors, age is one of the strongest predictors of both premarital and marital breakups,” but “the effects of sociodemographic variables are generally small, and factor out of multivariate prediction models” (2001:58).
In summary, socio-demographic factors including age, socioeconomic status, race, religion, can be useful in understanding premarital breakups, but are not expected to be significant predictors when included in multivariate models.

4.2.2 Individual Factors

Cate, Levin, and Richmond (2002) suggest that individual factors have disappeared from most studies because (1) they have not been found to be important predictors of relationship stability (Cate and Lloyd 1992), or (2) their effect on a relationship is mediated through dyadic factors (Fitzpatrick and Sollie 1999). While this may be the case, individual characteristics may be worth another look.

This may be especially true for predicting breakups. Lloyd and Cate (1985) suggest that individual factors may be just as important as dyadic factors. This is because partners who initiate a breakup are more likely to cite individual factors, while mutual breakups or those who say the partner initiated the breakup are more likely to cite dyadic factors leading to breakup.

Recently, Dailey et al. (2009) find that two of the factors leading to dissolution are negative attributes of partners and desire for independence, which are both individual characteristics. In short, while individual characteristics are rarely significant predictors of relationship stability, there is still good reason to include at least some individual factors in predictive models because they may be more predictive of dissolution than stability.
4.2.3 Dyadic/Relationship Factors

Dyadic factors only exist if there is a relationship (Cate and Lloyd 1992:58). Cate and Lloyd group dyadic factors into three areas: 1) states that evolve from the relationship (e.g. love, commitment), 2) dyadic interaction (e.g. sexual interaction), and 3) dyadic patterns that come from the degree of match of the couple (e.g. similarity, personality complementarity) (Cate et al. 2002).

4.2.3.1 States

Nearly all studies on premarital relationships have identified the dyadic states of love, commitment, intimacy, or all three as major influences in a relationship (Surra et al. 2006), but there is no consistency about the construct of these factors. For example, love has been found to be a good predictor of relationship stability, but it is often scaled from items such as attachment, caring, intimacy, belonging, closeness, sexual involvement, and commitment (Cate and Lloyd 1992). However, Felmlee et al. (1990) find that love is not significant when using measures of alternatives, length of relationship, and sexual intimacy. In general, there is no consistent definition or scale for the concept of love, but it is usually a significant predictor of relationship stability regardless of how it is constructed.

Commitment, or intention to maintain the relationship, has consistently predicted relationship stability, even when controlling for numerous variables (Cate et al. 2002). The trouble is that, like love, commitment is defined differently by different researchers (Surra and Hughes 1997; Cate et al. 2002). Interestingly, as many authors have attempted to separate the components of commitment, most have provided support for
Rusbult’s conception of commitment as composed of satisfaction, alternatives, and investment (Rusbult and Buunk 1993; Sacher and Fine 1996). Indeed, investments and attractive alternatives continue to be predictive of relationship stability (Goodfriend and Agnew 2008; Dailey et al. 2009).

Like commitment, “there is considerable controversy over the utility of using satisfaction indices in the study of marriage” (Cate and Lloyd 1992:69) and there is no agreement on what actually constitutes satisfaction. This is especially problematic if it is used as a component of commitment. When included, however, it is usually a significant predictor of relationship stability (Simpson 1987; Fitzpatrick and Sollie 1999). In short, it is probably best to use a single measure of relationship satisfaction rather than try to construct indices of satisfaction or commitment for studies of relationship stability.

Dyadic states are difficult to utilize because there is so much disagreement about how they should be constructed, but the factors that make up the constructs, such as sexual activity, satisfaction, and attraction to alternative partners, are important predictors of relationship stability.

4.2.3.2 Interaction

Interaction variables include things such as conflict, communication, sexual activity, and time together, and, as noted above, are often used as constructs of relationship states. Conflict in relationships has been found to influence stability, but only for specific activities or areas, such as how people handle conflict, and whether it is resolved (Surra and Longstreth 1990), and not the level of conflict (Berg and McQuinn 1986; Felmlee et al. 1990; Cate et al. 2002).

Sexual activity is also important to relationships, with premarital sexual activity providing more couple longevity, depending on commitment levels (Felmlee et al. 1990; Cate et al. 1993; Meredith and Holman 2001). In a related manner, cohabitation may influence the likelihood of dissolution, but it is unclear whether it strengthens or weakens premarital relationship stability (Sassler 2004; Hsueh, Morrisson, and Doss 2009).

Time together can be conceptualized as length of relationship and time spent together. Both of these factors are predictive of couple stability (Surra and Longstreth, 1990; Meredith and Holman 2001).

Dailey et al. (2009) explore the effects of breaking up and getting back together on relationship quality. They find that breaking up and getting back together leads to lower relationship quality (lower commitment and satisfaction, and more conflict and ambivalence). Specifically, as the number of renewals increase, partners report less positive behaviors in their relationship, and more negatives, such as unresolved conflict and aggression. Also, as the number of renewals increases so does relationship uncertainty.

In summary, communication, time together, and sexual activity are all good predictors of relationship stability. In order for conflict to predict well, it needs to specify specific areas of conflict, rather than trying to capture a general level of conflict in a relationship. Also, breaking up and getting back together (on-again/off-again relationships) are more likely to breakup.
4.2.3.3 Patterns

In general, most relationship research has focused on similarities between partners (Surra 1990; Cate and Lloyd 1992). The hypothesis that “similarity breeds attraction, progress toward deeper involvement, and the decision to wed is pervasive in all of the disciplines…and has received considerable support,” while the idea that opposites attract has received less attention, but does still appear (Surra et al. 2006).

In addressing compatibility, Houts, Robins, and Huston (1996) suggest that couple similarity can be of two types. Similar social characteristics or individuals that have common characteristics need to be distinguished from the choosing of a partner based on preferences for similarity. Similarity in leisure interests and role preferences should influence premarital mate selection if partners truly engaged in an evaluation of one another, but this type of conscious selection is probably not common. The idea of social structure suggests that people are naturally grouped with others that are similar to them (field of eligible partners), regardless of whether they are actively seeking homogamy. Houts et al. (1996) find that social, leisure, and role homogamy influence relationships, but couples who are similar in demography do not typically share the same leisure and role preferences.

When looking at couple outcomes, similarity/compatibility hypotheses are common. The proposed importance of dyadic similarity suggests that couples who are different in important ways may be more likely to break up. Most studies have used individual-level comparisons of similarity (Surra 1990; Cate and Lloyd 1992), rather than calculating couple mean and difference scores (e.g., mean age of the couple and the difference in age between the partners).
In general, dyadic factors seem to be most predictive of relationship dissolution. Patterns of dyadic influence have frequently supported the idea of similarity between partners in a relationship, suggesting that differences between partners should be explored in breakup studies. In particular, the concepts of love and satisfaction, and specific interaction variables such as intimacy, communication, and time together should be included in multivariate models of relationship stability.

4.2.4 External Factors

Social support from family and friends is predictive of greater relationship stability (Meredith and Holman 2001), while disapproval of family and friends leads to dissolution (Dailey et al. 2009).

Interestingly, the perceived reactions of close networks are more influential than actual approval from those networks, suggesting that social networks probably have a more passive influence than direct involvement (Surra and Longstreth 1990; Felmlee 2001). Friendships can even compete with romantic relationships for companionship (Felmlee 2001).

While approval of the relationship by family and friends has been a consistent predictor of relationship stability, there other external influences that matter. For example, things such as the ending of a school year or one partner getting a job in another location often make it difficult to maintain a relationship, or simply make it easier to breakup. "If one is able to attribute the impending breakup to external circumstances, one may be able to avoid some of the ambivalence, embarrassment, and guilt that may be associated with calling a relationship off" (Hill et al. 1976:148). Physical distance can also increase the chances of dissolution (Cameron and Ross 2007; Dailey et al. 2009).
Overall, however, social support from family and friends is probably the most significant external influence on relationship stability.

4.3 Hypotheses

Taking the existing literature into account the following hypotheses will be tested. These hypotheses are discussed in four groups: dyadic, individual, external, and social context characteristics.

4.3.1 Dyadic Similarity

Hypothesis 1. Across all non-dyadic measures, greater differences between partners are expected to predict breakup. For example, it is expected that the greater the age difference between partners, the more likely they will be to break up. Since partner data is available, the difference scores are expected to predict breakup better than couple mean scores.

Dyadic characteristics are not likely to have much variation because couples in serious or engaged relationships are probably on the same page in most of their interaction. For example, while partners in a few relationships might have very different overall satisfaction with the relationship, most partners will have similar satisfaction (whether it is high or low) because the dyadic characteristics involve their partner. If they did not have similar satisfaction with the relationship, they probably would have broken up long before getting serious about a long-term relationship together.
4.3.2 Dyadic Characteristics

Hypothesis 2. Cohabitation decreases the likelihood of breaking up. While the effect of cohabitation on a premarital relationship is not fully known, this hypothesis is expected because most couples do not cohabit unless they are at least seriously dating, and many live together before marrying. While there is evidence that a discussion of marriage or the state of the relationship is rare before moving in together (Sassler 2004), cohabitation is, nevertheless, likely to decrease the chances of breaking up.

Hypothesis 3. High satisfaction in the relationship decreases the chances of breaking up.

Hypothesis 4. In a similar manner, high couple mean scores on measures of love, empathic communication, and talking things over decrease the likelihood of breaking up, but high scores on contempt/defensiveness increase the likelihood of breaking up.

Hypothesis 5. Couples who have a high degree of problems in their relationship are expected to break up. And couples where both individuals feel like their partner wants them to change are expected to dissolve. In other words, the more each partner thinks the other should change, the greater the chance of breakup.

Hypothesis 6. Also, those couples who think their relationship is in trouble, or where only one partner thinks the relationship is in trouble will have higher chances of breaking up.

Hypothesis 7. Finally, if a couple has broken up previously, they are expected to have a higher likelihood of breaking up again. These on-again/off-again relationships (Daley et al. 2009) are not expected to last.
4.3.3 Individual Characteristics

Only a few individual characteristics are expected to be important breakup predictors. The reason is that by the time couples are seriously dating or engaged, they have already had time to decide whether their individual differences are detrimental to a long-term relationship. In other words, couples who have serious differences probably break up before they become serious. However, there are still some individual characteristics that may influence relationship stability.

Hypothesis 8. Higher substance use (alcohol and drugs) will increase the chances of breaking up, especially if there is a big difference in substance use between partners.

Apart from substance abuse, it is not clear is whether individual characteristics such as kindness, extraversion, immaturity, happiness, or materialism contribute to breakups. Based on previous literature (Cate et al. 2002), none of these individual attributes are expected to predict breakup (Hypothesis 9).

4.3.4 External Influences

External influences, especially from family, are not expected to have a major influence on a couple's relationship. This is because, by the time a couple is serious or engaged, their family and friends have had time to get used to their relationship. However, there may be lingering influences if a couple endures the disapproval of their family and friends.

Hypothesis 10. Approval of the relationship by family and friends decreases the chances of a breakup.

Hypothesis 11. Parental divorce increases the likelihood of breaking up, especially if both partners' parents are divorced.
4.3.5 Social Context

A number of socio-demographic measures are expected to influence relationship stability. Some factors should decrease the likelihood of breaking up, especially being older, having children, and being divorced.

Hypothesis 12. Age and the presence of children will have a stabilizing effect on a relationship. If they are getting older or if they have a child, partners might feel obligated to stay together or marry, even if they are not good for each other.

Hypothesis 13. Divorced couples (one or both partners) are also less likely to break up than never-married couples because they probably have fewer concerns about being in an imperfect relationship or getting married. In other words, couples whose partners are divorced may stay together, even though they recognize relationship problems (which could lead to another divorce).

