

A LONGITUDINAL EXAMINATION OF MARITAL PROCESSES LEADING TO INSTABILITY IN REMARRIAGES AND STEPFAMILIES

Kay Pasley

Florida State University

Brad van Eeden-Moorefield

Central Michigan University

Introduction



- Study of couple dynamics, quality, and stability as a focus of research
- Focus has shifted to more emphasis on children and interactions between former spouses
- Typically comparative (i.e., those in first marriages compared to those in remarriages)
- Mixed results
- Higher probability of redivorce
- Few have examined instability factors

Our Purpose



- Examine the factors related to stability and their patterns of change over time
- Examine the influence of structural complexity (remarriage vs stepfamilies)

Conceptual Model



- Martial conflict, perceptions of fairness, and marital quality lead to changes in marital stability including redivorce
- The patterns are more pronounced for those in stepfamilies compared to remarriages

Methods



- All 3 waves of NSFH data
- Sample delimited:
 - ▣ First remarriage
 - ▣ Continuous remarriage for waves 1 and 2, but not necessarily wave 3
 - ▣ N = 455
 - ▣ Average duration = 8.33 years
 - ▣ Men = 197, women = 258
 - ▣ Primarily white and educated

Measurement



- Family Complexity- ($n = 292$; i.e., remarrieds with no or only joint biological children) and stepfamilies ($n = 163$; i.e., stepfather-only families, stepmother-only families, stepmother-stepfather families, and those with both common and stepchildren)

Measurement- (possible scores)

	Time 1 Marital Quality (7-63)	Time 1 Fairness (4-20)	Time 1 Marital Conflict (6-36)	Time 2 Marital Quality (7-63)	Time 2 Fairness (4-20)	Time 2 Marital Conflict (6-36)	Time 3 Instability (1-6)
Mean	53.45	8.98	10.83	48.62	8.80	11.60	2.49
<i>SD</i>	12.58	1.22	4.22	10.88	1.29	4.61	2.34
α	.90	.60	.75	.90	.55	.76	--
Kurtosis	2.85	6.40	2.92	.54	4.59	2.39	2.39

Correlations

Manifest Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Time 1 Marital Quality	--						
2. Time 1 Fairness	.20*	--					
3. Time 1 Marital Conflict	-.30*	-.07	--				
4. Time 2 Marital Quality	.34*	.23*	-.30*	--			
5. Time 2 Fairness	.16*	.31*	-.13*	.38*	--		
6. Time 2 Marital Conflict	-.19*	-.01	.43*	-.53*	-.46*	--	
7. Time 3 Instability	-.25*	-.10*	.15*	-.60*	-.23*	.34*	--

