

WOMEN IN PANAMA: THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF MARRIAGE  
AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN

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AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of Problem and Need for Research

As interaction between the people of different lands and cultures becomes more common, knowledge of different people becomes more crucial and valuable. A common denominator in all cultures is the existence of some type of family organization. Understanding the nature and characteristics of family interaction in Latin America is important to people indigenous to Latin America and those who are not. Edelmann (1965) states that

The family is easily one of the most important institutions in Latin America. As the primary group in society, it exerts a greater influence on the individual than does any other group . . . . The family and its role is of interest to us not only as a key social unit but also as one of the major influences shaping the nation's political and economic development (p. 85).

Rivera (1971, p. 57) agrees: "The family is the microcosmos of the Latin American universe . . . . In my view, there is no other institution that penetrates the Latin culture so thoroughly." In view of the recognized importance of the family in Latin America, the tremendous lack of research concerning the Latin American family is surprising.

Basic to understanding the family of Latin America is understanding the husband-wife relationship and perceptions of appropriate sex-roles. A review of literature reveals that very little research has been done in Panama concerning marriage and sex-roles. This lack of research

perpetuates the cloud of mystery surrounding the Panamanian family and Panamanian women's roles as they undergo the tremendous changes of modern society.

The twentieth century has brought increasing pressures in the customary patterns of the male-female relationships, on family traditions, and on the general social fabric, especially in light of the subtle shifts in the status of females in their family and society. New ideas, new opportunities, new responsibilities allow Latin American women to move slowly but surely towards both the hazards and the benefits of behavior norms accepted by twentieth-century western society. Roles of women have undergone more changes in the past fifty years than at any other comparable time frame in history (Pescatello, 1972, p. 126).

Research concerning the Panamanian family, especially perceptions of the husband-wife relationship and the role of women in society will add to the understanding of the place of the Latin American family in the midst of a rapidly changing world. Uses for updated information are numerous. Educational administrators can use current research in these aspects of the Panamanian family in updating curriculums for home economics, sociology, and other subjects in educational institutions at both the secondary and college level. Other family life specialists can benefit from having current information on marriage and sex-roles as they endeavor to help Panamanian families improve their familial relationships. In addition, knowledge of some of the positive aspects of Panamanian family life can be helpful to family-life professionals and families everywhere.

#### Purposes

While the family exerts a great influence upon the culture in Panama, as in other Latin American countries, surprisingly little research has been conducted on family life in Panama. Since little is known of marriage and sex-roles in Panama, the purposes of this study

were to examine the perceptions of married Panamanian women concerning specific aspects of the husband-wife relationship, the role of women, and the meanings of masculinity and femininity in Panama.

Specifically, the purposes of this study were to examine the perceptions of married Panamanian women concerning:

1. The most important aspects of family life.
2. The factors associated with family unhappiness.
3. The factors associated with marriage happiness.
4. The principal reasons for marriage failure.
5. The principal problems in their marriages.
6. The degree of satisfaction in their marriages.
7. The most satisfying aspects of their marriages.
8. How often they and their husbands do things together.
9. How much they and their husbands demonstrate affection to one another.
10. How much they and their husbands empathize with one another.
11. How much they and their husbands compliment one another.
12. How much they and their husbands talk about their work and interests.
13. Who makes important decisions in their family concerning matters of money, children, activities during free time, move to a new locality, and birth control.
14. The role of the women.
15. The most important qualities of manhood.
16. The most important qualities of womanhood.

## Hypotheses

There is no significant difference in the Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale scores according to each of the following: a) rural or urban residence, b) number of children, c) wife's age, d) wife's level of education, e) wife's employment status, f) wife's immediate family's total monthly income, and g) length of marriage.

## Definitions

consensual marriage--A recognized union between a man and woman not made official by religious or political authorities.

egalitarian--Advocating equal status, rights, and responsibility for men and women, especially in the context of marriage.

machismo--"Aggressive masculinity which involves the demonstration of manhood through violence and fearlessness, but especially through feats of sexual conquest" (Rivera, 1971, p. 346).

modernity--"The extent to which a woman has a sense of her own worth as a member of a sex which is perceived as competent and deserving of serious attention, thus enabling her to take part in a more egalitarian nuclear family structure . . . ." (Rosen and La Raia, 1972, p. 354).

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Historical Considerations

In recent years, very little research has been done in the areas of marital relationships and the perception of sex roles in Panama. However, research has been done on the historical background which undergirds traditional Latin American ideas about the family. This review of literature reports some of this research plus research which has been done concerning the marital relationship and perceptions of sex roles in Central America, South America, Mexico, and Hispanic populations of the United States.

Historically, the oldest male member of the Latin American family has been viewed as the supreme authority, his wife and daughters finding their place of submission normal and comfortable. Girls were reared "to obey and respect their husbands" (Willems, 1975, p. 56).

Generally, the wife and mother was seen as the foundation of the home. Her first duty was to her family. If necessary, she would renounce career opportunities or property rights for the sake of the family. She was socialized from early childhood to equate marriage with motherhood and sex with reproduction. Even in cases of premarital sexual activity, the woman would very likely be loyal to the father of her illegitimate child since, in her mind, being a mother was the same thing as being a wife (Rivera, 1971, pp. 49-50). Indeed, society has viewed

this union as a legal marriage, especially since the phenomenon of the "consensual" marriage (a recognized union not made official by religious or political authorities) has had a long history in Latin America (Willems, 1975, p. 53).

The husband and father was viewed as the supreme authority. His children responded to him with both love and fear. For the male, sex was not necessarily confined to the home, but was viewed as an activity whereby he could assert his masculinity. His sexual reputation was an important determiner of the degree of acceptance he received from his peer group (Rivera, 1971). This assertive behavior was known as the maschismo complex. Michaelson and Goldschmidt defined machismo as "aggressive masculinity which involves the demonstration of manhood through violence and fearlessness, but especially through feats of sexual conquest" (1971, p. 346).

As a result of Spanish and Portuguese influences, marriage in Latin America was viewed as a means for perpetuating family interests. The wife's expected unquestioning submission to her husband and the husband's sexual freedoms both discouraged companionship or mutuality between husband and wife (Willems, 1975).

#### The Traditional Latin American Marriage

In view of the historical background related to the husband-wife relationship, many researchers have observed and reported the characteristics of the traditional family structure in various Latin American countries. Other researchers have reported changes in the family pattern where roles are less defined and husband and wife relate to one another more as equals. In order to clearly see the contrasts between

the traditional and the more modern structures, each structure is here-with discussed.

The traditional Latin American marriage system is characterized by a highly structured courtship system. Great importance is placed upon preserving the girl's reputation (McGinn, 1966; Michaelsen and Goldschmidt, 1971). Latin American courtship, which is very formal and ritualized, is seen as a way of acquainting persons to others of the opposite sex but offers little opportunity for the man and woman to test their relationship or truly get to know one another (Stycos, 1955; McGinn, 1966). As a result, the traditional marriage is often motivated by nonrational factors such as romantic love and misconceptions about marriage (Stycos, 1955; McGinn, 1966; Peñalosa, 1968). Also, the man and woman are expected to marry at an early age (Stycos, 1955).

In the traditional marriage, the husband's and wife's roles are clearly defined and compartmentalized. Some of the characteristics of the traditional Latin American marriage are:

1. The male's assumed biological superiority (Diaz-Guerrero, 1955; Sierra, Trent, and Marina, 1960).
2. The husband's unquestioned and sole authority in the household (Diaz-Guerrero, 1955; Sierra et al., 1960; Lewis, 1960; Rivera, 1971; Michaelsen and Goldschmidt, 1971).
3. The husband's freedom to pursue sexual relationships with women besides his wife (Sierra et al., 1960; Rainwater, 1964; Tharp, Meadow, Lennhoff, and Satterfield, 1968; Rivera, 1971).
4. The wife's expected role as homemaker (Stycos, 1955; Lewis, 1960; Sierra et al., 1960; McGinn, 1966; de Marti, 1967; Peñalosa, 1968; Michaelsen and Goldschmidt, 1971; Rivera, 1971; Flora, 1973).
5. The wife's necessary and submissive service to her husband and children (Diaz-Guerrero, 1955; Stycos, 1955; Lewis, 1960; Sierra et al., 1960; de Marti, 1967; Rivera, 1971; Stevens, 1973a).