Hypothesis 14. Differences in race or religion increase the chances of dissolution, but no specific race or denomination (if a couple is the same) is expected to have a higher risk of breakup.

4.3.6 Control Variables

There are a few variables that are included in the models for use as controls. These include engagement, length of relationship, education, and income. Being engaged or maintaining a relationship for a long time is obviously related to stability. Education and income do not make sense as predictors of breakup, even as difference variables. Couples of a particular socioeconomic status should not be more likely to break up than those of another, and differences between partners will be minimal because of propinquity in mate selection. In cases where there are big differences between partners
(e.g. income), it is quite likely that the differences are based solely on student status or gender role preferences.

4.3.7 Married

Since the processes of relationship progression and dissolution are different, the measures that are predictive of marriage are expected to be different from those that predict dissolution (Hypothesis 15). For example, the distinguishing characteristics of couples that marry (compared to those that stay together but have not married) will include socioeconomic status since couples usually wait to marry until they have completed college and established careers. Since the focus of this study is on breaking up, no other specific hypotheses are formulated for relationship progression (marriage).

4.4 Method

4.4.1 Sample

The sample consists of 608 heterosexual couples who were either seriously dating (58%) or engaged (42%) at Time 1 (there was only one couple where both partners indicated they were homosexual). At the time of the follow-up survey, 23% of the couples had broken up and 44% were married, and 33% of them had cohabited at some point in their relationship. 78% of the sample respondents are White and another 17% are couples whose partners are different races. The remaining descriptions are from responses at time 1. Approximately 60% of the couples had at least one partner currently enrolled in college, and most of the remaining couples had completed college degrees of some kind (only 6% had associate degrees or lower). Half of the couples had a combined
income of less than $120,000 a year, and only 14% of the sample earns less than $40,000. The sample also consisted of 7% couples with no religious affiliation, and 46% where the partners identified with different religious denominations. 21% of the sample contained couples in which one partner had been divorced. Ninety (15%) of the couples indicated that they were pregnant or had at least one child (together or from a previous relationship). The couples ranged in age from 17 to 55, with a mean age of 27.

4.4.2 Procedure

The data for this study come from the online RELATE survey. Respondents were introduced to the instrument primarily through academic courses, counseling, word-of-mouth, and Internet searching. After couples completed the survey, both partners were contacted about 1 year after they first completed RELATE and asked if they were still in a relationship with the same partner. If they had broken up, they were given a breakup instrument. If they were still with their partner, they were invited to take RELATE a second time. Because the follow-up surveys are different, it is not possible to use longitudinal data to compare couples who broke up with those that were still together. However, it is possible to know whether all of the couples had broken up or were still together at time 2. It is also possible to see which couples got married during that time.

There were some couples who took RELATE more than once, so duplicate cases were removed from the sample. In addition, there are a high number of Latter-day Saint couples who complete the instrument, so only a random sample (20 cases) of these were used to obtain the final sample for the study. Sampling the LDS couples was done in order to make the final sample more approximate to national averages for religious denomination.
Using couples as the unit of analysis provides one improvement over individual data. It is possible to get more precise estimates of relationship measures (Attridge, Berscheid, and Simpson 1995). Since the data were originally collected from individuals, each variable in the study is calculated from the matched partner responses. This means that two couple variables can be constructed from each individual-level variable (the mean of the two partners' responses and the difference between them). Dichotomous responses do not produce both mean and difference scores, but scale variables do. An example of a dichotomous variable is pregnancy or the presence of children. The important couple information is whether or not they are pregnant or already have a child. Variables that are not dichotomous can include measures of level (mean), difference/similarity (difference), and interaction (mean x difference). These new variables are necessary because, in most cases, the influence on a couple’s relationship stability could be attributable to either the mean or the difference score, or a combination of both. For example, age can influence relationship stability if both partners are young and do not want to get too serious. But, a large age difference between the partners may also make them more likely to breakup. If both measures can have predictive power, it is possible that as couples get older their age difference has less of an influence on relationship stability. So, measures of mean, difference, and interaction were created for all independent variables. A detailed discussion of each variable is provided below.

There was very little missing data; mainly because partners usually pay to take the instrument, and have an incentive to complete it (they obtain a relationship report once their responses are matched). In addition, when calculating couple scores, in the few instances where data from only one partner was available, it was possible to use the other
partner's response to estimate the couple score. Thus, most variables had only 1 or 2 missing values, and modes were used to replace missing cells.

Logistic regression is utilized for this study because the dependent variables (broke up and married) are dichotomous. A multinomial logistic regression model (using the categories broke up, still together, and married) was not used because the processes of breaking up and progressing to marriage are different. In other words, the coefficient estimates in a multinomial model will predict group membership, rather than the likelihood of breaking up or marriage occurring. The goal of the two logistic models below is to separate and compare the effects of the predictor variables for the two different processes (breaking up and marrying).

4.5 Measures

4.5.1 Dependent Variables

The primary dependent variable used in this study is a measure of whether a couple is still together at time 2. It is coded 0 for couples who are still together and 1 for those who have broken up.

The other dependent variable in this study is a dichotomous variable that represents couples who were married at time 2 (coded 1) and those who were still dating or engaged (coded 0). There were six missing cases on this variable that were filtered out before analysis was conducted.

In order to estimate a multinomial logistic regression model, the two variables representing couples who broke up or married were used to create a variable for
relationship status at time 2. This variable is coded as follows: 0=broke up, 1=still together, and 2=married.

4.5.2 Independent Variables

4.5.2.1 Dyadic

Cohabitation is the only independent variable that was computed using time 2 information. It is a dichotomous variable that is coded 1 if the couple ever cohabited. It was computed using the female partner's response for marital status at time 1 and 2, in addition to the cohabitation question from the breakup instrument. The marital status question asks: "Which best describes your current marital status?" Response categories range from: 1) Single, never married; 2) Cohabiting, living with your partner in an intimate relation; 3) Married, first marriage; 4) Married but separated; 5) Divorced; 6) Remarried; to 7) Widowed. There are some couples in the sample who may have cohabited before marrying (who also indicated they were single at time 1), but there is no way to identify how many are missing because of this situation. However, this estimated variable is certainly a better cohabitation measure than simply using an indicator of who was cohabiting at time 1.

Satisfaction scores were obtained with the question: "In your relationship, how satisfied are you with the following?" In addition to things like physical intimacy and conflict resolution, the final category is "Your overall relationship with your partner." Only this overall satisfaction score was used for this study, mainly because most of the other concepts were captured with other measures (e.g., love) that are included in the model. The question uses a Likert scale to rate overall satisfaction with partner, with
responses ranging from 1=Very Dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, 3=Neutral, 4=Satisfied, to 5=Very satisfied.

As noted above, various partner interaction issues can be very important in predicting relationship stability. In order to utilize information about partner interaction, scales were created for the following concepts: empathic communication, love, and contempt/defensiveness. The reliability score for each of these scales was 0.83, 0.77, and 0.84, respectively. In addition to these scales, the ability of the couple to simply talk things over was also utilized.

The empathic communication scale is composed of respondents' answers to the following questions (using the scale 1=Never; 2=Rarely; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often; 5=Very Often): "In most matters, I understand what my partner is trying to say," "I understand my partner’s feelings," and "I am able to listen to my partner in an understanding way."

These responses about themselves were combined with their partner’s responses to the same questions (about their partner): "In most matters, my partner understands what I am trying to say," "My partner understands my feelings," and "My partner is able to listen to me in an understanding way." Thus, an average score was created for each partner (combining their own response with their partner's estimation of them). These scores were then summed into partner scales (female partner's empathic communication, and male partner's empathic communication) before computing couple mean and difference variables.

The love scale is comprised of the items "I include my partner in my life," "I find my partner physically attractive," "I admire my partner," and "I show a lot of love toward my partner." The response categories are 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often,
and 5=Very Often. And, like empathic communication, the partner's estimates were averaged with the respondent's scores before creating a scale for each partner.

Contempt/defensiveness is scaled from the following items: "I have no respect for my partner when we are discussing an issue," "When I get upset I can see glaring faults in my partner's personality," "When my partner complains I feel that I have to "ward off" these attacks," and "I feel unfairly attacked when my partner is being negative." These questions used the same response categories for love and empathic communication. The same method described for the empathic communication scale was used before creating couple variables.

In order to use more information about a couple's communication, a variable about the couple's ability to just talk things over with one another was calculated. Like empathic communication, it averages individual responses with their partners' estimates for them. The combined questions are: "I sit down with my partner and just talk things over" and the partner's response to the question "My partner sits down with me just to talk things over." The same scale was used (1=Never; 2=Rarely; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often; 5=Very Often).

Desire for one's partner to change was calculated by combining responses from the individual's response to the question "There are many things about me that my partner would like to change" with their partner's response to the question "There are many things about my partner I would like to change." These questions used the scale: 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=It Depends; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree. Thus, the couple variables represent the overall degree to which the partners want each other to change, and the difference between their responses.
In order to get at relationship uncertainty, variables about thinking the relationship is in trouble and the number of previous breakups (with the current partner) were created. These questions are worded "How often have you thought your relationship (or marriage) might be in trouble?" and "How often have you broken up or separated and then gotten back together?" Responses were coded 0=Never; 1=Rarely; 2=Sometimes; 3=Often; 4=Very Often. Couple means were calculated for each, but a difference variable was not calculated for number of previous breakups.

Finally, the degree of relationship problems was computed by using the following question: "How often have the following areas been a problem in your relationship:
Financial matters, Communication, Having children, Rearing children, Intimacy/Sexuality, Parents/In-laws, Roles (Who does what), Weight, Who’s in charge, Time spent together, and Substance/chemical abuse. Respondents used the scale 1=Never; 2=Rarely; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often; 5=Very Often. The responses to all of the questions were summed, and then a couple mean variable was calculated.

4.5.2.2 Individual

The individual characteristics in this study include materialism, substance use, kindness, extraversion, maturity, and happiness. Materialism is measured using the statement “It is important to me that my family has the finer things in life,” which respondents rate using a Likert scale in which 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=It Depends; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree.

Respondents were also asked: "How frequently do you use the following? Alcohol and Illegal drugs" (separate questions), as well as estimating their partner's
scores. Alcohol and illegal drug use were then calculated for each partner as the average of the respondents’ reported personal use and their partner’s estimate of their substance use. The alcohol and drug variables were then summed to create substance use variables for each partner. These variables were then used to create couple mean and difference scores for substance use (including both alcohol and drugs).

Kindness, extraversion, immaturity, and unhappiness are all scale variables with multiple components (reliability for the scales is 0.78, 0.85, 0.72, and 0.89 respectively). Each variable comes from questions in which respondents rate themselves and their partners using the scale 1=Never; 2=Rarely; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often; 5=Very Often. The question is worded: "How much do these words or phrases describe you/your partner?" Considerate, loving, kind, friendly (Kindness scale); talkative, quiet, shy, outgoing (Extraversion scale); fight with others/ lose temper, act immature, easily irritated or mad (Immaturity scale); sad and blue, feel hopeless, depressed (Unhappiness scale). Reverse coding was used as necessary for each variable to be used in the scale. Average scores were calculated for each partner using the individual response and the partner’s estimate, and the variables were then summed to create scale variables for each partner. These scaled variables were they used to create couple mean and difference variables for the analysis.

4.5.2.3 External

Parental divorce was computed using dummy variables for whether each partner's parents had divorced. These dummy variables were then summed to create a variable for
parental divorce (coded 0=neither partner’s parents divorced, 1=one partner’s parents divorced, 2=both partners’ parents divorced).

