SATISFACTION AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS IN SATISFYING LONG-TERM

MARRIAGE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

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Liberty University Doctoral Student

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study investigated the subjective marital experiences of five couples married for more than forty years. Select participants responded to interview questions pertaining to the phenomena of marriage satisfaction and marriage longevity. Participants completed the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) to assure the phenomenon of satisfaction was experienced in the marriage.

The data was collected using semi-structured, conversational, recorded, transcribed interviews in which the participants were interviewed separately by same-sex interviewers within the participant couples' homes. The marriage experiences and answers were compared and contrasted.

Two major themes emerged from the participants' descriptions of satisfaction: "Togetherness" and "Children/Grandchildren." Additionally, two major themes emerged from the data in reference to marriage longevity. These were "Attitude," referring to the mind-set participants brought to their marriage relationship, and "Action," referring to the work and effort participants invested in the marriage relationship. Subthemes emerging from "Attitude" included an "Attitude of Commitment," "Attitude of Respect," and "Attitude of Humor." Subthemes emerging from "Action" included "Act of Communication," "Act of Compromise," and "Act of Support." The theme "Sense of Security" emerged as a fiber that was woven throughout satisfaction and the factors contributing to marriage longevity.

This study has implications for premarital education, clinicians treating married couples, and personal growth. Suggestions for future study include expanding geographical area and ethnicity of participants for a more diversity-based approach.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Problem Background

The ideology regarding the institution of marriage has undergone a dramatic

transformation in the United States over the past fifty to sixty years (Wallerstein, Lewis,

& Blakeslee, 2000; Popenoe, 1993; Uecker & Stokes, 2008). Until recently, marriage

was considered a basic fundamental societal institution; however, Cherlin (2004) shares

that "marriage has undergone a process of deinstitutionalization--a weakening of the

social norms that define partners' behavior" (p. 848) resulting in a large number of

couples cohabiting and the emergence of same-sex marriage. Waite and Gallagher

(2000) have expanded on that viewpoint by stating that today's society has managed to

transform a most basic and universal institution such as marriage into something

controversial.

Today, the number of dissolved marriage relationships has grown to well over

fifty to sixty percent, a substantial increase since 1969 when Governor Ronald Reagan

signed the first no-fault divorce law (Buckley, 2003; Bumpass, 1990; Lauer & Lauer,

1986; Wallerstein et al., 2000). Subsequently, the last half of the 20th century found

divorce replacing death as the most common end point for marriage. This new "normal"

marital end point in society is due in part to the "lengthening of the human lifespan; the

biological, psychological, social, and economic improvement of women's lives; and the

emergence of new relationship or family values and laws within the Western

civilization" (Pinsof, 2002, p. 155); and to changes in societal attitudes since the no-

fault divorce laws of the 1960's (Lauer & Lauer, 1986). These societal and attitudinal

changes may be reflected in the fact that the federal government has not produced

detailed national statistical information on marriage and/or divorce since 1990 (Waite & Gallagher, 2000).

However, Waite (1995) notes the significance of marriage is found in the societal benefits marriage offers. Marriage creates a unit of production and consumption, and influences thoughts, behaviors, decisions, and the way institutions treat you (Waite & Gallagher, 2000). Furthermore, unhappy marriages can be emotionally and physically stressful and unhealthy to the individual, leading to conditions including high blood pressure, heart disease, anxiety, depression, suicide, violence, substance abuse, and lowered immunity (Gottman & Silver, 2000).

Since research shows that "small, positive behaviors, frequently repeated, can make a *big* difference in the long-term success of a marriage" (Gottman, Schwartz Gottman, & DeClaire, 2006, p. 7), and awareness is vital if we are to recognize some behavior as a wake-up call (Gottman et al., 2006), perhaps as couples, educators, and counselors become more aware of what makes marriage succeed, we can begin to increase marital satisfaction and longevity, and lower the rate of divorce.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to further understand the phenomena of satisfaction and longevity in marriage. Additionally, within the context of a satisfying marriage, this study attempts to explore the factors that lead to marriage longevity.

Scores of studies relating to marriage and the marital relationship have been completed; however, a review of the literature finds few recent studies pertaining to the phenomena of marriage longevity, or marriages lasting more than twenty years (e.g.

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Kaufman & Taniguchi, 2006; Schmitt, Kliegel, & Shapiro, 2007; Pienta, Hayward, & Jenkins, 2000) and satisfaction in long-term marriage. In 1986, Lauer and Lauer (1986, p. 11) quoted Wallis (1970, p. 53) in reporting that we have not yet come to grips with "what it is that makes marriages last, and enables them to survive" (p. 11), and they concurred that almost twenty years later the observation was still valid. Levenson, Carstensen, and Gottman (1994) note that most marriage research has been conducted on "relatively young couples and has been more concerned with marriages that dissolve than with marriages that stay together" (p. 301), and that "we do not know a great deal about the nature of marriage in middle and late life" (p. 302). Those sentiments may remain equally valid today.

Additionally, most perceptions of building satisfying long-term marriages originate from the clinical context (Lauer & Lauer, 1986), and many popular authors such as Smalley (1996), Smalley and Trent (1989), and Harley (1988, 1992, & 1994) seem to have based their theoretical fundamental building blocks of a sound marital relationship on perceptions that flow out of the clinical setting. The caution is that this data may be flawed due to the premise that these counselors are generally working with troubled marriages only (Lauer & Lauer, 1986). Glen (1990) posits that more qualitative research is needed for the advancement of understanding marriage. If this study can uncover just one important new idea concerning factors that lead to greater marriage satisfaction, marriage longevity, or affirm previous findings, it will have been worthwhile.

Given the fact that qualitative research and phenomenology involve a rich description and interpretation of phenomena from the direct perspective of those

individuals experiencing them (Creswell, 2009; van Manen, 1990), a phenomenological study was most appropriate for this research.

Research Questions

Marriage will be limited to a documented and licensed religious or civil ceremony between one woman and one man (Defense of Marriage Act of 1996), although it is recognized that same-sex marriages are legalized in the states of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Iowa, New Hampshire, and Vermont (DOMAwatch.org, 2008), and more recently in Washington, DC (Gresko, 2010) and New York (New York Times, 2011). With this in mind, the overarching objective and theoretical basis of this study is to investigate the subjective marital experiences of couples of the opposite sex reporting marriage satisfaction after forty to forty-nine years of marriage, in order to find out how these participants describe satisfaction in their marriage, and to identify and describe the factors contributing to marriage longevity that surface as a result of face-to-face recorded interviews. The primary research questions framing this study are:

1. How do participants describe their satisfying long-term marriage?
2. What factors do participants identify as contributing to the satisfaction and longevity of their marriage?
3. How do the participants' responses regarding long-term marriage compare and contrast?

Definitions

Operational definitions of terms include, but are not limited to, marriage, marriage longevity, successful marriage, marriage dissolution, and marriage satisfaction.

Marriage

Marriage is an ancient practice, although its meaning may have changed throughout time and space. According to the early Judeo-Christian perspective, marriage was instituted in Genesis 2:18-24, when God said it was "not good for man to be alone," so He made a "helper suitable for him . . . woman" (Thompson, 1990). In Section 3, Definition Of Marriage, the Defense of Marriage Act of 1996 states "the word 'marriage' means only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife, and the word 'spouse' refers only to a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or wife" (Defense of Marriage Act of 1996). For the purposes of this study, the term marriage will refer to a legal union between one woman and one man.

Marriage Satisfaction

Satisfaction will be defined by the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) characteristics of: 1) agreement between partners on matters important to the relationship, 2) contentment with the present state of the relationship and commitment to its continuance, 3) expression of affection and sex in the relationship, and 4) common interests and activities shared by the couple (Spanier, 1989, 2001). Marriage satisfaction may be determined by using instruments such as the DAS which "is a widely used instrument for clinical and research applications with couples" to "characterize the

quality of a dyadic relationship" (Spanier, 1989, 2001, p. 1). In order to qualify for this study, participants needed to receive a T-score of 45 or higher on the DAS. A T-score of 45-50 represents an average score and indicates no concern regarding the participants' dyadic adjustment to the marriage relationship.

Long-Term Marriage/Marriage Longevity

Whereas some researchers might define long-term marriage or marriage longevity as those marriages lasting twenty to twenty-five years or more (Fennel, 1993; Kaslow & Robison, 1996), others consider only those who have experienced fifty or more years of marriage (Lauer & Lauer, 1986; Lauer, Lauer, & Kerr, 1990; Roberts, 1979-1980; Sporakowski & Hughston, 1978). This study will limit longevity to those marriages forty to forty-nine years in length in order to keep the age of the participants to the lower end of "older adult" which Spaniol, Voss, and Grady (2008) identify as between sixty and eighty-five years of age. This will be done to help protect against positive bias in recall during the interview process. Positive bias in recall, which tends to increase with age, might be described as maximizing the positive and minimizing the negative in recalling past experiences (Carstensen, Fung, & Charles, 2003; Charles, Mather, & Carstensen, 2003). In looking at the variables, a long-term marriage should not be confused with a satisfying marriage (Glenn, 1990; Roberts, 1979-1980).

Successful Marriage

Roberts (1979-1980) states that the two norms most frequently used by society to identify a successful marriage are: 1) the stability or durability which may be indicated by

the number of years a couple has been married, and 2) personal happiness, which, although very subjective, can be measured using appropriate instruments. In this study, successful marriage if defined as: 1) couples married forty to forty-nine years, and 2) couples identified as satisfied in their marriage relationship by their Dyadic Adjustment Scale scores.

Locating Myself as a Researcher

My experiences and work as a licensed marriage and family therapist for the past twenty years have allowed me a first-hand glimpse into the marriages of several struggling couples, some whose marriage has dissolved, and others who have made appropriate changes in attitude and behavior in order to salvage their marriage. Additionally, my experience with couples in premarital counseling begs the question of what needs to be addressed and implemented in order for them to experience a satisfying long-term marriage.

I am certain that part of my interest in long-term marriage is due to observing the marriage longevity my parents experienced and the manner in which they related and interacted with one another in their fifty-five year marriage, which ended with the death of my father. I witnessed firsthand the personality strengths and weaknesses of my parents, their communication skills, their financial, relational, and health struggles, and their idiosyncrasies. I often wondered what contributed to the longevity of my parents' marriage. If my mother was asked to what she attributed her marriage longevity, she would respond with something like, "Well, I had four good children. I can't complain." Or: "I had a good life. We always worked hard. We had our ups and downs, because he

was ten years older than me, but . . ." Or: "I went to work, and that helped out a lot."
Although he is now deceased, I recall my father frequently sharing the positive aspects of
my mother's family of origin, cultural background, and character, with comments like,
"She came from a good family," and "She's always been a hard worker, a good cook, and
a good housekeeper."

Finally, participation in my own marriage relationship has drawn me into an
existential experience of this intimate dyadic relationship. I consider my marriage to
Wendy to be a stable and satisfying relationship that will withstand the test of time. As I
examine the unique aspects of our relationship and the unique qualities we bring to the
relationship as individuals, I often consider the factors that contribute to our marital
satisfaction and potential for marriage longevity. Was it the early establishment of a solid
relational foundation through effective communication; or similarities such as Midwest
upbringing, educational experiences, and religious background; or was it differences in
personality that continued to draw us together and contribute to our marital satisfaction
and marriage longevity? Incidentally, having been married only twenty-two years, have
we established a successful marital relationship and achieved marriage longevity, or have
we merely begun our marital journey? How can I be assured that our marriage will
withstand the test of time?

As I experience my own marriage and reflect on the marriages I have observed, I
ask myself: What makes some marriages succeed and others fail? Why do some couples
appear to be satisfied and content in their marriage, while others appear dissatisfied? If
social scientists assert that satisfying long-term marriages don't just happen, then what
are the factors that contribute to satisfaction and marriage longevity? It is these factors

that I hope to discover and incorporate into my own marriage and into my counseling practice.

Qualitative research requires the researcher to immerse oneself into the particular context and the phenomena to be studied, which Piantanida and Garman (1999) refer to as "immersing oneself in the inquiry" (p. 157). Since I seek to find the meaning of marriage satisfaction and long-term marriage, a qualitative study from a phenomenological perspective was deemed appropriate.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This review will focus on the literature relevant to the phenomena of marriage satisfaction and marriage longevity (e.g. Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Kaufman & Taniguchi, 2006; Lauer & Lauer, 1986; Lauer et al., 1990; Roberts, 1979-1980). Additionally, the review will explore the history of the institution of marriage in America (e.g. Cherlin, 2004; Haines, 1996; Schoen, Landale, & Daniels, 2007; Uecker & Stokes, 2008), common types of marriage relationships that have been identified (e.g. Gottman, 1994; Lauer & Lauer, 1986; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995), seasons through which a marriage might transition (e.g. Appleton & Bohm, 2001; Henry & Miller, 2004; Levenson, Carstensen, & Gottman, 1993; Miller, Yorgason, Sandberg, & White, 2003; Schramm, Marshall, Harris, & Lee, 2005), marriage as a fractured institution (e.g. Gottman & Silver, 2000; Popenoe, 1993; Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995; Wallerstein et al., 2000), the benefits of marriage to the individual and to society (e.g. Gottman & Silver, 2000; Pienta et al., 2000; Silverman, 2007; Waite and Gallagher, 2000), factors contributing to marriage longevity (e.g. Driver & Gottman, 2004; Gattis, Berns, Simpson, & Christensen, 2004; Gottman & Silver, 2000; Gottman et al., 2006), and risk factors that lead to an eroded marriage relationship (e.g. Gattis et al., 2004; Gottman & Silver, 2000; Gottman et al., 2006; Miller et al., 2003; Shapiro, Gottman, & Carrere, 2000).

Marriage in America

Trends in Marriage from Colonial America to the Present

     Since the colonization of America, the institution of marriage has cycled through several trends and undergone a dramatic transformation, with greatest intensity during the past fifty to sixty years (Wallerstein et al., 2000; Popenoe, 1993; Haines, 1996). Haines (1996) reports that the immigrants' arrival in colonial America introduced a dramatic decrease in age at first marriage and decreases in number of white men and women never married. However, a reversal of this trend was witnessed at the beginning of the 1800's with an increase in marriage age and increase in number of both men and women never marrying. This trend continued until the 1900's when it again reversed. The most recent reversal began in the 1960's and 1970's and continues today, with the ages of men and women at first marriage again increasing steadily as well as the number of men and women never marrying (Haines, 1996; National Center for Family & Marriage Research [NCFMR], 2009), and the U.S. Census Bureau (2006-2008) reporting the median age at first marriage being 27.7 years for men and 26.1 years for women. The statistics are even higher for African Americans (Waite, 1995). In spite of this recent trend, Uecker and Stokes (2008) report that more than twenty-five percent of young women and more than fifteen percent of young men do marry before their twenty-third birthday; however, those who choose to marry before age 23 tend to be white or Hispanic, have parents who married early, were raised conservative Protestant or Mormon, have grown up in the South or in rural areas, and tend to be less educated. This trend has remained constant since the 1970's.