6. The wife's obligation to be totally loyal to her husband (Stycos, 1955; Sierra et al., 1960).
7. The wife's social status defined solely by her marital status (Peñalosa, 1968; Flora, 1973).
8. The wife's lesser ability and desire to enjoy sexual activity (Stycos, 1955; Rivera, 1971).
9. The wife's greater spiritual strength and moral superiority (Stevens, 1973a).
10. The husband's and wife's participation in few common activities (Stycos, 1955; Lewis, 1960; Rainwater, 1964; de Marti, 1967; Michaelsen and Goldschmidt, 1971).
11. The husband's and wife's avoidance of mutual discussions about sex (Stycos, 1955; Rainwater, 1964; Rivera, 1971).
12. The husband's and wife's expectations to find companionship in relationships other than their relationship with one another (Stycos, 1955; McGinn, 1966; Michaelsen and Goldschmidt, 1971).

Several researchers have discussed factors which may be associated with the perpetuation of the traditional Latin American marriage structure. Stycos (1955) suggested that among the lower classes the common pattern of early marriage and erroneous conceptions about marriage left the woman "prey to the type of marriage desired by the male" (p. 120). Once in a marriage, the woman managed to accept the total authority of her husband "through the consolation that all women are in the same boat" (p. 123).

In a comparative study of four lower class cultures, Rainwater (1964) noticed the similar "pattern of highly segregated conjugal role relationships . . . . The separation of man's work and woman's work is sharp, as is the separation of man's and woman's play" (p. 462). Rainwater associated these patterns with the "lack of mutuality in sexual relations" (p. 462).

Michaelsen and Goldschmidt (1971) suggested that the perpetual



expression of male dominance in the lower class might be associated with the doubts that men had about their masculinity since they were not in unique control of inherited property. Also, any deviation from strict sex-role behaviors could result in social ostracism for both men and women (Rivera, 1971).

Rivera (1971) and Stevens (1973b) associated the perpetuation of clearly defined role expectations with the fact that children learned sex-roles in the home throughout their life times. Apparently, the mother had more influence on the children than the father.

On a theoretical level, at least, the traditional Latin American roles are clearly defined, but these role expectations are not without some confusion. Rivera (1971) pointed out that by the time men and women were ready for marriage, they had conflicting ideas about what their culture expected. "At marriage, the young wife expects protective authority; the young husband, unwavering dedication" (p. 57). In Diaz-Guerrero's (1955) classic study of the Mexican family, this confusion about role expectations was connected with symptoms of neurosis in the individual. In a later study, conducted in Puerto Rico, Sierra, Trent, and Marina (1960) found neurosis to be associated with movement away from the traditional values to more modern values, rather than conflict over traditional beliefs.

Other writers have suggested that the traditional patterns are really only theoretical ideals or of little consequence since there seems to be little desire to change the patterns. In a study of a peasant, Mexican village, Lewis (1960, p. 55) found that the traditional roles of total male authority and complete female submissiveness were "only complied to outwardly . . . . Few husbands are the dominant figures

they seek to be and few wives are completely submissive." The reasons given for this situation were (1) the wife's responsibility for household management, (2) the wife's control over finances, (3) the wife's freedom to do as she pleased, since the husband was away from the home most of the time, (4) the husband's minimal participation in family and household affairs, and (5) the husband's demand for respect, which contributed to his aloofness from family members and consequent lack of control.

Chaney (1973) suggested that role conflicts will never become acute in Latin America, as in other parts of the world, because relations between men and women, whether at home, in business, or in political associations, "lack almost entirely any sense of overt competition. Moreover, the depreciation of women in Latin American society is counterbalanced by the tradition of gallantry . . ." which conveys a genuine appreciation and respect (p. 340). Stevens (1973b) put forth the idea that the pattern of male dominance and female passivity was perpetuated because it offered advantages for both sexes. Indeed, men enjoyed their positions of dominance, however strong or weak, and women used the "legend of their martyrdom" (p. 316) to manipulate men.

#### Emerging Alternatives to the Traditional Latin American Marriage

While some researchers suggest that the traditional Latin American marriage structure is here to stay, others report that traditional values are being challenged. As early as 1960, Lewis (p. 57), in discussing the conflicts in attitudes of Mexican women villagers, noted that

Their standards of behavior for themselves and their husbands are changing; they veer between the old ideal roles and new

needs and experiences. They readily admit the superiority of men and tend to admire a man who is macho or manly, yet they describe the "good" husband as one who is not dominating but relatively passive. They also tend to regard the very submissive wife more as a fool than as an ideal.

Trent (1965) noticed the conflicts of Puerto Ricans over the traditional familial structure against the more modern structure characterized by emphasis on the nuclear rather than extended family, individuality rather than family interdependence, shared authority rather than male authority, and the woman's choice to work outside the home rather than obligation to stay at home. Trent (1965, p. 296) attributed the conflicts to Puerto Rico's "rapid industrialization and consequent Americanization." Two studies of Mexican-American populations in the United States by Tharp, Meadow, Lennhoff, and Satterfield (1968) and Hawkes and Taylor (1975) dealt with conflicts between the traditional and modern structures. Both studies reported findings indicating movement away from the traditional Latin American system to the modern North American counterpart.

Some researchers have associated modern marriage patterns among Latin American populations with various descriptions of the wife such as her level of education, her degree of participation in the labor force, her residence in rural or urban areas, and her social class. Olesen (1971) reported a positive association between a massive literacy campaign in 1961 in Cuba with women's greater level of participation in the labor force and in Cuban society as a whole. Johnson (1972) reported a positive association between women's level of education and their degree of modernity concerning their roles. Rosen and La Raia (1972) also found an association between education and modernity.

In a study of lower- and middle-class wives of San Juan, Puerto Rico,

Weller (1968) found that wives who worked had greater influence in making family decisions than those who stayed at home. Youssef (1970) compared labor force participation of women in Latin American countries with the labor force participation of women in Middle Eastern countries. She found that the lessening of male authority in Latin American countries has made Latin American women more available as workers. Rosen and La Raia (1972) reported a positive association between a woman's labor force participation and modern values. Cohen (1973) reported that professional women in Columbia enjoyed egalitarian, companionship marriages.

In a study of the effects of migration to a large city in Columbia and social class, Harkess (1973) had some unexpected results. She found that recently-arrived women of the lower class were very similar to established wealthier women in their traditional values concerning family authority and women's roles. Rosenberg (1976), after comparing various geographic locations in Columbia, reported that a woman's residence has a significant influence on her decision to work outside the home.

Several researchers have attempted to associate social class with modernity. It is difficult to point to any definite trends, probably because of differing definitions of social class. Williamson (1968) found the middle class less traditional than the lower class. Moore (1970) reported that social class, marital status, and age probably all bear upon the woman's degree of modernity. Tancer (1973) predicted that egalitarianism would increase with the higher social classes, but Kinzer (1973) reported modern roles for women more popular in the middle- and lower-classes.

The trend toward more egalitarian marriage structures and greater opportunities for women has not gone unchallenged. Purcell (1973) reported that Cuba's forced creation of a society characterized by modern structures met with resistance by women who did not want to be resocialized. Cuban working-class men also expressed discomfort with forced changes in Cuba (Fox, 1973). Until the influence of the Perons, any deviation from the traditional patterns were very intimidating to most Argentinians (Hollander, 1973).