Relationship approval is a scale constructed using the respondents’ indications of the degree to which their father, mother, and friends approve of their current relationship. They used the response categories 1=Not at all; 2=Somewhat; 3=Mostly; 4=Entirely, and 5=Don't Know. This scale has a reliability of 0.77 for internal consistency. Respondents could have replied "Don't Know" in cases where they only had one parent, or where they had never introduced their partner to their friends. Because the category "Don't Know" is present, this variable contained more missing data than other variables. The missing data did not affect the couple mean variable because an average could be calculated using just 2 variables (e.g. mother and friends). The missing values (16 cases) on the couple difference variable were imputed using the median (0.33).

4.5.2.4 Social Context

A variable for partner divorce was calculated by recoding partner variables so that 0=never divorced, 1=one divorce, etc. These variables were then used to create a mean and difference score for each couple.

Children/pregnancy is a dichotomous variable coded 1 if the female partner reported being pregnant or if the couple has a child together/from a previous relationship, and 0 if the couple is childless and not pregnant.

Couple age was calculated by averaging the partners' ages, but there were 56 cases with missing female partner age, and 58 cases with missing male partner age. In order to impute missing ages, I calculated an age difference variable and found the mode
to be 1. On cases where only one partner’s age was available, I estimated the other partner’s age using this information (females were, on average, 1 year younger than their partners). If neither partner’s age was available, I imputed the median age (23 for female and 24 for male).

Couples’ race is coded into dummy variables “Non White” and “Different Races” (partners are different races) with White as the reference group.

Religion is coded into a dichotomous variable for couple religious difference, where partners identify with different denominations. A dummy variable was created for couples who are not religious. Religiosity variables were not computed because there is no reason to believe that higher religiosity leads to more stable premarital relationships (as a check, the correlations between the broke up variable and religiosity variables were analyzed and there was no significant correlation between them). Marital relationship stability might be influenced by religiosity, but premarital relationship stability is not likely to be.

4.5.2.5 Control Variables

Some variables are included in the model, but are not expected to predict relationships that breakup with those that stay together. These include length of relationship, education, and income. And while some engaged couples may break up, their dissolution is expected to be caused by other factors, not simply being engaged. Also, engagement is expected to have a nearly perfect linear relationship to marriage at time 2, so it is excluded from the married model.
Engaged is a dichotomous variable, with serious daters being the reference category. The length of relationship question is worded: "How long have you and your partner been dating?" with time ranges "0 to 3 months," "4 to 6 months," "6 to 12 months," "1 to 2 years," "3-5 years," "6-10 years," "11-20 years," and "More than 20 years." All responses were recoded into months. Both length of relationship and relationship status (engaged) were taken from the female partner's response with the assumption that women are more likely to track changes in their relationships.

In this study, SES controls include education and income. The RELATE instrument does not include a question regarding career type. Education level is computed as the mean level of education the couple has attained. Another variable was created for the difference between the partners’ education levels. The education question is coded 1 = “Less than high school;” 2 = “High school equivalency (GED);” 3 = “High school diploma;” 4 = “Some college, not currently enrolled;” 5 = “Some college, currently enrolled;” 6 = “Associate’s degree;” 7 = “Bachelor’s degree;” 8 = “Graduate or professional degree not completed;” and 9 = Graduate or professional degree completed.”

Income is similar in that both total income (sum of partners’ incomes) and the difference between the partners’ incomes were computed. Income is coded 1 = “None;” 2 = “Under $5,000;” 3 = “$5,000-14,999;” 4 = “$15,000-$24,999;” 5 = “$25,000-$29,999;” 6 = “$30,000-$39,999;” 7 = “$40,000-$49,999;” 8 = “$50,000-$74,999;” 9 = “$75,000-$100,000;” and 10 = “Over $100,000.” Even though some partners may still receive financial support from their parents, only the partners’ individual incomes are used to calculate couple income because it is not possible to determine who is receiving support from their parents and who is not.
4.6 Results

4.6.1 Bivariate Analyses

Descriptive statistics for all variables in the study are listed in Table 4.1. Bivariate correlations among all variables used in the regression models are found in Table 4.2. Zero-order logistic regression analyses were run using the dependent variable "broken up" and all independent variables. A summary of all zero-order regressions can be found in Appendix B. Most of the couple mean independent variables are significant predictors of breakup, but a few are not.

Contrary to hypothesis 1, many of the difference variables are not significant predictors of breakup. Age difference does not predict breakup, and neither do differences in number of divorces or feelings that the relationship is in trouble. Individual differences in kindness, extraversion, maturity, happiness, and materialism are also not predictive of breakups.

As expected, couple differences on many of the dyadic variables are not significant predictors of breakup. This is likely due to the fact that there is very little variation on most of the dyadic difference variables. These include differences in contempt/defensiveness, talking things over, and feeling like the relationship is in trouble.

In addition to these difference scores, there are two couple mean variables that are not good predictors of breakup. These are the divorce variables. Specifically, neither the mean number of divorces that the couple had previously, nor their parents' divorces have any influence on whether or not a couple broke up (contrary to hypotheses 11 and 13). Most of the other couple mean scores (not including dummy variables, e.g. nonwhite) are significant predictors of breakup.
### TABLE 4.1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF VARIABLES
DESCRIBING COUPLES’ ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent Variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broke up with time 1 partner</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married at time 2</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.46</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dyadic Variables</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabited</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall satisfaction</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall satisfaction - difference</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathic communication</td>
<td>12.43</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathic communication - difference</td>
<td>12.30</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>17.99</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
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<td>1.08</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contempt/ defensiveness</td>
<td>8.25</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17.50</td>
</tr>
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<td>2.57</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17.50</td>
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<td>Talk things over</td>
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<td>0.67</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Talk things over - difference</td>
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<td>Thought relationship in trouble</td>
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<td>Frequency of breakups</td>
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<td>Relationship problems degree</td>
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<td>Substance use</td>
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<td>0.80</td>
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<td>Kindness</td>
<td>17.68</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>12.50</td>
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<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>14.13</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>8.50</td>
<td>18.50</td>
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<td>2.11</td>
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<td>1.37</td>
<td>3.25</td>
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<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Immaturity</td>
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<td>1.37</td>
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<td>Sadness</td>
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<td>3.25</td>
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<td>1.35</td>
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<td>External Variables</td>
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<td>Parents divorced</td>
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<td>0.59</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approval of parents and friends</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>1.50</td>
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<td>Approval of parents and friends - difference</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.51</td>
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<td>Social Context Variables</td>
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<tr>
<td>Different races</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.37</td>
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<td>Different religions</td>
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<td>No religious affiliation</td>
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<td>0.22</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have child/ pregnant</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.33</td>
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<td>Not white</td>
<td>0.20</td>
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<td>Age</td>
<td>26.40</td>
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SOURCE: RELATE Institute
NOTE: n=608
### CORRELATIONS OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLES FOR LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS PREDICTING BREAKUP AND MARRIAGE

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<td>Frequency of breakups</td>
<td>Relationship problems degree</td>
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<td>Contempt/defensiveness</td>
<td>Talk things over</td>
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<td>-0.362**</td>
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</table>

SOURCE: RELATE Institute
*p<.05,  **p<.01
In every model, odds ratio coefficients are presented. An odds ratio of 1 indicates 1 to 1 odds, or 50% probability, that a couple is broken up or married. Odds ratios higher than 1 represent higher odds of being dissolved or married, while odds ratios lower than one (approaching zero) indicate lower odds. Thus, each model shows the odds that couples are either broken up or married compared to still being together.

4.6.1.1 Dyadic

In support of hypothesis 2, cohabitation significantly decreases the likelihood of breaking up. If couples ever cohabited, their odds of breaking up are 0.32 times lower than couples who never cohabit (in other words, cohabiters have 68% lower odds of breaking up than those who never cohabit). There is also support for hypotheses 3 and 4; higher levels of satisfaction, love, empathic communication, and talking things over significantly decrease the likelihood of breaking up, but higher levels of defensiveness/contempt increase the likelihood of breaking up.

There is support for hypothesis 5, as both a higher degree of relationship problems and greater desire for each other to change increase the likelihood that a couple will break up. In these instances, a one unit change in degree of relationship problems will increase the odds of breaking up by 1.05 times, and a one unit change in the desire for each other to change means that the odds are 1.87 times higher.

Hypothesis 6 is confirmed because the more a couple thinks their relationship is in trouble, the more likely they are to break up (odds are 2.35 times higher for each one unit increase in thinking the relationship is in trouble). As stated above, there is no
support for the hypothesis that differences in partners feeling that the relationship is in
trouble increase the likelihood of breaking up.

Finally, the zero-order results confirm hypothesis 7. On-off couples (who break up and get back together) have a significantly higher likelihood of breaking up than couples who have never renewed their relationship. In this case the odds of breaking up are approximately 1.97 times higher for each previous breakup than couples with no renewals.

4.6.1.2 Individual characteristics

Hypothesis 8 is confirmed. Higher levels of substance use or differences in the level of substance use between partners increase the likelihood of breaking up. As discussed below, there is an interaction effect between these two variables. As substance use increases, and as one partner becomes the primary user, the likelihood of them breaking up increases significantly.

All of the other individual characteristics are significant predictors of breakup, which is in opposition to hypothesis 9. Specifically, higher levels of extraversion, immaturity, sadness, and materialism all increase the likelihood of breaking up. Higher levels of individual kindness, however, decrease a couple's chances of breaking up. However, individual characteristics tend to lose their predictive capabilities when added to multivariate models of premarital relationship stability, which results are reported below.
4.6.1.3 External Influences

There is strong support for hypothesis 10. Greater approval of the relationship by parents and friends means a couple is much less likely to break up than couples whose significant others disapprove of the relationship. Specifically, a one unit increase in approval from parents and friends means the odds of breaking up decrease by 0.29 times. In this sense, it is rare for a couple to maintain their relationship in the face of opposition to it from their family and friends.

As noted above, hypothesis 11 is rejected since parental divorce has no effect on whether a couple stays together.

4.6.1.4 Social Context

Hypothesis 12 is only partially confirmed. Age does have stabilizing effect on a relationship, but, surprisingly, having a child does not. Older couples are slightly less likely to breakup than younger couples, but the effect is very small. In contrast, couples who get pregnant or have a child (their own or from a previous relationship) are just as likely to break up as couples who do not have a child.

There is no support for hypothesis 13 since divorce (of either or both partners) is not a significant predictor of breakup.

With race and religion, only the difference variables were significant. Specifically, couples with no religion and non-white couples are no more likely to break up than couples who have the same or different religious affiliations, or couples where both partners are white or of different races. These results provide good support of hypothesis 14. Differences in race and religion increase the chances of breaking up.
Specifically, mixed-race couples have 1.6 times higher odds of breaking up than couples of the same race, and those with different religions also have 1.6 times higher odds of breaking up. In other words, if partners are of different races or religions, the odds of breaking up increase by 60%, respectively.

4.6.2 Multivariate Analyses

4.6.2.1 Paired Logistic Regression

In order to further test hypothesis 1, the dependent variable "broke up" was regressed on each pair of couple mean and difference variables. For example, I regressed "broke up" on the couple's mean level of love and partners' love difference (two independent variables in the model) to see if they both maintained predictive power. Surprisingly, almost none of the difference variables are important predictors once the couple mean score is included in the regression model. Specifically, the difference scores for love, empathic communication, overall satisfaction, approval of parents and friends, and desire for partner to change were no longer significant predictors of breakup. Results of these zero-order regression tests are shown in Appendix C.

