

THE 1980'S AND TODAY;
AN ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to augment the existing literature concerning the relationship between marital status, gender, social networks, and cohort effect on dimensions of subjective well-being for women. Multiple dimensions of subjective well-being are examined. Multiple regression and logistic regression are employed to examine the effects of marital status, social networks, and cohort effects on the dependent variables that tap the dimensions of subjective well-being. The analysis controls for age, race, education, income, religious attendance and region of residence. The findings report some inconsistency in regards to the current literature. Social networks and support are found to be the most constant independent predictor of subjective well-being. While the effects of being divorced and separated, as well as cohort membership, are not as consistent, the findings are notable and should be addressed in future research addressing subjective well-being.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

What we have known about quality of life has come from objective and external indicators of the context in which a person lives. While objective indicators have great potential for describing this context of peoples' lives, they do not give subjective insight on why some people find their lives enjoyable and satisfying, and some do not (Campbell 1981).

Campbell's (1981) *The Sense of Well-Being in America* attempted to tie economic indicators to the "good life" by equating national well-being with national economic prosperity. According to Campbell, the 30 years following the World War II was a period of general increase in economic affluence. The poverty level dropped, and the average family income went up by two-thirds between 1945 and 1973. One might assume that with the rise of the national economy that subjective well-being would also rise. He concluded that while we did experience economic affluence as a nation, we did not increase Americans' subjective quality of life measures like sense of confidence, attachment to community, satisfaction with employment, or the bonds that hold families together (Campbell 1981).

In addition to economic affluence as an objective indicator of well-being, Campbell includes other objective life domains such as standard of living, employment status, neighborhood or town of residence, education and health to account for quality of life. Each life domain provides noteworthy knowledge on well-being but only as indicators of the objective dimension. Rojas (2004) extends the subjective analysis of well-being by including information not contemplated by the traditional objective indicators. That is, Rojas focused on the internal or subjective indicators of well-being. Subjective indicators of quality of life consist of individuals' own evaluations of their lives, including self-reported emotional responses, life domain

satisfactions, and global perceptions of satisfactions (Farquhar 1995; Gullone and Cummins 2002).

Deiner (2000) reports that defining quality of life subjectively, rather than objectively, allows the individual to decide for him or herself whether his or her life is worthwhile. Deiner contends that it is this approach to defining what has come to be called subjective well-being. From the subjective well-being standpoint, Rojas (2004) declares that objective indicators of well-being can often be deceiving, since well-being is an innately subjective concept and the so-called objective indicators chosen by the researcher are largely subjective and arbitrary criteria themselves. Cummins (2000) supports this idea by adding that objective measures are a product of our own perceptions, and as a consequence, subjective.

Researchers' judgments and considerations heavily rely on what people report about their own life experiences; Bryant and Veroff (1984) contend that measures of well-being comprises strong validity that interest sociologists who are eager to plot the quality of life in subjective terms. In Bryant and Veroff's research on subjective well-being, focus was on the structural dimension underlying people's self evaluations. In accordance with their earlier research Bryant and Veroff reported that there are at least four dominant dimensions that underlie people's evaluations of their own subjective mental health: evaluation of positive affective experience, evaluation of negative experience, feelings of personal competence in handling negative experience, and feelings of personal competence in handling positive experience (1984).

The purpose of this study is to augment the existing literature concerning the relationship between marital status, gender, social networks, and cohort effect on dimensions of subjective well-being. Multiple dimensions of subjective well-being analyzed are perceptions of physical health, happiness, and reported life optimism. Specifically this research compares the Baby

Boom and Generation X's perception of subjective well-being, as well as exploring the effects of respondents in the two cohorts who are currently divorced. Comparisons are made across and within birth cohorts; Baby Boom cohort born in 1946-1960; and Generation X born in 1966-1980.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

An abundance of literature has been produced on marriage and divorce. This literature review will focus on the multiple dimensions of subjective well-being: physical health, happiness, and reported life optimism across marital statuses. Social networks will be discussed regarding the impact on subjective well-being across marital status and gender. Lastly, the literature review will focus on age, cohort, and time-period on subjective well-being for women.

Predictors of Subjective Well-Being

Marital Status

There is a general agreement that married people are, overall, happier and healthier (Waite and Gallagher 2000). Forste and Heaton (2004) report that married people score higher on measures of well-being than the unmarried. Alternately, divorced people are less happy, less healthy and score lower on measures of well-being. The decline in marriage and increase in divorce is largely due to legal sanctions, changing attitudes toward divorce, and increased participation in the paid labor force by women (Varnis 1997). Moreover, women's increased education has raised women's status allowing greater control over decision-making and increasing the potential for less patriarchal and more equal relationships (Amato et al. 2003).

Shortly after the beginning of the 1960s, the divorce rate rapidly increased in less than a decade (Thornton 1985; Whitehead 1996). Between 1960 and 1980, the annual divorce rate more than doubled from 9.2 divorces per 1,000 married women to 22.6 per 1,000 married women (Smith 1999). The increase during this time period could be explained by what Barbara Whitehead suggested in her 1996 book *The Divorce Culture*. According to Whitehead this era emerged in a time of economic affluence, where women gained more freedom and opportunities in the world of work and public life (Whitehead 1996). No-fault divorce statutes in 1970 played a significant role in the rate of divorce. The implemented legislation was aimed at standardizing the process of divorce and putting an end to having to find sufficient fault in the spouse for terminating a marriage (Arendell 1997).

After the 1980s, the divorce rate declined to 19.8 per 1,000 married women by 1995 (Smith 1999). Divorce has become socially constructed to be less stigmatized and more normative in American society, presenting itself as a highly individualized process that encompasses different experiences for each person involved (Davis and Greenstein 2004; Coltrane and Adams 2003; Varnis 1997). Recent observations regarding changes in marriage and divorce from 1980 and 2000 reveal that there are two notable perspectives for marital dissolution. The first suggests that people terminate their marriage because of a strong belief that it is too difficult to maintain a happy and stable marriage. The second perspective views divorce as being beneficial, allowing for people to terminate low-quality marriages. The latter perspective allows for individuals to remarry and enter into a happy marriage, hinting that existing marriages may be better in quality than in the past (Amato et al. 2003).

With the divorce rate remaining constant over the last 25 years, and with women's increased independence, why is it still true that married people report higher levels of subjective

well-being? Kim and McKenry (2002) reported that the association between marriage and individual well-being can be derived from two modes of research, the influence of marital status and marital quality on personal well-being (protection perspective), and the effect of health status; physical and psychological well-being on marriage (selection perspective).

The protection perspective outlines that the variations in mental health across marital statuses are mainly attributed to the marital union. That is, marriage provides sense of well-being, purpose for life, and emotional support. The protection perspective also notes that the marital union produces feelings of mutual obligations and reinforcements that serve to reduce vulnerability to decreased well-being (Kim and McKenry 2002). The selection perspective holds that the variations in individual well-being are viewed as being directly attributed from the personal characteristics of the individual. Personal disposition, socioeconomic status, childhood background, and/or preexisting health conditions are thought to affect marital and social relationships (Kim and McKenry 2002).

Deiner et al. (2000) found that married individuals report greater subjective well-being than never-married and previously married individuals, suggesting that married persons experienced more positive emotions, and fewer negative emotions, than divorced persons. People who divorce report greater global unhappiness than persons who are married, the divorced also report the experience of a wider range and heightened intensity of emotional, social, economic, and physical health problems (Weingarten and Bryant 1987).