#### Summary

The traditional marriage structure with its clearly defined and segregated roles for men and women has had a long history in Latin America. A highly structured courtship system and the romanticization of marriage underlie and perpetuate the system. Some of its characteristics are the husband's assumed biological superiority, his authority in the household, his freedom in sexual relationships, the wife's place in the home, her total submission and loyalty to her husband, her limited social status, her assumed lack of ability to enjoy sex, and the husband's and wife's lack of mutual companionship or communication.

Along with the courtship patterns and the romanticization of marriage, other factors have perpetuated the system. Some of these are segregation of roles in various aspects of life, doubts that men have about their masculinity, fear of social ostracism, life-time socialization of sex-roles, confusion as to the expected patterns of behavior, freedom to deviate from the expected patterns to some extent, and advantages which the system offers to both men and women.

Even though the traditional marriage structure has been perpetuated

in some respects, it has also been challenged, especially by a more modern egalitarian concept of marriage and sex-roles. Some of the factors which have contributed to the challenge are industrialization and Americanization of Latin American populations, labor force participation and higher education of women in Latin America, and socio-cultural factors such as urbanization and societal pressure.

## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURE

#### Purpose

In spite of the tremendous influence of the family in Latin America, very little research has been conducted on family life in Panama. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of married Panamanian women concerning the husband-wife relationship, the role of women, and the meanings of masculinity and femininity.

#### Subjects

The subjects were 71 married women representing 71 families from various social strata and from various geographic locations in Panama. The country was divided into areas with each area being identified as predominately urban or rural and predominately inhabited by upper class or lower class families. A number of these areas were randomly selected corresponding to the proportions of urban and rural and upper income and lower income areas in Panama as a whole. A specified number of subjects were interviewed in each selected area.

#### Instrument

The instrument used was part of an interview schedule which was developed by Dr. Nick Stinnett, Family Relations and Child Development, Oklahoma State University, and Dr. James Walters, Department of Family

and Child Development, University of Georgia. After reviewing the literature concerning family life in Panama and Latin America and after interviewing family life specialists and university educators in Panama, Stinnett and Walters included items that seemed important to understanding family life in Panama. The interview schedule was given to a panel of Panamanian family-life specialists and university educators who rated the items by the following criteria:

1. Does the item possess sufficient clarity?
2. Is the item sufficiently specific?
3. Is the item significantly related to the concept under investigation?
4. Are there other items that need to be included to measure the concepts under investigation?

The interview schedule used for this study included items concerning (a) background information such as age, number of children, and wife's employment status, (b) perceptions of specific aspects of the husband-wife relationship, (c) perceptions of the role of women, and (d) perceptions of the most important qualities of masculinity and femininity. The schedule contained items of both the fixed-alternative and the open-ended types. An interview schedule was used instead of mailed questionnaires in order to get a better rate of return and also so that an interviewer would be present to explain any items that needed clarification. Also, Stinnett and Walters felt that interviews would be the most useful in gathering baseline information. In spite of the greater difficulty of scoring, several of the items were open-ended since the range of possible responses had not been previously determined and to allow the respondents to freely express their views. Categories



were developed for the open-ended items.

A part of the interview schedule contained the Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale (Stinnett and Walters, 1972). This scale was designed to measure the degree to which a respondent has an egalitarian view of the role of women. The Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale is a nine item Likert-type scale. Each item has three degrees of response and is scored in such a way that the egalitarian response is given the highest score. The items in the scale are based upon a review of literature and in part upon the Modernity Index developed by Rosen and La Raia (1972).

The interviews were conducted by several Home Economics students from the University of Panama between September, 1972 and November, 1973. Each interviewer received instruction on how to administer the interview schedule by the director of the Home Economics Department at the University of Panama. The director was a co-investigator who had consulted with Stinnett and Walters concerning the training of interviewers. Under supervision, the interviewers administered the interview schedule to subjects living in the same general geographic location as themselves.

#### Analysis of Data

A percentage and frequency count was used to examine the background information of the respondents as well as the perceptions of the respondents concerning:

1. The most important aspects of family life.
2. The factors associated with family unhappiness.
3. The factors associated with marriage happiness.
4. The principal reasons for marriage failure.

5. The principal problems in their own marriages.
6. The degree of satisfaction in their marriages.
7. The most satisfying aspects of their marriages.
8. How often they and their husbands do things together.
9. How much they and their husbands demonstrate affection to one another.
10. How much they and their husbands empathize with one another.
11. How much they and their husbands compliment one another.
12. How much they and their husbands talk about their work and interests.
13. Who makes important decisions in their family concerning matters of money, children, activities during free time, move to a new locality, and birth control.
14. The role of women.
15. The most important qualities of manhood.
16. The most important qualities of womanhood.

The Mann-Whitney U Test was used to test the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale scores according to each of the following: (a) rural or urban residence and (b) wife's employment status.

The Kruskal-Wallis One-Way Analysis of Variance was used to test the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale scores according to each of the following: (a) number of children, (b) wife's age, (c) wife's level of education, (d) wife's immediate family's total monthly income, and (e) length of marriage.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of Panamanian women concerning specific aspects of the husband-wife relationship, the role of women, and the meanings of masculinity and femininity. The 71 women who participated in this study represented 71 Panamanian families.

#### Description of Subjects

A detailed description of the 71 subjects who participated in this study is given in Table I. All the subjects were married women between the ages of 20 and 49. The greatest proportions of the women were in the age categories 25-29 (20%) and 30-34 (31.43%). Most were from urban areas (71.01%) and almost all were Catholic (98.59%). The subjects represented a wide spectrum in the level of education, some with just a few years of grade school and others with several years of college. The greatest proportions had 12 years of grade school (23.88%) and 1-4 years of college (28.36%). The majority (77.46%) were employed outside the home. Of those employed outside the home, a majority listed their occupation as teacher (65.12%). The next two most commonly mentioned occupations were home economist (9.30%) and professor (9.30%).

TABLE I  
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUBJECTS\*

Variable	Classification	No.	%
Age	20-24	11	15.71
	25-29	14	20.00
	30-34	22	31.43
	35-39	8	11.43
	40-44	10	14.29
	45-49	5	7.14
Rural or Urban Residence	Rural	20	28.99
	Urban	49	71.01
Religion	Catholic	70	98.59
	Protestant	1	1.41
Level of Education	Grades 1-4	5	7.46
	Grades 5-8	8	11.94
	Grades 9-11	11	16.42
	Grade 12	16	23.88
	1-4 years of college	19	28.36
	5 or more years of college	8	11.94
Employment Status	Employed outside the home	55	77.46
	Not employed outside the home	16	22.54
Occupation of Respondents Employed Outside the Home	Hospital aide	2	4.65
	Office worker or secretary	3	6.98
	Home economist	4	9.30
	Teacher	28	65.12
	Professor	4	9.30
	Education administrator	1	2.33
	Dentist	1	2.33
Husband's Level of Education	Grades 1-4	4	6.25
	Grades 5-8	16	25.00
	Grades 9-11	10	15.63
	Grade 12	15	23.44
	1-4 years of college	13	20.31
	5 or more years of college	6	9.38
Husband's Occupation	Day laborer	6	12.24
	Chauffer or conductor	7	14.29
	Office clerk	2	4.08

TABLE I (Continued)