There was only one instance where both the mean and difference variables maintained predictive power when included in the same model. This is with substance use, even though the difference in partners' substance use was the most powerful predictor. The interaction of these two variables is significant. As the level of substance use within the relationship increases, and as one partner uses alcohol or illegal drugs much more than the other, the likelihood of breaking up is intensified. Because this was the only instance where both mean and difference scores are simultaneously significant.
breakup predictors, and since substance use is the only significant interaction effect (interaction effects were tested for all other paired variables, but none was significant), neither the couple substance use mean or interaction effect variable is included in the multivariate models.

After regressing "broke up" on the paired mean and difference variables, the only difference scores that retained predictive power are those representing race, religion, and substance use (as discussed above). In sum, there was no support for hypothesis 1. Almost none of the difference scores are significant predictors of relationship dissolution.

It is important to note that odds ratios in multivariate logistic regression models are multiplicative, rather than additive. That is, odds ratio coefficients close to 1 indicate that an independent variable has no effect on the dependent variable (because any number multiplied by 1 is still the same number). So, a coefficient of 1 in logistic regression is similar to a coefficient of 0 in OLS regression (in which coefficients are added together). When many different predictor variables are included in the same model, each of the exponentiated coefficients is multiplied by the value on the variable, and then also multiplied by (not added to) other predictor values times their coefficients, and multiplied by the exponentiated constant to obtain the odds of breaking up or marrying.

4.6.2.2 Breakup Model

Utilizing the information gained from the zero-order and paired (mean and difference) logistic regressions enables the construction of a more simplified model of breakups. For the final breakup model, all the couple difference variables were dropped, as well as any variables that were not predictive of breakups at the zero-order level. This
model can be seen in Table 4.3. Once all the independent variables are added to the model, the ability to predict breakup is improved dramatically.

One of the first things to note in Table 4.3 is that, while all were significant predictors of breakup at the zero-order level, very few of the independent variables maintain their predictive power when constrained in a multivariate model. In fact, only the following five variables remain significant predictors of couples that break up (not including control variables): cohabitation, overall satisfaction with partner, religious difference, substance use difference, and extraversion.

It is somewhat surprising that only a handful of the independent variables retain their predictive power in the multivariate model. In fact, none of the other variables even approach significance. This suggests that, at least for this sample, there are only a few main reasons why couples break up.

With strong support for hypotheses 2 and 3, it appears that cohabitation and high satisfaction significantly decrease the likelihood that a couple will break up. If a couple ever cohabited, their odds of breaking up decrease by 0.25 times (or are 75% lower) over couples who do not cohabit. Likewise, with overall satisfaction with partner, a one unit increase in satisfaction decreases the odds of breaking up by 0.51 times (odds reduced by about half). These are the only two dyadic variables that are good predictors of breakup in the full model.
TABLE 4.3
LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODEL
SHOWING ODDS OF COUPLE BREAKUP BY TIME 2

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<th>Exp(B)</th>
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<td>(.14)</td>
<td>1.52**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>(.16)</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall satisfaction</td>
<td>-0.66</td>
<td>(.39)</td>
<td>0.52*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval of family &amp; friends</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>(.31)</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire partner to change</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>(.25)</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought relationship in trouble</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>(.26)</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of breakups</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>(.19)</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship problems - degree</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>(.04)</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>(.15)</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathic communication</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>(.15)</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contempt/ defensiveness</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>(.08)</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk things over</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>(.27)</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>(.14)</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>(.08)</td>
<td>1.32**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immaturity</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>(.13)</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>(.11)</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>(3.06)</td>
<td>8.13</td>
</tr>
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</table>

N = 608
R squared (Cox & Snell) = .260

SOURCE: RELATE Institute
*p<.05, **p<.01
Religious difference is the only social context variable to remain significant in the full model. Partners who have different religions have 1.66 times higher odds of breaking up than couples who share the same religion or have no religion. This provides some support of hypothesis 14, but race difference does not appear to have a significant influence on whether or not couples break up.

Perhaps most surprising in the full model, two individual characteristics are significant predictors of dissolution. Both the partner difference in alcohol/drug use and the individual characteristic of extraversion have an important influence on relationship stability. Substance use has been discussed above, and it is no surprise that a greater difference between partners in their frequency of substance use leads to a higher likelihood of breaking up (and, as noted above, this difference becomes more destructive with higher levels of substance use).

What is most surprising with the individual characteristics is the variable extraversion. The more extroverted a couple is, the more likely they are to break up. For every one unit increase in a couple's extraversion score, the odds that they will break up increase by 1.3 times (or a 30% increase in the odds of breaking up). This suggests that couples who are more outgoing and social are more likely to break up. While the full model does provide some support of hypothesis 9 (apart from extraversion, none of the individual variables is a significant predictor when controlling for other variables), extraversion remains a good predictor of dissolution. One interpretation of this finding is that couples who regularly interact with others and get involved in social events are more likely to meet alternative partners to whom they are attracted. Another possibility (that could go along with finding attractive alternatives to the relationship) is that extroverted
individually are less likely to want to be tied down. They may find independence is more attractive than staying in a relationship. In this sense, the significance of extraversion for breakups seems to provide some support of the attractive alternatives component of Rusbult's investment theory, as extroverted couples may find it difficult to pass up attractive alternatives to their relationship (whether they be potential partners or social freedom).

Another surprising result in the full model is that the interaction scales for love, empathic communication, and defensiveness/contempt have no significant influence on the likelihood of breaking up (which is contrary to hypothesis 4). The dyadic variables talking things over, desiring each other to change, and feeling that the relationship is in trouble are also not important in predicting breakup.

The control variables for engaged and length of relationship were significant predictors in the full model. This is not surprising since couples who are engaged are planning to marry and make a long-term commitment. While broken engagements do occur, they are rare. The odds of an engaged couple breaking up are 0.31 times lower (a 69% reduction) than couples who are seriously dating. Length of relationship has similar effects. Basically, the longer a couple has been dating, the less likely they are to break up.

While all of the factors are included in the multivariate model to see which are still predictive of breakups while controlling for the others, it is likely that they do not all influence a relationship at the same time. In other words, there may be some support here for different breakup types. Many of the predictors are dependent upon the stage of the
relationship. For example, it is not likely that a couple with partners of different religions and low satisfaction would also be cohabiting and engaged.

Since engagement, cohabitation, and length of relationship are all related to the longevity of the relationship, they are not necessarily related to breakup types. For example, if a couple that had only been dating for a short time decided to get engaged and move in together, they might not be less likely to break up (as the model would indicate). Instead the other important predictive factors would be most relevant in the early stages of their relationship.

Setting aside the predictive factors associated with couple longevity, the remaining significant predictors of breakup are a difference in partners’ religions, a difference in substance use, low overall satisfaction, and extraversion. Interestingly, these all fit nicely into the breakup types proposed by Loyer-Carlson and Walker (1990). Having different religions or low overall satisfaction would suggest a relationship problem breakup. Difference in substance use involves an undesirable partner trait, and would suggest a disposition breakup. Extraversion suggests that partners in the relationship are very social and might not want to remain tied down by one relationship, which means they would qualify as an independence breakup.

4.6.2.3 Married Model

For comparative purposes, the same group of independent variables is used to predict which couples get married vs. those who simply stay together. In order to conduct this regression, any couples who had broken up were dropped from the sample, leaving 470 couples. The same independent variables were used to predict marriage
using zero-order logistic regression analysis. The results suggest that there are four additional variables which might be good predictors of marriage: age difference, parental divorce, difference in partner divorce, and no religion. However, when these variables are included in a model with the other independent variables (as used in the final breakup model) none of them is significant. Because they did not remain predictive of marriage in the full model, they were left out of the final marriage model. In addition, the engaged variable is excluded from the final marriage model because more than 92% of the engaged couples ended up marrying (thus creating a nearly perfect correlation, and significantly altering the coefficients of the remaining predictors). Thus, the logistic regression model predicting marriage (with the reference group of couples who are still together) includes the same group of variables as the broke up model, but without the control for engaged. The resulting model is shown in Table 4.4.

In predicting who will marry, cohabitation, age, income, approval of parents and friends, kindness, and materialism are all significant. Two other variables approached significance (p<.10): substance use and degree of problems. As discussed above, this model provides support for hypothesis 15. Comparing these two models (Tables 4.2 and 4.3) provides evidence that progression to marriage is a different process than breaking up. The only variable that is a significant predictor in both the breakup and marriage models is cohabitation; the rest of the predictors are different.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohabited</td>
<td>-0.89</td>
<td>(.29)</td>
<td>0.41**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of relationship in months</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>(.01)</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>(.03)</td>
<td>1.07*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race - difference</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>(.37)</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have child/ pregnant</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>(.46)</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>(.11)</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income total</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>(.09)</td>
<td>1.49**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion - difference</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>(.27)</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance use - different</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
<td>(.19)</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism</td>
<td>-0.85</td>
<td>(.18)</td>
<td>0.43**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall satisfaction</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>(.40)</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval of family &amp; friends</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>(.36)</td>
<td>3.70**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire partner to change</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>(.28)</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought relationship in trouble</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>(.26)</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of breakups</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>(.23)</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship problems - degree</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>(.04)</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>(.17)</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathic communication</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>(.16)</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contempt/ defensiveness</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>(.09)</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk things over</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>(.30)</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>(.15)</td>
<td>0.68*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>(.08)</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immaturity</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>(.14)</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>(.12)</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-4.55</td>
<td>(3.43)</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N 470
R squared (Cox & Snell) .365

SOURCE: RELATE Institute
*p<.05,  **p<.01
When predicting breakup, cohabitation decreased the likelihood of breaking up. In contrast, cohabitation reduces the likelihood that a couple will marry. Specifically, if a couple cohabits, the odds that they will be married at time 2 are 0.41 times lower than couples who do not cohabit (a 59% reduction in odds of marriage). This finding is in harmony with existing cohabitation literature (Sassler, 2004; Avellar and Smock 2005). In some sense, cohabitation is a way of delaying marriage, or simply taking advantage of a way to reduce expenses while maintaining a committed relationship. So, while some of the cohabitators in the sample may still marry, they have, at a minimum, delayed it for a year. In short, once a couple begins living together, they are more likely to break up rather than marry.

Two of the most interesting predictors of marriage involve finances. First, a couple's total income is an important predictor of marriage. This is expected since couples usually wait to marry until they have finished school and established careers. However, the materialism variable is also a significant predictor of marriage. This suggests that individuals who desire that their family have "the finer things in life" are less likely to be married. This finding also goes along with the idea of establishing a career before marrying. It seems that couples who are more concerned about having nice things are less likely to get married. It is likely that materialistic couples are more likely to wait to marry until they achieve a certain salary or feel financially secure.

Along similar lines as income, age is a significant predictor of marriage. As couples delay marriage until they have completed school and established careers, their age at marriage rises. There is support for this idea in Table 4.3. Older couples are more likely to be married at time 2 than younger couples. For each year increase in a couple's
mean age, the odds that they are married increase by 1.07 times. While not a huge influence, it is still significant.

One of the major influences on whether or not a couple marries is the approval of parents and friends. For every one unit increase in the mean approval a couple receives from their parents and friends, their odds of being married are 3.70 times higher (or 270% higher odds). This suggests that approval of family and friends is crucial for marriage. This is probably because marriage involves the joining of families, in addition to individuals seeking their friends' opinions regarding their unions.

Kindness is the final significant predictor of marriage in the full model. It is the only individual-level measure that is predictive of marriage. Surprisingly, though, it has a negative influence on the odds of marrying. For every one unit increase in the couple's mean kindness score, the odds of their later marrying decrease by 0.68 times (a 32% reduction in the odds of marriage). There is really no reason to expect this outcome, especially considering that the individual scores for kindness are taken from time 1. It seems that kind individuals are less likely to marry. Perhaps kind people are simply more careful in deciding who to marry.