Weingarten and Bryant's investigation of well-being asked individuals among varying marital status if they would give the same answer as one another to questions asking about how they feel, mean the same thing by their responses. The research contends that when people's life situations differ, the way in which they evaluate affective experience will differ as well

(Weingarten and Bryant 1987). Their findings suggest that the meaning of similar responses to questions of well-being varies across marital status. First-married respondents' structure well-being in a fashion that resembles the general population pattern, the way in which the divorced and remarried respondents structure their subjective evaluations significantly differs. That is, people stress different criteria when evaluating present well-being depending on marital status; remarried individuals were found to be focused on the quality of ongoing role relationships in evaluating current gratification more than other marital groups did, and individuals who are first-timers in the marital union seemed to focus on the future moral in evaluating current well-being (Weingarten and Bryant 1987).

Kim and McKenry (2002) investigated how the levels of well-being varied across marital status. Their study noted that marital status itself separate from the quality of the relationship is a major predictor of an individual's well-being, due to the notion that marital status is an important social structure that plays a central role in determining family resources, relationships, and processes. Ultimately their study reported that the levels of well-being differed across marital groups, which married individuals reported higher levels of well-being than members of other marital groups, and that marital status is associated with individual well-being. Divorced and separated individuals reported an association with decreased well-being; that is, the effects of becoming divorced or separated remained strong even after controlling for the quality of the marital relationship (Kim and McKenry 2002).

Time-Period

Research by Bryant and Veroff (1982) investigated the difference in the structure of well-being that may have existed for both men and women and between two historical eras; 1957 and 1976. Their research proposed that the historical variation found in the structuring and deciphering of well-being might be explained by the social changes in the traditional expectations of work, family, and world view (Bryant and Veroff 1982).

A study conducted by Weingarten and Bryant (1987) went further to suggest that the two decades between 1957 and 1976 observed a turnabout in sex roles and normative behavior; characterized by shifts in women's focus from the private sphere to public sphere, along with reverse shifts from work to family life for men.

During the last thirty years American society has witnessed demographic changes for our Nation's late adolescents and young adults. In 1970, the reported age of marriage for females was 21 and males 23 (Arnett 2000). In 2000, the majority of men and women in age groups from 15 to 24 years of age were never married, while men 25 and over are married, as well as the majority of females who were 25 years or older (U.S Census Bureau 2000). Just as the age of first marriage rose, so did the amount of young adults pursuing higher education. In 1970, 48% of young adults were obtaining higher education after high school; by 1993, the proportion of young adults involved in higher education rose from 48% to 60% (Arnett 2000). Research on time period has postulated that the present era is a period in time where America's young adults are breaking the pasts' typical role, that is, young adults are prolonging the marital union and opting for higher education. Presently, we are witnessing late adolescents' and young adults'

experience a high degree of change, experimentation, and instability as they strive to explore and discover various possibilities in love, work, and world perspective (Arnett 2000).

Along with the dramatic changes in demographics and gender roles, research has a valid presumption in questioning the gender differences in the effects of marital status on well-being. Williams (2003) reports that the shifts in women's employment status are accompanied by delay in age of marriage and childbirth and declines in marital stability; that these demographic changes affect the economic necessity, meaning, and experience of marriage (Williams 2003). These changes in gender roles may have also weakened the importance of marital status and quality to women's well-being compared to men. Women today have a wider range options, not confined to the traditional roles of mother and homemaker; that is, women's participation in the paid workforce and contributing to household income allot women increased personal power and marital equality (Williams 2003).

Cohort

Research by Felton (1987) reported that time period and age differences in well-being suggest that factors related to cohorts can explain at least some of the variation in reported well-being. Sociological assumptions suggest that people's evaluations of their well-being reflect the socializing influences of their cohort (Felton 1987).

Gay and Campbell (1991) focused on Levinson's and Easterlin's hypotheses regarding personal well-being, bridging each of their assumptions that age, time period, and cohort have an

impact of well-being. Levinson outlined that there are periods in the life course that are marked by transitory and stable periods. Transitory periods between stable periods present the chances of personal distress, where stable periods increase the likelihood of positive well-being (Gay and Campbell 1991). Easterlin focused on the impact of the size of cohorts on well-being, suggesting that cohort size has a direct impact on well-being, employment opportunities, family life and social settings.

In Gay and Campbell's discussion of Easterlin's cohort analysis, the researchers reiterated that members from differing cohorts are faced with problems that previous or future cohorts may or may not have experienced. The Baby Bust cohort preceding and birthing the Baby Boom cohort witnessed problems that they themselves were not faced with, due in part to the time periods high birthrate. Some problems that the baby boom have been faced with, due large cohort size, are the negative effect of career advancement and attainable income, hesitation to marry, increased marital strains and divorce, and increased psychological distress and alienation (Gay and Campbell 1991). The researchers reaffirm that the Baby Boom cohort are characterized by difficulties of forming personal identity, entering and attaining occupational goals, marital unions, stable residence and lifestyles.

Whereas the Baby Boom cohort differs from the Baby Bust cohort, so does the cohort following the baby boom, termed as Generation X. Generation X has been described as pessimistic, materialistic, and cynical towards life and world views. People within this particular cohort are often depicted as overwhelmed by the economic prospects that face them in the workplace, by the personal debt accrued by participating in higher education, and by the national debt left behind by previous generations; at the same time they are described as being ambitious, and eager to pursue financial, occupational and personal goals (Arnett 2000).

Arnett's (2000) study investigated the views of the future among the adults belonging to Generation X, including economic prospects, personal relationships, career options, and overall quality of life. This study also asked respondents from Generation X, whether they agreed that the label of being pessimistic, materialistic, and cynical accurately identified their cohort. Their study revealed that the adults viewed their personal future with high hopes, expecting their lives to be as good or better than the preceding generation, they also stressed the importance of personal satisfaction in the workplace over financial well-being. This generation has placed greater importance on personal relationships, such as marriage, which they view as the most critical component to their future well-being (Arnett 2000).

Social-Networks

Social support is the loyalty, nurturance, advice and aid provided in personal relationships, the sense of being cared for and valued as person, and part of a network of communication and social ties (Ross and Willigen 1997).

Social support has been found to have direct effects on well-being (Kamp Dush and Amato 2005). Social support, both the quantity and quality of social contact and networks has been found to have a positive effect on well-being (Ellison et al.1989). Marriage has the ability to enhance and diminish social networks and support. In most cases a spouse or marital partner provides convenient access to new relationships, for example, in-laws, friends, and peers (Terhell et al. 2004). Yet, being married can also have isolating effects on social networks. Individuals who are involved in a mutually dependent relationship may have fewer reasons to expand social and support networks outside of the relationship (Ishii-Kuntz and Seccombe 1989). The presence

or absence of children also has an effect the social networks of both married and divorced persons' (Simmons et al. 1993; Ishii-Kuntz and Seccombe 1989).

The termination of the marital union subsequently produces changes in one's personal well-being such as engagement in social networks (Barrett 2003). In similarity to married individuals, divorced individuals may experience enhancement or disruption of the personal network. Half of the relationships accrued prior to divorce, mostly the relationships that are mutual between partners, are lost as a result of the dissolution (Terhell et al. 2004).

A study looking at network dynamics after divorce postulated that divorce characteristics, personal capacities, and structural conditions are the main determinants of social network changes. The researchers noted that for some, divorce may be an emotional and social liberation from a problematic relationship. For others, however, it could be highly undesired and negative event (Terhell et al. 2004). A difficult divorce may prompt family members and personal friends to provide increased social support. Personal capacities, such as preferences and needs may determine the amount of time and energy placed on personal relations. Being extroverted, having emotional stability and self-esteem have been found to be positively associated with engagement in social networks (Terhell et al. 2004). Lastly, divorce has the ability to affect one's structural conditions such as having to move, economic adjustment, and parenting. Being forced to move because of divorce, among other structural conditions, have been found to contribute to social network losses and restrict the development of new relationships (Terhell et al. 2004).