Variable	Classification	No.	%
Husband's Occupation (Concluded)	Skilled craftsman such as butcher, tailor, or musician	3	6.12
	Skilled technical worker such as electrician or surveyor	5	10.20
	Accountant	1	2.04
	Merchant or store owner	6	12.24
	Inspector	1	2.04
	Supervisor or administrator	5	10.20
	Engineer or draftsman	5	10.20
	Teacher	3	6.12
	Professor	2	4.08
	Dentist or physician	2	4.08
National guardsman	1	2.04	
Type of Matrimonial Ceremony	Civil	18	25.35
	Religious	8	11.27
	None	9	12.68
	Both civil and religious	36	50.70
First Marriage	Yes	63	92.65
	No	5	7.35
Years Respondent and Husband Have Been Married	1-2 years	7	10.00
	3-5 years	12	17.14
	6-10 years	22	31.43
	11-15 years	15	21.43
	16-20 years	8	11.43
	More than 20 years	6	8.57
Age at Current Marriage	15-16	2	2.86
	17-18	9	12.86
	19-20	17	24.29
	21-22	16	22.86
	23-24	15	21.43
	25-30	9	12.86
	Over 30 years	2	2.86
Size of Household In- cluding Live-in Domestic Help	3 persons	9	15.49
	4 persons	16	22.54
	5-6 persons	30	42.25
	7-8 persons	10	14.08
	9 or more persons	4	5.63

TABLE I (Concluded)

Variable	Classification	No.	%
Presence of One or More Grandparents in the Home	Yes	8	11.27
	No	63	88.73
Number of Children in the Immediate Family	One child	17	23.94
	2 children	21	29.58
	3-4 children	22	30.99
	5-6 children	8	11.27
	7 or more children	3	4.23
Total Monthly Income of All Members of the Immediate Family in Balboas (Equal to U. S. Dollars)	Less than 100	1	1.47
	100-199	10	14.71
	200-299	10	14.71
	300-399	17	25.00
	400-599	13	19.12
	600-799	8	11.76
	800-999	4	5.88
1,000 or more	5	7.35	
Person Earning Major Part of Family Income	Husband	55	82.09
	Wife	8	11.94
	Both the same	3	4.48
	Child	1	1.49
Ownership of Home	Own home	34	47.89
	Rent home	37	52.11

\* The number of responses to each question does not always total 71, since the respondents did not always answer every question.

The subjects' husbands represent a wide range in educational level and a great variety in occupations. The husbands' level of education vary from a few years in grade school to several years in college. The greatest proportions fell into the categories of grades 5-8 (25%), grade 12 (23.44%), and 1-4 years of college (20.13%). The husbands' occupations were more varied than the wives'. The most frequently mentioned occupations were day laborer (12.24%), chauffer or conductor (14.29%), and merchant or store owner (12.24%).

Concerning their marriages, a majority of the respondents (50.70%) reported that they had had both civil and religious marriage ceremonies. A majority were in their first marriage (92.65%). The respondents varied greatly in the length of marriage, some having been married only 1-2 years (10%) and others for more than 20 years (8.57%). The greatest proportion had been married 6-10 years (31.43%). The respondents also showed great variability in their age at marriage, some being 15-16 (2.86%) at marriage and others being over 30 years (2.86%). The greatest proportion were married at age 19-20 (24.29%).

The respondents showed great variability in the descriptions of their households and their economic status. The number of people in these households including the live-in domestic help ranged from three persons (15.49%) to nine or more persons (5.63%). The greatest proportion were households of five-six persons (42.2%). Some households (11.27%) included one or more grandparents. Some households included seven or more children (4.23%), but the greatest proportion had three-four children (30.99%). The total monthly income of these families also varied greatly from less than 100 balboas (1.47%) to 1,000 or more balboas (7.35%). The greatest proportion had an income of

300-399 balboas (25%). A majority of the respondents reported that the husband earned the major part of the family income (82.09%) and that they did not own their own home (52.11%).

Respondents' Perceptions Concerning Various  
Aspects of Their Family Life

Percentage and frequency counts were used to examine the perceptions of Panamanian women concerning various aspects of their family life. The results are now presented.

Perceptions Concerning the Most Important  
Aspects of Family Life

As Table II illustrates, the greatest proportion of respondents (20.54%) listed expressions of love and affection as most important aspects of family life. The second most frequently mentioned response concerned time for the family to be together/companionship (15.18%).

Perceptions Concerning the Factors Associated  
With Family Unhappiness

Table III illustrates that the respondents varied greatly in their perceptions of factors associated with family unhappiness. Some of the most frequently mentioned factors were housing situation (16%), economic situation (13.33%), and too little time for family to be together (13.33%).



TABLE II  
PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECTS  
OF FAMILY LIFE

Perceptions	Number	Percent
Expressions of love and affection	23	20.54
Time for the family to be together/companionship	17	15.18
Emotional well-being of family members	16	14.29
Family unity	16	14.29
Understanding and/or respect among family members	15	13.39
Expressing or sharing responsibility	12	10.71
Expressions by the children of obedience and/or respect to their parents	6	5.36
Good relations with relatives	3	2.68
Physical well-being of family members	2	1.79
Communication	2	1.79

TABLE III  
PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE FACTORS ASSOCIATED  
WITH FAMILY UNHAPPINESS

Perceptions	Number	Percent
Housing situation	12	16.00
Economic situation	10	13.33
Too little time for family to be together	10	13.33
Husband's behavior problems such as jealousy, bad temper, gambling, or irresponsibility	8	10.67
Children's behavior problems such as disobedience, sibling rivalry, or irresponsibility	5	6.67
Poor relations with relatives	5	6.67
Outside relationships which interfere with family unity such as children's undesirable friends	5	6.67
Too few children	3	4.00
Too many children	3	4.00
Lack of knowledge on child-care or difficulties in providing good child-care	3	4.00
Other	11	14.67

Perceptions Concerning the Factors Associated

With Marriage Happiness

As Table IV indicates, the greatest proportion of the respondents (33.05%) mentioned understand one another as one of the most important factors associated with marriage happiness. The second most frequently mentioned response was express love and affection toward one another (16.10%). Only 2.54% of the respondents mentioned have a good sexual relationship.

TABLE IV  
PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE FACTORS ASSOCIATED  
WITH MARRIAGE HAPPINESS

Perceptions	Number	Percent
Understand one another	39	33.05
Express love and affection toward one another	19	16.10
Respect one another	12	10.17
Accept personal responsibility or share responsibilities	11	9.32
Trust one another	9	7.63
Communicate	9	7.63
Make realistic plans and goals	6	5.08
Attain a better economic situation	6	5.08
Share common interests or backgrounds	4	3.39
Have a good sexual relationship	3	2.54

Perceptions Concerning the Principal

Reasons for Marriage Failure

As Table V illustrates, respondents differed greatly in their perceptions of the principal reasons for marriage failure. The largest proportion (28.40%) indicated lack of understanding. The next most frequently mentioned reason was complications with a third person (14.20%).

TABLE V  
PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE PRINCIPAL REASONS  
FOR MARRIAGE FAILURE

Perceptions	Number	Percent
Lack of understanding	48	28.40
Complications with a third person	24	14.20
Immaturity	20	11.83
Financial problems	19	11.24
Lack of common interests and goals	19	11.24
Poor sexual adjustment	13	7.69
Egotism	11	6.50
Conflicts in personality	10	5.92
Weight of the responsibility for the children	2	1.18
Other	3	1.78

Perceptions Concerning the Principal Problems

in Respondents' Marriages

As Table VI shows, the respondents mentioned principal problems in

their marriages which fall into approximately nine different areas. The most frequently mentioned problems were lack of mutual understanding and respect (22.37%), husband's habits such as drinking, getting jealous, getting angry, or coming home late (19.74%), and economic problems or health problems (18.42%).

TABLE VI  
PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE PRINCIPAL PROBLEMS IN  
RESPONDENTS' MARRIAGES

Perceptions	Number	Percent
Lack of mutual understanding and respect	17	22.37
Husband's habits such as drinking, getting jealous, getting angry, or coming home late	15	19.74
Economic problems or health problems	14	18.42
Infidelity	9	11.84
Lack of common goals or lack of unity	5	6.58
Poor relations with or between other relatives	4	5.26
Lack of time for the family to be together	3	3.95
Problems concerning child-care or child-discipline	3	3.95
Lack of communication	1	1.32
Other	5	6.58

Perceptions Concerning the Degree of Satis-  
faction in Respondents' Marriages

As Table VII shows, the majority (69.01%) of the respondents perceived their marriages as happy. Only 1.41% perceived their marriages as unhappy and 29.58% were indecisive.