4.6.3 Multinomial Model

While the processes of dissolution and marriage are different, it might be useful to run a multinomial logistic regression model as a check on the results obtained above. The dependent variable for this model has three groups from the follow-up question about relationship status: 1) broke up, 2) still together, and 3) married. The predictors should not vary much with the multinomial model because one part of the model is estimating the same two-group comparison as the married model (married vs. still
together). In this sense, the only change with the multinomial model is that the couples who broke up are compared to the reference group, couples that are still together, without including the married couples (who are a separate group). The results of the multinomial logistic regression model are presented in Table 4.5. The reference group is couples who are still together but not married.

The results of the multinomial model with time 2 relationship status as the dependent variable are very similar to the logistic regression models discussed above. There are a few surprises, however.

First, it is possible to see the effect of engagement on both group comparisons. Engagement significantly increases the likelihood of marrying (as opposed to just continuing to date), but, contrary to the finding in the breakup model, engagement increases the likelihood of breaking up. This shows the importance of conducting the two logistic models rather than only using a multinomial logistic model. In the multinomial model, when only comparing those who broke up with those who are still together (but not married) engagement increases the likelihood of breaking up, which suggests that if engaged couples do not marry within about one year of taking RELATE the first time, they are more likely to break up than still be engaged.

Cohabitation shows the same effects as in the previous logistic models. Couples who cohabit are less likely to break up or marry; they are most likely to still be dating. Total income also has the same results. Higher incomes mean that couples are much more likely to be married instead of still dating, but it does not make a couple more likely to break up.
### Table 4.5

**Multinomial Logistic Regression Model**

**Showing Odds of Couple Breakup or Marriage by Time 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship status at time 2</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 Broke Up</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Still together</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Married</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pseudo R-Square (Cox & Snell)**

0.50

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship status at time 2</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 Broke Up</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged at time 1</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>2.25**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabited</td>
<td>-1.82</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.16**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of relationship in months</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.99*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race - difference</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have child/ pregnant</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income total</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion - difference</td>
<td>0.18</td>
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<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance use - different</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism</td>
<td>-0.30</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.74*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall satisfaction</td>
<td>-0.78</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.46*</td>
</tr>
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<td>0.29</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire partner to change</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought relationship in trouble</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>1.84**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of breakups</td>
<td>0.25</td>
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<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship problems - degree</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
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<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
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<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.86</td>
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<td>Empathic communication</td>
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<td>0.15</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contempt/ defensiveness</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk things over</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindness</td>
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<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
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<td>0.08</td>
<td>1.30**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immaturity</td>
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<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Married</td>
<td>Intercept</td>
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<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged at time 1</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabited</td>
<td>-1.46</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of relationship in months</td>
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<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>0.03</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.41</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>0.11</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income total</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>1.19**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion - difference</td>
<td>-0.85</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.43**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance use - different</td>
<td>-0.66</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.52**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.51**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall satisfaction</td>
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<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval of family &amp; friends</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>1.87**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire partner to change</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought relationship in trouble</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of breakups</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship problems - degree</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathic communication</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contempt/defensiveness</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk things over</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.75**</td>
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<td>Extroversion</td>
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<td>0.07</td>
<td>1.15**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immaturity</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.70**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: RELATE Institute
NOTE: The reference group is 1 Still Together
*p<.05,  **p<.01
Somewhat related to income, materialism (or desiring one's family to have the finer things in life) is still a good predictor of who will marry, but also of which couples break up. Higher scores on materialism mean a couple's odds of marrying decrease, but it also means they are less likely to break up. It is possible that remaining in a relationship makes people better off financially because they can share resources (especially if they are cohabiting).

The findings for satisfaction and approval are the same between all the models. Higher satisfaction makes couples much more likely to continue dating instead of breaking up, but does not increase the odds that a couple will marry. In contrast, higher approval of parents and friends predicts that couples will marry, but does not protect against breaking up.

Difference in substance use is still a good predictor of who marries, and approaches significance as a predictor of who breaks up (as compared to couples who are still together). The finding here is that a higher difference between partners in their level of substance use decreases the chances that a couple will be married, and a higher difference may also influence a couple to breakup.

The effects of race and religious differences on relationship status change somewhat in the multinomial model. In particular, differences in race and religion are no longer predictive of couples who break up. And only a difference in religious affiliation is an important predictor of which couples are married. Having different religions decreases the odds of a couple being married by 0.43 times (or a 57% reduction in the odds of marrying compared to couples who are still together).
Feeling like the relationship is in trouble is only a good predictor of which couples will break up, but has no effect on who will marry. Higher troubled feelings predict higher odds of breaking up. Interestingly, a higher degree of relationship problems makes couples less likely to break up (although it only approaches significance). If this is the case, it is likely due to the fact that every couple experiences problems in their relationship and those with extreme problems probably broke up before ever taking RELATE.

Perhaps most surprising in the multinomial model is the findings regarding individual characteristics. Three of the individual characteristics are significant predictors of marriage. Kindness (as a couple) still reduces the odds that a couple will marry, while having no effect on who will break up. A higher level of extraversion still increases the likelihood of breaking up, but it also increases the likelihood of marrying. Finally, a higher level of immaturity decreases the odds that a couple will marry. While individual characteristics are supposed to be good predictors of dissolution, in this model they are good predictors of relationship progression.

4.7 Discussion

The models suggest that there are significant differences in the processes of breaking up and progression to marriage. Thus, hypothesis 15 is confirmed. Relationship dissolution seems to occur primarily because of dissatisfaction with the relationship and some individual characteristics of the partners, especially extraversion and differences in religious affiliation and substance use. Relationship progression to marriage, on the other hand, is best predicted by social-context and external influences,
especially age, financial considerations (income and materialism), and approval of the relationship by significant others (parents and friends). Cohabitation affects both processes, as couples who live together are less likely to break up but also less likely to marry. These findings provide some support for the conclusion that relationship progression is influenced most by dyadic factors, while dissolution tends to be explained by individual and social context factors. However, for a couple to decide to marry, some external influences must also be supportive of their relationship, especially in receiving approval from family and friends.

Hypothesis 1 is rejected. The couple difference variables were not better predictors of breakup than the couple mean scores. While partner differences do matter in two instances (religion and substance use), the mean couple score had the most influence in every case. This could be due to the fact that the couple mean partially accounts for the difference between partners on a variable. If both partners indicate a low or high score, then their mean score will also be low or high, but if their scores are quite different, their mean score will likely be somewhere in the middle (neither low nor high).

The only significant predictor of both breakups and marriages is cohabitation. The influence of cohabitation on a relationship should not be underestimated. Confirming hypothesis 2, couples who move in together have a lower likelihood of breaking up. But, cohabiters also have a lower likelihood of marrying. Cohabitation essentially delays relationship change; cohabiting couples neither break up nor progress.

Overall relationship satisfaction is also an important influence on relationship stability. With support from the models, hypothesis 3 is confirmed. Satisfaction does significantly decrease the likelihood of breaking up. Hypotheses 4 through 7, however,
have little support, as only the zero-order regressions show any influence on the odds of breaking up. Thus, the only dyadic characteristics that are important in predicting breakup are cohabitation and satisfaction.

With individual characteristics, hypothesis 8 is confirmed. Substance use increases the likelihood of breaking up, especially if there is a difference in use between the partners. There is quite good support for hypothesis 9, although extraversion emerges as an important predictor of dissolution. As mentioned above, it is possible that extroverted couples (who are outgoing and social) encounter attractive alternatives to their relationship more often, and thus might be tempted to break up to date someone new or simply feel like they can socialize without the limitations of a relationship.

There is no support for hypothesis 10, since low approval of the relationship by parents and friends does not predict breakup. Relationship approval matters when people decide to marry, though. There is also no support for hypotheses 11 and 13. Neither the partners' previous divorces nor their parents' divorce has any real influence on their relationship stability.

As for the social context variables, there is no support for hypothesis 12. Neither age nor the presence of children has a stabilizing effect on a relationship when other factors are taken into account. But, there is good support of hypothesis 14 since no specific religion or race is more likely to break up, but having different religions does increase the chances that a couple will break up. Differences in race, however, have no effect on relationship stability.

The overall findings from this study could be particularly useful for people who are interested in finding a person to marry. In the first place, it is important to know what
to avoid so that breakup likelihood is reduced. The results suggest that religious differences are not conducive to relationship permanence. Religion can have a major influence on how a person lives their life, and having different denominations may complicate seemingly common aspects of life, including sexuality, Sabbath day observance, financial well-being (especially tithing), and more. If a person is interested in finding a partner to marry, it is probably best for him/her to seek someone of a similar denomination. Drug and alcohol use has a similar affect on relationship stability, so a person would benefit from knowing how much their partner drinks or whether they ever abuse drugs.

Aside from those differences, however, it is potentially important for a social person to avoid forming a relationship with another highly social person. If both partners in a relationship are extroverted, they may become restless in a relationship. It would be better for a person who knows he/she is socially outgoing to find someone who is more introverted. While they may still be restless in any exclusive relationship, their more introverted partner may help them find some stability. On the other hand, forming a stable relationship that has the potential for marriage may mean finding someone who is happy with a small circle of friends or who does not need to go out every weekend. In general, the results suggest that there may be some people who are less marriageable because of their substance use or because they do not want to be in an exclusive relationship.

In addition to avoiding breakup, however, there are a few things a person should remember when seeking a marital partner. First, while cohabitation may seem like a good way to analyze a partner for marriage, it is more likely to end the relationship than
lead to marriage. Cohabitation seems to delay the marriage decision rather than propelling a couple toward marriage. In addition, the approval of family and friends is crucial to marriage. If a couple's family and friends approve of their relationship, but one partner has reservations, he/she may want to reexamine their priorities for a spouse.

Finally, if a couple is concerned about having the "finer things in life" they will probably be less likely to marry. So, if marriage is important to a couple, they should not wait until they have everything they think they need before marrying. Or, if one partner is really concerned about having nice things, it may make them less likely to want to get married. So, a person could increase their chances of marrying by lowering their desires for acquiring nice things.

4.7.1 Strengths and Limitations

Most studies on premarital relationships look at couple outcomes but do not use couple data, mainly because of the difficulty in obtaining responses from both partners. Even if couple data is not needed to obtain an outcome measure (broken up or still together), using individual data to estimate stability still has limitations because both partners influence relationship stability (even if one partner initiates the breakup, they have been influenced by the actions of the other, whether the other partner is satisfied with the relationship or not). So, couple data predict couple outcomes better than individual data predict couple outcomes. The use of couple data is the biggest advantage of this study.

Another good component of this study is the comparison of both logistic and multinomial logistic models. Seeing how the effects might differ with the different
methods provides further support of the hypotheses, and more accurately separates the
effects of the breakup predictors.

There are some limitations with this study. First, because of the difficulty in
obtaining longitudinal data from both partners, this analysis relies on cross-sectional data
for the independent variables. While longitudinal outcomes are known (for the most part,
anyway, recognizing that most of the couples that are still together will either break up or
get married eventually), changes in the relationship are not known. This type of analysis
is possible using RELATE data if only analyzing couples who are still together or
married since they take the full RELATE instrument a second time. But, in order to
understand more about breakups, partners from relationships that dissolve are asked to
complete a different instrument. The only way to obtain partner data from couples that
break up would be to ask them to complete the full RELATE instrument right around the
time they break up. Otherwise, their responses to the questions will be biased as they
look back on a dissolved relationship with conflicted feelings (e.g. someone whose
partner broke up with them might be inclined to say the relationship is bad, when they
may have indicated things were good just before their partner broke up with them). In
short, it is not possible to use couple change data from all the relationships. This is a
common challenge in relationship research, however, and possibly the only way around it
would be to obtain information about couples at every stage of their relationship (whether
through journal keeping, regular surveys, or some other method).