The presence or absence of children may also enhance or diminish networks and support. A study conducted by Ishii-Kuntz and Seccombe (1989) asked whether social isolation was more prevalent among those who do not have children as compared to those who do, or alternatively, are childless couples' more likely to have a larger and more active social network. The

researchers set forth the argument that the effects of parenthood upon the couple's social network varies across stages of the life course. Couples with young children may find that they have little time to cultivate relationships outside of the marital union. Yet, as children grow older and become more independent, parents are allotted increased free-time.

Ishii-Kuntz and Seccombe's (1989) study revealed that parents with preschool-aged children had the least amount of contact with friends, involvement in their neighborhood, and the least amount of marital support. As much as having young children has been found to restrict the time available to meet people outside of the home, Terhell et al. found that being restricted to the local neighborhood increases the frequency of interactions with neighbors and other parents (2004). Childless persons in Ishii-Kuntz and Seccombe's study were found to be deprived of social support from their neighborhood and social confidants, suggesting that couples' greater independence and parental freedom does not translate into being more socially engaged (1989).

Aside from the two-parent family, Research has suggested that single-parents experience more stress and less access to support networks than married couples (Simmons et al. 1993). The single-parents experience, in which most women typically experience a reduction in income with the transition to unmarried status, leads them to be less actively involved in support networks, and, in turn, affects well-being (Simmons et al. 1993). Research suggests that the increased economic hardship of single-parents is likely to reduce the amount of resources needed for social and recreational activities leading to a reduction in the amount of time spent with friends. Social support from friends and relatives has been found to be positively related to the well-being and morale of recently divorced adults (Simmons et al. 1993).

Gender

It is important to note the importance of the role of gender in of subjective well-being. Bernard's book *The Future of Marriage* (1972) suggests that marriage in the United States is beneficial to men and detrimental to women. For the past thirty years, this idea has laid the foundation for present research and theory on a range of related topics, such as offering explanation of marital dissolution, gender differences in mental health, division of household labor, and the physical and mental health consequences of women's social roles (Williams 2003). Since Bernard's seminal work on gender differences in regards to well-being among married and unmarried persons have received a great deal of attention (Mookherjee 1997; Williams 2003; Kurdek 2005; Kurdek 1991).

Some studies suggest that gender differences in the association of marital status with well-being have diminished (Williams 2003). Inconsistent with Bernard's gender ideology Waite and Gallagher's book *The Case for Marriage* (2000) posits that marriage presently provides mental health benefits for both men and women. However, observations on older adults, being never-married has been associated with a decrease in men's psychological well-being more so than women's (Williams 2003).

Mookherjee's (1997) focus was to examine the gender differences in perception of well-being among the married and unmarried population in the United States. The results of the study indicated a noteworthy difference in the perception of well-being between marital status and gender. Comparison between men and women as well as between marital status posited no significant difference, yet, comparison between unmarried men and women did reveal significant

difference on perception of well-being. Overall, women reported being more satisfied with life than men regardless of marital status. This finding challenges Bernard's contention, furthermore the findings suggest just the opposite that marriage enhanced perception of well-being for both men and women, and married women scored higher than married men on measures of perception of well-being (Mookherjee 1997).

Williams (2003) focused on assessing the gender differences in the effects of marital quality on well-being and whether it is worse for men and women to be unmarried or to exit the marriage through divorce rather than being in an unhappy marriage. The results of the study suggest that being in a rewarding and supportive marriage insinuates similar benefits to both men and women, and that dissolving such a marriage or being in an unhappy marriage confers similar costs. The researcher notes that it is unclear whether the present state of marriage is a product of the changes in women's status and economic opportunities, or whether it always existed (Williams 2003). The focus of the current analysis addresses the isolated effects on subjective well-being for women.

Dimensions of Subjective Well-Being

Physical Health

Divorce studies that focus on physical health or illness as a factor are rare and their findings are conflicting. There has been a vast amount of literature published regarding psychological distress and divorce, but very little on the implications divorce has on the effect of actual physical health (Cramer 1993).

Being married has been found to contribute positively to mental as well as physical health (Forste and Heaton 2004; Cramer 1993; Thorton 1985; Waite and Lehrer 2003). Married persons tend to have lower mortality and morbidity rates than non-married persons (Kitson and Morgan 1990; Cramer 1993; Wilson and Waddoups 2002). Married people are also less likely to suffer from long-term illness and disabilities (Waite and Lehrer 2003). Separated and divorced men, in contrast to married men, have a shorter life expectancy and are more likely to be hospitalized. Similarly, separated or divorced women have shorter life expectancies than married women. Hawkins (2005) discussion of physical health and the effect of being married states that the married lifestyle and the structure it provides works to promote healthy behaviors and discourages harmful acts. It has also been found that married persons can afford better medical care and obtain residency in safer communities.

In the social science research community there are two main processes that could be responsible for the health differences between marital status groups: selection perspective and

protection perspective (Kim and McKenry 2002; Joung et al. 1998; Waldron et al. 1997; Cramer 1993).

The selection perspective permits that good health conditions reported by married persons is a result of the selection bias of “healthy” persons into the marital arena and the amount of “unhealthy” persons in non-marital arena (Joung et al. 1998; Goldman 1993). In accordance with previous literature Goldman (1993) highlights that selection perspective should distinguish between direct selection and indirect selection. On the basis of direct selection, health status itself would be the sole criteria for selection. On the basis of indirect selection, less obvious determinants of health like alcoholism and socioeconomic status would be the selection criteria for marriage.

The protection perspective, on the other hand, states that marriage has a health promoting or protective effect, implying that being unmarried would have the opposite health effects (Kim and McKenry 2002). Similarly, Hawkins (2005) contends that more recent research portrays that about half of the health benefits derive from marriage itself. That is, the positive effects of marriage occur despite any previous selection bias into the marriage arena, so the protection perspective is superior to selection perspective in explanatory power.

Under both the marriage selection perspective and the protection perspective one could correctly assume that divorced individuals would be inherently less healthy. In the case of selection perspective, individuals might get divorced as a result of poor health. For instance, a pre-existing health problem could influence marital dissolution. Alternately, one may never marry if poor health conditions make them unattractive to a potential mate. Under the protection perspective one could assume that married people are healthier because they are married, that

marriage produces a protective effect, and that healthy people stay married or remarry more than less-healthy people.

Happiness

Just as being married has been found to contribute positively to physical health it also contributes to overall happiness (Waite and Lehrer 2003). In Waite and Gallagher's 2000 book *The Case for Marriage*, the researchers state that virtually every study of happiness that has ever been conducted has found that married men and women are happier than persons who are single. Campbell's research on the quality of life of married and divorced people found that divorced men and women felt more strongly than any other marital group that they had not had their full share of entitled happiness (1981). Likewise a study conducted by Lee et al. (1991) found that divorced individuals are generally found to have the lowest levels of reported well-being.

In accordance with the theories postulated regarding marriage on the effect of physical health, social scientists have also speculated that some of the advantages of the married may be due to the selection of happier persons into marriage and the greater chance of them staying married (Kamp Dush and Amato 2005; Hawkins 2005). Yet, current scholars and theorist have more readily adopted the position that the marital relationship itself has a positive effect on happiness levels and can explain more fully the relationship between marital status and reported happiness (Lee et al. 1991).

Kurdek (1991) posits that marital status has been the strongest correlate of reported happiness. Relative to persons who are not married, married people report higher levels of

personal happiness (Kurdek 1991; Forste and Heaton 2004). Glenn and Weaver's research conducted in 1988 compared the reported happiness across marital statuses from surveys conducted from 1977 through 1986. They found that during this time period, reported happiness in correlation to being married had steadily declined. The explanation for the decline in reported happiness was found to be in due part to the increased happiness of never-married males and the decrease in the reported happiness of married females (Glenn and Weaver 1988). The researchers close their study with the idea that the benefits traditionally associated with marriage such as financial security can today be obtained and sustained outside of the traditional marital union.