Haines (1996) attributes the marriage trend of the last fifty to sixty years to "more difficult labor markets for younger workers; improved access to employment opportunities for women; better, less expensive, and more accessible contraception; and changing views on the family" (p. 36). Cherlin (2004) defines the transition as the process of deinstitutionalization, that is, "the weakening of the social norms that define people's behavior in a social institution such as marriage" (p. 848), and the "increasing number and complexity of cohabitating unions and the emergence of same-sex marriage" (p. 848). Effecting the deinstitutionalization of marriage is an emphasis on personal choice and self-development, individual fulfillment, flexible and negotiable roles, open communication, and confrontation of problems (Cherlin, 2004). According to Uecker and Stokes (2008), cohabitation and premarital sex have gradually become increasingly normative and socially acceptable, with the prevalence of cohabitating members of the opposite sex reaching 4.8 percent and same-sex 0.6 percent when referring to unmarried-partner households (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008). Cohabitation outnumbers marriage for young women, with nearly sixty percent cohabitating at least once before reaching age twenty-four (Schoen et al., 2007); however, those unions are relatively short-lived (Waite, 1995) and much less a prelude to marriage than they once were (Schoen et al., 2007).

Baker, Sanchez, Nock, and Wright (2009) assert that mainstream society has moved toward more egalitarian attitudes regarding gender roles in marriage; however, Kaufman and Taniguchi (2006) report that these attitudes result in significantly higher levels of marital happiness for men only. Nonetheless, the "strictly ordered transitions of the 1950's are long gone and have been replaced by a variety of paths to adulthood"

(Schoen et al., 2007, p. 807), and these transitions today may not involve marriage, which until fifty to sixty years ago was the "only socially acceptable way to have a sexual relationship and to raise children" (Cherlin, 2004, p. 851). The result is that for many today, marriage is more a representation of personal achievement and choice than an expectation or necessity for transitioning into adulthood, filling intimacy needs, gratifying sexual desires, and raising children. Furthermore, it appears that normative marriage and the traditional family, with husband assuming the role of breadwinner and wife the role of stay-at-home mom, are now the minority (Cherlin, 2004; Lauer & Lauer, 2009; Shiota & Levenson, 2007).

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) describe marriage as having undergone a "profound, irrevocable transformation . . . driven by changes in women's roles and the heightened expectations of both men and women" (p.6), resulting in dramatic changes in society's attitude towards marriage. Some changes include increases in women's employment and earnings, translating into less dependence on husbands for support and less energy to invest in a marriage relationship. Added to this are changes in divorce laws, attitudes toward divorce, and public policies that support single women (Waite, 1995). In a sense, "insurance, Social Security, unemployment compensation, pensions, and 401(k)s" have taken the place of the husband's support (Waite & Gallagher, 2000, p. 175). The participants in this study are some of the first couples to experience marriage in the post-1950's era, an era defined by high marriage and birth rates, general marital stability, and low divorce rates in America (Popenoe, 1993).

Types of Marriages

Researchers and marriage experts describe many types of marriages based on satisfaction, behavior, and stability. Marital relationships can be placed in three basic classifications: 1) the successful and fulfilling marriage, 2) the mediocre marriage, and 3) the conflict-oriented marriage (Gottman, 1994; Lauer & Lauer, 1986; Levinger, 1965; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995).

The Successful and Fulfilling Marriage

The successful and fulfilling marriage is referred to by Levinger (1965) as the full-shell marriage, and by Gottman (1994) as the validating marriage, both represented by a relationship in which the couple is open to compromise and calmly works toward conflict resolution as virtuosos of communication, having developed a keen ability to listen to and understand the other's point of view. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) describe this marriage as a "process of continual change" (p. 24), as the marital relationship pertains to dealing with new issues and problems that arise, with the couple utilizing the resources available at each stage of life of the relationship.

Additionally, Lauer and Lauer (1986) recognize two types of successful marriage: the vital marriage and the total marriage. The vital marriage is characterized by an emotional bond and a depth of sharing that is lacking in dissatisfying marriages, with the husband and wife working through difficulties and problems in their relationship. The total marriage is similar to the vital marriage; however, the emotional bond, depth of sharing, and ability to work through problem areas is even more complete in the total marriage.

The Mediocre Marriage

The mediocre marriage has many faces. Levinger (1965) identifies two mediocre marriages: the no-shell marriage, characterized by low stability and low satisfaction; and the empty-shell marriage, characterized by low satisfaction only. Gottman's (1994) version of the mediocre marriage is the conflict-avoidance marriage, in which the couple agrees to disagree, with little interaction within the marriage relationship other than reaffirming what they love and value in the marriage. This couple accentuates the positive, and simply accepts the rest.

Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) identify four types of mediocre marriages, the first of which is the romantic marriage, consisting of individuals who believe they are destined to be together. The core relational element of the romantic marriage is a lasting and passionately sexual relationship, which presents the danger of each individual becoming consumed by a preoccupation with the other. The second is the rescue marriage, which embraces comfort and healing from past hurt and pain as its core relational element. The third is the companionate marriage, identified as the most common mediocre marriage. The companionate marriage is grounded in friendship and equality that can easily be diluted to a brother/sister type relationship. Finally, the traditional marriage incorporates clear division of roles and responsibilities, but may reduce marriage by narrowly focusing on the roles surrounding parenthood with the individuals recognized as little more than functioning parents.

Lauer and Lauer (1986) identify two mediocre marriages. These are the devitalized marriage, which begins with intense emotion, love, and sexual relationship, but erodes to two separate entities engaging in similar tasks at a similar time and place

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with the couple simply going through family rituals; and the passive-congenial marriage, which is characterized by dullness and ritualization that existed from the beginning. Although less fulfilling, mediocre marriages do withstand the test of time (Levinger, 1965).

The Conflict-Oriented Marriage

Levinger (1965) posits that some marriage relationships are almost certain to fail, which is how he defines the half-shell marriage, characterized by low stability or satisfaction. Gottman (1994) and Lauer and Lauer (1986) identify the conflict-oriented marriage as the volatile and conflict-habituated marriages respectively. These marriages are characterized by conflict which is addressed head-on with passionate disputes, and the couple taking very little interest in hearing or understanding the other's point of view in the heat of an argument.

Seasons of Marriage

Regardless of the nature of the marriage, Shiota and Levenson (2007) maintain that marriage relationships change in numerous ways over the decades. These changes are identified by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) as several distinctive stages based on life tasks, wants, and needs that differ depending on the stage of the marriage.

Early Marriage

It is in the early stage of marriage that the vitally important relational alliance must be established (Appleton & Bohm, 2001), yet this stage is also the most common

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time for marriages to end (Shiota & Levenson, 2007). In early marriage couples are newlywed and idealize each other (Murray, Holmes, Bellavia, Griffin, & Dolderman, 2002). Problematic areas in this stage tend to be debt brought into the marriage and the balancing of employment and marriage responsibilities. The couple receives satisfaction from respect, appreciation, commitment, affection, and trust within the relationship (Schramm et al., 2005). Husbands and wives are still emerging into their new roles as adults in early marriage. This stage is often accompanied by the birth of children, which is often the busiest season in a marriage (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995). Relationships stabilized early in the marriage will remain more stable throughout the marriage (Miller et al., 2003).

Midlife Marriage

In midlife, the marriage relationship transitions from the idealization of early marriage to the reality of raising a family and making ends meet. In this stage couples may compete to complete the same task while neglecting other tasks, resulting in conflict and dissatisfaction. In contrast to the early marriage, communication patterns solidify, and more collaborative-cooperative styles of conflict resolution increase in middle marriage (Shiota & Levenson, 2007). As the marital relationship matures, couples again make time for togetherness, learn to interchange roles and responsibilities as situations arise, make accommodations for changes in health, and recognize a future together (Shiota & Levenson, 2007). Problematic areas for couples in midlife may also involve demands of multiple roles, caring for aging parents (Brody, Litvin, Albert, & Hoffman,

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1994), retirement (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995), financial matters, sexual issues, and dealing with children (Henry & Miller, 2004).

Adolescent children present unique challenges to the mid-life marriage. These challenges are often associated with establishing independence, driving, clothes, and friends (Collins, Laursen, Mortensen, Luebker, & Ferreira, 1997). Later, launching children off to college and career pose challenges associated with financial support for education, as does adult children returning home for financial and emotional support following divorce or unemployment (Cherlin, Scabini, & Giovanna, 1997; Mitchell & Gee, 1996).

Long-Term Marriage

An examination of long-term marriage indicates a high level of adjustment (Johnson, 1985), often accompanied by increased intimacy, emotional expression, and companionship, as compared to the midlife marriage when changing life stages and demands from outside the home are much more prevalent (Shiota & Levenson, 2007). An interdependence and cohesion develops over years of marriage resulting from shared experiences, hardships, and successes, which help the couple deal with age-related issues such as illness (Shiota & Levenson, 2007). In long-term marriage, health issues may include hormone imbalance and medication contraindication in both men and women, which may negatively affect sexual desire and/or performance (Kaplan, 1990). However, it is a myth that sex is one of the first biological activities that falls prey to the aging process, as the majority of healthy individuals remain sexually active until advanced old age (Kaplan, 1990).

Conflict tends to decrease in long-term marriage (Levenson et al., 1993), and "personality similarity may offer less cause for conflict than in midlife" (Shiota & Levenson, 2007, p.672), with older couples reporting fewer and less severe potential sources of conflict (Johnson, 1985). However, conflict still possesses the potential to erode the marriage relationship in any stage (Levenson et al., 1993). When conflict is present in long-term marriage, it often originates from fears of loss, abandonment, or competition for the sick role; but is often met with "good-humored joking, sarcastic remarks, or teasing, rather than overt arguments" (Johnson, 1985, p. 171). Influencing the frequency or impact of conflict may be the husband's "move from more patriarchal styles to more collaborative or conceding styles" (Huyck & Gutmann, 1992, p. 249), whereas women may move from "acknowledging the authority of the husband to covertly and overtly challenging his authority" (p. 249), while others "show a style of matriarchal nurturance" (p. 249).

Schmitt et al. (2007) report that "being married is still the norm in middle and old age" (p.283), and to endure, marriage requires lots of hard work, while affording comfort, security, and a sense of confidence and hope for a future (Appleton & Bohm, 2001). For older individuals, marriage also "provides a significant dyadic relationship for which there are few substitutes" (Johnson, 1985, p. 171).

<div align="center">Marriage as a Fractured Institution</div>

Until recently, marriage was considered a fundamental societal institution. However, American society today has managed to transform this basic and universal institution into something controversial (Waite & Gallagher, 2000). This transformation

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is represented in the battle between religious authorities within the Judeo-Christian community, the Federal government, conservative and liberal activist groups, and marriage and family experts. Judeo-Christian tradition defines marriage as a relationship between one woman and one man, as established in Genesis 2:18-24: "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.' . . . For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Thompson, 1990). The Federal Government legislated that marriage be limited to a documented and licensed religious or civil ceremony between one woman and one man (Defense of Marriage Act of 1996). Conservative activist groups have fervently fought to protect marriage as an institution between one woman and one man (DOMAwatch.org, 2008). Liberal activist groups have fanatically fought for and won recognition and legalization of same-sex marriages in the states of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Iowa, New Hampshire, and Vermont (DOMAwatch.org, 2008), and more recently in Washington, DC (Gresko, 2010) and New York (New York Times, 2011). Marriage and family experts such as Stacey (2001) suggest traditional marriage is fundamentally incompatible with women's well-being; Sanger (2005-2006) questions why women need marriage since it is an oppressive relationship, while Waite and Gallagher (2000) view marriage as more than a sheet of paper, but a "unique public commitment--supported by law, society, and custom" (p. 11), which assumes a long-term contract (Waite, 1995). Nonetheless, twenty-nine states have adopted amendments blocking same-sex marriages, perhaps reflecting the American public's opposition to same-sex marriage (Vestal, 2009), and the seventy-five percent of the Republicans and fifty-two percent of the Democrats who disapprove of gay marriages (Buckley, 2003).

The California State Supreme Court had ruled in favor of same-sex marriages in June 2008 (Holton, 2008); however, Proposition 8 reversed the ruling after only five months (League of Women Voters of California Education Fund, 2008). With various interest groups vying for input into the definition of conventional marriage and family, is there any wonder why marriage is a fractured institution and in danger of inevitably dying out in America (Lauer & Lauer, 1986)?

Recognizing the effects of the erosion of the American family, Popenoe (1993) states that the family has "lost functions, social power, and authority over their members," and has "grown smaller in size, less stable, and shorter in life span" (p. 528). The decline of marriage as an institution should be cause for alarm, for "family decline since 1960 has been extraordinarily steep, and its social consequences serious, especially for children" (Popenoe, 1993, p. 527). This decline is represented in the fifty percent (Buckley, 2003; Gottman, 1994; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995) to sixty-seven percent of marriages ending in divorce today, with half of all divorce occurring within the first seven years (Gottman & Silver, 2000), a substantial increase since 1969 when Gov. Ronald Reagan signed the no-fault divorce law (Buckley, 2003; Bumpass, 1990; Wallerstein et al., 2000). This legislation was influenced by the mistaken belief that children are resilient and the expectations that if divorced parents are happier their children will be happier, and that divorce is only a temporary crisis that exerts its most harmful effects on children at the time of the breakup (Wallerstein et al., 2000). Waite and Gallagher (2000) sense we've moved from believing that marriage is "a unique public commitment--supported by law, society, and custom--to a private relationship, terminable at will, which is nobody else's business" (p. 11). In spite of the dramatic

increase in the number of divorces, Waite and Gallagher (2000) report ninety-three

percent of Americans recognize a happy marriage as an important goal and objective in

life. Discerning insight might recognize that marriage is an institution that is worth

protecting.

<p style="text-align: center;">Benefits of Marriage to the Individual and Society</p>

Although critics such as Stacey (2001) may claim marriage is detrimental to

women, proponents highlight the importance of close and intimate personal relationships

to personal well-being (Corrigan & Phelan, 2004; Dush & Amato, 2005; Kaplan &

Kronick, 2006). Fifty years ago, Lewis (1960) stressed the importance of relationships in

stating, "We need others physically, emotionally, intellectually; we need them if we are

to know anything, even ourselves" (p. 2). Similarly, Waite and Gallagher (2000) contend

that "Marriage actually changes people's goals and behavior in ways that are profoundly

life enhancing" (p. 17).

Although it is recognized that some unhealthy and unsatisfying marriages can be

destructive and stressful, marriages that are healthy and satisfying can boast many

benefits (Lauer & Lauer, 2009). Ross (1995) posits, "The positive effect of marriage on

well-being is strong and consistent, and the selection of the psychologically healthy into

marriage or the psychologically unhealthy out of marriage cannot explain the effect" (p.

129). Pienta et al. (2000) contend that the health benefits of marriage are "widely shared

across demographic groups" (p. 559). Marriage offers a built-in support system in which

to process difficulties and struggles (Dehle, Larsen, & Landers, 2001). The potential

emotional and physical benefits are illustrated in married people who are happier,

<p style="text-align: center;">22</p>

healthier, and better off financially than those who are unmarried (Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Lauer & Lauer, 1986).

Emotional Benefits

The marriage relationship enhances mental health in both men and women (Horwitz, White, & Howell-White, 1996; Simon, 2002); it is associated with more sex and greater sexual satisfaction due to the emotional relationship (Waite, 1995), lowers levels of stress (Waite & Gallagher, 2000), leads to better management of crisis (Bosworth, Steffens, Kuchibhatla, Jiang, Arias, O'Connor, & Krishnan, 2000), and fills the need for human intimacy since isolation tends to be dehumanizing (Lauer & Lauer, 1986). Men in particular experience less stress and emotional and physical pathology than their unmarried counterparts, perhaps because women provide emotional support to the husband (Coombs, 1991). Marriage provides someone to assist with important decisions and the specialization of roles in the marriage leads to better productivity (Waite & Gallagher, 2000). Marriage also fills a basic need for "erotic love, sympathetic love, passionate love, tender nurturing love all of our adult lives," and provides an "oasis where sex, humor, and play can flourish" (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995, p. 5). Having a committed partner willing to offer support makes difficult tasks accomplishable and doable (Waite & Gallagher, 2000). Sanger (2005-2006) recognizes status, or the respect associated with the participation in civil marriage, as a unique benefit of marriage.