Another limitation of this study is the sample. While obtaining a representative
sample of a large population of dating couples is nearly impossible, this sample is from
an online survey of couples who are already in established relationships. This is
highlighted by the fact that most of the couples at time 1 were either seriously dating or already engaged. As a relationship assessment tool, many of the couples may be using RELATE to help make a decision about whether to marry their partner, so they may already be thinking about marriage. So, the sample for this study does not include very many couples in the early stages of a relationship. Looking at couples who are casually dating will likely produce different results from those here, as couples may stop dating for a number of reasons. However, this brings up the question as to what constitutes a breakup. As discussed in chapter 1, in order for a breakup to occur, there usually has to be some sort of a commitment of exclusivity with the relationship, otherwise people may simply say they "are not seeing that guy anymore," or are "not going to ask her out again" or something else that they do not consider a breakup. In short, in order for a breakup to occur, there has to be an exclusive dating relationship. So, any study of premarital breakups will have a focus on couples who are serious or engaged, but this sample may have a high number of couples who are really close to marrying.

While multicollinearity did not seem to be a significant problem in any of the models, there is still a relatively high significant correlation between the measure of overall satisfaction and other measures such as love, empathic communication, thinking that the relationship is in trouble, and desiring partner to change. This may suggest that an overall latent measure of relationship quality is important in predicting breakup. Further study, especially using factor analysis, is needed to determine whether an index of relationship quality could be constructed.

Moving forward with breakup research, partner data could be utilized without combining it into couple scores. This might be possible using a structural equation
model, where the partner scores could be kept separate but still predict dyadic outcomes. This type of model would also enable the researcher to see what changes occur in all of the different causal paths when only one input changes.

Perhaps most fascinating would be to capture data from partners in the early stages of their relationship, when the likelihood of breaking up may be much higher. Couples who have just decided to form an exclusive relationship probably still have a lot to learn about each other and, as true character and challenges to the relationship become apparent, they are likely considering breakup much more frequently than couples who are deciding whether to marry. If it was possible to survey couples who have recently formed an exclusive relationship, and then follow them over the course of their relationship, additional insights into breakups would probably surface.

4.8 Conclusion

There are significant differences in the processes of breaking up and progression to marriage. Relationship dissolution occurs primarily because of dissatisfaction with the relationship and some individual characteristics of the partners, especially extraversion, difference in religious affiliation, and difference in substance use. Relationship progression to marriage is best predicted by social-context and external influences, especially age, financial considerations (income and materialism), and approval of the relationship by significant others (parents and friends). Cohabitation is important to both processes, as couples who live together are less likely to break up but also less likely to marry. If a couple are satisfied, they are much less likely to break up. Thus, the only
dyadic characteristics that are important in predicting breakup are cohabitation and satisfaction.

Surprisingly, differences between partners in a relationship are not good predictors of breakup. While partner differences do matter in a couple instances (religion and substance use), mean partner scores are better predictors in every other case.

In general, relationship progression to marriage is influenced most by dyadic factors (and possibly some individual factors), while dissolution tends to be explained by individual and social context factors.
CHAPTER 5:

CONCLUSION

"She was leading a double life. She was a nice Christian girl with me, but behind my back was drinking and I think started using drugs. Once we broke up, she completely changed and became a raging partier." (30 yr old male)

"Just when you think one is perfect for you…..PSYCHO." (26 yr old female)

"I feel it would have been helpful in my relationship had I not been unfaithful. She was faithful to me, and although we had problems, she tried breaking up with me. I did not want to be alone. When she moved for a few months I did not want to be alone." (22 yr old male)

5.1 Review of Premarital Breakups

Premarital relationship dissolution is a unique experience which depends on the characteristics of each relationship, but it is also a very common experience. While marriages are also common, premarital breakups occur more frequently because most people date and break up with more than one partner before they decide to marry one. The process of relationship dissolution can be considered part of the overall relationship process, but it is different from the courtship process or relationship progression to marriage. Dissolution can be discussed as both an event and a process.
5.1.1 Breakup as an Event

One way of thinking about breakups is as an event or experience along the path toward marriage (or long-term commitment). In this sense, relationships progress as partners discover more about each other and have mutually satisfying interaction. Couples break up when they reach a point where their interaction is no longer satisfying. They progressed as far as they could toward marriage, but a certain aspect of their relationship was not mutually beneficial, so the relationship ended. From this perspective, a breakup is more like an event that occurs when at least one partner decides that the outlook for the relationship is not good, and initiates the breakup through some form of communication. Sometimes the breakup event does not involve direct communication between the partners. For example, in some relationships the breakup event is the point at which a person realizes their partner is not going to call or answer calls from them. While there is no discussion about it, they understand that they are no longer dating.

5.1.2 Breakup as a Process

Another way of thinking about relationship dissolution is as a process. From this perspective, the dissolution process begins when relationship progression levels off or the moment that the first doubts about its longevity appear. Or, as Battaglia et al. (1998) suggest, it is the moment when one partner feels dissatisfied with the relationship to such a degree that he/she considers initiating a breakup. In some sense, a process view suggests that the dissolution process begins the moment partners meet and begin analyzing each other as potential mates. From the first date, or even the first interaction, partners think about whether they want to spend more time together or not, which,
although based on minimal information, is still an assessment about satisfaction with the interaction. However, this view of the dissolution process is somewhat extreme. In general, a process view of relationship dissolution is best understood as starting the moment when one partner in an exclusive relationship considers breaking up.

While being introduced to someone and beginning to date are part of the relationship process, if, after just a few dates/meetings, either partner decides they do not want to see the other again, it is not considered a breakup; they simply stop dating. In order for the dissolution process to begin, or a breakup to occur, there has to be a commitment between the partners. In most cases, this means exclusivity within the relationship. The couple makes a commitment to avoid pursuing other potential partners, and only be romantically involved with one another. Oftentimes, this commitment of exclusivity is publicly expressed. Before a commitment of exclusivity is made, there is no relationship to dissolve. It is simply two people that decide not to spend time together anymore. Until a couple is dating exclusively, it is not possible for them to experience a breakup.

In a similar manner, the process of relationship dissolution can be thought of as extending for as long as both partners are alive, or at least until one partner forms a new exclusive relationship, as long as any contact with or thoughts about an ex-partner following the breakup event are considered part of the dissolution process. This is why it is important to recognize a breakup as an event. The moment partners decide to discontinue their exclusive commitment is the end of the dissolution process. Any contact they have after the breakup event should be considered a post-dissolution process.
In sum, a process model of relationship dissolution begins the moment one partner in an exclusive dating relationship first considers initiating a breakup and ends with the breakup event. The breakup event occurs when it is clear to both partners that they are no longer dating each other. Usually this is through direct conversation, but sometimes it occurs when one partner cuts off all communication and avoids the other partner.

5.1.3 Motivations and Strategies for Dissolution

There are three major reasons why one partner becomes dissatisfied with the relationship and starts the dissolution process: desire for independence, relationship problems, and partner disposition. Independence breakups occur when one partner loses interest in the other, or desires to explore attractive alternatives to the relationship (including other partners and freedom from commitment). Breakups rooted in relationship problems occur because of negative interaction between partners or the overall problematic nature of the relationship, such as arguments or physical distance. Disposition breakups come from frustration or annoyance with a partner's attributes, which could include things like sense of humor or substance abuse.

There are many different elements of the breakup experience. First, the desire to break up can be mutual or one-sided. In addition, the breakup can be initiated by one or both partners, although how partners can mutually initiate a breakup is unclear. The initiation of the breakup can occur via a direct or indirect approach (e.g. "we need to talk" vs. avoidance). The mutuality and directness of the breakup approach create different breakup strategies. One-sided indirect approaches include withdrawal, scaling back, and being hurtful. The one-sided direct strategies are a declaration and talking about it.
Mutual, indirect breakup strategies include fading away or pretense. Mutual, direct approaches include blame and negotiation.

Sometimes there are multiple attempts at dissolving a relationship before both partners understand that the relationship is not going to continue. And finally, not all breakups are bad. In many instances, breakups can be positive, even if they cause temporary sadness.

This dissertation focuses on premarital dissolution in the United States. In general, breakups are only possible in the context of a dating culture, where couples have the opportunity to spend time together in casual interaction before making any long-term commitment to one another. This dating culture is not the same, or does not exist, in other cultures. In some countries, or among certain groups of people, couples do not spend time alone together before deciding to marry. Dating may even be prohibited. In fact, individuals sometimes do not have a choice about who to marry; a marital partner is simply provided for them through family agreements (Hamon and Ingoldsby 2003). In short, premarital relationship dissolution described in this dissertation is only possible in cultures where dating is possible and people have the option of forming exclusive relationships with partners before getting engaged. In a more familial based relationship formation culture, while dissolution sometimes still occurs, it is more likely to affect the relationship between the families of the partners than the partners themselves.

5.2 Summary of Major Findings

According to the RELATE breakup data, most relationships that eventually dissolve do so within about two years. However, the breakup process itself (from the
moment the relationship begins to decline to the breakup event) averages about ten months. Adding the average length of time partners knew each other before dating (10 months), a good estimate of the total relationship process for couples that break up is approximately three years (from first meeting to breakup).

5.2.1 Breakup Experience

About half of the respondents indicated a rapid relationship decline, and another half indicated that the relationship decline was bumpy (periods of growth and decline intermixed). The state of the relationship at the time of breakup had a significant influence on the breakup experience, however. Seriously dating couples are more likely to experience gradual relationship decline, while engaged couples tend to experience rapid or very bumpy decline (lots of ups and downs). Some couples even regress to a state of casual dating, presumably so they can continue to evaluate other potential partners with their current partner.

Overall, engaged couples experience more difficult breakups compared to couples who are seriously dating. In particular, engaged individuals experience fewer positives and more negatives near the end of the relationship. Engaged couples also experience a higher degree of relationship problems than seriously dating partners.

The effect of cohabitation on the breakup experience is very similar to being engaged. Cohabiting couples experience a higher level of relationship problems and partners experience more long-term negative feelings about the dissolution of the relationship (compared to individuals who do not live together). Cohabiting breakups are also less likely to be mutual. Confirming previous research on cohabitation (Sassler
2004), cohabitators did not report higher satisfaction at the peak of the relationship, nor did they report higher chances of marrying their partner.

The findings regarding engaged and cohabiting breakups suggest that a greater level of commitment leads to a more difficult breakup. This idea is supported by marital dissolution research which suggests that divorce is one of the most stressful experiences that a person can experience in life (Amato 2000; Williams and Dunne-Bryant 2006). This does not mean that couples should avoid greater levels of commitment, but simply that they should expect some additional stress when experiencing a broken engagement or breaking up while cohabiting with a partner. People should recognize that a breakup might be difficult for both partners, regardless of who initiated or caused it.

Surprisingly, there were no significant differences between men and women on any of the tested dissolution variables. In contrast to findings in prior studies, men and women in this sample do not have significantly different breakup experiences. The reason for their similarity could be due to the sample, but the sample in previous studies has not been great, either. Most surprising is that, contrary to Hill et al. (1976) and Meredith and Holman (2001), there are no differences between men and women on reported relationship problems.

On-off couples do not experience poorer relationship quality or have more unequal commitment between partners. Surprisingly, compared to respondents who had no renewals, on-off couples do not have a higher chance of getting back together.

Couples who had mutual breakups had more equal commitment between the partners at all stages of the relationship. In other words, one-sided relationships, where one partner is more committed, usually result in one-sided breakup. Individuals who
experience mutual breakups do not have lower satisfaction or commitment in their relationships, and they do not have an easier time moving on following a breakup than individuals who experience one-sided breakups. However, mutual breakups are much friendlier.

