

The Nature and Predictors of Changes in Marital Satisfaction over the First 3 Years of Marriage

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This study estimated the trajectory of change in marital satisfaction for newlywed couples over the first 3 years of marriage. In addition, this study examined the longitudinal relationships among marital interaction (intimate interaction and negative behaviors), relationships with in-laws, and marital satisfaction, as well as spousal influences in such longitudinal relationships. A total of 128 newlywed couples from Taipei City provided 3 waves of data, which were analyzed by conducting growth curve modeling. Both the husbands and wives examined in this study began their trajectories of change at relatively high levels of marital satisfaction but showed a linear decline over time. The changes in newlywed marital satisfaction were mainly associated with the changes in intimate interaction and the relationships with in-laws rather than with the initial conditions of those factors. These results were consistent with the prediction of the reciprocal change hypothesis. Whereas the wives' negative behaviors were not associated with the initial state of the husbands' marital satisfaction, changes in wives' negative behaviors predicted those in husbands' marital satisfaction. However, although the husbands' negative behaviors affected the initial state of the wives' marital satisfaction, time-varying negative behaviors of the husbands were not associated with the changes in wives' marital satisfaction. This showed that the partner effect of negative behaviors on the husbands' marital satisfaction was instantaneous, whereas that on the wives' marital satisfaction was long-term. The initial state and change in the couples' marital satisfaction were associated with the relationships between the wives and their in-laws, indicating that maintaining favorable relationships between the wives and their in-laws had a positive effect on the marital satisfaction of both the husbands and wives.

Keywords: *growth curve modeling, marital satisfaction, newlywed couples*