Physical Benefits

In respect to physical health, married couples have someone to take care of them, and have higher levels of immune function (Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Gottman & Silver, 2000). Both married men and women face lower risks of dying at any point than those who have never married or whose previous marriage has ended (Lillard &Waite, 1995). A lower rate of risky behavior is also associated with marriage (Lillard & Waite, 1995), as is a lower rate of drinking among married men and women (Umberson, 1987), particularly binge drinking and marijuana use in men (Duncan et al., 2006).

Financial Benefits

In respect to finances, married couples can save more at the same level of income, because in a cooperative effort two people can live cheaper than one. For example, both do not have to pay for housing or utilities. Married people are also more likely to possess an interest in providing for a spouse, leave bequests to spouses and children, save for a child's education, buy a house, and acquire cars and other assets (Waite, 1995). Married people have the highest household income and level of support, and lowest perceived economic hardship (Ross, 1995). Silverman (2007) states that there are over a thousand federal benefits for married couples, and more money in terms of pension, Social Security, real assets, financial assets, and property value of residence (Waite, 1995). Although employment and parenthood may slightly negatively impact women's happiness, "the positive effect of marriage on the happiness of these women is as strong as it has ever been" (Lee & Bulanda, 2005, p. 69).

Cooperative Benefits

Specialization within the marriage allows for more efficiency in household tasks by allowing one spouse to develop some skills while neglecting others (Waite, 1995). Each spouse can count on the other to assist and take responsibility for certain tasks resulting in a specialization of tasks that creates efficiency and proficiency (Waite, 1995). Marriage may connect individuals to others and to social groups which gives meaning to one's life outside the self (Waite, 1995). Two functions that cannot be performed better outside the family unit is childbearing and the provision of affection and companionship (Popenoe, 1993).

Familial Benefits

In respect to offspring, two-parent homes offer "more parental supervision, more parental time helping with homework," and "another parental shoulder to cry on after a hard day" than one-parent homes (Waite, 1995, p. 495). Benefits to children of two-parent homes include lower high school dropout rate and lower teen pregnancy rate (Waite, 1995), with Waite and Gallagher (2000) reporting children from two-parent homes twice as likely to graduate from high school and less likely to give birth themselves while teenagers than children from one-parent homes. Conversely, there also exists a higher rate of poverty for children in one-parent homes than in two-parent homes (Waite & Gallagher, 2000).

Beyond the many documented personal benefits of marriage are the benefits to society (Waite, 1995). Many believe that the foundation of a healthy society is the institution of marriage (Popenoe, 1993). Marriage creates not only a unit of consumption, but one of production in producing goods for the partnership, for children, and for society. Marriage changes the way you think about yourself, your partner, your present actions, and your future. It changes the way other institutions treat you. Marriage also carries with it the "unique public commitment--supported by law, society, and custom" (Waite & Gallagher, 2000, p. 11).

Identified Factors Contributing To Long-Term Marriage

The institution of marriage may have changed over the years; however, Fields (1983) contends that the psychic underpinning which identifies marriage as a very special interpersonal relationship that nourishes intimate emotional needs and is defined by a warm, trusting, and satisfying sexual relationship, has not. Given this, what are the factors that lead to a satisfying long-term marriage relationship? Gottman (1994) once stated the factors that facilitate a successful relationship are far from obvious; however, he later identified them as surprisingly simple, if the couple can prevent negative thoughts and emotions from overpowering the positive ones (Gottman & Silver, 2000). Marriage and family experts share specific attitudes and behaviors that may, when implemented, serve to enhance and facilitate the strengthening of the marriage relationship (Harley, 1994; Sporakowski & Hughston, 1978). However, not all lengthy marriages are healthy, as some are held together by "lethargy, fear, mutual helplessness,

or economic dependency" (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995, p. 14). Additionally, some marriages that rank high in quality or satisfaction will end in divorce, and some marriages that rank low in quality or satisfaction will endure (Lauer & Lauer, 1986).

Commitment

A review of the literature reveals that complete commitment is a fundamental factor in long-term marriage relationships regardless of sex or marital satisfaction (Fenell 1993; Harley, 1994; Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Lauer et al., 1990; Roberts, 1978-1980; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999). Lauer and Lauer (1986) define commitment as "willingness and determination to work through troubled times" (p. 57). Both happily and unhappily married couples note the perceived nature of the relationship and the belief in long-term commitment as the primary reasons for remaining in the marriage (Sporakowski & Hughston, 1978).

An integrative analysis by Adams and Jones (1997) yielded three components to the concept of marital commitment including "an attraction component based on devotion, satisfaction, and love; a moral-normative component based on a sense of personal responsibility for maintaining the marriage and on the belief that marriage is an important social and religious institution; and a constraining component based on fear of social, financial, and emotional costs of relationship termination" (p. 1177). Fenell (1993) and Kaslow and Robison (1996) suggest a commitment not to the spouse alone, but to good parenting and the children; while Huyck and Guttman (1992) suggest a commitment to not the spouse alone, but to the relationship itself.

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Perhaps Lewis (1960) catches the essence of commitment best when he identifies charity, the Gift-love that comes by Grace, the final of four types of love he lists. Charity recognizes the high value of a spouse. Rather than quarreling over differences, charity recognizes the individual for what they are. Commitment involves reassurance and the element of doing something for the other even when one is sick or tired (Canary, Stafford, & Semic, 2002). Additionally, commitment involves hard work (Lauer & Lauer, 1986) and maintaining an idealized romantic view of marriage (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995) throughout the good and bad seasons, moments of anger and joy, and times of ecstasy and quiet contemplation (Sporakowski & Hughston, 1978).

So fundamental is the concept of commitment to the marriage, that marriage is still viewed as a life-long commitment by the majority of adolescents (Martin, Specter, Martin, & Martin, 2003). Couples may also benefit from premarital education which is associated with higher marital commitment and satisfaction, lower levels of conflict, and reduced odds of divorce (Stanley, Amato, Johnston, & Markman, 2006).

A Friendship Relationship

Gottman (2006) discovered two surprisingly simple truths about happily married couples. They behave like good friends, meaning that their relationship is characterized by respect, affection, and empathy, and they handle conflict in a gentle and positive manner. Behaving like good friends encompasses looking past a spouse's flaws, focusing on endearing qualities of the spouse, developing an acceptance of one another, and acknowledging them with compliments (Appleton & Bohm, 2001; Canary et al., 2002).

Friendship is also associated with nurturing a relationship that supports life together, which may be enhanced by marrying someone you like (Lauer et al., 1990), learning to intimately know your spouse's world (Gottman & Silver, 2000), and building intimacy (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995), which includes a warm, trustful sexual relationship, and a rich and pleasurable physical relationship that leads to fulfillment (Fenell, 1993; Fields, 1983; Greeley, 1994; Harley, 1994; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995). So important is a satisfying sexual relationship that Greeley (1994) believes sex helps keep marriages healthy by bringing couples closer emotionally and helping them to weather the inevitable strains of life with another person.

Good friends also smile, touch, and reflect on good times and tough times that they have weathered (Canary et al., 2002). They love one another (Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Sharlin, 1996), have developed respect for self and other (Fenell, 1993; Gottman, 2006; Gottman & Silver, 2000; Kaslow & Robison, 1996), are loyal (Fenell, 1993; Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Sharlin, 1996), honest, and trusting (Harley, 1994; Kaslow & Robison, 1996). Good friends have fun with each other (Appleton & Bohm, 2001; Gottman, 1994; Kaslow & Robison, 1996), they are companions and experience leisure together (Veroff, Douvan, Orbuch, & Acitelli, 2006), and they have developed a sense of humor in relating to one another (Gottman, 1994; Gottman et al., 2006; Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Lauer et al., 1990; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995).

Conflict Resolution

Conflict is inevitable in any relationship, and Cherlin (2004) suggests that, because society is lacking social norms related to marriage relationships, partners are

now required to negotiate new ways of acting, which may itself be a potential source of conflict. Satisfied long-term couples find methods to manage and resolve conflict rather than becoming gridlocked in their opposition (Gottman, 1994; Lauer & Lauer, 1986). Preventative measures regarding conflict may include the development of consensus on goals, decisions, and direction (Lauer et al., 1990), an attitude of give and take, flexibility, compromising (Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Sporakowski & Hughston, 1978), and the development of empathy and understanding (Fields, 1983; Gottman et al., 2006; Gottman, 1994; Sporakowski & Hughston, 1978) with a commitment to solve the solvable problems (Gottman & Silver, 2000). Additionally, conflict must be addressed without criticizing the other's character or personality (Canary et al., 2002; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999), while looking for understanding and appreciation in each other's complaints (Gottman et al., 2006). When dealing with conflict, Gottman et al. (2006) stress the importance of compromise, giving in, fighting fair, handling conflict in a gentle and positive manner, and postponing problem solving until after you feel connected.

Kaslow and Robison (1996) promote cooperation over competition and equitability in power distribution between spouses, and this happens best when husbands are open to the wife's influence (Gottman & Silver, 2000; Gottman et al., 2006). The husband's playfulness, enthusiasm, humor, and affection also play a key role during conflict (Driver & Gottman, 2004). The willingness to forgive and to be forgiven when transgressions have been committed must also be integrated into a lasting marital relationship (Fenell, 1993). A successful marital relationship also depends on one's ability to understand that, at times, the needs of one's mate may not fit comfortably into

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existing patterns; therefore, new adaptations continually need to be developed (Fields, 1983). Marriage can work even if the couple decides not to deal with conflict; however, the marriage is likely to be a lonely existence (Gottman, 1994).

Effective Communication

Good communication, an essential element in any successful relationship, involves both individuals openly and honestly expressing their thoughts and feelings, and making an earnest attempt to understand the thoughts and feelings of the other (Burns, 1989). This verbal intercourse takes place best within a safe environment (Appleton & Bohm, 2001; Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995; Weigel, & Ballard-Reisch, 1999) and, as difficult as it may seem, it is most beneficial to share needs and feelings as they arise (Gottman et al., 2006). In order to build strong relational foundations, individuals must penetrate the superficial level of cliché conversation and begin to communicate at the risky and vulnerable gut-level, sharing the essence of who they are as individuals (Powell, 1969). Effective communication also involves listening to emotions, reading between the lines, and careful observation of how the other deals with life issues (Harley, 1994; Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Powell, 1969).

Personality Characteristics

Couples who have spent more than twenty-five years together probably share a cluster of characteristics and attributes that have enabled them to sustain their relationship through the stresses and problems that inevitably arise during the course of married life (Kaslow & Robison, 1996). However, according to Gattis et al. (2004),

similar personality is not necessarily a determinant of good or poor relationship quality. Shiota and Levenson (2007), Dryer and Horowitz (1997), and Murray et al. (2002) refer to a complementary hypothesis which suggests that couples with more diverse personalities may actually bring a wider range of skills and abilities to the marital relationship, allowing spouses to better divide daily tasks and complete goals and objectives with less conflict. For example, as one pays bills in the evening, the other may make phone calls pertaining to appointments and social outings, leading to less conflict than in couples with similar personalities in which both desire to make the phone calls and neither wishes to pay the bills. Gattis et al. (2004) expect couples to be similar in areas of age and education; however, they posit partners are likely to influence each other over the course of the marriage, resulting in the individuals becoming either more similar or more different from one another.

General Factors

Among the factors that play a minor role in long-term marriage are finances (Schmitt et al., 2007). In regard to finances, unhappily married wives are more likely to shift into fulltime employment, which is also associated with greater marital stability (Schoen, Rogers, & Amato, 2006). Also associated with marital longevity and stability are strong moral values, faith in God, spiritual commitment (Fenell, 1993; Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Sporakowski & Hughston, 1978), similar religious views (Myers, 2006), recognizing marriage as a sacred institution (Lauer et al., 1990), and greater religiousness (Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar, & Swank, 2001).

Risk Factors that Erode Marriage Relationships

Marriage and family experts have also identified behaviors and attitudes which may serve to set a relationship on a negative trajectory (Harley, 1994; Sporakowski & Hughston, 1978). According to Gottman and Silver (2000) and Gottman et al. (2006), the behaviors that are sure to sabotage a marriage are criticism, involving complaints and blaming, coupled with attacking the spouse's personality or character; defensiveness, involving counterattacks spouses use to defend their innocence; contempt, which is "criticism bolstered by hostility or disgust" (p. 5) delivered via "sarcasm, mocking, name-calling, or belligerence" (p. 5); and stonewalling, involving retreating from communication. An added relational dilemma is that sixty-nine percent of all conflict can be categorized as "perpetual issues," or those that are never ending and will never go away (Gottman et al., 2006, p. 24).

Negative Patterns of Behavior

Patterns of behavior associated with marital instability and divorce include "negative start-up by the wife, refusal of the husband to accept influence from his wife, wife's reciprocation of low intensity negativity in kind, and the absence of de-escalation of low intensity negativity by the husband" (Gottman et al., 2006, p. 17). Karney and Bradbury (1997) also found that neuroticism, defined as negative emotion, in both husbands and wives lowers marital satisfaction; while Shiota and Levenson (2007) and Kelly and Conley (1987) found that neuroticism as measured by the NEO Five Factor Inventory, in either husband or wife or both, is toxic for a marriage, as is high extroversion in the husband only. Additionally, Gattis et al. (2004) report that "higher

neuroticism, lower agreeableness, lower conscientiousness, and less positive expressivity are tied to marital dissatisfaction" (p. 564). Shiota and Levenson (2007) also found that "personality similarities predicted more negative slopes in marital satisfaction trajectories" (p. 666), especially in terms of conscientiousness and extroversion in long-term marriages, when "responsibilities outside marriage are at their peak" (p.673).

Poor Communication

Communication is a common issue with which clients present in counseling (Miller et al., 2003). Gottman (1994) identifies denying responsibility, making excuses, disagreeing with negative mind-reading, cross-complaining, yes-butting, repeating oneself, whining, and poor body language as prevalent communication issues in marriage.

Parenthood

Also, detrimental to marital satisfaction is "the husband or wife having described their lives as hectic" (Shapiro et al., 2000, p. 59). Parenthood, a season of marriage that can be particularly hectic, is usually associated with decline in marital relationship quality and satisfaction (Lawrence, Rothman, Cobb, Rothman, & Bradbury, 2008), particularly when the mother is working outside the home (Lee, 1988). Additionally, the number of children can negatively impact marital satisfaction (Twenge, Campbell, & Foster, 2003), with a decline in positivity and increase in negativity with the onset of puberty in the first-born child (Whiteman, McHale, & Crouter, 2007). However, it must

be noted that Angeles (2009) has recently discovered that, in Britain, children have a positive impact on life satisfaction in married couples.