A study comparing the effects of long-term, low-quality marriages on well being was conducted by Hawkins (2005). This study examined the negative effects on well being that were produced by low-quality marriages. The researcher compared unhappily married individuals to continuously married individuals, people who divorced and remarried, and individuals who divorced remained unmarried. Hawkins' conclusion was that unhappily married people, compared to the continuously married group, suffered from lower levels of overall happiness. Divorced individuals who later remarried (as well as those who divorced and stayed unmarried) reported greater overall happiness than those who remained in an unhappy marriage (Hawkins 2005). The researcher concluded that unhappily married people who terminate low-quality marriages have greater chances of increasing personal happiness than those who remain married.

Waite and Gallagher (2000) found that, overall, married men and women report less depression, less anxiety, and lower levels of other types of distress than those who are single, divorced or widowed. Amongst their compiled research is a study of suicides in the U.S between 1979 and 1981. The study found both widowed and divorced persons were about three times as

likely to commit suicide as married persons were, and that divorced women were the most likely, followed by widowed, never-married, and married persons (Waite and Gallagher 2000).

Another piece of work reviewed by Waite and Gallagher was a study that investigated the changes in the emotional health of men and women from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s. Researchers Nadine Marks and James Lambert took into account the individual's present emotional health at the beginning of the study and monitored each male and female over a five year period. They measured emotional well-being across eleven domains such as happiness with life in general. Their findings suggested that when people marry their emotional well-being increases, alternatively people who separate or divorce suffer from decreased emotional well-being and declines and personal happiness. Waite and Gallagher (2000) explain that one possibility why married people are happier is because happier people find it easier to get and keep mates. The authors close with the idea that the happiness "boost" created from marriage is a function of the selection of individuals into and out of the marital union and that happy divorcees remarry disproportionately (Waite and Gallagher 2000).

Optimism

Optimism has been found to account for personal differences in well-being as well as shaping well-being (Turkum 2005). Grant and Higgins' (2003) research suggests that an optimistic individual is more adaptive to life changes and has more-stable coping abilities. The researchers define optimism as an individual's belief about the likelihood of obtaining positive outcomes in the future.

It could stand to reason that an optimistic divorced individual would be more adaptive to the transition from being married to being unmarried and would be better able to cope with the effects of divorce than a pessimistic divorcee. Research on optimism posits that optimistic expectancies give people a sense of success in life and allows for heightened resources and sustained motivation (Grant and Higgins 2003).

Yoder and Nichols (1980) focused their attention on attitudes related to marital dissolution. The study compared married and divorced people from the General Social Survey. The researchers identified attitudinal factors that are thought to predict marital dissolution. Life satisfaction and optimism were two attitudinal factors identified by the researchers as appropriate for analysis. Yoder and Nichols controlled for background and demographic variables in order to demonstrate that attitudes significantly differentiate groups defined by marital status. Their study revealed that, compared to married people, divorced people had a lower degree of satisfaction with life and reported less optimism about whether things were worthwhile (Yoder and Nichols 1980).

Summary

The preceding review of literature reveals that there are certain predicting variables associated with well-being; as discussed marital status, time period, cohort, social networks and gender . Age, race, income, education, religious attendance and region of residency has also been well documented as independent predictors of well-being (Ellison et al. 1989), therefore, they will be controlled for in the following analysis. Research has also postulated that life domains

such as, physical health, happiness, and life optimism are important dimensions of subjective assessments and well-being of individuals (Dzara 2005).

The analysis that follows will augment the existing body of literature by analyzing marital status and wellbeing. The impact of marital status, time period, cohort, and social networks will be employed to assess subjective well-being for women. Dimensions of subjective well-being that will be explored are the self-reported physical health, happiness, and reported life optimism. Comparisons will be made between two specific cohorts and time periods.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Secondary data is provided by the General Social Survey (GSS). It is the leading and longest-running research endeavor supported by the Sociology Program of the National Science Foundation (Smith 1999). The General Social Survey's core principles are to make timely, high quality, scientifically relevant data available to the social science research community (NORC, 2002). Since 1972 the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago has administered the GSS to gather data on American society. NORC is the oldest national survey research facility that is not-for-profit and university affiliated.

The General Social Survey emerged from the social indicator movement as a comprehensive effort to promote the use of social science to monitor trends relevant to sociological and psychological research (NORC, 2002). The survey contains core demographic and attitudinal variables in attempt to monitor and explain how and what social changes are occurring. Up until 1994 the GSS was an annual study with the average response rate of 76%, currently biennial over 40,000 persons has been interviewed (Smith 1999). The survey makes use of full probability sampling. Interviews are conducted in a personal manner to adults no younger than 18 years old who reside in households in the United States.

The impact of marital status, time period, cohort, and social networks will be employed to assess subjective wellbeing. Dimensions of subjective wellbeing that will be explored are self-reported physical health, happiness, and reported life optimism. Comparisons will be made between two specific cohorts and time periods in an attempt to examine potential variation across perceptions of well-being across a twenty year time period. The first time period combines

survey years 1980-1984 and the second time period combines the survey years 2000-2004 for the twenty year comparison.

Dependent Variables

The multiple dimensions of subjective well-being that will be applied as indicators of quality of life are the reported physical health, happiness, and reported life optimism. The dependent variables are chosen for their relation to quality of life, as well as indicators of subjective well-being (Dzara 2005).

The first dependent variable assesses the overall physical health of the respondent. The General Social Survey (GSS) asks “Would you say your own health, in general, is excellent, good, fair, or poor?” The responses are coded; Excellent (01), Good (02), Fair (03), Poor (04), Don’t Know (08), No Answer (09), and Not Applicable (BK). To provide consistency throughout the research project, a new variable is created. Excellent (01) is recoded to (04), Good (02) is recoded to (03), Fair (03) is recoded to (02), Poor (04) is recoded to (01). Don’t know (08), No answer (09) and Not applicable (BK) are recoded as missing (SYSMIS)

The second dependent variable employed as a measure of well-being is reported happiness. The question used to measure happiness by GSS is stated as the following; “Taken all together, how would you say things are these days--would you that you are very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?” Responses are coded as, Very Happy (01), Pretty Happy (02), Not too Happy (03), Don’t Know (08), No Answer (09). A dichotomous variable is created for logistic regression analysis. The created variable has Very Happy (01) and Pretty Happy (02) recoded to

(01) and Not too Happy (03) recoded to (0). Don't know (08), No answer (09) and Not applicable (BK) are recoded as missing (SYSMIS).

The last dependent variable is serving as a proxy for life outlook; seen as an important dimension of subjective well-being. GSS asks, "In general, do you find life exciting, pretty routine, or dull?" Responses are coded as Exciting (01), Routine (02), Dull (03), No Opinion (08), No Answer (09), and Not Applicable (BK). A dichotomous variable is created for logistic regression. The created variable has Exciting (01) recoded to (1) and Routine (02) and Dull (03) recoded to (0). Don't know (08), No answer (09) and Not applicable (BK) are recoded as missing (SYSMIS).

Independent Variables

The Independent variables used in this study is marital status, gender, and social networks. The impact of the independent variables will be employed to assess multiple dimensions of subjective well-being of cohorts between a twenty year time period.

The first independent variable is the respondent's marital status. The GSS asks "Are you currently—married, widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never been married?" Responses are coded Married (01), Widowed (02), Divorced (03), Separated (04), Never Married (05), and No Answer (09). Marital status will be represented by creating dummy variables for married respondents, and never married respondents. Respondents who are divorced and separated will be combined and collapsed as the third dummy variable for marital status; widowed respondents are omitted from the proposed analysis.

A Variable will be constructed using interaction terms to represent divorced female respondents. In addition, variable representing cohort specific divorced female respondents will be created facilitating the same strategy (i.e., divorced Baby Boom and divorced Generation X women).