TABLE VII  
 PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE DEGREE OF SATISFACTION  
 IN RESPONDENTS' MARRIAGES

Perceptions	Number	Percent
Happy	49	69.01
Indecisive	21	29.58
Unhappy	1	1.41

Perceptions Concerning the Most Satisfying

Aspects of Respondents' Marriages

A large proportion (43.16%) of the respondents mentioned mutual understanding or respect as a most satisfying aspect of their marriage, according to Table VIII. The next largest category of responses was expressions of love and affection (21.05%). The least frequently mentioned category of responses was good standard of living (3.16%).

Perceptions Concerning How Often Respondents

and Their Husbands Do Things Together

As indicated in Table IX, a majority (51.43%) of the respondents perceive that they and their husbands do things together to a moderate degree. A large proportion (37.14%) said they did things together often.

TABLE VIII  
 PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE MOST SATISFYING ASPECTS  
 OF RESPONDENTS' MARRIAGES

Perceptions	Number	Percent
Mutual understanding or respect	41	43.16
Expressions of love and affection	20	21.05
Expressing or sharing responsibility	9	9.47
Good sexual adjustment	7	7.37
Sharing common interests or goals	6	6.32
Communication	4	4.21
Family life or companionship	4	4.21
Good standard of living	3	3.16
Other	1	1.05

TABLE IX  
 PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING HOW OFTEN RESPONDENTS  
 AND THEIR HUSBANDS DO THINGS TOGETHER

Perceptions	Number	Percent
Little	8	11.43
Moderate	36	51.43
Much	26	37.14

Perceptions Concerning How Much Respondents and  
Their Husbands Demonstrate Affection to  
One Another

A majority of the respondents reported that their spouses demonstrated affection to them to a moderate degree (50.70%) and that they demonstrated affection to their spouses to a moderate degree (56.34%), according to Table X. Only 4.23% reported that they received little affection from their husbands and only 2.82% reported showing little affection to their spouses.

TABLE X  
PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING HOW MUCH RESPONDENTS  
AND THEIR HUSBANDS DEMONSTRATE  
AFFECTION TO ONE ANOTHER

Perceptions	Number	Percent
Husband to Wife:		
Little	3	4.23
Moderate	36	50.70
Much	32	45.07
Wife to Husband:		
Little	2	2.82
Moderate	40	56.34
Much	29	40.85

Perceptions Concerning How Much Respondents and  
Their Husbands Empathize With One Another

The greatest proportion of respondents perceived that they received much empathy from their husbands (47.89%), as shown in Table XI. The next largest proportion reported receiving a moderate degree of empathy (35.21%). A majority reported that they supported their husbands with much empathy (66.20%).

TABLE XI  
PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING HOW MUCH RESPONDENTS AND  
THEIR HUSBANDS EMPATHIZE WITH ONE ANOTHER

Perceptions	Number	Percent
Husband to Wife:		
Little	12	16.90
Moderate	25	35.21
Much	34	47.89
Wife to Husband:		
Little	3	4.22
Moderate	21	29.58
Much	47	66.20

Perceptions Concerning How Much Respondents and  
Their Husbands Compliment One Another

According to Table XII, a majority (52.11%) of the respondents



reported that they receive compliments from their husbands to a moderate degree and 32.39% of the respondents reported receiving compliments to a great degree. A greater majority (61.97%) said that they are complimentary to their husbands to a moderate degree. A smaller proportion than those who reported receiving compliments to a great degree were those who reported giving compliments to a great degree (22.54%).

TABLE XII  
PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING HOW MUCH RESPONDENTS AND  
THEIR HUSBANDS COMPLIMENT ONE ANOTHER

Perceptions	Number	Percent
Husband to Wife:		
Little	11	15.49
Moderate	37	52.11
Much	23	32.39
Wife to Husband:		
Little	11	15.49
Moderate	44	61.97
Much	16	22.54

Perceptions Concerning How Much Respondents and  
Their Husbands Talk About Their Work and  
Interests

As indicated in Table XIII, a majority of the respondents reported that their husbands talked to them about their work and interests to a

great degree (56.34%) and that they talked with their husbands about their work and interests to a great degree (53.52%). The next most frequent responses were that communication in these areas was moderate both ways, husband to wife, 30.99%, and wife to husband, 38.03%, respectively.

TABLE XIII  
PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING HOW MUCH RESPONDENTS AND  
THEIR HUSBANDS TALK ABOUT THEIR WORK  
AND INTERESTS

Perceptions	Number	Percent
Husband to Wife:		
Little	9	12.68
Moderate	22	30.99
Much	40	56.34
Wife to Husband:		
Little	6	8.45
Moderate	27	38.03
Much	38	53.52

Perceptions Concerning Who Makes Important

Decisions in Respondents' Families

As can be seen in Table XIV, a majority of the respondents reported that they and their husband equally shared the responsibility of making decisions concerning matters of money (66.20%), children

TABLE XIV  
 PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING WHO MAKES IMPORTANT  
 DECISIONS IN RESPONDENTS' FAMILIES

Perceptions	Number	Percent
Who makes decisions concerning matters of money:		
Husband	16	22.54
Both, about equally	47	66.20
Wife	8	11.27
Who makes decisions concerning children:		
Husband	5	7.35
Both, about equally	53	77.94
Wife	10	14.71
Who makes decisions concerning activities during free time:		
Husband	10	14.49
Both, about equally	45	65.22
Wife	14	20.29
Who makes decisions concerning a move to a new locality:		
Husband	8	12.50
Both, about equally	42	65.63
Wife	14	21.88
Who makes decisions concerning birth control:		
Husband	1	1.49
Both, about equally	52	77.61
Wife	14	20.90

(77.94%), activities during free time (65.22%), a move to a new locality (65.63%), and birth control (77.61%). Most of the respondents who reported that one or the other spouse had the greater responsibility in making decisions, reported that the wife had greater decision-making power in all areas except matters of money.

Respondents' Perceptions Concerning the  
Role of Women

By looking at the responses to the items in the Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale (Stinnett and Walters, 1972) in Table XV, a majority of the respondents could be described as having the following perceptions concerning the role of women: that women should receive equal quality of formal education as men (87.14%), that women should receive the equal amount of pay that men would receive for the same work (88.57%), and that women are just as intelligent as men (91.18%). The majority of respondents perceived that men have the right to be "head of the family" (81.43%), that the wife must obey her husband (83.10%), and that the place of the women is in the home (71.83%). The majority of the respondents also reported that the wife does not have to wait until asked by her husband in order to express her opinions about a matter (75.36%), that women are just as capable as men in making important decisions (92.86%), and that a wife should make her disagreements verbally known to her husband (69.01%), rather than keeping silent.