Other Detrimental Behaviors

Couples who cohabitate prior to marriage report "poorer marital quality and greater marriage instability" (Kamp Dush, Cohan, & Amato, 2003, p. 539), and are more likely to divorce than those who do not cohabitate (Budinski & Trovato, 2005). Other detrimental behaviors include self-centeredness, or the preference for individuals to invest time, effort, and money in themselves rather than in the family unit (Popenoe, 1993), and societal moves "toward nontraditional gender role attitudes among wives" (Amato, & Booth, 1995, p. 64). Today, women are less likely to remain in an unsatisfactory marriage for economic reasons (Popenoe, 1993), since they now possess the capacity to generate higher income which translates into a greater likelihood of divorce (Cherlin, 1981). Stacey (2001) agrees with Popenoe (1993) in that "women's capacity to survive outside marriage, however meagerly, has been a central factor in the escalating rates of divorce and single motherhood of recent decades, and that marriage has become increasingly fragile as it has become less obligatory, particularly for women" (p. 546).

More Research Needed

Although many good studies concerning the marriage relationship have been completed, most have not focused on relationships that are satisfactory and long-term, but on variables that disrupt marriages (Gottman et al., 2006). Furthermore, Shiota and

Levenson (2007) state that much research has focused on young married couples rather than those in long-term marriages. The question to be answered is whether or not there are factors that contribute to marriage longevity, since the symbolic importance of marriage has remained high in the light of a rising divorce rate and changes in opportunities available to women (Cherlin, 2004). Gottman (1994) suggested that boys in particular should be taught the skills necessary to navigate the shifting emotional tides of an intimate relationship since girls tend to be much better versed in the subject. Glen (1990) suggests that we need more qualitative research in the area of marriage. Carrere, Buehlman, Gottman, Coan, and Ruckstuhl (2000) suggest that perceptual bias can influence marriage on a trajectory toward success or dissolution. Perhaps if researchers can identify the factors that set a marriage on a trajectory towards success, society may experience a lower rate of divorce, and an increase in marriage duration, stability, and satisfaction.

CHAPTER III: METHOD

Introduction

A review of the literature revealed that a number of quantitative studies have been conducted pertaining to marriage satisfaction and longevity, as well as the factors contributing to those phenomena (e.g. Fennel, 1993; Fields, 1983; Huyck & Gutmann, 1992; Johnson, 1985; Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Kaufman & Taniguchi, 2006; Lauer & Lauer, 1986; Lauer et al., 1990; Lawrence et al., 2008; Lee, 1988; Levenson et al. 1994; Moen , Kim, & Hofmeister, 2001; Schmitt, Kliegel, & Shapiro, 2007; Shiota & Levenson, 2007; and Sporakowski & Hughston, 1978). Although qualitative studies are noticeably absent from literature, Roberts (1979-1980) completed a descriptive study on a non-random sample of fifty couples married over fifty years. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) completed an oral history study on fifty married couples who identified their marriage as happy, were married for a minimum of nine years, and had children.

The sole qualitative study from a phenomenological perspective that examined what long-term marriage means for persons in long-term marriages was from Appleton & Bohm (2001), who described "the experience of enduring marriage in mid-life marriage" (p. 41). Appleton and Bohm (2001) utilized the interview as the means for data collection; however, their study was limited in scope to enduring marriage in mid-life, and it did not address satisfaction. Furthermore, their study was not conducted on married couples, but on thirteen women and four men, all of whom were unrelated.

Further study was warranted to gain an increased understanding of the experience of marriage satisfaction and long-term marriage. This qualitative study was conducted from a phenomenological perspective with five diverse married couples who, through

their Dyadic Adjustment Scale scores, confirmed the experience of satisfaction in their long-term marriage. The interview was the data collection method of choice in order to allow married couples to reflect on and describe their experience with marriage satisfaction and longevity (van Manen, 1990).

Research Design

According to Eisner (1998), the six characteristics that make a study qualitative is that: 1) the study is field focused, in that the observer enters into the subjective world of the participant to "observe, interview, record, describe, interpret and appraise settings as they are" (p. 330); 2) the study relates to the self as an instrument, in that the observer enters into the situation in order to make sense of it; 3) the study possesses an interpretive character, in that the observer attempts to "*account for* what they have given *account of*," (p. 35) and searches for meaning for those whose situation is being studied; 4) the study incorporates "t*he use of expressive language* and the presence of voice in text," (p. 36), which presents the material in such a manner as to express empathy while indicating that a person rather than a machine has presented the text; 5) the study gives "*attention to particulars*" (p. 38), indentifying various nuances of the situation; and 6) the study is "believable because of its *coherence*, *insight*, and *instrumental utility*" (p. 39), meaning that the material gathered from the inquiry approach is presented in a concise, persuasive, and believable manner. Furthermore, van Manen (1990) asserts that a phenomenological perspective wants to rise above the facticities of one's life and "know the world in which we live as human beings" (p. 5). Phenomenology seeks to "study the lifeworld," (p. 9), to

gain a "deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday world" (p. 9), and to incorporate a "systemic attempt to uncover and describe the structure, the external meaning of structures, and lived experience" (p. 10). According to Creswell (2009), phenomenology is a "strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by the participants" (p. 13). Given that an integral objective of this study was to further understand the experiences of those couples in enduring long-term marriages, the meaning of marriage, the phenomena of long-term and satisfaction as related to the marriage relationship, and the author's passionate interest in the institution of marriage, it was appropriate to implement a phenomenological method of inquiry.

The primary research questions which framed the study were:

1. How do participants describe their satisfying long-term marriage?

2. What factors do participants identify as contributing to the satisfaction and longevity of their marriage?

3. How do the participants' responses regarding long-term marriage compare and contrast?

Selection of Participants

The purposeful selection of research participants is important to qualitative research (Creswell, 1998). Furthermore, criterion sampling ensured that all participants in this study experienced the phenomena being studied (Creswell, 1998).

A search for participants was attempted by searching the Web and southeastern Michigan newspapers for public announcements of couples celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary. Addresses were acquired through Michigan-White-Pages.com. Several dozen initial Letters of Participation (See Appendix A) were mailed to potential participants along with a Participation Response Form (See Appendix B) and a self addressed stamped envelope. Approximately fifty percent of the potential participants failed to respond to the request, and the remaining fifty percent responded with regrets that they either could not participate or were not interested in participating. Therefore, "chain referral" or "snowballing" was implemented to find potential participants who met the specific characteristics needed for the study (Portney & Watkins, 2000).

A diverse population of ten participants comprising five married couples was sought in order to receive a rich and thick saturation of data; yet, guard against overly repetitive responses (Creswell, 1998). To meet the standard of diversity, this study included a population of couples from varying ethnic groups (e.g. Caucasian, African-American, Italian-American), culturally influenced (e.g. East Coast of United States, Southern United States), religious groups (e.g. believers from various major denominations and the un-churched), socioeconomic groups (e.g. middle income and higher income), and education levels (e.g. high school graduate, some college, Bachelors Degree, Master's Degree, Ph.D.) in southeastern Michigan.

As mentioned earlier in this study, the participants had been married for a minimum of forty years in order to ensure an enduring long-term marriage and a maximum of forty-nine years to keep the participant age to a minimum, thus guarding against participant positive bias in recall while answering interview questions (Spaniol et

al., 2008). Each participant read and signed the Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study (See Appendix C), which included their right to withdraw from the study at any time, explained the central purpose of the study and procedures for data collection, addressed issues of confidentiality, and answered any questions regarding potential risks and benefits involved with participation (van Manen, 1990).

Prior to the interview, The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) was administered. The DAS is a 32-item assessment "used to characterize the quality of a dyadic relationship" (Spanier, 1989, 2001, p. 1). The results from the DAS were used to ensure participants experienced the phenomenon being studied (i.e., satisfaction). The range of the participants' DAS scores can be found in Appendix G. The DAS is regarded as a reliable and valid measure of relational satisfaction, with Spanier (1989) reporting "a total scale internal consistency reliability of .96" (p. 29); Antill and Cotton (1982) reporting "a cross-spouse correlation of .59" (p. 30); and Stein, Girodo, and Dotzenroth (1982) reporting "11 week test-retest correlations for the total DAS of .96" (p. 30). Term generation and expert consensus ensured content validity of the DAS (Spanier, 1989).

Data Collection

Although the "notion of 'data' is ambiguous within the human science perspective" (van Manen, 1990, p. 53), the data was actually the human experience of the participants, and Creswell (2009) states that in phenomenological research the primary method for data collection is interviews that are conversational in nature. The fundamental question that prompted the need for the interview according to van Manen's (1990) approach was, "How do persons in satisfying long-term marriage experience

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marriage?" Therefore, the interview questions were carefully constructed to tap the great

potential of rich data that could be gathered from the participants. Furthermore, the

interviews took place in the couples' homes as phenomenology attempts to meet persons,

"where they are naturally engaged in their world" (van Manen, 1990, p. 18). The

interview consisted of two sets of questions. The first set addressed demographic

information, and the second set addressed relational information. The demographic data

was collected in a joint interview (See Appendix D) with the male and female

interviewers and the husband and wife participants all present. The joint interview was

conducted in order to observe and record subtleties and nuances of the participants within

their lifeworld (van Manen, 1990, Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995) as they answered

questions regarding general demographic information about themselves and their

marriage. Following the joint interview, the male interviewer met privately with the

husband and the female interviewer met privately with the wife in separate interviews for

the remainder of the questions which addressed relational information (See Appendix D).

The relational questions in Appendix D were asked in private by a same-sex interviewer

in a manner similar to that of Roberts (1979-1980) in order to foster open and honest

dialogue and to prevent one spouse from monopolizing the conversation. All dialogue

and interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed by the researcher himself in

order to protect participant confidentiality.

Phenomenological interviews can often be long and exhausting. If a block in

recall was observed, the interviewer repeated the last sentence (van Manen, 1990). If an

elaboration on an answer was necessary, the interviewer asked open ended questions such

as "How did you feel about that?" or "Can you give me an example?" Additionally, a rich

source of experiential descriptions can often be poems, literature, biographies, autobiographies, personal life histories, and journals (van Manen, 1990); therefore, the participants were asked if such data existed and could be utilized for the study. Although such data was not available, photographs displayed within the home, non-verbal communication, and observed behavior between participants was recorded in field notes during the initial demographic segment of the interview in which the couple participated with both interviewers, as well as during the relational segment of the interview during which the couple was separated. This data offered insights into the relationship and who or what was significant to the participants. No compensation was offered other than the satisfaction of perhaps offering insights to the academic community and society.

Data Analysis

The raw data from the joint demographic interviews in which both spouses were present as well as the separate interview segments where the male researcher interviewed the husband and a female interviewed the wife was digitally recorded. The raw data was then transcribed into single-space verbatim transcripts by the researcher. The participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect identities and ensure the confidentiality of the participants. Embololia, patterns of speech, and filler words such as "um," "uh," "like," and "you know" were edited out. After all interviews were transcribed and coded, the verbatim transcripts were compared with the audio record to ensure accuracy. Additionally, the participants' DAS scores and notes concerning observations were added to the coded verbatim transcripts. The transcribed interviews produced ninety-four pages of raw data.

After the recorded interviews were accurately transcribed, data analysis began with the task of reading and re-reading the verbatim transcripts in order to identify the "emerging themes as generative guides for writing the research study" (van Manen, 1990, p. 168). "Theme describes an aspect of the structure of lived experience" (van Manen, 1998, p. 87), and their lived experience which is "an appropriate source for uncovering thematic aspects of the phenomenon it describes," (van Manen, 1998, p. 92), which in this study is marital satisfaction and long-term marriage. The fundamental question framing the research was, "What does satisfying long-term marriage mean for those persons involved in satisfying long-term marriage?" This question was printed and posted in view of the researcher to keep it foremost in mind during the mining of the themes and subthemes from the raw data.

Key words and phrases that served to describe satisfaction in marriage were marked with an "S." Key words and phrases that served as contributing factors to marriage longevity were marked with an "L." Key words and phrases were then grouped together as either descriptions and or contributors to satisfaction or marriage longevity. Major themes began to emerge, and subthemes were sorted and grouped as they fell under major themes.

Trustworthiness

Verification of the trustworthiness and credibility of the work is a process that must occur throughout data collection, data analysis, and reporting of the findings (Creswell, 1998). Methods employed to ensure validity and reliability were member checking, in which participants examine analyzed data (Rudestam & Newton, 2001); peer

review by faculty, committee members, and co-interviewer (Creswell, 1998); and triangulation, which is the corroboration of interview data and DAS scores with photos, observed behavior, and non-verbal interaction during the initial demographic segment of the interview at which both participants were present (van Manen, 1990).

After several readings and re-readings of the raw data, major themes began to emerge. The themes that emerged from satisfaction were "Togetherness" and "Children/Grandchildren." The major themes that emerged under factors contributing to marriage longevity were "Attitude" and "Action."

The raw data was read and re-read, and subthemes began to emerge. Subthemes were sorted as they fell under major themes. Subthemes that emerged from "Attitude" were "Attitude of Commitment," "Attitude of Respect," and "Attitude of Humor." Subthemes that emerged under "Action" were "Act of Communication," "Act of Compromise," and "Act of Support." The theme "Sense of Security" was a fiber that was interwoven throughout satisfaction and factors contributing to long-term marriage. These preliminary findings were mailed to each participant for validation (See Appendix E). Five participants responded by U.S. mail, and all five validated the findings and shared comments which included, "You had great insight and synopsis of your interview," "You got this right," and "I agree with your observations." Additionally, one participant met with the researcher face-to-face to discuss and validated the findings, stating, "You need to keep everything in perspective and keep working at it to make a marriage work."

Summary

This phenomenological study attempted to explore the meaning of satisfaction and factors contributing to marriage longevity. Participants were recruited by "chain referral" and "snowballing" after a failed attempt to recruit participants by letter following public announcement of anniversary. After informed consent was received, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) was administered to ensure couples experienced the phenomenon of satisfaction. Interviews were conducted by same-sex interviewers. Audio was recorded digitally and transcribed by the interviewer. Pseudonyms were ascribed to participants to protect confidentiality. The transcripts were then coded and analyzed for major themes and subthemes. Member checking, peer review, and triangulation were utilized to insure trustworthiness.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to further understand the phenomena of satisfaction and longevity in marriage. The phenomenological approach to qualitative research is "the preferred method for human science" and "involves description, interpretation, and self-reflective or critical analysis;" therefore, it was the preferred approach for this study (van Manen, 1990, p. 4).

This chapter will introduce the reader to the research participants through a written portrait of each participant couple. The remainder of the chapter will address the research questions including the major themes identified from the participants' descriptions of satisfaction and the factors participants identified that lead to marriage longevity. Finally, the participants' descriptions of satisfaction and the factors they identified that lead to marriage longevity will be addressed throughout the findings as they are compared and contrasted.

Portraits of Participants

All participants were married couples in which the husband and wife both agreed to participate in the research study which included completing the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) and participating in a face-to-face recorded interview. The range of age for the participating husbands was 63 to 73 years, and the range of age for the participating wives was 59 to 73 years. The couples were married between 42 and 49 years. They represented a diverse population ethnically, culturally, religiously, socio-economically, and educationally. Although several couples had granted permission to have their real

names used in the study, the researcher felt most comfortable using pseudonyms;

therefore, the names found below are not the actual names of the participants.