The third independent variable used to assess subjective well-being is the respondents social network. Two questions are used for the final independent variable. Social networks involving relatives and social networks that operate outside family unit. GSS asks the respondent “How often do you spend a social evening with relatives?” The use of this question is used with the assumption that the “social” context of the evening is a pleasurable, non-forced event, serving as positive relation to well-being. Responses are coded Almost every day (01), Once or twice a week (02), Several times a month (03), About once a month (04), Several times a year (05), About once a year (06), Never (07), Don’t know (08), No answer (09), and Not Applicable (BK). To provide consistency throughout the research project, a new variable is created. Almost every day (01) is recoded to (07), Once or twice a week (02) is recoded to (06), Several times a month (03), About once a month (04) is recoded to (04), Several times a year (05) is recoded to (03), About once a year (06) is recoded to (02), Never (07) is recoded to (01). Don’t know (08), No answer (09) and Not applicable (BK) are recoded as missing (SYSMIS).

The second measure of social networks on subjective well-being is stated by the GSS as, “How much satisfaction do you get from your friendships?” This question is used with the assumption that having satisfying friendship(s), regardless of frequency or duration of contact holds a positive association with well-being. Responses for the second question are coded A very great deal (01), A great deal (02), Quite a bit (03), A fair amount (04), Some (05), A little (06), None (07), Don’t know (08), No answer (09), and Not applicable (BK). To provide consistency

throughout the research project, a new variable is created. A very great deal (01) is recoded to (07), A great deal (02) is recoded to (06), Quite a bit (03) is recoded to (05), A fair amount (04) is recoded to (04), Some (05) is recoded to (03), A little (06) is recoded to (02), None (07) is recoded to (1). Don't know (8), No answer (9) and Not applicable (BK) are recoded as missing (SYSMIS).

Control Variables

The objective of this study is to examine potential variation across perceptions of well-being among a twenty year time period. Impact of marital status, cohort affiliation and social networks will be employed to assess subjective wellbeing. Age, Race, education, income, attendance at religious services and region of residency will be used as control variables.

The respondent's age is measured in actual age. No answer and Don't know (09) are recoded as missing (SYSMIS).

The second variable used to isolate the effects of the independent variables is the respondent's race. The GSS asks "what race do you consider yourself?" Responses are arbitrarily coded as (01) White, (02) Black, and (03) Other. A dummy variable will be created to represent African American respondents with the "other" category omitted from the analysis.

Education will be measured using actual years of schooling. The GSS uses a 20 point scale for years of formal schooling. Coding is constructed by the use of actual years of formal education and is based on completion of the specified grade level. No formal schooling is coded (00), 1st grade (01), 2nd grade (02), 3rd grade (03), this sequence of coding follows with a

numerical pattern reaching the highest level of formal schooling; completion of eight years of college coded as (20). Don't know (98) and No Answer coded as (99) are recoded as missing (SYSMIS).

Income is the third control variable. The GSS asks "In which group does your family income, from all sources, fall last year before taxes?" For years 1980 and 1982-1984 GSS coded income on a 17 point scale. Family incomes under 1,000 are coded (01), family incomes between 1,000 to 2,999 are coded (02), family incomes between 3,000 to 3,999 are coded (03), family incomes between 4,000 to 4,999 are coded (04), family incomes between 5,000 to 5,999 are coded (05), family incomes between 6,000 to 6,999 are coded (06), family incomes between 7,000 to 7,999 are coded (07), family incomes between 8,000 to 8,999 are coded (08), family incomes between 9,000 to 9,999 are coded (09), family incomes between 10,000 to 12,499 are coded (10), family incomes between 12,500 to 17,499 are coded (11), family incomes between 17,500 to 19,999 are coded (12), family incomes between 20,000 to 22,499 are coded (13), family incomes between 22,500 to 24,999 are coded (14), family incomes between 25,000 to 34,999 are coded (15), family incomes between 35,000 to 49,000 are coded (16), family incomes 50,000 or over are coded (17), Refused, (18) Don't Know, (98) No answer (99), and (BK) Not applicable. Income is rescaled to percentages to standardized the measurement across years (Gay and Campbell 1991).

For the years 2000-2004 GSS measured family income on a 23 point scale. Family incomes between under 1,000 are coded (01), family incomes between 1,000 to 2,999 are coded (02), family incomes between 3,000 to 3,999 are coded (03), family incomes between 4,000 to 4,999 are coded (04), family incomes between 5,000 to 5,999 are coded (05), family incomes between 6,000 to 6,999 are coded (06), family incomes between 7,000 to 7,999 are coded (07),

family incomes between 8,000 to 8,999 are coded (08), family incomes between 9,000 to 9,999 are coded (09), family incomes between 10,000 to 12,499 are coded (10), family incomes between 12,500 to 17,499 are coded (11), family incomes between 17,500 to 19,999 are coded (12), family incomes between 20,000 to 22,499 are coded (13), family incomes between 22,500 to 24,999 are coded (14), family incomes between 25,000 to 29,999 are coded (15), family incomes between 30,000 to 34,999 are coded (16), family incomes between 35,000 to 39,999 are coded (17), family incomes between 40,000 to 49,999 are coded (18), family incomes between 50,000 to 59,000 are coded (19), family incomes between 60,000 to 74,999 are coded (20), family incomes between 75,000 to 89,999 are coded (21), family incomes between 90,000 to 109,999 are coded (22), family incomes 110,000 or over are coded (23), Refused is coded (24), Don't Know is coded (98), No answer is coded (99), and Not applicable is coded (BK). Income is rescaled to percentages to standardized the measurement across years (Gay and Campbell 1991).

The fifth control variable used to isolate the effects of the independent variables is the attendance of religious services. GSS poses "How often do attend religious services?" Responses are coded as, Never (0), Less than once a year (01), About once or twice a year (02), Several times a year (03), About once a year (04), 2-3 times a month (05), Nearly every week (06), Every week (07), Several times a week (08), No answer and Don't know (09). No answer and Don't know (9) are recoded as missing (SYSMIS).

The final control variable employed is the respondents region of residency. The GSS researcher documents the region of the interview, coded as the following: New England (01), Mid Atlantic (02), East North Central (03), West North Central (04), South Atlantic (05), East South Central (06), West South Central (07), Mountain (08), and Pacific (09). South Atlantic

(05), East South Central (06) and West South Central (07) will be used to create a dummy variable to represent southern residence

Analytical Strategy

Multiple regression and logistic regression are employed to examine the effects of marital status, gender, social support and networks on the dependent variables that tap the dimensions of subjective well-being. The analysis controls for age, race, education, income, religious attendance and region of residence.

The analysis generates five tables. Table 1 includes means and standard deviations for the dependent, independent, and control variables for the years 1980-1984. Table 2 includes descriptive statistics for the dependent, independent, and control variables for the years 2000-2004. Table 3 reports the multiple regression results for effects of marital status, cohort, social networks, and sociodemographic variables on subjective perception of health. Table 3 has an overall total of four models. For each time period 1980-1984 and 2000-2004, there are two models. Model 1 reports appropriate results for independent variables with the control variables omitted from the analysis. Model 2 reports appropriate results for the independent variables while taking the control variables in account.

Table, 4 and 5 report the logistic regression results for the effects of marital status, cohort, social networks, and sociodemographic variables on subjective perception of happiness and life outlook. In similar fashion as Table 3, Tables 4 and 5 present a total of four models. For each time period 1980-1984 and 2000-2004, there are two models. Model 1 reports appropriate results for independent variables with the control variables omitted from the analysis. Model 2

reports appropriate results for the independent variables while taking the control variables in account.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Table 1 displays descriptive statistics for the dependent, independent, and control variables for 1980-1984. Table 2 displays descriptive statistics for the dependent, independent, and control variables for 2000-2004. Dependent variables are listed as physical health, general happiness, and life outlook. Marital status, social network, and cohort affiliation maintain their position as independent variables. The control variables presented in the analysis are age, race, education, income, religious attendance and region of residence.

