

# This Week's Citation Classic®

CC/NUMBERS 51-52  
DECEMBER 22-29, 1986

**Spanier G B.** Measuring dyadic adjustment: new scales for assessing the quality of marriage and similar dyads. *J. Marriage Fam.* 38:15-28, 1976.  
[Division of Individual and Family Studies and Department of Sociology, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA]

A new measure for assessing the quality of marriage is presented in a 32-item scale that is theoretically grounded, relevant, valid, and reliable. The factor analytic study also found four empirically verified subscales: satisfaction, cohesion, consensus, and affectional expression. [The *Social Sciences Citation Index® (SSCI®)* indicates that this paper has been cited in over 275 publications.]

Graham B. Spanier  
Office of the Vice President  
for Academic Affairs  
Oregon State University  
Corvallis, OR 97331

October 15, 1986

This study was one of my first projects after finishing my doctorate. I had been impressed with the fact that marital adjustment was the most frequently studied variable in the field of family sociology, yet surprised that there were few measures of this concept. Moreover, the measures that existed were dated and had never undergone any sophisticated assessment of their psychometric properties. Since I had been very interested in the study of the quality of marriage since doing my master's thesis, I decided I would combine my interest in the subject with my growing background in measurement to develop a new scale.

In the decade since its publication, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale has become the most widely used measure in the field. It has been used in hundreds of doctoral dissertations as well as in the published articles cited. The scale has some weaknesses that I have acknowledged from the beginning, and the original paper called

for further development. Yet no new measure has emerged that has taken the place of the scale. It seemed to meet a critical need at the right time and continues to be widely used.

I never did market the scale commercially; it is generally used without any required permission or fee (commercially available computer and paper versions will soon exist, however). I now wish I had marketed it from the beginning, not for financial gain but because it probably would have relieved me of the daily burden of responding to correspondence about the scale: granting permission, giving out scoring information, commenting on issues of reliability and validity, and indicating that the scale may be used without permission and may be duplicated without charge. I have answered more than 1,000 letters and an equal number of phone calls in 10 years.

I named the scale "dyadic" adjustment, and developed item wording without specific reference to marriage, because I wanted to develop a measure that could be used in any committed couple relationship, including unmarried cohabitation. As I anticipated, however, more than 90 percent of the scale's use has been with married couples. We also developed four subscales (dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, dyadic consensus, and affectional expression) and revalidated the scale and subscales in a subsequent study.<sup>1</sup>

Much of the criticism that has followed the article's publication, interestingly enough, is not of the scale itself so much as of the issue of whether the quality of marriage can be measured. I continue to believe that it can, although I am sure that there can be improvements in how it is done. I expect that the scale will continue to be used widely for a few more years and that its use will then diminish as new measures emerge that improve on the psychometric properties and utility of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale.

1. Spanier G B & Thompson L. A confirmatory analysis of the dyadic adjustment scale. *J. Marriage Fam.* 44:731-8, 1982.