Table I: Characteristics of the Participants

	Couples	Wives	Husbands
Age of Participants		59-73 years	63-73 years
Years of Marriage	42-49 years		
Number of Previous Marriages		None	None
Range of age when Married		17-22	21-24
Length of Courtship	2-5 years		
Cohabitation Prior to Marriage	None		
Ethnic Background		3 Caucasian 2 Italian-American	3 Caucasian 1 African-American 1 Ukrainian
Education		3 High School 1 Some College 1 MA	1 Professional Lic. 1 AA 2 BA 1 Ph.D.
Socio-economic Status	Middle to Upper-Middle Class		
Religious Background	1 Lutheran 2 Catholic 2 Unchurched		
Number of Children	2-4		

Arthur and Anna

Arthur and Anna were married November 14, 1964. They were both twenty-

years-old when they got married forty-six years ago. This marriage is the first marriage

for both. This couple met in high school and dated for approximately four years prior to marrying. They did not cohabitate prior to marriage.

Arthur and Anna were both born and raised in Detroit, Michigan. Both are Caucasian; however, Anna was raised with a very strong Italian influence. Arthur has earned a bachelor's degree, while Anna is a high school graduate. Socio-economically, they consider themselves upper-middle class. They have always been actively involved in the Lutheran Church, having attended parochial high school and sent their children to parochial grade schools and high schools.

Arthur and Anna lost two children to miscarriage, but raised four daughters to adulthood. The couple has six grandchildren.

Arthur, the breadwinner, recently retired as a configuration manager for a very large military arms manufacturing company. Anna was a homemaker and Mary Kay representative. Arthur, who enjoyed parachute jumping and motorcycles in his youth, considers himself much more adventurous and outgoing than his "sedate" [Arthur's word] wife, Anna, who enjoys sewing and knitting.

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale was administered to both Arthur and Anna to assess satisfaction in their marriage relationship. Arthur scored markedly above average in dyadic adjustment, and Anna scored moderately above average in dyadic adjustment.

Bill and Barbara

Bill and Barbara were married November 22, 1968. Bill was twenty-one years old and Barbara was seventeen-years-old when they married forty-two years ago. This marriage is the first marriage for both. The couple met while Bill was in college and

Barbara was a high school student. They dated for approximately three years prior to marrying. They did not cohabitate prior to marriage.

Bill and Barbara were both born and raised in the metro-Detroit area. Both are Caucasian; however, Bill was raised with a strong Ukrainian influence and Barbara, whose parents were from Alabama, was raised with a strong Southern influence. Bill acquired his professional license as a master plumber and opened a business as a plumbing contractor. Barbara earned her Graduate Equivalent Degree after the couple married, eventually earned her master's degree and acquired a license as a nurse practitioner. She is presently employed as a critical care nurse. Socio-economically, they consider themselves upper-middle class. They have recently become active in the Catholic Church. The couple has two children, a son and a daughter, and three grandchildren.

Bill, the primary breadwinner for most of the marriage, recently retired as a master plumber and small business owner. Barbara was a homemaker until the children entered high school. She then began to pursue her collegiate degrees and entered the medical field.

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale was administered to both Bill and Barbara to assess satisfaction in their marriage relationship. Both scored markedly above average in dyadic adjustment.

Charles and Carlotta

Charles and Carlotta were married January 24, 1961. Charles was twenty-four-years-old and Carlotta was twenty-two-years-old when they married forty-nine years ago.

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This marriage is the first for both. Charles and Carlotta met as a result of socializing with the same group of friends. They dated for approximately two years. Following a one-year engagement, the couple eloped in a small civil ceremony performed by a Justice of the Peace while Charles was on leave from the service. They did not cohabitate prior to marriage.

Charles was raised in the Bronx and Carlotta was raised in Manhattan; both are boroughs of New York City, New York. Charles is African-American, whose family emigrated from Martinique, West Indies; and Carlotta is Italian-American. Charles earned his Ph.D. as a result of the GI Bill; and Carlotta is a high school graduate. Socio-economically, they consider themselves upper-middle class. They are active members of the Catholic Church. The couple has four children; two sons and two daughters. They also have thirteen grandchildren.

Charles has always been the primary breadwinner. Carlotta was a homemaker until the children were married. She then worked in a childcare center for a couple of years.

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale was administered to both Charles and Carlotta to assess satisfaction in their marriage relationship. Charles scored moderately above average in dyadic adjustment, and Carlotta scored markedly above average in dyadic adjustment.

Donald and Doris

Donald and Doris were married August 25, 1962. Donald was twenty-two-years-old and Doris was twenty-five-years-old when they married forty-eight years ago. This

marriage is the first marriage for both. The couple met while residing across the hall from one another in the same apartment complex in Brentwood, California. They dated for approximately two years prior to marrying. They did not cohabitate prior to marriage.

Donald was raised in the metro-Detroit area, while Doris was raised in Sarasota, Florida. Both are Caucasian. Donald earned his bachelor's degree and became a CPA after the couple married. Doris finished one year of college prior to marriage. Socio-economically, they consider themselves upper-middle class. They are members of the Catholic Church; however, Doris shared that religion did not define their relationship. The couple has three children, a son and two daughters. They also have six grandchildren.

Donald was the primary breadwinner while Doris was a homemaker. The two enjoy fishing and cruising in their classic 1954 Chevrolet.

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale was administered to both Donald and Doris to assess satisfaction in their marriage relationship. Both scored markedly above average in dyadic adjustment.

Eddie and Eva

Eddie and Eva were married January 14, 1967. Eddie was nineteen-years-old and Eva was eighteen-years-old when they married forty-four years ago. This marriage is the first marriage for both. This couple met while "cruising" Woodward Avenue in the summer of 1965. They dated for approximately one and a half years prior to marrying. They did not cohabitate prior to marriage.

Eddie and Eva were both born and raised in the metro-Detroit area. Eddie is a combination of French, English, and Native American, Cherokee Nation. Eva is Caucasian. Eddie worked as an automotive engineer after earning his associates degree. Eva graduated from high school and worked as an interior designer. Although they were married in a Catholic Church, they are inactive non-members. The couple has three children, a son and two daughters. They also have two grandchildren.

Eddie was the primary breadwinner; however, Eva was a homemaker while she supplemented family finances working as an interior decorator. The couple enjoys gardening, cruising in one of their classic Corvettes, and their grandchildren.

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale was administered to both Eddie and Eva to assess satisfaction in their marriage relationship. Both scored moderately above average in dyadic adjustment.

<div align="center">Participants' Descriptions of Satisfaction</div>

General Descriptions of Satisfaction

The couples in this study offered detailed descriptions of satisfaction in their long-term marriage. The participants shared genuine emotion as they laughed, reflected, and openly shared the personal accounts and descriptions of their marriage relationship.

Doris's satisfaction was evident in her references to consensus in thought, values, mutual support, mutual respect, and mutual trust when she shared:

We think alike. Our values are the same, and we stand by each other. I would

stand up for him. He would stand up for me. I respect him, and he respects me.

[The wife of one of his coworkers] once said she has never heard a bad thing said

about him, and I thought that was kind of neat; and I agree. I wouldn't think you

could find anything bad about him. He's an upstanding person. I think that makes

it nice, that you can trust him, and that you can count on him.

Donald shared a simple illustration of satisfaction in his marriage, showing his

satisfaction with the present state of his marriage, and his commitment to its continuance.

In response to how he would describe satisfaction in his marriage, he answered:

I come home at night. I don't stop at the bar and have a couple "pops" or avoid

coming home. We have children. I'm proud of the children we have. . . I love my

children. I love my wife.

Likewise, Arthur and Anna caught the essence of satisfaction in the way they each

described contentment in their marriage relationship. Arthur described satisfaction this

way:

Looking at the next hour or the next week, as this hour or this time frame holds

the potential for more good things, rather than the dread of thinking, ugh, I've got

to spend another hour with this person in this relationship, or another week in this

relationship. . . Our marriage relationship is forty-six years. It's still an exciting

relationship. I think what's kind of nice about it is that now after these forty-six

years we can anticipate what makes each other feel good or happy. And the

relationship is such that you want to do those things.

Anna incorporated similar thinking, companionship, and monogamy as elements that

describe her satisfaction with Arthur.

I think that we just get along so well, and we're so used to each other. We know

what each other is thinking. We can finish each other's sentences sometimes. We

laugh together a lot. We just enjoy each other's company. So that's very

satisfying to me. I cannot think of being married to anybody else, and I've just

always loved Arthur. He's the only person I've ever been with, so it's hard to

imagine life without him.

Furthermore, Anna was so attentive to Arthur's personality, interests, character, and

behavior, that she accurately estimated the amount of time it would take Arthur to finish

the interview. Upon the completion of her interview she said, "I'll tell you one thing.

Arthur is going to be another hour, because he's much deeper than me. [Laughter]

They're probably still on question one."

Bill and Barbara shared descriptions of satisfaction similar to one another and to

Arthur and Anna. Bill was rather absolute in his description of satisfaction, attributing it

to intimate knowledge of one another, and a reciprocal love between him and Barbara.

I wouldn't have it any other way. I wouldn't be with another woman. I love

Barbara with my whole heart. She has been a blessing for me. There is no other

woman, I don't think, that I could be with the way [I am with her]. We know each

other very, very well. We are very tolerant of each other. We aren't perfect,

obviously. No [couple] is. . . My satisfaction is that I have been successful in my

marriage. I have a woman that I love and who loves me in return. . . I love

Barbara. To me, life couldn't be better, and it has been that way for quite a long

time.

Barbara's satisfaction with Bill was grounded in openness and confidence, and enhanced

by the absence of mystery.

I always wanted a mate that would talk to me, good or bad, that we could discuss things. That was never an issue with him, so that was very satisfying. I never had to wonder if he was going to come home. I never had those areas where I had to wonder what he's all about. Not that I know every molecule of his being, but I always felt a certain confidence in him. Even when we were going through hard times, maybe all the money wasn't here that we needed, I didn't have a dissatisfaction that it wasn't going to come through.

Although all participants described elements associated with physical affectional expression, one husband in particular described the expression of both affection and sexual satisfaction in the relationship with his wife.

As far as satisfaction, there's all kinds of satisfaction. There's physical satisfaction, and [my wife] and I have always had fun with one another. We've had fun with each other physically. Probably for the last three or four years I've got a lot of problems, because I'm a type two diabetic. I've got high blood pressure, and I've got problems sexually, but we haven't avoided each other. We still enjoy each other. We still like to hold hands. We still like that physical contact.

Similarly, another husband shared how important the expression of sex was to him in comparison to his wife.

I love my wife. She would probably say I'm a sex maniac. [Laughter] I've never had enough [sex] to say I'm done, I can't do any more. We would say we have a satisfying sex relationship with each other, and I would say that it is not a traditional missionary position sex. We have a pretty varied sex life. She would

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probably be happy with the level it is at now, and I'd probably like more.

[Laughter]

The cohesion element of relational satisfaction was illustrated by Charles and Carlotta in the common interests and activities they share with one another, often with a twist of humor, as Charles shared:

I thought about the possibility [of losing] Carlotta when she was getting ready to go in for surgery. . . I'm grateful I do have her around. I have someone I can fight with, [Laughter] and someone I can laugh with, someone to share my feelings with, and we can watch our children, and grandchildren. We have thirteen grandchildren . . . so we are blessed. That's fulfillment. . . I think if you say you're willing to do it all over again, and you can point to the results of you being together, and you are both happy, I'd say you have a successful marriage.

Carlotta illustrated cohesion, as she described her relational satisfaction resulting from the companionship, humor, support, and common interests she has shared with Charles throughout their marriage.

[Satisfaction is] having my children, and having [Charles] around. We sort of fulfill each other. As I say, there are times you just want to wring his neck, but we laugh together, we joke together. . . We're friends. We're partners. We may not always think alike. Sometimes he listens; sometimes he doesn't. [Laughter] It's just being together; being there for each other. It hasn't changed. We've gone through different stages of our marriage, but it's always had that same "partners in love" as we grew with each other, because we do have to grow with the times, and the change, and the world.

Eddie also described the partnership he shared with Eva. Additionally, he illustrated the contentment that is derived from his marriage relationship.

[Satisfaction is] getting along together. Now it's like we've been married so long that we know what each other is going to do. [Satisfaction] is being a partner with each other. She does her things, and I do my things, and we try to do things together. We do a lot together. We've taken a lot of vacations together. We went on nice vacations when I was working at General Motors, and sometimes she went on business trips with me. We got along with each other our whole lives. . . We had a really good life together. I have no qualms about whatever happened. I wouldn't change a thing [concerning] the way we did things.

Like Eddie, Eva described the intuitive nature of their relationship and contentment within their relationship.

Being together [is fulfilling]. A lot of times you don't need to say anything. You just know you are on the same path and you are comfortable with each other. . . If something happened to Eddie health-wise, I'd be devastated. I think it's a successful marriage, and I don't know exactly how to explain it, except that by the end of the day we can go to bed in peace and know that we had a good day together.

Two Themes Emerging from Satisfaction in Marriage

As the participants shared their descriptions of satisfaction, two major themes began to emerge regarding what they believed to be the source of satisfaction in

marriage. These two themes were first, a distinctive sense of "Togetherness," and secondly, "Children/Grandchildren."

Togetherness as a Source of Satisfaction in Marriage

The theme of "Togetherness" surfaced over a hundred times in the interviews, as participants used the terms "together," "partner," "friend," in reference to their relationship with their spouse. Togetherness was a theme described by participants as an element established early in their relationship and continued after over forty years of marriage. References of togetherness in the early stages of relationships included phrases such as, "went to the prom," "went to football games," "went to movies," and "looked for rings together." Within the marriage relationship, a host of activities shared together included "laugh," "joke," "garden," "vacation," "have fun," "fish," "hunt," "have good times," "have good life together," "working together," and "working on marriage together." Additionally, togetherness involved acts of sharing between spouses. Participants talked of mutually sharing "blame," "load," "foundation," "things," and "everything."

These participants recognized and understood that the satisfaction and longevity they experience in their marriage relationship is unique in society today. Several participants described their spouse as the sole, unique individual with whom they want to share togetherness. Togetherness, as described by participants, might be encompassed in the phrase "I love us," as Arthur shared:

I don't know how rare, I don't know how commonplace our love for each other is; but I'm real happy that we have this. [Laughter] You can't measure what people

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say. It's when you're here with each other, and you don't have to look good and talk good, that's what really counts. And I honestly, in my heart of hearts, I believe that Anna was *the* [emphasis Arthur's] person for me. I mean, I have no doubt in my mind.

Participants shared various aspects of togetherness. Barbara shared togetherness expressed through communication, whether discussing positive or challenging issues; as well as an unconditional nature of togetherness:

I always wanted a mate that would talk to me, good or bad, that we could discuss things. That was never an issue with him, so that was very satisfying.

Charles indicated that challenges can work together for the good of the relationship, as he shared, "We had a little rough time in the beginning, but that kind of brought us together." Carlotta described togetherness in terms of partnership and mutual support in time of need, while remembering to balance togetherness with quiet alone time and socializing with peers in order to become refreshed, maintain, and continue a healthy relationship.

