
**ABSTRACT**

The two objectives of this study were to (a) provide descriptive information on couples' relationship problems at three stages of family development and (b) study the nature of couples' progress through these stages by using relationship problems as exemplars of changes in developmental tasks. With respect to the first objective, consistent patterns were found among three methods of assessing couples' problems. Subsequent analyses on problem intensity ratings indicated a moderately strong association between male and female ratings of most problem areas and between overall problem intensity and relationship satisfaction at each stage of family development. With respect to the second objective, changes in clusters of problems were found between stages consistent with some changes in developmental tasks predicted by stage theories of family development. Support was also found for the assumption that men and women confront developmental tasks at different rates. Implications for therapy and preventative interventions with couples and recommendations for future research are discussed.