TABLE XV  
 PERCEPTIONS REFLECTED IN THE PERCEPTIONS OF  
 THE ROLE OF WOMEN SCALE

Item	Number	Percent
1. Do you believe that women must have equal quality of formal education as men?		
agree	61	87.14
don't know	6	8.57
disagree	3	4.29
2. Do you believe that women should receive equal pay as men for equal work?		
agree	62	88.57
don't know	4	5.71
disagree	4	5.71
3. As a general rule, do you believe that women are less intelligent than men?		
agree	3	4.41
don't know	3	4.41
disagree	62	91.18
4. Do you believe that a man has the right to be the "head of the family"?		
agree	57	81.43
don't know	3	4.29
disagree	10	14.29
5. Do you believe that the wife must obey the husband?		
agree	59	83.10
don't know	7	9.86
disagree	5	7.04
6. Do you believe that the place of the woman is in the home?		
agree	51	71.83
don't know	7	9.86
disagree	13	7.04
7. Do you believe that the wife should not express her opinions about a matter if her husband does not ask for it?		
agree	13	18.84
don't know	4	5.80
disagree	52	75.36

TABLE XV (Concluded)

Item	Number	Percent
8. Do you believe, as a general rule, that women are less able than men to make important decisions?		
agree	4	5.71
don't know	1	1.43
disagree	65	92.86
9. Do you believe that when a wife does not agree with her husband it is better that she remain silent rather than disagree with him?		
agree	20	28.17
don't know	2	2.82
disagree	49	69.01

Respondents' Perceptions Concerning the Most  
Important Qualities Associated With  
Manhood and Womanhood

Perceptions Concerning the Most Important  
Qualities of Manhood

As indicated in Table XVI, the largest proportion of respondents (27.56%) perceived responsibility as being an important quality of manhood. A significant proportion of the respondents mentioned understanding or wisdom (10.24%) and good personality and self-confidence (9.45%). None mentioned faithfulness and only one mentioned dignity (0.79%). Only 6.30% of the respondents mentioned virility or masculinity as an important quality of manhood.

TABLE XVI  
PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE MOST IMPORTANT  
QUALITIES OF MANHOOD

Perceptions	Number	Percent
Responsibility	35	27.56
Understanding or wisdom	13	10.24
Good personality and self-confidence	12	9.45
Love or affection toward others	11	8.66
Honesty/sincerity	11	8.66
Education or good upbringing	10	7.87
Courtesy	9	7.09
Virility or masculinity	8	6.30
Concern for the affairs of the home and family	6	4.72
Self-discipline and good moral character	6	4.72
Respectfulness	5	3.94
Dignity	1	0.79
Faithfulness	0	0.00

Perceptions Concerning the Most Important  
Qualities of Womanhood

The largest proportion of respondents (17.02%) perceived responsibility as being a most important quality of womanhood. Other frequently mentioned qualities, as shown in Table XVII, were understanding or thoughtfulness (12.82%), femininity, delicacy, or attractiveness (12.82%), love or affection toward others (11.11%), and concern for the affairs of the home and family (10.26%). Only 3.42% of the respondents mentioned faithfulness, and none mentioned courtesy or dignity.

TABLE XVII  
PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE MOST IMPORTANT  
QUALITIES OF WOMANHOOD

Perceptions	Number	Percent
Responsibility	20	17.02
Understanding or thoughtfulness	15	12.82
Femininity, delicacy, or attractiveness	15	12.82
Love or affection toward others	13	11.11
Concern for the affairs of the home and family	12	10.26
Honesty/sincerity	10	8.55
Good personality and self-confidence	9	7.69
Education or good upbringing	9	7.69
Respectfulness	8	6.84
Faithfulness	4	3.42
Self-discipline and good moral character	2	1.70
Courtesy	0	0.00
Dignity	0	0.00



### Examination of Hypotheses

The Mann-Whitney U Test was used to test the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale scores according to each of the following: (a) rural or urban residence and (b) wife's employment status.

The Kruskal-Wallis One-Way Analysis of Variance was used to test the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale scores according to each of the following: (a) number of children, (b) wife's age, (c) wife's level of education, (d) wife's immediate family's total monthly income, and (e) length of marriage.

#### Hypothesis I

Hypothesis I(a). There is no significant difference in the Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale scores according to rural or urban residence. The Mann-Whitney U Test was used to examine this hypothesis. As Table XVIII indicates, a Z-score of -2.25 was obtained. This value indicated that a significant difference did exist at the 0.01 level in the Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale scores according to rural or urban residence. The women of urban residence scored significantly higher on the scale indicating more egalitarian views of women's roles

Hypothesis I(b). There is no significant difference in the Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale scores according to wife's employment status. The Mann-Whitney U Test produced a Z-score of -0.94, as Table XIX indicates. This value revealed that no significant

difference existed in Perception of the Role of Women Scale scores according to whether or not the respondents were employed outside their homes.

TABLE XVIII

DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF  
WOMEN SCALE SCORES ACCORDING TO RURAL  
OR URBAN RESIDENCE

Variable	No.	Average Rank Score	Z-score	Level of Sig.
Rural	19	26.29	-2.25	0.01
Urban	50	38.31		

TABLE XIX

DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF  
WOMEN SCALE SCORES ACCORDING TO  
WIFE'S EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Variable	No.	Average Rank Score	Z-score	Level of Sig.
<u>Employed</u> <u>outside</u> <u>the home</u>				
Yes	54	37.28	-0.94	none
No	17	31.94		

Hypothesis II

Hypothesis II(a). There is no significant difference in the Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale scores according to number of children. When the Kruskal-Wallis One-Way Analysis of Variance was used to examine this hypothesis, an H-score of 3.42 was obtained. As Table XX illustrates, this value revealed that no significant difference existed in scores on the Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale according to number of children.

TABLE XX  
DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF  
WOMEN SCALE SCORES ACCORDING TO  
NUMBER OF CHILDREN

Variable	No.	Average Rank Score	H-score	Level of Sig.
<u>Number of children</u>				
1-2	36	37.49		
3-4	23	37.30	3.419	none
5 or more	11	25.23		

Hypothesis II(b). There is no significant difference in the Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale scores according to wife's age. As

Table XXI illustrates, the Kruskal-Wallis One-Way Analysis of Variance produced an H-score of 0.80. This value indicated that there was no significant difference in scores on the Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale according to wife's age.

TABLE XXI  
DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF  
WOMEN SCALE SCORES ACCORDING  
TO WIFE'S AGE

Variable	No.	Average Rank Score	H-score	Level of Sig.
<u>Years of age</u>				
20-29	26	32.87		
30-39	30	36.47	0.80	none
40-49	14	38.32		

Hypothesis II(c). There is no significant difference in the Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale scores according to wife's level of education. The Kruskal-Wallis One-Way Analysis of Variance indicated that a significant relationship did exist between the Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale scores and wife's level of education. As Table XXII illustrates, an H-score of 10.30 was obtained which was significant at the 0.01 level. A positive relationship existed between

the level of education and the respondents' attitudes on the degree of egalitarianism between men's and women's roles. Those women who had some college education were most egalitarian in their attitudes while those women who had only between one and eight years of education were least egalitarian.

TABLE XXII  
DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF  
WOMEN SCALE SCORES ACCORDING TO WIFE'S  
LEVEL OF EDUCATION

Variable	No.	Average Rank Score	H-score	Level of Sig.
<u>Years of education</u>				
1-8	14	24.46		
9-12	27	30.26	10.30	0.01
1 or more college	26	43.02		

Hypothesis II(d). There is no significant difference in the Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale scores according to wife's immediate family's total monthly income. No significant difference was found to exist in Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale scores according to the wife's immediate family's total monthly income upon

examination of this hypothesis. As Table XXIII illustrates, the Kruskal-Wallis One-Way Analysis of Variance produced an H-score of 1.57.

TABLE XXIII

DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF  
WOMEN SCALE SCORES ACCORDING TO WIFE'S  
IMMEDIATE FAMILY'S TOTAL  
MONTHLY INCOME

Variable	No.	Average Rank Score	H-score	Level of Sig.
<u>Balboas per month</u>				
less than 300	21	33.69		
300-599	30	32.23	1.57	none
600 or more	17	39.50		

Hypothesis II(e). There is no significant difference in the Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale scores according to length of marriage. When the Kruskal-Wallis One-Way Analysis of Variance was used to examine this hypothesis, an H-score of 1.57 was obtained, as illustrated by Table XXIV. This value revealed that no significant difference existed in the Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale scores according to length of marriage.