Path Analysis

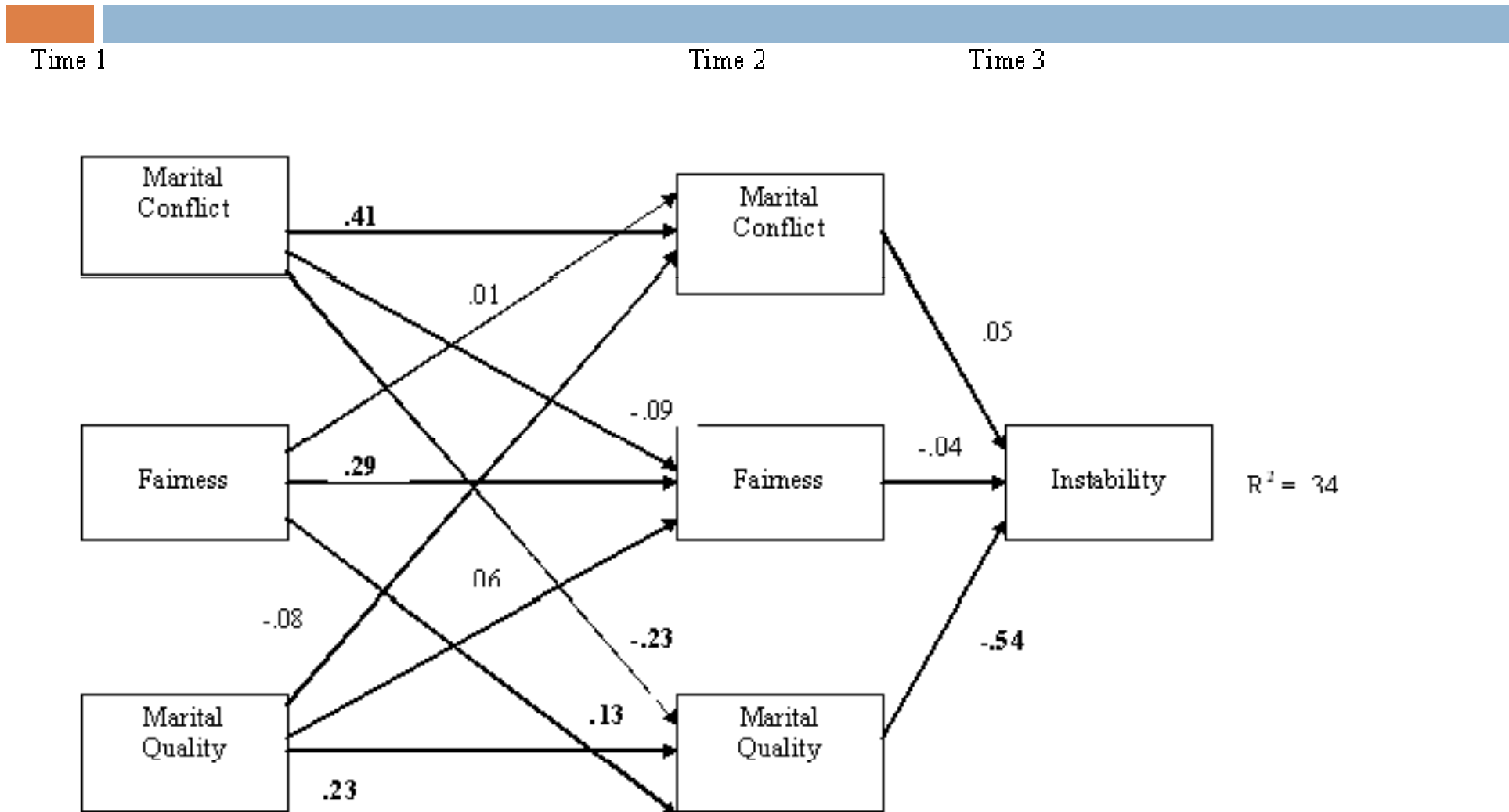


- Full information likelihood estimation
- Imputation

- Used to handle non-normal and missing data

- Amos 5.0 used
- Fully cross-lagged design
- Wave 2 instability regressed on wave 3 to control

Full Sample Path Model of Processes Leading to Instability (Standardized Solution; $N = 455$).



*Note: Significant paths in bold.

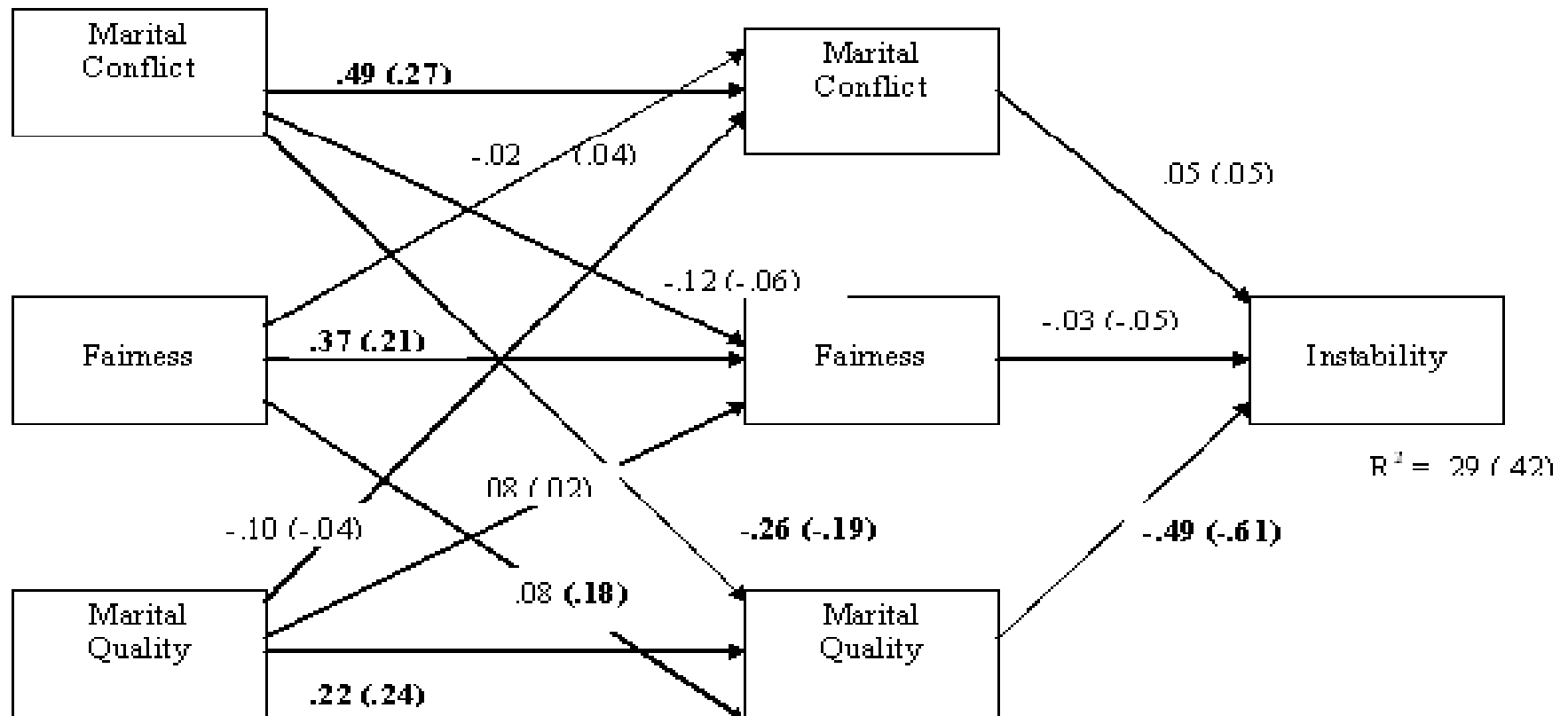
$\chi^2 [4] = 6.69, p = .15, RMSEA = .04, NFI = .99, CFI = .99.$

Remarriage and Stepfamily Path Model of Processes Leading to Instability (Standardized Solution)

Time 1

Time 2

Time 3



*Note: Significant paths in bold and estimates for the stepfamily model are in parentheses.
 Moderated Model: $\chi^2 [8] = 8.37, p = .40, RMSEA = .01, NFI = .99, CFI = .99$

Conclusions



- Earlier marital conflict affected later marital quality
 - consistent with previous findings (e.g., Beaudry et al., 2004; Bodenmann et al. 2006)
 - key site for intervention
- Marital quality was related to marital instability
 - consistent both with earlier (e.g., White & Booth, 1985) and more contemporary findings (e.g., Stewart, 2005). In fact, this path was quite strong (-.54) and accounted for a significant amount of variance in the full model (.34)
 - Stronger for stepfamilies
- Perceptions of fairness are also key, but more so for stepfamilies