I'm his partner in crime and everything else. He's there for me when I'm sick, and I'm there for him. . . It's that we're partners together in this marriage. [In maintaining the relationship] he also says he gives eighty percent and I give twenty percent. He always [invests] more than I do. [Laughter] That's what he thinks. [Laughter] . . . Right now Charles is home for [a six month sabbatical] and we are constantly together, especially now that I had my hip surgery. He drives me everywhere. . . Charles gets to have lunch with the guys, and I think sometimes you need to have a break away, to do your own interest. I call them the

old ladies. They sit there, and they talk about science, of course. I think it's nice when you get away from each other once in awhile, to make peace with your mind, and then you come back refreshed again. . . Sometimes I [tell Charles] I'm going for a drive, because sometimes I need that little break. I say I need to get a cup of coffee by myself and read a magazine. [Laughter] It makes me refreshed again. I can come back and watch those stupid war movies that he wants to watch. [Laughter]

Donald and Doris each shared an account in which they stepped out of their comfort zones in order to experience togetherness by participating in each other's favorite recreational activity. Although they did not necessarily learn to appreciate or embrace the other's recreational activity, their actions are remarkable illustrations of togetherness, as Donald shared:

Doris *likes* [Donald's emphasis] to hunt. She's a duck hunter. I *love* [Donald's emphasis] to hunt. We went out to Wyoming . . . [where] you ride around in a pickup for the most part . . . and if you see a deer or a herd of deer you get as close as you can without spooking them. Then you get out. Maybe you have to stalk them awhile. We saw this deer, [pointing to a mounted buck hanging on the wall] and that would be a dink. Some of them are huge. I said, "Here's one you can [harvest]," and she wanted to do it. She got out [of the truck], she's leaning over the front end of the Suburban, [Laughter] . . . pulled the trigger, and the deer dropped over dead. It hit her that she killed something, and she handed me the gun and started crying. But she wanted to get it mounted.

Doris shared a similar account in which Donald stepped out of his comfort zone in order to participate in a favorite past time of hers.

I have two horses. . . We did put him on [a horse] one time. My daughter likes to ride as do my granddaughters. [Once] we had the three of us, my daughter, my granddaughter, and myself, and we put him on a horse. All you could hear behind us was, "Whoa, whoa." We were sitting up there in front dying of laughter. [Laughter] So he's very unsure of himself on a horse.

Eva referenced the fun she and Eddie had and still have together. The satisfaction they find in togetherness is simply being together, supporting each other as spectators while the other participated in a favorite past time, and learning the art of becoming a "tag team" when addressing issues. As Eva illustrated:

We're happy. We have good times together. We have fun together, and that's now. Before we had fun together, too, but we also had other responsibilities and problems and kids. Now that we haven't had kids around in years and years, we just have a good time together. We laugh. He makes me laugh. It's not so much what we are doing together; it's that we are together. I think it has always been that way. He'd play baseball, and I'd go with him. The only things that we don't do together are he likes to golf, and I used to play volleyball. . . I [also] like things that he likes to do. He likes to go to car shows, and I like to go to them. I like home decorating, so he'll go to home improvement shows with me, too.

Additionally, Eva shared that togetherness also involves the sense of sharing, teamwork, mutual shouldering, and asking what part am I contributing to the stability of the relationship.

Compatibility is a lot of the satisfaction part of it. . . You need to work together at being happy. You need to work together at being thoughtful of each other, respectful of each other. You need closeness without saying words. We are the same people [as we were when we got married], we may have mellowed a little bit, but we still have the same tendencies that we have had, and we have learned to be a great tag team together. We've learned the lesson that together we can withstand anything, and apart we cannot do much.

Children/Grandchildren as a Source of Satisfaction in Marriage

A second major source of satisfaction for these participants was "Children/Grandchildren," with the terms "children," "grandchildren," "kids," and "grandkids" referenced over a hundred times in manners characteristic of Carlotta's response, "My kids were a highpoint and the good times together with them. It seems our kids are what we grow around." Associated with children were memorable accounts as represented in Arthur's fond recollection of escorting his daughter onto the football field for homecoming ceremonies, parent/child relationships that have matured into friendships, and the sympathy and empathy that accompanies an adult child's trials and hardships.

What's so neat is that when they grow up into the young men or women or what they're going to become, that you still like them, that you like their company. I like the company of our girls . . . [and] going out to lunch. Jessica's a business woman . . . and she'll ask me stuff about how [something] should be done . . . and it's good. It's such a blessing when they grow up to be people you like to be

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around. Like, you would go choose them as your friends. That's the way they all

are. And that's great.

Doris's satisfaction resulted from memories with children established during

summer vacations and 4th of July traditions.

We had a summer home in Frankfort [Michigan]. We love to have the kids come

up, and those are great times. They come up the 4th of July so we can watch the

fireworks in our dinky little town. Those fireworks are magnificent, actually. So

those are fun times.

Barbara referred to the intrinsic joy her children bring to her and Bill and her

complete willingness to sacrifice for them.

Our children have always been a joy in our life. I'm not kidding. I would have

stopped any social engagement with any friend, any place, any whatever. My kids

were always the most important thing.

Additionally, Bill illustrated the powerful transforming capacity children possess in the

lives of new fathers.

When [the nurse brought out my firstborn daughter] and I saw [her], I said I'd

better get my shit together. I still didn't do as well as I should have done, but it

was a little wake-up to reality. . . I remember when my son was born. . . I thought

I'm going to be a big . . . reason for what he becomes. [The kids] were waker-

uppers for me a little bit. Shortly after that I began to get myself straightened out,

working, and taking things a little more seriously. Once you do that you start

making little gains and things get better.

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Similarly, Charles shared an example of the significant impression children make on new parents and the lasting influence they have on their parents' behavior, even well into adulthood.

> The birth of our first-born was absolutely significant. When Joseph was born, that changed me, because I was a happy-go-lucky person who didn't have any worries at all, no concerns, because it was Carlotta and myself, and now I had this little thing that depended on me. [Laughter] I had this little baby who depended on me.

Charles also described the satisfaction found in his children and grandchildren as he talked about the fulfillment and joy resulting from watching them grow and mature into adult children who emulate parents by incorporating life lessons taught during their youth.

> Most fulfilling is our children. They are emulating us. My Ricky tells us about doing some of the same things I used to do when he was small. [Laughter] Which is funny, because I say I did something right. [Like my parents], everything we did, we did because we thought it was the right thing to do. I think our kids are fantastic parents. They have their head screwed on alright in spite of us.
> [Laughter]

Charles and Carlotta both referred to a sabbatical in Hong Kong as their "first honeymoon," which was a time of reconnecting with one another and re-establishing their marriage relationship. Although they wanted to extend it by another year, their children played a significant role in their decision to return to the states.

> [The sabbatical] was so much fun that we wanted to stay another year, and our kids prevailed upon us. They did not want us to stay another year. They wanted us

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to come back home. That was when our second grandchild was born, and, of course, Carlotta wanted to get back to see him. [We have] thirteen [grandchildren].

Carlotta also described how her first-born child acted as a positive and equalizing force with her and Charles' strained relationship with her parents.

[Our marriage] was a challenge because we are two different races. When we first got married neither family liked the idea that we were married. . . Once the first grandchild was born it was like [the racial tension] never existed. . . What bonded us together was our first son. . . After my son was born, [the racial tension] just disappeared. One day I went to visit my mother with my son, and my father looked at me, and he saw the baby. My husband would drop me off, and I would see my parents without him. [On that day] my father said, "Where's your husband?" . . . That's when everything came about. I told Charles to come up, and we had dinner, and then the family accepted him.

Additionally, Carlotta shared the satisfaction found in grandchildren with whom she shared a similar sense of humor.

The best part of being married is having grandchildren. That is God's thing. Thank you [Laughter] for not killing your kids before they got married. Thank you, thank you, thank you. So we have thirteen grandchildren. [Laughter] That's my reward for not killing my husband and my kids. [Laughter] The best part is you can send [grandchildren] home after awhile. . . I see my sense of humor and my husband's sense of humor coming out of my grandkids. It's at the point now where you can enjoy them, because they're just so funny.

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Eddie and Eva found great satisfaction, contentment, and pride in the adults their children have matured into. Today they enjoy the time they have with each other, and the special time they now have available to them as grandparents and parents of grown children, as Eddie shared:

> The kids were really fulfilling for us. The grandkids are fulfilling, I think, now that the kids are gone. We get to see our grandkids all of the time. It's just the two of us here. We get along really well. We sit back and look at our accomplishments, we've done real well, and the kids have done well, and we pat ourselves on the back for how our kids came out.

Eva reflected on the difficult nature of transitioning from a family of five to her and Eddie as empty nesters.

> We missed our kids when they moved out. It was very hard for us. Our basic high points were with the kids. But in our relationship, just he and I, [our basic high point is] getting away together, going to see different places, relaxing, and laughing together.

Summary

For these participants, satisfaction incorporated a variety of elements; however, the two that surfaced most frequently were "Togetherness" and "Children/Grandchildren." Perhaps Eva captured the total essence of marital satisfaction when she shared:

I don't know exactly how to explain it except that by the end of the day we can go

to bed in peace and know that we had a good day together, and all those days add

up to forty-four years together so far.

Two Major Themes Regarding Contributing Factors in Long-Term Marriage

As the participants shared their descriptions of the factors contributing to

marriage longevity, two major themes and six subthemes emerged in the analysis of the

raw data. The major themes relating to marriage longevity were "Attitude" and "Action."

Attitude can be described as the mind-set with which the participants approached the

marriage relationship. So influential was attitude for Arthur in choosing a spouse that it

was Anna's positive attitude that initially attracted him to her and has helped foster

satisfaction and longevity.

At that young age what really impressed me most was her really positive up

attitude. And over the years, it's that positive up attitude that's really been a help

for me.

Likewise, in response to her expectations prior to marriage, Carlotta expressed an attitude

of lifelong commitment in her relationship with Charles as she portrayed a future filled

with children, grandchildren, and growing together as husband and wife.

When I was young I thought that we'd be together forever. We would raise kids

together, and have a good life with our children and grandchildren, and being a

family. Working together in our relationship, and helping it to grow.

The second major theme, "Action," can be described as the work and effort

couples invest in their marriage relationship. When "Action" was combined with a

positive "Attitude," these two elements worked hand-in-hand resulting in a long-term marriage for these participants, as illustrated by Bill.

I think the key word is work. What's the main thing that keeps you together as man and wife, going through the things that most couples go through. The key word is work. You've got to work at things. . . You have to learn to work at it. A relationship [is] never perfect. But if it's in your heart, and you know that you are in [the other] person's heart, no matter what happens, as long as you work at it, work at your relationship, work with each other, everything will be cool. You can work through anything. The thing is many people don't want to work at it. How many of our friends were married when we were married, and two, three, four, five years later, boom, apart?

Attitude as a Contributing Factor in Long-Term Marriage

Three distinct subthemes emerged under "Attitude," which included an "Attitude of Commitment," "Attitude of Respect," and "Attitude of Humor." Although these subthemes were not initially arranged in any particular order, during member checking one couple prioritized these themes in the following order: 1) "Attitude of Commitment," 2) "Attitude of Respect," and 3) "Attitude of Humor." Therefore, these themes will be presented as such.

Attitude of Commitment to the Relationship

For these participants, commitment involved a spirit of dedication to the relationship and to one another. Therefore, the "Attitude of Commitment" can be divided

into two areas: first, commitment to the relationship itself, and secondly, commitment to one another. For these couples, an "Attitude of Commitment" was communicated even in the presence of dissatisfaction. Commitment carried with it the sense of determination to make the relationship work, tenacity to keep working when one feels like giving up, and the picturing of a future for the relationship and the existence of the family unit.

One husband described the importance of commitment to the marriage relationship even when one does not feel like it. According to Arthur, a committed husband is:

> Dedicated to [his] wife, and to the family that you've been able to collectively bring into existence. It's that forever commitment . . . a secure relationship, a committed relationship that doesn't stop tomorrow because you don't feel like it tomorrow. You know the commitment, the relationship is there.

For Bill, commitment to the relationship originated in his belief that marriage is a sacred institution. Furthermore, commitment was modeled for him by his mother who was married to his alcoholic father. To Bill, divorce did not pose a viable option unless there were extraordinary circumstances within the relationship that may warrant it.

> I took marriage seriously, even though I was young. I thought it was an institution. It was the normal thing [to do]. A man is supposed to get married to a woman, and a woman's supposed to get married to a man. . . So when you talk about divorce, it's not for me. I've got the 1950's mentality that you got married once. Part of that was ingrained in me during the arguments that my mother and father would have. Friends would come over and talk to my mom about divorce, and my mom would say, even though she made her happy drunk a mad drunk,

she'd say, one marriage, that's it. That's the way it is supposed to be. If it's going to be a bad one, that's the way it's going to [be]. Don't misunderstand me. I do believe there are instances when people have to split. . . But as far as normal, if you want it to work, ask, Him, [pointing up] He'll help you make it work. . . Don't quit. Don't quit.

These couples entered marriage with a deep-seated conviction towards marriage, with divorce never an option, or an option only in extreme situations. As Barbara shared, relationships are not void of issues; however, a sense of commitment was demonstrated from the onset of her relationship with Bill. Barbara also illustrated her promise "to love, comfort, honor and keep for better or worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health . . . as long as you both shall live," as she described the approach to her marriage relationship with Bill.

We did have some issues at some times with each other. But before we got married I said don't look for it, because there will never be a divorce. I'm not going down that road. That was before we ever got married that I said that. I always thought whatever ride this is going to be, I'm in for the long haul. . . It is something God put on my heart. . . I knew I was going to be in it for the long haul. God forbid, you don't want your husband to be paralyzed, and you don't want something to happen, but if it had ever been like that, he would have never been left. . . I was totally committed, and am still totally committed. I felt like God gave him to me and now he belongs to me.

Likewise, Donald's commitment originated from the vows that he had taken more than forty years earlier.

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Number one, I took a vow and I meant it. So any time you get to saying, "Is it

worth it?" You [tell yourself] it's easy to quit. It's harder to make it work. . . We

both took a vow, and we took it serious.

Eva's commitment originated in her appreciation for the good of the relationship

and the future she envisioned for her and Eddie. Furthermore, her commitment was

illustrated in her willingness to work through issues.

When you think in terms of longevity you have to think positively and the good

and the future, and goals, even if it's a small goal, to see your grandchildren

grown and get married, and kids be healthy. It's like a lifeline, and it's sort of fun

along the way. You have your ups and downs and you have your sad times, but

you've got to work through those together, too.

Attitude of Commitment to One Another

The couples in this study also expressed an "Attitude of Commitment" to one

another which encompassed awareness of, a deep appreciation for, and a great

commitment to one another. As Anna shared, marriage is a partnership between a

husband and wife which can grow stronger throughout the marriage as it is cared for and

nurtured.

When I think of husband and wife, I think of partners, that you're partners in life.

Your role is with your husband. He's with me, and I'm with him. We're together,

and Christ is in the middle of our marriage. That's what I think being married is.

To be a husband and a wife is to be partners in all aspects. And I don't think my

opinion of that has changed through the course of my marriage. I think it's only

gotten stronger. Our partnership has only gotten stronger.

Bill recognized early in his relationship with Barbara that she was committed to him. He

wanted to reciprocate that commitment. He emphasized the importance of adhering to a

consistent attitude of commitment even in the midst of conflict and differences in opinion

in order to maintain a long-term marriage relationship.

I wanted my wife to know that I loved her. That doesn't mean buying her stuff,

fur coats, or a mansion. I wanted to show her that my heart is true, because I knew

that hers was. And I think she felt the same way, even when [we got] into an

argument. Of course, we have differences of opinions, because we were raised

entirely different, as all people are, but I don't think there has been a day when we

didn't go to bed without saying, "I love you." . . . Maybe she doesn't cook the

food the way you like. Maybe she's not the house cleaner you want. Maybe she's

a lot of things that you don't like. But . . . what God has brought together, we do

not put asunder. [Our mission is to] learn to love one another. . . Don't look at the

bad stuff or the things that are negative to you. Look at the blessings of the

family. I have been wonderfully blessed.