Descriptive statistics for the years 1980-1984 are presented in Table 1. A total of 873 respondents were asked to rate their physical health on a 4 point scale; mean score reported as (3.031), standard deviation (.827). General happiness is recoded from a 3 point scale to a dichotomous variable (1 = very happy, pretty happy, 0 = not too happy). A total of 1654 respondents were asked to report their general happiness. Respondents mean score for general happiness (.882) indicates that 88.20 percent of the sample reports happiness and the standard deviation is (.323). Life outlook is recoded from a 3 point scale to a dichotomous variable (1 = exciting, 0 = routine, dull). A total of 886 respondents were asked to report their life outlook. Respondents mean score for life outlook (.441) indicates that 44.10 percent of the sample report optimistic outlooks with a standard deviation of (.497). Means and standard deviations for the independent and control variables are reported respectively.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for the Dependent, Independent, and Control Variables 1980-1984
*(N)

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Physical Health	3.031	.827	1-4
General Happiness	.882	.323	0-1
Life Outlook	.441	.497	0-1
Divorced	.191	.393	0-1
Single	.180	.384	0-1
Friends Social	4.113	1.547	1-7
Family Social	4.604	1.576	1-7
Baby Boom Generation	.377	.485	0-1
Baby Boom Divorced	.064	.245	0-1
Age	40.88	15.641	18-89
African-American	.176	.381	0-1
Education	12.33	2.767	0-20
Income	53.354	29.971	0-100
Religious Attendance	4.37	2.625	0-8
Southern Residency	.341	.474	0-1

* Physical Health = (873)

* General Happiness = (1654)

* Life Outlook = (886)

* For all other Variables = (1654)

Descriptive statistics for the years 2000-2004 are presented in Table 2. A total of 989 respondents were asked to rate their physical health on a 4 point scale; mean score reported as (3.069) standard deviation is (.813). General happiness is recoded from a 3 point scale to a dichotomous variable (1 = very happy, pretty happy, 0 = not too happy). A total of 1763 respondents were asked to report their general happiness. Respondents mean score for general happiness (.891) indicates that 89.10 percent of the sample reports happiness and the standard deviation is (.312). Life outlook is recoded from a 3 point scale to a dichotomous variable (1 = exciting, 0 = routine, dull). A total of 839 respondents were asked to report their life outlook. Respondents mean score for life outlook (.465) indicates that 46.50 percent of the sample report optimistic life outlooks with a standard deviation of (.498). Means and standard deviations for the independent and control variables are reported respectively.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for the Dependent, Independent, and Control Variables 2000-2004

* (N)

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Physical Health	3.069	.813	1-4
General Happiness	.891	.312	0-1
Life Outlook	.465	.499	0-1
Divorced	.233	.423	0-1
Single	.248	.432	0-1
Friends Social	4.163	1.550	1-7
Family Social	4.720	1.608	1-7
Baby Boom Generation	.231	.421	0-1
Baby Boom Divorced	.064	.249	0-1
Generation X	.250	.433	0-1
Generation X Divorced	.041	.198	0-1
Age	43.13	15.193	18-89
African-American	.178	.383	0-1
Education	13.55	2.681	0-20
Income	56.414	30.730	0-100
Religious Attendance	3.92	2.716	0-8
Southern Residency	.369	.483	0-1

* Physical Health = (989)

* General Happiness = (1763)

* Life Outlook = (839)

* For all other Variables = (1763)

Table 3 reports the multiple regression results for effects of marital status, cohort, social networks, and sociodemographic variables on subjective perception of health. Table 3 has an overall total of four models. For each time period 1980-1984 and 2000-2004, there are two models. Model 1 reports appropriate results for independent variables with the control variables omitted from the analysis. Model 2 reports appropriate results for the independent variables while taking the control variables in account. The results report unstandardized regression coefficient/standardized (beta) coefficient with the standard error given in parentheses.

Independent variables marked by an asterisk sign denote statistical significance; p-value of .05 or less. The unstandardized coefficient tells us about the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. For example, the coefficient for divorced respondents (-.171) demonstrates that these respondents report lower levels of subjective health before controlling for all other independent variables in the model. For the 1980-1984 time period model 1 accounts for .061 proportion of the variance on subjective health.

Table 3 model 1 shows that being divorced and spending time with family have negative effects on subjective health. Time spent with friends, as well as being part of the Baby Boom Generation have a positive effect on subjective health. Model 2 displays findings when the control variables are included in the regression analysis of subjective health. Being divorced is no longer significant, yet being single reports significance, having a negative effect on subjective health. Time spent with family also loses significance when holding the control variables constant, yet time spent with friends' still shows a positive effect on subjective health. There is a negative effect on subjective health for the Baby boom divorcees, while there is a positive effect for education, age and religious attendance. Race and southern residency exhibit negative effect

upon subjective health. For the 1980-1984 time period model 2 accounts for .172 proportion of the variance on subjective health

Model 3 presents the findings for the year 2000-2004, being divorced has negative effects on subjective health. Time spent with family and time spent with friends has a positive effect on subjective health. Cohort affiliations for both years have positive effects on subjective health. For the 2000-2004 time period model 3 accounts for .050 proportion of the variance on subjective health. Model 4 displays findings when the control variables are included in the regression analysis of subjective health. Being divorced has no effect on subjective health; time spent with family has a positive effect on subjective health. There is a positive effect on subjective health for the Baby boom divorcees. Education, income, and religious attendance have positive effects on subjective health, while age has a negative effect. For the 2000-2004 time period model 4 accounts for .171 proportion of the variance on subjective health.

Table 3 Multiple Regression Results: Effects of Marital Status, Cohort, Social Networks, and Sociodemographic Variables on Subjective Perception of Health

<u>Independent Variable</u>	<u>1980-1984</u>		<u>2000-2004</u>	
	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>	<u>Model 3</u>	<u>Model 4</u>
Divorced Respondents	-.171/-.085* .069	.105/.052 .084	-.207/-.107* .065	-.097/-.050 .087
Never Married Respondents	-.124/-.060 .072	-.167/-.081* .076	-.046/-.025 .062	.056/.031 .068
Time Spent With Family	-.039/-.075* .017	-.017/-.034 .017	.041/.079* .016	.042/.081* .016
Time Spent With Friends	.105/.195* .019	.047/.086* .018	.064/.120* .017	.020/.039 .016
Baby Boom Generation Age 24-34 1946-1960	.193/.112* .058	.072/.042 .076	.194/.101* .064	.017/.009 .072
Baby Boom Divorcees Age 24-34 1946-1960	-----	-.442/-.132* .132	-----	-----
Baby Boom Divorcees Age 44-54 1946-1960	-----	-----	-----	.251/.082* .132
Generation X Age 24-34 1966-1980	-----	-----	.196/.102* .064	.059/.031 .073
Generation X Divorcees Age 24-34 1966-1980	-----	-----	-----	.134/.028 .169
Education	-----	.057/.193* .011	-----	.060/.196* .010

<u>Independent Variable</u>	<u>1980-1984</u>		<u>2000-2004</u>	
	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>	<u>Model 3</u>	<u>Model 4</u>
Age	-----	-.011/-.203* .002	-----	-.007/-.132* .002
Family Income	-----	.002/.068 .001	-----	.005/.175* .001
Southern Residence	-----	-.161/-.094* .057	-----	-.081/-.047 .052
African Americans	-----	-.165/-.091* .062	-----	-.111/-.054 .067
Religious Attendance	-----	.037/.112* .011	-----	.029/.095* .009
Intercept	2.778	2.540	2.553	1.922
N	873	873	989	989
R2	.061	.172	.050	.171

Note: Cell entries are given as unstandardized regression coefficient/standardized (beta) coefficient with the standard error given in parentheses.