TABLE XXIV  
 DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF  
 WOMEN SCALE SCORES ACCORDING TO  
 LENGTH OF MARRIAGE

Variable	No.	Average Rank Score	H-score	Level of Sig.
<u>Years of marriage</u>				
1-5	19	32.76		
6-10	22	39.34		
11-15	15	36.40	1.57	none
16 or more	14	32.21		

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY

Surprisingly little research has been conducted on family life in Panama. The purposes of this study were to examine the perceptions of married Panamanian women concerning various aspects of the husband-wife relationship, the role of women, and the meanings of masculinity and femininity in Panama.

The sample consisted of 71 married Panamanian women between the ages of 20 and 49. They represented a wide range in educational background, social strata and geographic locations. A majority were from urban areas and most had jobs outside the home.

The subjects were interviewed in 1972 and 1973 by students of the University of Panama under the supervision of the Home Economics Department. The interviewers used a schedule developed by Stinnett and Walters which contained items concerning basic information about the respondents' families, perceptions of various aspects of family life, perceptions of various aspects of the husband-wife relationship, perceptions of the role of women in the Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale (1972), and perceptions of the meaning of masculinity and femininity.

Percentage and frequency counts were used to examine the background information and the perceptions. The Kruskal-Wallis One-Way Analysis of Variance and the Mann-Whitney U Test were used to determine if the



Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale scores were independent of (a) rural or urban residence, (b) wife's employment status, (c) number of children, (d) wife's age, (e) wife's level of education, (f) wife's immediate family's total monthly income, and (g) length of marriage.

The results of this study were:

1. The most frequently mentioned important aspects of family life were expressions of love and affection (20.54%) and time for the family to be together/companionship (15.18%).
2. The most frequently mentioned factors associated with family unhappiness were housing situation (16%), economic situation (13.33%), and too little time for the family to be together (13.33%).
3. The most frequently mentioned factors associated with marriage happiness were understand one another (33.05%), and express love and affection toward one another (16.10%).
4. The most frequently mentioned reasons for marriage failure were lack of understanding (28.40%) and complications with a third person (14.20%).
5. The most frequently mentioned marital problems were lack of mutual understanding and respect (22.37%), husband's habits such as drinking, getting jealous, getting angry, or coming home late (19.74%), and economic problems or health problems (18.42%).
6. A majority (69.01%) of the respondents perceived their marriages as happy.
7. The most satisfying aspects of their marriages were mutual understanding or respect (43.16%) and expressions of love

and affection (21.05%).

8. A majority (51.43%) of the respondents perceived that they and their husbands do things together to a moderate degree. A large proportion (37.14%) said they did things together often.
9. A majority of the respondents perceived that their spouses demonstrated affection to them to a moderate degree (50.70%), and that they demonstrated affection to them to a moderate degree (56.34%). Only 4.23% perceived receiving little affection and only 2.82% reported showing little affection.
10. The greatest proportion of respondents perceived that they received much empathy from their husbands (47.89%) and a majority perceived that they supported their husbands with much empathy (66.20%).
11. A majority of the respondents perceived that they receive compliments from their husbands to a moderate degree (52.11%), and that they are complimentary to their husbands to a moderate degree (61.97%).
12. A majority of the respondents perceived that their husbands talked to them about their work and interests to a great degree (56.34%), and that they talked with their husbands about their work and interests to a great degree (53.52%).
13. A majority of the respondents perceived that they and their husbands equally shared the responsibility of making decisions concerning matters of money (66.20%), children (77.94%), activities during free time (65.22%), a move to

a new locality (65.63%), and birth control (77.61%).

14. The majority of the respondents held to the following attitudes concerning the role of women:
- a) that women should receive equal quality of formal education as men (87.14%),
  - b) that women should receive the equal amount of pay that men would receive for the same work (88.57%),
  - c) that women are just as intelligent as men (91.18%),
  - d) that men have the right to be "head of the family" (81.43%),
  - e) that the wife must obey her husband (83.10%),
  - f) that the place of the woman is in the home (71.83%),
  - g) that the wife does not have to wait until asked by her husband in order to express her opinions about a matter (75.36%),
  - h) that women are just as capable as men in making important decisions (92.86%), and
  - i) that a wife should make her disagreements verbally known to her husband (69.01%).
15. The most frequently mentioned important qualities of manhood were responsibility (27.56%), understanding or wisdom (10.14%), and good personality and self-confidence (9.45%).
16. The most frequently mentioned important qualities of womanhood were responsibility (17.02%), understanding or thoughtfulness (12.82%), and femininity, delicacy, or attractiveness (12.82%).

17. A significant difference was found to exist at the .01 level in respondents' scores on the Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale according to urban or rural residence. Those women of urban residence were significantly more egalitarian in their views of women's roles.
18. A significant difference was found to exist at the .01 level in respondents' scores on the Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale according to level of education. A positive relationship existed between level of education and degree of egalitarianism. Those women with the highest level of education were most egalitarian.
19. No significant difference was found to exist in Perceptions of the Role of Women Scale scores according to each of the following: (a) wife's employment status, (b) number of children, (c) wife's age, (d) wife's immediate family's total monthly income, and (e) length of marriage.

#### Conclusions and Discussion

One major conclusion of this study was that most of the women considered their marriage relationship to be moderately to highly satisfying. However, they perceived economic and housing problems as the major factors associated with family unhappiness. These problems were understandable since over one-half of the respondents reported having total incomes of less than 400 Balboas (roughly equivalent to U. S. dollars) per month. The generally low income of many Panamanians could be seen as a possible deterrent to family happiness for many persons. This is consistent with other research such as a study by Williamson (1962) who

found a positive association between adequate income and marriage happiness.

Another major conclusion of this study was that Panamanian women generally do not express the traditional Latin American marriage system. Most indicated that their marriages were characterized by mutual activities, mutual expressions of affection, empathy, and compliments to at least a moderate degree. The great degree to which many women shared interests and responsibilities with their husbands stood in contrast to the highly compartmentalized traditional Latin American marriage structure. This contrast was expected as many researchers have noted these changes since Oscar Lewis wrote about the challenges to the traditional system in 1960. Studies by Trent (1965), Tharp et al. (1968), and Hawkes and Taylor (1975) all reported the tremendous influence of North American culture in Latin American movement away from the traditional pattern. A similar study in Panama would probably show that the United States has had much to do with Panamanians' rejection of the traditional structure.

A majority of the women perceived that women were equal to men with regard to the need for equality of educational opportunities and the recognition of capabilities. However, most of the women reported that men have the right to be "head of the family" and that a woman's place is in the home. These attitudes may look contradictory, especially since most of the women held jobs outside the home. Perhaps these women would have ideally spent all their time at home, but had to work because of economic necessity. Another explanation might be that working women perceived the working role as secondary to the roles of wife and mother. Stevens (1973b) probably would have explained comments such as "a

woman's place is in the home" as a perpetuation of the "myth of male dominance and female passivity" (p. 316).

It is interesting to note in looking at the sample as a whole that the respondents were generally more educated than their husbands. Since education is related to type of employment, the wives' greater education may explain why most of the respondents reported that the responsibility for moving to a new location was equally shared, and of the remaining respondents, more reported that they had greater responsibility than their husbands in making this decision.

One of the most interesting conclusions of this study was that the Panamanian women perceived the important qualities of manhood and womanhood to be very similar. For example, the most frequently mentioned quality for both womanhood and manhood was responsibility. This finding is consistent with, and may be explained by, the finding that the respondents expressed a generally egalitarian view of the husband-wife relationship.

Mutual understanding and respect was reported to be the most satisfying aspect of marriage. This finding is consistent with Sauer (1976), who found that husbands and wives of strong North American families indicated that mutual understanding and respect were the most important factors contributing to their marriage satisfaction. The present finding was also consistent with the research of Otto (1962). Stinnett, Carter, and Montgomery (1972) found that mutual respect was the characteristic of a successful marriage most often reported by older husbands and wives.

Those Panamanian women from urban areas and those having the highest level of education were found to be significantly more egalitarian in their views on women's role. These findings were consistent with

studies by Olensen (1971), Johnson (1972), Rosen and La Raia (1972), and Rosenberg (1976). It was surprising that no significant differences in perceptions of the role of women were found according to the wife's employment status, income, and age since these variables have been significant in other studies of Latin American women.