Partners who initiate a breakup report lower satisfaction with the relationship at the peak, as well as fewer positives and lower commitment to the relationship near the end. This suggests that initiators of the breakup tend to start the dissolution process (being the first to experience dissatisfaction that causes them to consider breaking up with their partner). Individuals who get dumped have a slightly more difficult time coping with the breakup (even though they report being at least somewhat successful with it). But, overall, getting dumped does not have long-term negative consequences for those who experience it. They are just as likely as those who initiate a breakup to form new relationships and avoid lingering negative feelings about their ex-relationship.

For most couples, the problematic aspects of their relationship come from their own interaction. The problem areas that are rooted in the individual partners are also quite common, though. In many cases, it is difficult to separate individual and dyadic problems. For example, commitment level differences can be considered an individual or a dyadic problem. Also, "one or both partners changed," and "different life goals" are both individual and dyadic, depending on how they are discussed.

Forming a new relationship helps to overcome negative aspects of a breakup. Individuals who form new relationships are more successful in coping with their breakup. And, overall, they have more positive and fewer negative feelings about their ex-relationship. In contrast, individuals who have not formed new relationships have more
contact with their ex-partners and have lingering feelings of hurt, confusion, and sadness. The passage of time also helps people overcome negative aspects of a breakup.

In relationships that eventually dissolve, relationship quality gradually decreases over time. It is usually highest in the beginning, with a slight decrease near the peak, and then a serious decline towards the end. The most common relationship problems that dissolved couples experience are: communication, time spent together, dealing with conflict, and commitment level differences. Interestingly, these support two general types of breakups. The first three can all be typed as relationship problems, while commitment level differences suggests an independence breakup.

For most individuals in the RELATE sample, breaking up was a positive experience. Respondents report feeling more positives than negatives about the ending of the relationship approximately 18 months after the breakup. On average, individuals who experienced a breakup reported feeling like they learned from the experience, as well as feeling more comfortable, relieved, and happy than any negative feelings. Since there were no significant differences between individuals who initiated a breakup and those who were dumped, these findings suggest that breakups do not have long-term negative effects on most people.

In general, most people are able to move on quickly following a breakup. The most difficult breakups occur when couples are engaged or cohabiting. While the passage of time and forming a new relationship to help people move on, relationship dissolution does not seem to have a lasting negative influence on people.
5.2.2 Positive Breakups

Sometimes the ending of a relationship is a good thing. Some relationships have lots of problems and the partners are simply not a good match. Sometimes the actual breakup experience is friendly. In other cases, people feel like they learned from the relationship. These three different conceptions of a positive breakup are termed problematic, friendly, and educational. The factors associated with friendly and educational breakups are slightly different.

The friendliness of a breakup is influenced most by the state of the relationship near the end and how the breakup actually happens. Most breakups are not friendly. An unbalanced relationship (where one partner is less committed) decreases the friendliness of a breakup. In contrast, higher relationship quality (more positives than negatives) near the end of the relationship leads to friendlier breakups. Regardless of who initiates the breakup, how it occurs is the primary determinant of its friendliness. A fight or a sudden decision by one partner makes a breakup less friendly, while a conversation in which partners mutually decide to break up is much friendlier.

Some things have a lingering influence on a person's feelings about a breakup. In general, the dissolution of a relationship in which at least one partner feels confident about a future together makes the breakup more difficult to come to terms with. In a similar way, the better a relationship was at the peak, the more difficult it is for a person to get over it. A person's feelings about the ending of their relationship are highly influenced by the friendliness of the breakup, the passage of time, the likelihood that they will get back together with their former partner, and their own coping with the breakup.
5.2.3 Predicting Breakup and Marriage

In Chapter 4, the multivariate models show that there are significant differences in the processes of breaking up and progression to marriage. Relationship dissolution occurs primarily because of dissatisfaction with the relationship and some individual characteristics of the partners, especially extraversion, difference in religious affiliation, and difference in substance use. Relationship progression to marriage is best predicted by social-context and external influences, especially age, financial considerations (income and materialism), and approval of the relationship by significant others (parents and friends).

Cohabitation is important to both processes, as couples who live together are less likely to break up but also less likely to marry. Cohabitation delays relationship progression or dissolution. Relationship satisfaction is an important influence on relationship stability. If a couple are satisfied, they are much less likely to break up. Thus, the only dyadic characteristics that are important in predicting breakup are cohabitation and satisfaction.

Low approval of the relationship by parents and friends does not predict breakup, but approval of the relationship is important for couples who decide to marry. If approval of family and friends is low, couples may not marry. Neither age nor the presence of children has a stabilizing effect on a relationship when other factors are taken into account. But, having different religions does increase the chances that a couple will break up. Differences in race, however, have no effect on relationship stability.
Surprisingly, differences between partners in a relationship are not good predictors of breakup. While partner differences do matter in a couple instances (religion and substance use), the mean score of the partners was a better predictor in every case.

There is some support for three different breakup types: relationship problem, disposition, and independence. In interpreting these models, it is possible that, after taking into account the couple's longevity (length of relationship, cohabitation, and engagement), the remaining predictive factors are indicative of different breakup types. A relationship problem breakup would result from having different religions or low overall satisfaction. A disposition breakup occurs when one partner drinks alcohol or uses drugs much more than the other partner. Independence breakups happen occur when extraverted people form a relationship but decide it is too constricting for their social natures.

In general, relationship progression is influenced most by dyadic factors (and potentially some individual factors), while dissolution tends to be explained by individual and social context factors.

5.3 Purpose of the Study and Important Contributions

The threefold purpose of this research was to 1) examine the breakup experience with new dissolution data from RELATE, 2) explore the possibility of positive breakups, and 3) compare the processes of relationship dissolution and progression to marriage using data from both partners.

The RELATE data does provide additional information about the breakup experience that has not been available until now. Specifically, it allows individuals to
discuss their relationships at three different stages: in the beginning, at the peak, and near the end. This provides a more detailed view of both the initial progression and the decline of relationships that eventually fail. The breakup instrument includes questions about the early stages of the relationship, the relationship itself, and the post-dissolution relationship, so there is a more complete picture of relationships that dissolve. The RELATE breakup questionnaire also give respondents more relationship problems to assess, instead of having them list a few of the most relevant problems in their relationship. Thus, it is possible to utilize a total relationship problems variable, and see which problems are most common among couples that break up.

RELATE data also enable an exploration of positive breakups. Almost all post-dissolution research has focused on the friendship between ex-partners. This dissertation explores whether positive breakups are possible. Problematic positive breakups are those that occur when partners are simply not a good match, so breaking up enables both of them to find a better relationship. These are indirectly discussed in chapters 2 and 4. Most respondents wish they would have broken up with their partner sooner, and breakups are often predicted by differences in individual characteristics, suggesting the partners were not a good match in the first place.

Friendly and educational breakups are also ways of thinking about positive breakups. Friendly breakups seem most dependent on how the breakup actually happened. The most important way that couples can have a friendly breakup is if they discuss their relationship and why it is not working (even if only one partner is dissatisfied). In general, most people do not suffer long-term negative consequences of a breakup. While there are a few things that make breakups more difficult (such as being
engaged or living together), most people are able to move on and form new relationships with the feeling that they learned from their previous relationship. Many people feel relief that it is over. This is true even if they did not initiate the breakup.

Analyzing both relationship dissolution and progression to marriage provides an interesting contrast. The processes are indeed different. The advantage of this comparative approach is that it uses data from both partners, which strengthens the findings. Instead of relying on one partner's view of the relationship, it is possible to see both sides. With longitudinal data from couples who broke up, stayed together, and got married, it is also possible to see how dissolution and progression differ, instead of simply combining them into a single relationship stability model where the assumption is that predictive factors that do not strengthen a relationship lead to its dissolution.

In short, all of the chapters presented here provide a more detailed analysis of the dissolution process, which have not been conducted before. Therefore, the results of this research provide a more complete picture of premarital relationship dissolution. The breakup experience is dependent on many factors, breakups can be considered a positive experience in many instances, and dissolution is not simply the opposite of progression.

Dissolution is a unique process within the overall relationship path. The breakup experience is the culminating event of the process, which enables two people to move on and, hopefully, find happiness through newfound independence or with new partners.
5.4 Implications for Theory, Research, and Practice

5.4.1 Theory

In chapter 1, I discussed my approach to relationship dissolution as the blending of two theories: interpersonal process models and filter/stage theories. In essence, I see some advantages to using filter theory. There are three issues that arise from filter theories: 1) Filtering – process by which individuals analyze potential marital partners, and potential partners are weeded out; 2) Ordering – the sequence of the filtering; and 3) Layering – even if there is a sequence, do the factors in previous filters cease to be important in later filters, or do they build on one another? In some sense, dissolution represents the filtering process in action. If partners do not match well on interaction, individual attributes, family background, or demographics, they are likely to break up. Determining whether there is a sequence to the dissolution would require some sort of survival analysis, to see which factors were predictive of dissolution at casual dating, serious dating, and engaged statuses. Of course, this would mean that when two partners discontinue dating each other it would be considered a breakup in some way.

Several different conceptions of positive breakups are explored in chapter 3. I wanted to discuss the positive aspects of breakups because they are given little attention. However, this does suggest that there are really negative breakups or breakup experiences that are ambivalent. In some ways, any breakup is likely to yield ambivalent feelings, regardless of whether a person initiates it or not. For those who initiate the breakup, if the relationship was good enough at some point to feel compelled to make a commitment of exclusivity, then a person is likely to miss the positive aspects of the relationship once it is gone. For a person who is dumped, feelings of hurt and confusion are offset by the
positives of the relationship. Partners experiencing mutual breakups might also feel ambivalent. In general, relationship dissolution may be ripe for exploration using theories of ambivalence.

In chapter 4, there is some support for the three breakup types proposed by Loyer-Carlson and Walker (1990). Interestingly, these breakup types are somewhat similar to Murstein's SVR theory. Stimulus characteristics can apply loosely to independence breakups (people value their independence or want to find someone different). Values characteristics essentially correlate with disposition breakups. Role complementarity would correspond with relationship problem breakups, where there are specific conflicts between the partners that get in the way, and the emphasis is on the "us" rather than the individual. Another interesting comparison between the two is that both the values stage and the disposition type have the least amount of empirical support. The comparisons are not solid because Murstein discusses stimulus characteristics as the elements that bring two people together in the first place. However, if an independence breakup is rooted in the quality of extraversion, then it could be something which is present early in a relationship, but which is only manifested once the couple start thinking about long-term commitment. In short, the findings here suggest that there may be some benefit to reexamining Murstein's SVR theory in relation to breakups.

While individual characteristics are rarely important in relationship studies, they seem to have some importance in the dissolution process. This suggests that the same characteristics which bring two people together may be the very ones that influence their breakup (Felmlee 1995). If people initially choose partners based on individual characteristics such as physical attraction, extraversion, or maturity, it is possible that,
after forming an exclusive relationship, those same characteristics become "vain," "flirty with other people," or "too serious." In this sense, individual characteristics may be important for both attraction and dissolution, but less important (or even detrimental) for increasing commitment.

5.4.2 Research

There may be some benefit in creating a path model of relationship dissolution, in which mediating variables are possible. For example, when I began analyzing the concept of a mutual breakup I quickly found that the mutuality of the breakup is primarily determined by how the breakup occurred. In turn, mutuality influences the friendliness of the breakup, and the friendliness of the breakup influences how people feel about the breakup years later. Instead of the models presented here, which assume that all factors influence a relationship outcome (both positivity and breakup), it is likely that some different influences would be discovered, or that multiple outcomes would be identified.