* p<.05 ** p<.01

Table 4 reports the logistic regression results for effects of marital status, cohort, social networks, and sociodemographic variables on subjective perception of happiness. Table 4 has an overall total of four models. For each time period 1980-1984 and 2000-2004, there are two models. Model 1 reports appropriate results for independent variables with the control variables omitted from the analysis. Model 2 reports appropriate results for the independent variables while taking the control variables in account. The results are reported as logistic regression coefficient/odds ratio with the standard error given in parentheses. For example, the logistic regression coefficient for divorced respondents (-.907) indicates that they are less likely than married respondents to report higher levels of happiness.

The chi-square statistic for model 1 is (40.588). Table 4 model 1 divorced and never married respondents are less likely than married respondents to report higher levels of happiness. Time spent with friends is more likely to increase subjective happiness. The chi-square statistic for model 2 is (137.097). Model 2 displays findings when the control variables are included in the regression analysis of subjective happiness. Marital status and time spent with family and friends are no longer significant. Education, age, income, and religious attendance are more likely to increase subjective happiness as opposed to race, which displays a more likely decrease in subjective happiness.

The chi-square statistic for model 3 is (46.850). Model 3 presents the findings for the year 2000-2004, reporting the results for independent variables with the control variables omitted from the analysis. Divorced and never married respondents are less likely than married respondents to report higher levels of happiness. Time spent with friends and time spent with family is more likely to increase subjective happiness. The chi-square statistic for model 4 is (98.673). Model 4 displays findings when the control variables are included in the regression analysis of subjective happiness. Divorced respondents are less likely than married respondents to report higher levels of happiness. Time spent family is more likely to increase subjective happiness. Education, income, and religious attendance are also more likely to increase subjective happiness. Southern Residency reports an increase in subjective happiness, while being from African-American descent displays a more likely decrease in subjective happiness.

Table 4 Logistic Regression Results: Effects of Marital Status, Cohort, Social Networks, and Sociodemographic Variables on Subjective Perception of Happiness

<u>Independent Variable</u>	<u>1980-1984</u>		<u>2000-2004</u>	
	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>	<u>Model 3</u>	<u>Model 4</u>
Divorced Respondents	-.907/.404* .180	-.155/.891 .249	-.990/.371* .192	-.564/.569* .275
Never Married Respondents	-.878/.416* .191	-.297/.743 .227	-.709.492* .202	-.254/.776 .247
Time Spent With Family	.044/1.045 .047	.081/1.085 .049	.145/1.157* .048	.158/1.171* .051
Time Spent With Friends	.134/1.143* .048	.044/1.044 .052	.123/1.131* .050	.034/1.035 .054
Baby Boom Generation Age 24-34 1946-1960	-.045/.956 .162	.409/1.505 .222	.030/1.031 .198	-.209/.811 .272
Baby Boom Divorcees Age 24-34 1946-1960	-----	-.671/.511 .366	-----	-----
Baby Boom Divorcees Age 44-54 1946-1960	-----	-----	-----	-.026/.974 .426
Generation X Age 24-34 1966-1980	-----	-----	.182/1.200 .204	.311/1.365 .270
Generation X Divorcees Age 24-34 1966-1980	-----	-----	-----	.164/1.178 .529
Education	-----	.114/1.121* .033	-----	.093/1.097* .035

<u>Independent Variable</u>	<u>1980-1984</u>		<u>2000-2004</u>	
	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>	<u>Model 3</u>	<u>Model 4</u>
Age	-----	.016/1.016* .007	-----	.004/1.004 .007
Family Income	-----	.009/1.009* .003	-----	.013/1.013* .003
Southern Residence	-----	-.006/.994 .173	-----	.564/1.757* .192
African Americans	-----	-1.036/.355* .178	-----	-.507/.602* .212
Religious Attendance	-----	.137/1.146* .032	-----	.072/1.075* .033
Intercept	1.650	-1.222	1.450	-.837
N	1654	1626	1763	1618
Chi-Square	40.588	137.097	46.850	98.673

Note: Cell entries are given as logistic regression coefficient/odds ratio with the standard error given in parentheses.

* p<.05 ** p<.01

Table 5 reports the logistic regression results for effects of marital status, cohort, social networks, and sociodemographic variables on subjective perception of life outlook. Table 5 has an overall total of four models. For each time period 1980-1984 and 2000-2004, there are two models. The chi-square statistic for model 1 is (35.301). Model 1 reports appropriate results for independent variables with the control variables omitted from the analysis. Model 2 reports appropriate results for the independent variables while taking the control variables in account. The results report as logistic regression coefficient/odds ratio with the standard error given in parentheses. For example, the logistic regression coefficient for divorced respondents (-.411) indicates that they are less likely than married respondents to report optimistic life outlooks.

Table 5 model 1 divorced respondents are less likely than married respondents to report optimistic life outlooks. Time spent with friends is more likely to increase optimistic life outlooks. The chi-square statistic for model 2 is (97.401). Model 2 displays findings when the control variables are included in the regression analysis of subjective life outlook. Time spent with friends, education, and religious attendance is more likely to increase optimistic life outlooks. Being from an African-American descent is reported to more likely to decrease optimistic life outlook or more likely to increase a pessimistic life outlook.

The chi-square statistic for model 3 is (32.192). Model 3 presents the findings for the year 2000-2004, reporting the results for independent variables with the control variables omitted from the analysis. Time spent with friends is more likely to increase optimistic life outlooks. The chi-square statistic for model 4 is (86.181). Model 4 displays findings when the control variables are included in the regression analysis of subjective life outlook. Time spent with friends is more likely to increase optimistic life outlooks. The Baby boom generation female divorcees report that they are less likely to have optimistic life outlooks or that they are more likely to have pessimistic life outlooks. Education and religious attendance are more likely to increase optimistic life outlooks.

Table 5 Logistic Regression Results: Effects of Marital Status, Cohort, Social Networks, and Sociodemographic Variables on Subjective Perception of Life Outlook

<u>Independent Variable</u>	<u>1980-1984</u>		<u>2000-2004</u>	
	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>	<u>Model 3</u>	<u>Model 4</u>
Divorced Respondents	-.411/.663* .177	-.214/.807 .236	-.199/.820 .181	.412/1.509 .270
Never Married Respondents	-.324/.723 .184	-.329/.720 .216	-.125/.882 .171	.129/1.138 .217
Time Spent With Family	-.004/996 .044	.021/1.022 .048	-.003/997 .044	.018/1.018 .050
Time Spent With Friends	.261/1.298* .049	.205/1.227* .054	.260/1.297* .048	.176/1.192* .053
Baby Boom Generation Age 24-34 1946-1960	-.185/.831 .151	-.291/.747 .201	-.016/.984 .180	.177/1.193 .230
Baby Boom Divorcees Age 24-34 1946-1960	-----	.028/1.029 .386	-----	-----
Baby Boom Divorcees Age 44-54 1946-1960	-----	-----	-----	-1.227/.293* .441
Generation X Age 24-34 1966-1980	-----	-----	-.122/.885 .174	-.157/.855 .226
Generation X Divorcees Age 24-34 1966-1980	-----	-----	-----	.018/1.019 .525
Education	-----	.177/1.194* .031	-----	.131/1.140* .034

<u>Independent Variable</u>	<u>1980-1984</u>		<u>2000-2004</u>	
	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>	<u>Model 3</u>	<u>Model 4</u>
Age	-----	-.002/.998 .006	-----	-.007/.993 .006
Family Income	-----	.001/1.001 .003	-----	.006/1.006 .003
Southern Residence	-----	-.089/.915 .159	-----	.018/1.018 .164
African Americans	-----	-.407/.666* .176	-----	-.314/.731 .217
Religious Attendance	-----	.115/1.122* .031	-----	.102/1.107* .029
Intercept	-1.152	-3.568	-1.140	-3.179
N	886	870	839	760
Chi-Square	35.301	97.401	32.192	86.181

Note: Cell entries are given as logistic regression coefficient/odds ratio with the standard error given in parentheses.