One implication of this research is that family life specialists need to be concerned with the totality of the family context. In order to strengthen family life in Panama, the problems of inadequate housing and income will need to be attended to, as well as providing for improved family interaction.

The following recommendations for future research are made:

1. Replicate this study in other Central and South American countries.
2. Replicate this study among affluent Panamanian families.
3. Replicate this study among Panamanian husbands.
4. Conduct a time use study among Panamanian families in order to gain greater insight into their values. Such a study could be useful in cross-cultural comparisons.
5. Examine how Panamanian women integrate their working and homemaking roles.
6. Compare the apparent influence concerning the roles of women and marriage patterns that the United States has had in various Central and South American countries.

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## APPENDIXES

## STUDY OF THE LIFE OF PANAMANIAN FAMILIES

The Department of Home Economics of the University of Panama in conjunction with the Home Economics Department of Oklahoma State University is carrying out a study about Panamanian family life.

With the information supplied by those being interviewed, we will be able to improve current Home Economics programs, making them more consistent with the true national picture which we hope to gain from this study.

The outcome of this study depends upon the cooperation of each person interviewed. For this reason, we ask that you would be as truthful and sincere as you can in your responses to each part of this interview.

You can be certain that the information which you supply for this study will be kept in complete confidence.

The University of Panama with Oklahoma State University gratefully appreciate the cooperation of all the people, who in one way or another, have made this study about Panamanian family life possible.

Urban: \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Rural: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Questionnaire No.: \_\_\_\_\_

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. How many people live in your household including live-in domestic help?
3. Do one or more grand-parents live in your home?
4. How many children do you have in your immediate family?
5. What is your age?
6. What is your level of education?
7. Are you employed outside the home?
8. What is the total monthly income of all members of your immediate family?
9. Who earns the major part of the family income?
10. What is the level of your husband's education?
11. What is your husband's occupation?
12. What if your occupation if you are employed outside the home?
13. Do you
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 1. own this house
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 2. rent this house
14. Do you own some land?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 1. yes
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 2. no
15. What is your religion?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Catholic
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Protestant
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 3. none
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 4. other
16. What type of matrimonial ceremony did you and your spouse have?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 1. civil
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 2. religious
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 3. none
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 4. both civil and religious
17. Is this your first marriage?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 1. yes
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 2. no

18. How did your first marriage end?  
 1. death  
 2. divorce  
 3. separation
19. Is this the first marriage for you spouse?  
 1. yes  
 2. no
20. Did your spouse's first marriage end in  
 1. death  
 2. divorce  
 3. separation
21. How many years have you and your spouse been married?  
 1. Less than one year  
 2. 1-2 years  
 3. 3-5 years  
 4. 6-10 years  
 5. 11-15 years  
 6. 16-20 years  
 7. More than 20 years
22. How long were you in love with your spouse before you married?  
 1. Less than one year  
 2. 1-3 months  
 3. 4-6 months  
 4. 7-11 months  
 5. 12-18 months  
 6. 19-24 months  
 7. More than 2 years
23. How old were you when you and your spouse were married? \_\_\_\_\_
24. How old was your spouse when you were married? \_\_\_\_\_

#### FAMILY LIFE

25. What two things would you like most of an ideal family (of the children and of the spouse)?
- 1.
  - 2.
26. If you could change two things in your family life, what would they be?
- 1.
  - 2.

## THE HUSBAND-WIFE RELATIONSHIP

27. Do you believe that the majority of the couples that you know are happily married?
1. yes  
 2. no
28. What do you think are the two principle reasons that marriages fail? (If the answer is other than one on the list, write it in.)
1. poor sexual adjustment  
 2. financial problems  
 3. conflicts in personality  
 4. lack of common interests and goals  
 5. complications with a third person  
 6. weight of the responsibility for the children  
 7. immaturity  
 8. egotism  
 9. lack of understanding  
 10. other (explain)
29. How important do you believe it is for husbands and wives to share common interests and activities?
1. very important  
 2. of some importance  
 3. not important
30. Among the couples that you know, do you believe that the infidelity of the husband could cause a divorce?
1. yes  
 2. no
31. Among the couples that you know, do you believe that the infidelity of the wife could cause a divorce?
1. yes  
 2. no
32. Do you feel that your own marriage is:
1. happy  
 2. indecisive  
 3. unhappy
33. What two major things do you like best about your marital relationship?
1.  
2.
34. What do you think are the two principal problems in your marital relationship?
1.  
2.

35. Since you and your spouse were married, do you believe that your marital relationship has changed?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1. more satisfactory  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. less satisfactory  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. more or less the same  
\_\_\_\_\_ 4. indecisive
36. What do you believe are the two most important things that people can do to have a good marriage?  
1.  
  
2.
37. How frequently do you and your spouse do things together?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1. little  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. moderate  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. much
38. Does your spouse demonstrate affection to you?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1. little  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. moderate  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. much
39. Do you demonstrate affection to your spouse?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1. little  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. moderate  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. much
40. When you feel disillusioned or depressed does your husband try to lift your spirits and do something to make you feel better?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1. little  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. moderate  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. much
41. When your spouse feels disillusioned or depressed do you try to lift his spirit and to make him feel better?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1. little  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. moderate  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. much
42. Does your spouse say complimentary words to you?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1. little  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. moderate  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. much
43. Do you say complimentary words to your spouse?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1. little  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. moderate  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. much
44. Does your husband talk with you about problems and things that concern him?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1. little  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. moderate  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. much



45. Does your husband talk with you about his work and interests?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 1. little  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 2. moderate  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 3. much
46. Do you talk with your husband about your work and interests?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 1. little  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 2. moderate  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 3. much
47. How often do you not argue with your husband for fear that he would get angry?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 1. little  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 2. moderate  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 3. much

Who makes the final decisions in your family about:

48. Matters of money  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 1. always the husband  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 2. generally the husband  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 3. you and your husband about equally  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 4. generally yourself  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 5. always yourself
49. Children  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 1. always the husband  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 2. generally the husband  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 3. you and your husband about equally  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 4. generally yourself  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 5. always yourself
50. Activities during free time  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 1. always the husband  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 2. generally the husband  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 3. you and your husband about equally  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 4. generally yourself  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 5. always yourself
51. Move to a new locality  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 1. always the husband  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 2. generally the husband  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 3. you and your husband about equally  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 4. generally yourself  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 5. always yourself
52. Birth control  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 1. always the husband  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 2. generally the husband  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 3. you and your husband about equally  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 4. generally yourself  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 5. always yourself

## PERCEPTION OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN SCALE

46. Do you believe that women must have equal quantity of formal education as men?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1. agree  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. don't know  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. disagree
47. Do you believe that women should receive equal pay as men for equal work?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1. agree  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. don't know  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. disagree
48. As a general rule, do you believe that women are less intelligent than men?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1. agree  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. don't know  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. disagree
49. Do you believe that a man has the right to be the "head of the family?"  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1. agree  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. don't know  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. disagree
50. Do you believe that the wife must obey the husband?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1. agree  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. don't know  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. disagree
51. Do you believe that the place of the woman is in the home?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1. agree  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. don't know  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. disagree
52. Do you believe that wife should not express her opinions about a matter if her husband does not ask for it?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1. agree  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. don't know  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. disagree
53. Do you believe, as a general rule, that women are less able than the men to make important decisions?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1. agree  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. don't know  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. disagree
54. Do you believe that when a wife does not agree with her husband it is better that she remain silent rather than disagree with him?  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1. agree  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. don't know  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. disagree

**MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY**

62. What do you believe are the two most important qualities that a man should possess?

1.

2.

63. What do you believe are the two most important qualities that a woman should possess?

1.

2.

VITA

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