Barbara summarized how commitment, acceptance, and understanding, when

coupled with a sense of security, can lead to marriage longevity. She recognized the

unique differences that exist between the sexes, but with a healthy attitude of

commitment to one another, the marriage will grow into a rich relationship in spite of the

differences.

When we first got married . . . we were going to be together for the rest of our

lives. This isn't just going to be if everything is okay. But with every single day

that goes by I do appreciate him more [as] a person than I ever did. . . He's

definitely a man, I'm definitely a woman, and that's definitely in there, but as a

person, as a human being, I appreciate how he is, and every year I realize I've

been blessed with a very wonderful and unusual man; and I'm so happy with that.

My view of him hasn't changed. . . I always knew I wanted to finish up with Bill.

I don't think in my mind or his mind giving up or getting a divorce was ever an

issue. I see us as being very, very old people together. I see the end of my life

being with him. . . I see that all the way through. I saw that the minute I saw him.

I never said if he does this he's out the door.

Charles's perspective was to marry someone with a different personality and

talents than himself; however, he illustrated the importance of remaining committed to

the individual to whom you were first attracted, rather than attempting to remake them

into a fabricated fantasy image created after you've been married for a number of years.

As Charles shared:

Marry someone who is different from you. The thing that attracted me to Carlotta

so much was her carefree attitude. She was positive. Everything's going to turn

out okay. She was an extrovert. I was an introvert. I realized that we marry our

opposite pretty much. The mistake comes when you try to remake this person in

your own image. As long as you recognize that this person is different from you,

and their perspective is just as valid as yours, and you keep that person on the

pedestal, and you don't try to remake them in your own image, things work out

pretty well. I didn't try to remake her.

Carlotta and Doris shared simple truths concerning their commitment to their

spouses. During seasons of struggle, Carlotta suggested that couples "Go back to when

they first started to date each other and find out what they saw in each other, and why

they got married in the first place." Likewise, Doris stated that she and Donald were

"More friends than anything else at first." It was that commitment to the friendship

relationship and to one another that allowed their marriage to endure for over forty years.

Attitude of Respect

Respect also emerged as a major theme under "Attitude." An "Attitude of

Respect" involves the elements of admiration, acceptance, charity, esteem, honor, love,

pride, and reverence. According to these participants, these elements must be conveyed to

the other in the marriage relationship if it is to endure, as Arthur illustrated:

> I think it is absolutely significant [and] important that your spouse and others,
>
> from your dialogue and from your actions, know that you absolutely respect and
>
> love [your wife] or respect and love [your husband].

The respect Arthur held for Anna was a product of the pride he felt for her following the

care for their oldest daughter in preparation for heart surgery.

> I was so proud of Anna. When Tina was ten months old, she weighed [only] ten
>
> pounds. Little skinny arms and legs. [The] doctor said she's in the best possible
>
> shape that she could possibly be in. That was because of Anna's work.

Appreciation and common courtesy was not taken for granted by Arthur and Anna, but

recognized and openly expressed, as Arthur described:

> She always says, "Thanks." Like I get up, I make the bed. She says, "Thanks for
>
> making the bed," or "Thanks for doing the dishes," . . . so that's how I started
>
> saying thanks for cooking. She'll say, "What are you thanking me for?" I say, "I
>
> thank you for the same reason you're thanking me." Those roles are appreciated
>
> roles, and I don't mean it's laundering that's the satisfaction, but it creates that
>
> environment of satisfaction, of well-being.

Additionally, Arthur attributed the respect and honor that he and Anna share with one

another to the spiritual foundation which bound them together.

> We have a commonality in our faith, and that's not to be taken lightly, because
>
> what happens is, that foundation we share permeates its way into how we act. . .
>
> She takes the extra step. She does that because she honors me as her husband, and
>
> I need to honor her as my wife.

> Anna integrated the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do

unto you" as she illustrated how respect for the other produced care and caring for the

other.

> The Golden Rule . . . applies in a marriage as well as outside a marriage with
>
> other people. I try to think about [Arthur's] needs before my own. And I think he
>
> does the same thing, so that way it just works; because the kinder you are to
>
> somebody else, then it just comes back to you. You treat somebody with respect;
>
> you're going to get respect back. We both take care of each other, even in simple
>
> things, like you get up to get something; you ask, "Do you want me to get you

anything?" Like last night I wasn't feeling good, and he said, "You want me to get you a Pepto Bismol?" And I said, "Yes," so he got up and got me a Pepto Bismol with a glass of water. And I would do the same thing for him if he wasn't feeling well. So, just be attentive to each other's needs, and put the other above yourself.

The respect Charles held for Carlotta grew out of the recognition and appreciation of her ability to manage the household finances beginning early in their marriage. His respect for her has grown into a deep appreciation that she is certainly the one woman with whom he would want to spend the rest of his life.

While I was still in the army . . . the army had a dependent allowance. What they would do is send you money, and you could save up the money, and it would be our nest egg. That's exactly what we did. We got married while I was in the service, and Carlotta saved the money, which she used to buy the furniture. We still have some of that furniture. A very, very smart thing on her part. . . Carlotta is a woman who I have absolutely never removed off the pedestal. She's got strengths that are absolutely admirable. She's absolutely the strength, because I think sometimes the things that I might have been inclined to fall apart on, she was the one that kind of pulled us through it. . . I have fantastic respect for her, even though sometimes we differ, in perspective on the way we want to approach things. . . Recognize that you are different, and the reasons you attracted one another is because you are different. You are attracted to one another, because you have admiration for the qualities of one another, and I kind of think, being a chauvinist, that the husband has to place his wife on a pedestal. She's a special

person. There are other women who might be physically more fun, but I wouldn't

put them on a pedestal. I wouldn't want them to raise my children. I wouldn't

want them to keep my home clean and wholesome, and play with my

grandchildren.

Eddie expressed the importance of respect even in the presence of arguments and

disagreements. With respect came the responsibility to work through issues in a timely

manner.

We respected each other. We both respected each other. Everybody has

arguments, but we respected each other all our lives. I respected her wishes, and

she respected mine. We just tried to get along with each other, and I think we did

a good job of it. Not that we didn't have our arguments and spats, we did. . .

Sometimes we'd end up arguing, and one would go in the bedroom and one

would go in the basement. Or [Eva] would go to the store, saying, "I'm leaving

here and going shopping for awhile." It always came back. It didn't last more than

a day. We never had two or three days, or week arguments. It never happened like

that.

Attitude of Humor, Fun, and Laughter

Humor was displayed by all participants in the form of friendly joking, loving

chiding, and kidding during the demographic segment of the interview at which both

participants were present and during the relational segment of the interview in which the

couple was interviewed separately. An "Attitude of Humor" emerged as a subtheme

under "Attitude" with over two hundred episodes of laughter observed during the

interview process. The terms "humor," "fun," and "laughter" were referred to over eighty times by the participants. Humor was also identified by the participants as a significant element in long-term marriage. Arthur shared accounts of practical jokes played on him by Anna early in their marriage and the important role humor played in his relationship with Anna.

> She's always been a practical joker. We have a lot of fun. That's not something to be minimized. I think that's significant. As I look back at it, I think that was a significant thing, the humor, having that humor, and that surprise. . . I really do think it's important. Probably as we get older we get more beat up physically, and it does good for you to be able to laugh. It really does. I think that our marriage is successful. I think you measure the success of the marriage by the degree of happiness, satisfaction, joy that you see in yourself and your spouse.

Similarly, Anna's sense of humor was displayed throughout the interview process.

> We laugh a lot. We have a good time. We rarely argue. He gets frustrated when he can't find stuff. He accuses me of moving it, and that's not the way it is most of the time. [Laughter] Sometimes I do move it.

> Humor and laughter were evident as these participants shared the account of their married life. Charles's illustration of humor included Carlotta's practical jokes as he stressed the importance of humor in the marriage relationship.

> Every April Fool's Day Carlotta gets me. She starts out [switching the] salt and sugar. [Laughter] Every year! I never, never remember. [Laughter] I put the salt in my tea. [Laughter] And she'll be there looking at me. [Laughter] Straight faced.

[Laughter] . . . A sense of humor is very, very important. . . You've got to be able to joke. You've got to have a sense of humor.

Carlotta laughed as she illustrated the adage that at times in a long-term relationship one must laugh to keep from crying.

We have a good [relationship]. Sometimes I'd like to kill him, but it's very good. We enjoy one another . . . our sense of humor. You're laughing at each other. Sometimes you're fighting and in the middle of your fight, not "fight, fight," but in the middle of a disagreement, all of a sudden one of you just busts out laughing. It's just having that sense of humor around, because if you didn't have that sense of humor you could really go bananas.

With a touch of humor, Carlotta shared the commitment to her marriage relationship with Charles.

We joke about the reason we stayed together for this long. It was because nobody wanted the kids. [Laughter] That's why I was laughing about the divorce [question]; because I wouldn't take the kids, and he wouldn't take the kids. That's why we never thought about getting a divorce. [Laughter] I wouldn't take the kids and he wouldn't take the kids, so we had to stay together to keep the kids happy.

Summary

For these participants, an "Attitude of Commitment," "Attitude of Respect," and "Attitude of Humor" emerged as significant attitudinal factors that contributed to their marriage longevity. Additionally, attitudes served as a foundation and catalyst for "Action," or the work and effort required in maintaining a long-term marriage.

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Action as a Contributing Factor in Long-Term Marriage

The participants in this study shared that long-term marriage relationships do not simply evolve. A satisfying long-term marriage requires lots of hard work and effort. A satisfying long-term marriage requires "Action." For the marriage relationship to endure, it was the consensus of these participants that marriage requires an attitude of commitment, respect, and humor coupled with "Action," or the act of hard work, while affording security, or a sense of confidence and hope for a future.

In response to the inquiry regarding factors contributing to marriage longevity, Bill emphatically replied, "I think the key word is 'work.' . . . It takes discipline, self-discipline to work at your marriage." Work can be described as the effort and energy couples invest in their marriage relationship. Work within a marriage relationship might also be described as "Attitude" put into "Action."

The consensus of these participants was that no couple is immune to the "Action," or the work, effort, and energy required to build a long-term marriage, as illustrated by Eddie.

> Everybody has challenges in their marriage. It was tough, especially when you don't have any money when you're first married, and you're looking for a house, cars, etc. You're buying old beater cars, and life was tough, but we managed to get through it. We just worked together and got through it. We knew some day would be a better day.

Eva shared similar sentiments with her husband, Eddie, that hard work is a requisite to making a marriage endure.

We had our fights, but we worked at our relationship. I don't care if it is a

marriage or a friendship or parents, daughters, sons, whatever. You've got to

work at a relationship. That attitude of commitment is placed into action through

communication, compromise, and mutual support. . . I was very head-strong, and

he was, too, in a way. If I did something wrong, or he did something wrong, we

worked at it. We worked at it hard, but it wasn't always like that.

While discussing a short marital separation, Eva illustrated the importance of both

attitude and action as fundamental building blocks of long-term marriage.

There was a time when Eddie and I did separate for four to six weeks. He was

overly stressed at work. I was overly stressed at home and work. . . We got to the

point where we needed some space. He moved out and went to his mom's. . . She

stabilized her son, and I just had to understand what he was going through. . . You

come to your senses and you realize this marriage is worth it. We had to work

things out and realize that a job is not the matter of life and death, and we realized

that family was where it is at, and we still do to this day.

Furthermore, three distinct subthemes emerged under "Action" which include

"The Act of Communication," "The Act of Compromise," and "The Act of Support." The

attitudes discussed previously lay the foundation on which these elements of action may

be implemented.

The Act of Communication

The participants in this study identified open and honest communication as a vital

element in their long-term marriage. In describing communication with Barbara, Bill

shared that truth and honesty is essential, regardless of the difficulty in conveying or receiving the message.

> I've been very, very honest [with Barbara]. We talked about [honesty] when we were young. Just be truthful. I don't care if you think it's going to hurt me, or if I think I'm going to hurt you. I want honesty. Let me deal with it if it is painful, or let me deal with it if it is pleasurable. I've tried to be that way with Barbara. If I have something to say to her, I'll say it. I don't necessarily say it in a mean way, but she knows what I'm saying. I love Barbara. To me, life couldn't be better, and it has been that way for quite a long time.

Barbara shared that her desire to find a husband with whom she could experience open and honest communication existed even prior to meeting and marrying Bill. She, like Bill, enjoyed discussing everything from politics to landscaping plans.

> We always enjoyed discussion. We discuss a whole variety of things. We've always talked about politics. We've always talked about nature, which we both love, like the mountains, the sea. . . This year we're going to pour a new sidewalk and re-landscape. . . [We] talk about the design of the sidewalk and the landscaping, what we're going to do. What kind of plants we're going to have in the yard. . . We were always talkers. We [are] very dominant people, so we have to keep that in check sometimes. He'll tell me something and I'll tell him why I don't think this is going to be [a good idea], and we'll go back and forth, we'll research why it would be and why it wouldn't be. We do communicate.

Barbara also shared the importance of learning how to share the truth in love, recognizing that, in sharing a difficult message; it is not so much what you say, but how you say it.

Speak the truth. If you are speaking the truth you can speak the truth without being rude, and you can speak the truth without stepping on people's toes. Unfortunately, there probably have been times when I might have offended Bill with things that I have said. [When I've done that], I say, "Well, I do care about what you care about. These are my reasons [for what I've said]. What are your reasons? And I really want to hear your reasons." You need balance. . . Close the mouth when it needs to be shut, and open the mouth when it needs to be open. . . That's something that I consistently struggled with.

Carlotta described her perspective on the importance of communication when couples face challenge and disagreement. Couples must be committed to working through marital struggles rather than abandoning the relationship and the spouse at the first sign of distress.

You have to be in love with each other. You have to take the good with the bad with each other. You just can't get angry and run out of the house because you have a disagreement. That doesn't help either. You just have to communicate. You have to learn to communicate in your marriage. I think that and laughing. You go through steps in your marriage. People today expect the first time you get married is like the fairy tale. You're just married and all this other stuff. When the first little thing goes wrong, they split. No one seems to want to work on their problems anymore, which is sad. I mean, you fell in love with the person for a reason; you just have to find a way to work it out.

Donald shared that communication takes work and the clearer couples can be with one another in their communication, the better their chances of survival are. "I think you

have to work at it. The clearer you can be with each other . . . the better chance you're going to have." Likewise, Eva illustrated that communication may take a variety of forms, but it is always hard work. Communication must take place in some form or another to maintain a healthy relationship.

> Communication is a biggie. Whether you agree, whether you yell at each other, whether you write things down, it's still communication. In the end, the finality has to be worked out. . . It's just hard work, and if you can get to the agreement and answers, I think you just grow together instead of growing apart.

Doris shared the importance of non-confrontational dialogue and the value of talking though conflict. She also illustrated how gentle confrontation saved her husband from possible severe health issues.

> We seldom, well; I don't know if we've ever had a fight. Well, maybe once; maybe twice. We just kind of discuss it and get past it. We get along really quite well. . . [For those struggling] I would say talk. Get it off your chest. Just talk about it. . . It was a big deal when he changed jobs, because I thought he was going to get an ulcer working for this man. At one point I sat him down, and I said this is not good for your health. You need to quit, and he agreed.