It may be possible to construct a multi-faceted positive breakup scale. The only way this might work is to maintain distinctions between different times. A positive breakup can refer to so many different things, but keeping items related to breakup experience together, or those related to a reflection on the dissolution of the relationship, might produce a reliable scale.

While an event history analysis was not possible to conduct in this dissertation, it may be possible with another dataset, or by refining the response categories in the RELATE breakup instrument. If respondents are able to indicate exactly when their relationship begins and ends, it would enable an analysis of the timing of breakups, as
well as a more detailed analysis of the process of breaking up. This type of approach would be especially helpful in determining which factors are important at different levels of commitment. If dissolution data from casually dating, seriously dating, engaged, and married (divorced) couples were available, it would be possible to see which factors are most predictive of relationship dissolution for each status.

On a related note, one of the challenges of collecting data about breakups is the inability to get responses about the breakup immediately after it occurs. A data collection method utilizing diaries to describe significant changes in the relationship could provide some additional insights into the dissolution process, especially if respondents record their impressions of the breakup within a day of the event, and then again some months later. This would enable the researcher to capture their initial reaction to the breakup, rather than their thoughts about it after they have had considerable time to come to terms with it.

Another issue for collecting data on relationship dissolution is the inability to get responses from both partners. For some reason, even if both partners complete an instrument at time 1, it is rare for both of them to complete a follow-up survey. Getting both partners to respond to a breakup instrument would help provide a more complete picture of the breakup experience, and comparisons between partners' perspectives on why it occurred, who initiated it, etc. The best way to deal with this approach might be through interviews. If respondents know that someone will be contacting them to discuss their relationship even if it dissolves, they may be more likely to participate. There may be some interviewer bias with these interviews. For example, men may feel
uncomfortable discussing the reasons why they broke up with their girlfriend with a female interviewer.

Finally, while casually dating couples do not really experience breakups, they do discontinue dating. It may be interesting to compare the causes for not dating/calling someone anymore and the causes of breakups. If my theory is correct, casually dating couples will be more likely to cite individual differences or partner disposition as the reasons for not continuing to date someone.

5.4.3 Practical Applications

The findings presented in this dissertation may also be useful for educators, counselors, and couples. In general, it is important to remember that with increased commitment comes more difficult dissolution. If either partner in a relationship is having doubts, or is not sure about moving forward, pressure to move in together or get engaged may provide temporary stability, but it will make breaking up even more difficult for both partners later on. This has implications for cohabiting, as well.

While cohabitation increases the likelihood that couples will stay together, it does not mean that couples should cohabit to strengthen their relationship. Cohabiting couples experience a higher level of relationship problems, and their breakups are less likely to be one-sided. In addition, a cohabiting breakup has a negative influence on people feel about the relationship. In short, cohabitation leads to less positive breakups. And, considering that cohabitation is more likely to cause the breakup of a relationship than it is to lead to marriage, it does not seem like a good recommendation for couples who eventually want to marry (Manning and Smock 2002).
In addition to the potential problems caused by cohabitation, there are also things to discuss with religion, drug use, and extraversion. In particular, religious differences do not seem to be good for relationship stability. There may be good reason for people dating within their own religious community, as they are more likely to form a long-lasting bond. This is applicable to marriage as well. It may also be a good idea for people to avoid partners who use alcohol or drugs much more/less than they do. Differences between partners' drug/alcohol use has a significant negative influence on relationship stability. Educators and counselors may want to encourage individuals to ask more direct questions about substance use earlier in a relationship (if the partners are not already friends) so that the differences can be known up front. If there are big differences between partners, it may be a reason to end the relationship before getting too serious and running into problems later.

Another issue for counselors and couples is the idea of positive breakups. While most people do not experience long-term negative effects from a breakup, there are things individuals can do to make dissolution much friendlier. The most important thing is to communicate with your partner. While this is frequently cited as being important to relationship stability, it is also important for dissolution. If a couple are able to discuss the problems or dissatisfaction within their relationship they may be able to work through things. But if, after trying to work it out, the relationship is still not good for one partner, at least they will not be blindsided by a breakup. People have a much more difficult time with a breakup when their partner suddenly initiates it and it seems as if there is no reason for it. People like to know why a breakup occurs, even if the answer is just a
general feeling of uncertainty or a desire for independence, rather than a specific flaw in the relationship.

Perhaps the best information for counselors and individuals, however, is that breakups are difficult, but not always a bad thing. People often experience temporary guilt or sadness from a breakup (depending on whether they initiated it or were dumped) but these feelings usually do not persist. Breaking up with someone does not need to be a big deal. In many instances, a breakup is a positive thing because it enables individuals to escape poor matches, and it also provides an educational experience for people to (hopefully) establish better relationships in the future. If most premarital relationships involve some level of courtship with the possibility of marriage, then a failed relationship simply means that the marital relationship would not have been good (in most cases). In this sense, breakups can be hopeful. Even in situations where no other prospective partners are available, it is better to maintain satisfying familial relationships and friendships than to stay in an unsatisfying relationship.

5.5 Ideas for Future Research

One of the most interesting aspects of relationship dissolution is the total number of premarital breakups before marriage. This concept is not explored by very many researchers. While Burgess and Wallin (1954) and Whyte (1990) address it to some degree, it is difficult to find other studies that have asked about previous romantic partners, or even the number of different partners that people date before marriage. This could be a very fruitful area of research, especially as the number of partners relates to breakups or marriage. It is possible that dating many people before marriage helps
individuals selected a better mate, but it is also possible that dating just one or two partners before marriage helps people to avoid divorce, if they do not have ex-partners with which to compare their current partner. In other words, having numerous relationships before marriage may be educational, but it may also be detrimental to marital stability.

In fact, Meredith and Holman (2001) find that there are differences between individuals who broke up and who stayed married or divorced. Individuals who broke up were similar to the divorced group rather than individuals who have high-satisfaction marriages. This suggests that breakups may be a good thing in that they help people who are poorly match to avoid marrying, but their next relationship is not likely to be a good match either. Basically, Meredith and Holman suggest that there is a selection effect with breakups. They suggest that some individuals have troubled backgrounds and personal problems that might make them a poor match for anyone. While this certainly could be the case, it would be good to explore whether the breakup itself is ever a good thing. Meredith and Holman make it sound like all breakups are good in the sense that they avoid a bad marriage, but it would be interesting to determine if breakups help some people form good marriages by learning from the bad ones that dissolve.

Another question that might be worth exploring is the early discussion of marriage. While many people are looking for a spouse, there is a cultural taboo against bringing up the possibility of marriage too soon in a relationship. I wonder whether early discussion of (or even thinking about) marriage influences a couple to break up, even if they might be good for each other. If one or both partners think that there is a high chance for marriage at the beginning of the relationship, how does it affect the stability of
the relationship? Do couples feel pressure to commit, and does this pressure cause them to break up?

On a related note, there is an interesting question of whether it is better to start a relationship as friends or simply begin dating someone new. Does one approach produce better results, or is one more likely to break up? As with all breakups discussed in this dissertation, this question is specifically related to couples that have already formed a serious relationship. It is highly likely that people who have never met before will be less likely to continue dating than people who are friends beforehand and begin dating. But, once an exclusive relationship is formed, there might be different results. In short, are friendships a better foundation for a relationship? Are friends less likely to breakup? Do friends have more positive breakups, or are they worse because they know each other so well?

5.6 Final Thought

Premarital relationship dissolution is a common occurrence. Most people will experience at least one breakup before finding a person to marry. When two people are not a good match, it is like two lines of music that do not harmonize. While both might sound good on their own, they do not produce pleasant outcomes when blended together. Like a classical piece composed in sonata form that is performed without the recapitulation, a breakup is a relationship that develops until partners experience incompatibility, conflict, or dissatisfaction, leading to dissolution before ever reaching a state of equilibrium.
Breakups do not have to be a negative experience. In some ways, they are hopeful. This may depend on the type of breakup that people experience, but, even in cases where a person gets "dumped," most breakups are positive from a forward-looking perspective. In order to have a great marriage, it may be necessary for people to date and break up with many partners. Some people are lucky to find a good match with the first person they date, but for everyone else, relationship dissolution is a learning experience on the marital pathway.
APPENDIX A:

ZERO-ORDER AND PAIRED REGRESSION MODELS

TABLE A.1

ZERO-ORDER OLS REGRESSION MODELS

FOR POSITIVE BREAKUPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Friendly Coefficients</th>
<th>Coefficients</th>
<th>Positive feelings now Coefficients</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of relationship in months</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabited</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>-3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of breakups</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship quality at peak</td>
<td>0.06**</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.47**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship quality near end</td>
<td>0.06**</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.26**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commit difference near end</td>
<td>-0.23**</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakup method - sudden decision</td>
<td>-0.63**</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>-1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakup method - decided together</td>
<td>1.12**</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>3.94**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakup method - fight</td>
<td>-0.79**</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>-2.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship problems - degree</td>
<td>-0.02**</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendliness of breakup</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.23*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chance of getting back together</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-2.05**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks since breakup</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.09**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping success</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.94***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.07**</td>
</tr>
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</table>

SOURCE: RELATE Institute
*p<.05, **p<.01
### TABLE A.2

**ZERO-ORDER LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS**

**FOR BREAKUP AND MARRIED BY TIME 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Substance Use</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>15.98</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.38</td>
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<td>Substance Use difference</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>20.35</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.66</td>
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<td>Materialism</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>5.93</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
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<td>Materialism difference</td>
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<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Relationship in months</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
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<td>Have child/ pregnant</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>1.20</td>
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<td>Engaged</td>
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<td>0.27</td>
<td>50.61</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of divorces</td>
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<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of divorces difference</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>0.01</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age difference</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race difference</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>1.58</td>
</tr>
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<td>Not white</td>
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<td>0.55</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.55</td>
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<td>Education level</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>8.72</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.82</td>
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<td>Education level difference</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total income difference</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>11.20</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.93</td>
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<tr>
<td>Income difference</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.88</td>
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<td>Religion difference</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>0.02</td>
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<td>0.37</td>
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<td>0.87</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ever cohabited</td>
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<td>0.25</td>
<td>20.92</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall satisfaction</td>
<td>-1.12</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>44.28</td>
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<td>0.32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall satisfaction - difference</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>7.25</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental divorce</td>
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<td>0.15</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval of parents &amp; friends</td>
<td>-1.25</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>32.86</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approval of parents &amp; friends difference</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>19.24</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for partner to change</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>21.80</td>
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<td>1.87</td>
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<td>Desire for partner to change difference</td>
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<td>7.04</td>
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<td>Thought relationship in trouble</td>
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<td>0.13</td>
<td>45.34</td>
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<td>Thought relationship in trouble difference</td>
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<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>1.13</td>
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TABLE A.2 (CONTINUED)

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
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<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of renewals</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>30.06</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.97</td>
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<tr>
<td>Degree of relationship problems</td>
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<td>0.02</td>
<td>6.06</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>1.05</td>
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<td>Love</td>
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<td>Love difference</td>
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<td>10.25</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>Empathic communication</td>
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<td>0.04</td>
<td>17.92</td>
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<td>Talk things over</td>
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<td>0.09</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
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<td>Extraversion</td>
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<td>10.97</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>Immaturity</td>
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<td>0.07</td>
<td>9.68</td>
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</tr>
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<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: RELATE Institute
TABLE A.3

PAIRED LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS

FOR COUPLE BREAKUP BY TIME 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Income difference</td>
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<td>0.06</td>
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<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Love</td>
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<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Love difference</td>
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<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.12</td>
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<td>1.22</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>20.71</td>
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<td>0.18</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Approval difference</td>
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<td>0.01</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.05</td>
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SOURCE: RELATE Institute
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