* p<.05 ** p<.01

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to augment the existing literature concerning the relationship between marital status, social networks, and cohort effect on dimensions of subjective well-being. Multiple dimensions of subjective well-being analyzed were perceptions of physical health, happiness, and reported life outlook. Research provided explored the differential impact of social networks on subjective well-being across marital status and gender. The analysis attempted to show variation within a twenty year time period by comparing the Baby Boom cohort to Generation X. Multiple and logistic regressions are reported for the female population. That is, all respondents in the sample are women.

For each time period it is apparent that there is some inconsistency with the results and the presented literature. The literature provides that married people are less likely to suffer from long-term illness and disabilities and that separated and divorced women were presumed to have shorter life expectancies than married women. In regards to happiness, research implied that virtually every study of happiness that had ever been conducted had found that married men and women are happier than persons who are single. The research by Lee et al. (1991) found that divorced individuals are generally found to have the lowest levels of reported well-being. The literature acknowledges that, compared to married people, divorced people had a lower degree of satisfaction with life and reported less optimism about whether things were worthwhile (Yoder and Nichols 1980). The control variables in the study were found to be greater predictors of subjective well-being rather than the assumed independent variables; although, the effects of marital status, cohort, and social involvement postulated noteworthy findings.

The first dimension of subjective well-being analyzed was self-reported physical health. For the years 1980-1984, the findings report that being divorced has neither a positive nor negative effect. Yet, compared to married women, being a separated woman has a negative effect on physical health. Also, Affiliation with the Baby Boom generation being a woman who is separated has a negative effect on subjective health. The only independent variable found to have statistical significance was time spent with friends, having a positive effect on subjective health.

For the years 2000-2004, findings report that the only variable having a negative effect on subjective health was age. Time spent with family in the years 2000-2004 proved to have a positive effect on subjective health. Divorced women from the Baby Boom generation in 2000-2004 now report a positive effect on subjective health. That is, the divorced women in 1980-1984 reported negative effects, twenty years later they reported positive effects.

One explanation for this outcome could be that separated women, twenty years ago were confronted with different challenges and hurdles than separated women today. Social changes in the traditional expectations of work, family and world view may contribute to this assumption. Women today have increased independence in public and private spheres. That is, it is now easier for women to participate in the paid workforce; not confined to her husband's income or alimony. Therefore, the increase in subjective health over twenty years may be the result of women participating in the paid workforce, which enable them to be eligible for health benefits, thus, increasing subjective health.

Social support was found to have positive effects on subjective health; one explanation of this could be what is stated in the literature, that the sense of being cared for and valued as person by friends or family is an important factor in a person's perception of physical health.

That being cared for and about will reduce the likelihood of being involved in detrimental activities.

The second variable employed as an indicator of subjective well-being was reported happiness. For the years 1980-1984, the variable found to decrease subjective happiness was the ascription to the African-American descent. Variables found to increase subjective happiness were education, income, and religious attendance.

For the years 2000-2004, divorced women compared to married women reported lower levels of subjective happiness; which is consistent with the literature provided. The only independent variable found to be of significance is time spent with family, which is also true for subjective health; that is, time spent with family in 2000-2004 has the ability to increase subjective happiness.

One assumption that may prove to be valid is the notion that existing marriages today, married women are happier because they have disengaged from unhappy marital unions, have since remarried increasing personal happiness. One explanation for divorced women being more unhappy than married women is that they are suffering the repercussions of marital dissolution, that they forced to take on the role of the breadwinner, professional, parent, and homemaker. That is the general stressors associated with being a divorcee may lower subjective happiness.

Spending time with family increases subjective happiness; this may be due in part because of the caring, nurturance and aid that family typically provides to an individual.

The third and final indicator of subjective well-being employed in the analysis is respondents overall outlook on life. For the years 1980-1984, findings report that being from the African-American descent was more likely to decrease life outlook or that, females in 1980-1984 who ascribed to the African-American ethnicity had a more pessimistic life outlook, rather an

optimistic outlook. The only independent variable found to have statistical significance was time spent with friends; increasing the likelihood of perceiving life optimistically. Education and religious attendance were also found to increase life outlook.

For the years 2000-2004, the first independent variable of statistical significance was the ascription to the Baby Boom generation. That is, woman who are divorced, born between 1946-1960, now in 2004 are between the ages of 44-54 imply a lesser likeliness to report having an optimistic life outlook. The second independent variable of statistical significance was time spent with friends; increasing the likelihood of viewing life with optimism.

One possible explanation for the increase in perceiving life optimistically, is that spending time with friends validates a person as an individual. Having someone to confide in outside to the family unit may increase self esteem and the belief about obtaining positive life outcomes. The decrease in optimism from divorced women today from the Baby Boom generation could be explained by personal disposition and life events. That is divorced women 44-54, come from a time period where women were supposed to be married. They may feel that they are not complete without a marriage and that they do not view their future as having many more positive outcomes.

One purpose of the analysis was to highlight any variation among the Baby Boom generation and Generation X. The only noteworthy finding was that being a female divorcee age 24-34 in 1980-1984 reported a negative effect on subjective health. While the divorced cohort now 44-54 report a positive effect on subjective health. This variation could be due in part to what is stated above or in part due to the increased general awareness of physical health.

In regards to marital status as a predictor of subjective well-being, female divorcees compared to female married respondents in 2000-2004 reported lower levels of subjective

happiness. The Baby Boom female divorcees in 2000-2004 also report that they are less likely to view life with optimism. This life outlook taken by this specific cohort could be explained by the discussion presented in the literature on age and life stages, that there are periods in the life course that are marked by transitory and stable periods. Transitory periods between stable periods present the chances of personal distress, where stable periods increase the likelihood of positive well-being (Gay and Campbell 1991). It could be possible that female divorcees age 44-54 are experiencing some variation of personal distress associated with life transitions.

Social networks and support seem to be the most consistent independent predictor of well-being in the analysis. Holding constant in each table presented except for the years 1980-1984 tapping subjective happiness. Yet, there seems to be inconsistent findings on what type of social support is most significant. In regards to subjective health, social contact outside the family unit proved significant for the years 1980-1984, as opposed to time spent with family in 2000-2004. Time spent with family in 2000-2004 proved to be significant, increasing subjective happiness. Time spent with friends for both time periods increased the likelihood of viewing life optimistically. These findings on social networks are congruent with the literature presented; that, social support from friends and relatives are positively related to well-being and moral (Simmons et al. 1993).

The control variables in the study were found to have the most constant effect on subjective well-being. Education, income and religious attendance report greater predictors than the assumed independent variables. Race was also found to be a general predictor of subjective well-being, although having a negative effect on health and decreasing the view of life optimistically.

The findings reported within this research are intended to augment the existing literature on subjective well-being. The findings presented vary with significance challenging some the literature presented.

Future replication of this study may want to include the male population, the research presented on gender generally found that women report overall higher quality of lives, being more satisfied with life than men regardless of marital status. Therefore women were singled out under this assumption. It would be interesting to investigate the well-being of males, attempting to show variation from the 1980's to 2004, as well as the inclusion of the previous generation to the Baby Boom cohort; the Baby Bust cohort. The inclusion of the Baby Bust cohort may show a larger variation of subjective well-being. As stated in the literature review members from differing cohorts are faced with problems that previous or future cohorts may or may not have experienced. The Baby Bust cohort preceding and birthing the Baby Boom cohort witnessed problems that they themselves were not faced with, just as Generation X has been faced with differing problems from the previous generation.

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