The Act of Compromise

For these participants, compromise connoted the settlement of differences through the use of mutual consensus or the combination of elements of varying points of view. It also represented a partnership between those who are working towards a compromise. At times, each individual is asked to sacrifice, yield, or invest in their marriage relationship while maintaining integrity in their beliefs. As Donald described:

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Lots of times I will just say it's not worth fighting over. I'm not a Caspar

Milquetoast by any means, but there's a time to fight and a time to compromise. I

see that in business. I see that in relationships. It's a partnership.

In a society that is quick to take the defense and point the finger, Arthur explained the

importance of stepping back from the situation for an objective look.

I think each party has to ask what part [he's] contributing to the struggle. How big

is my contribution to the struggle? That helps you identify what part of the

solution I can be? I first have to figure how much of the problem am I bringing to

the table as part of the struggle. . . That's where the work has to be done. And so

you identify where the work has to be done, but then you don't unload the

responsibility to fix. You've got to share in that fix.

Anna illustrated the perspective of give and take. If couples can discipline themselves to

compromise in insignificant areas of the relationship, perhaps compromise can be

employed in more significant areas of the relationship, as Anna shared:

Like, we're riding in the car, and I want to listen to talk radio, and he wants to

listen to Bill Haley and the Comets or whatever. [Laughter] That's a difference of

opinion. But he lets me have my way sometimes, and I let him have his way

sometimes, and it works out.

Rather than digging heels in, compromise encompasses an element of fighting

fair, avoiding low blows, and refraining from bringing up issues from the past. As

Charles reflected on the marriage trajectory of some of his neighbors, he commented on

his own marriage and their approach to managing conflict.

It's scary, though. I've known some neighbors who have gone thirty years and

then get a divorce. I was asking Carlotta, what was different about us? We fight.

We do fight. I think the difference is I don't try to draw blood. She doesn't draw

blood either. [Laughter] Maybe we fight fair. That's the difference.

The Act of Support

Flowing out of the attitudes of commitment and respect is the act of caring for and

supporting one another. Elements of support for these participants included sharing the

blame, sharing the load, sharing in the fix, sharing religion, and sharing everything. This

action helped foster long-term marriage for these participants. The act of mutual support

cannot be more powerfully exemplified than by the couple whose child was molested by

an extended family member. The husband shared:

[The molestation] was something that [my wife] and I got through. That was a

tough thing. . . [We had] collectively said, okay let's do this [in reference to

allowing the wife's extended family member move into the home]. . . He didn't

have a dad, and [my wife] wanted to bring him in, and we talked about it. I had a

lot of reservations about doing that. But we brought him into the house. . . [After

the molestation I assured her], "It isn't [your] fault. We're together in this thing."

She tells me now that the big thing for her was that I didn't try to point the finger

at her. I couldn't! What husbands and wives need to understand, more than

anything, is that big decisions are collective decisions. They're decisions that you

go back and forth on, then you collectively agree on a decision, and you're in that

decision together. You hold each other up for it. You share the blame for it if it's

not the wisest thing you ever did. Being able to shoulder that thing together, is

what I believe really gets you through the significant down thing. It's that I'm not

going through that down thing alone. We had a mutual choice. We have mutual

respect for each other's judgment, and we can share the load. . . That's how

sharing the load happens. . . We concentrated on getting each other through,

rather than trying to push the blame somewhere. There's too much pointing or

there's too much deflection, when there should be mutual shouldering.

The act of mutual support and sharing of responsibilities was illustrated by

Arthur, "In our division of labor that we kind of have in the house . . . it's okay for you to

be the expert." The division of labor and support also extended to large tasks, as he

described how Anna chose and purchased a house while Arthur was busy working and

time was running out for capital gains. In reference to the new home, Arthur shared:

[Anna] got this place while I was traveling. I [told her we had] to move

[Laughter] because we sold our other house in Shelby. We were in an apartment

for a couple of years. At that time you had to take those capital gains and roll that

money. We were running out of time. I said, "I'm just going to count on you. It's

just four walls and a roof to me. Get something that you're happy with." And so

she picked out this [house], and we like it.

For Barbara, mutual support was something to be learned in the light of the fact

that both she and her husband were independent thinking, first-born children.

We are both first-born children so we are both stubborn in our ways. We've been

married for a while, so we now have a lot of understanding. Now we know how to

pull the wagon together. We both have a tendency to be leaders. We both like to

say I've got a thought and a way [to do things], so that took some coming together on those things.

Barbara also illustrated mutual support in family finances, an arena that is a cause for concern and frustration for many couples today.

We've always shared everything we had. The years that he worked and did everything, and I did not work, our money was totally ours. It wasn't just his and he gave me an allowance. We had a bank account and I would pay the bills and buy the groceries. If we were going to make a big decision like buying a piece of property, or even buying something big for the house, I didn't just independently do it. I'd say, "Hey, I'm thinking of this. What are your thoughts?"

Similarly, Charles shared the account of Carlotta's support by supplementing family income while he was in graduate school.

While we were in graduate school, another significant thing, we had some times when finances were a little rough. What Carlotta did was she started baby-sitting to bring in extra money. She didn't complain or anything, she [did] baby-sitting, and we had kids all over the house that Carlotta was watching. She has always been very good with kids. She took care of kids, and that brought in extra money which helped us get over those rough spots financially. . . Before we ever did anything, we always had a discussion, and we weighed the plusses and the minuses. . . Two people help one another get through life together.

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Sense of Security -- A Thread Woven Throughout Attitude and Action

A "Sense of Security" was described by these participants as freedom from care, anxiety, or doubt that their spouse is vested in the relationship and that the relationship will last. A "Sense of Security" might be defined as confidence in both the relationship and the other. A sense of security eliminates the need for investing negative emotional energy into the relationship. It emerged as a theme woven throughout each relationship as participants described the satisfaction they experienced, and the factors they identified that lead to marriage longevity. In response to member checking Eva shared that "A sense of security is like a big hug, warm fuzzies, and living happily ever after all rolled into one." Likewise, in response to member checking, Arthur shared, "I absolutely agree that security is the 'umbrella' over marital satisfaction and marriage longevity."

For Bill, security was found in the assurance and love Barbara communicated to him. He always felt that in his wife and home he had a safe haven from the pressures of the world.

> She told me that she loved me. I always knew that she did. I don't know how. . . She sustained me much later after we were married, because I knew that there was always at least one person [Laughter] that I could come home to no matter how hard the day might have been, or somebody bitched at me, or what. I knew that I could always come home to Barbara, and that she loved me. And when we had kids it was the same thing. . . There is not too much that affects our relationship, and that boils down to one thing: I always knew she always loved me and I think she feels the same way. I could come home from work no matter what, with all kinds of crap on my head, and people could chew me a new butt hole, but I knew

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that when I came home there was at least one person who loved me. [Laughter] You don't know how much that means. It means a lot.

As Barbara demonstrated, the assurance and security she intended to communicate to Bill began in the early stages of their relationship, and Bill has sensed it throughout.

One time, I don't know where I found the courage to say it, but I said that if you would ever decide to marry me you would be smart, because all of these other [girls] you are going out with will never care about you the way I'll care about you. I couldn't believe I would say [that], because I wasn't a forward person. But it just kind of popped out of my mouth like that. After we had been married a few years, he finally said, "I knew you always really loved me." I'm sure he did.

Summary

For these participants the "Act of Communication," "Act of Compromise," and "Act of Support" emerged as significant actions that contributed to their marriage longevity. Additionally, a "Sense of Security" was fiber woven throughout their descriptions of satisfaction and factors contributing to long-term marriage.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to further understand the phenomena of satisfaction and longevity in marriage. Many studies relating to marriage and the marriage relationship have been completed; however, a review of the literature finds few recent studies pertaining to the phenomena of satisfaction in long-term marriage and marriage longevity. Additionally, Levenson et al. (1994) note that most marriage research has been conducted on "relatively young couples and has been more concerned with marriages that dissolve than with marriages that stay together" (p. 301).

This qualitative study was conducted from a phenomenological perspective with five diverse married couples who, through their Dyadic Adjustment Scale scores, confirmed the experience of satisfaction in their marriage. The method used to gather the data was digitally recorded face-to-face interviews with a male researcher interviewing the husband and a female researcher interviewing the wife. The researcher transcribed all interviews and formed no theories and made no assumptions prior to the analysis of the data. Preliminary findings were sent to each participant for validation.

Two major themes emerged from the participants' descriptions of satisfaction. These were "Togetherness" and "Children/Grandchildren." Additionally, two major themes emerged from the data in reference to marriage longevity. These were "Attitude," referring to the mind-set participants brought to the marriage relationship; and "Action," referring to the work and effort participants invested in the marriage relationship. Subthemes emerging from "Attitude" include: "Attitude of Commitment," "Attitude of Respect," and "Attitude of Humor." Subthemes emerging from "Action" include: "Act of

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Communication," "Act of Compromise," and "Act of Support." The theme "Sense of Security" emerged as a fiber that was woven throughout the participants' descriptions of satisfaction and the identified factors contributing to marriage longevity. In this chapter the descriptions of satisfaction and the factors contributing to marriage longevity identified by the participants are compared and contrasted to those found in literature.

Participant Responses Compared to Findings from Literature

The marriage experiences of the participants in this study are consistent with the couples described in literature that enjoy marriage satisfaction and longevity (e.g. Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Kaufman & Taniguchi, 2006; Lauer & Lauer, 1986; Lauer et al., 1990; Roberts, 1979-1980). In reference to satisfaction, participants' DAS scores, interview responses, and observed behavior were consistent with satisfied adjustment to the marriage relationship as described in the DAS manual (Spanier, 1989, 2001).

The couples in this study were married between 1961 and 1968, an era following the 1950's which was defined by high marriage and birth rates, traditional roles of husband as breadwinner, wife as homemaker, high general marriage stability, and a low divorce rate (Popenoe, 1993). However, this era also witnessed Governor Ronald Reagan's signing of the no-fault divorce law which seemingly ushered in what Cherlin (2004) describes as the "deinstitutionalizing" of marriage in America. Although the wives in this study filled the traditional role of homemaker and mother while their children were in grade school, some began to break the mold of the 1950's. Anna became a successful Mary Kay distributor and was issued the coveted pink Mary Kay car. Barbara earned a degree as a nurse practitioner and presently works in an intensive care unit. Eva became a

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successful interior decorator. Carlotta opened an in-home child care center while Charles was in graduate school and entered the workforce as a child care worker following Charles's semi-retirement. Doris was the sole female participant who filled the "traditional" role of the 1950's wife and remained strictly a housewife and homemaker. The husbands in this study adopted the "traditional" role of primary breadwinner until retirement or partial retirement, after which several husbands began to experiment with domestic chores such as cooking and cleaning, managing personal finances, and caring for grandchildren.

Successful and Fulfilling Marriages

The marriages of the participants in this study were demonstrative of what Levinger (1965) describes as the full-shell marriage and Gottman (1994) describes as the validating marriage. These marriages are represented by a satisfying relationship in which the couple have become virtuosos of communication, developed the ability to listen to and understand the other's point of view, and are open to compromise and calmly work toward conflict resolution. Conflict is inevitable in any relationship (Cherlin, 2004) and Donald illustrated, "not every day is going to be a perfect day . . . every single day was not pretty;" however, these couples have developed an attitude of commitment to the relationship and to each other rather than becoming gridlocked in conflict (Gottman, 1994; Lauer & Lauer, 1986). In describing his approach to communication and calm conflict resolution with Doris, Donald's illustration is consistent with the literature, as he shared, "We are not volatile people. We don't go off the deep end. We'll talk about it. We'll have discussions, and I don't mean angry ones at all."

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The participants in this study experienced the continuum of change to be expected within a long-term relationship as they progressed through early marriage, middle marriage, and into long-term marriage. This was consistent with Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) who describe the satisfying marriage as a "process of continual change" (p. 24), which pertains to dealing with new issues and problems that arise within the marriage, with the couple utilizing the resources available at each stage of life. These participants also described personal accounts illustrating that feelings change, circumstances change, finances change, health conditions change, bodies change, and challenges change with each new season in the marital relationship. However, satisfied long-term couples recommit to the marriage and take advantage of the resources available to them.

Satisfaction Found in Togetherness

In reference to "Togetherness" the literature described the importance of carving out time for each other during midlife, increased companionship in late marriage, and the interdependence and cohesion that develops in shared experiences, challenges, and successes (Shiota & Levenson, 2007). Veroff et al. (2006) posited that togetherness in the form of companionship and shared leisure contributes to marital happiness in early marriage; however, this was for white wives and African American wives and husbands only. They shared that "white husbands seem impervious to the amount of time or leisure they spend with their wives" (p. 166).

However, both husband and wife participants in this study shared descriptions that emphasized the establishment of togetherness and the satisfaction it produced in their

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dating relationship and in early marriage as well as in the middle and late stages of marriage. The husbands in this study shared early accounts of togetherness representative of Arthur who said, "Anna and I have always had fun together," as he shared descriptions of riding motorcycles together and playing practical jokes on each other. Likewise, Bill shared, "We didn't have a lot of money. A lot of times we'd just go for walks, go to the park, and just spend time together." Charles described how a strained relationship with Carlotta's parents acted as a catalyst for togetherness between him and his wife, "We had a little rough time in the beginning, but that kind of brought us together." Others talked of events including "cruising Woodward [Avenue]," dancing, hanging out, water skiing, and eating out at local hot spots in their descriptions of togetherness. This was inconsistent with Veroff et al. (2006).

Satisfaction Found in Children/Grandchildren

In reference to children and child rearing, much of the literature refers to the challenges of raising children. Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) and Lawrence et al. (2008) highlight the hectic nature of the child rearing years. Collins et al. (1997) reference the difficult nature of raising adolescent children, and Cherlin et al. (1996) and Mitchell and Gee (1996) the challenges associated with launching children off to college and careers and receiving them into the home again following divorce or loss of job. Many participants shared examples of their challenging experiences with child rearing that were consistent with literature. Included were examples of dealing with a child's severe health issues, looking for children in violation of curfew, and comments similar to this one by Bill, "Kids don't come with an instruction manual."

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However, the majority of the descriptions by the participants in this study described the satisfaction found in children and grandchildren. These participants also illustrated the fulfillment and pride that accompanied the experience of child rearing and the birth of grandchildren. Examples include those by Arthur, "I'm proud of the children we have. . . I would choose them to be friends with," and Barbara, "Our children have always been a joy in our life. . . Our kids were always a treasure." This was inconsistent with literature, with the exception of Angeles (2009), who recently discovered that children have a positive impact on life satisfaction in married couples.

Additionally, Charles and Carlotta illustrated the transforming power of children in their account of their relationship with Carlotta's parents. Similarly, Bill described the power of his children to transform him from irresponsible husband to responsible father in response to the birth of his son and daughter. In both situations great satisfaction was generated from the results of the transforming power of their children.

Attitude of Commitment

Barbara illustrated her attitude of commitment when she shared, "When we first got married . . . we were going to be together for the rest of our lives. . . I always knew I wanted to finish up with Bill." For these participants, surrendering to relationship pressure was not considered an option from the very beginning. Long-term couples adopt the theme that marriage is a long-term commitment. The commitment to the relationship itself and to one another with which these participants approached marriage was consistent with literature (Fenell, 1993; Harley, 1994; Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Lauer et al., 1990; Roberts, 1978-1980; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999).

Commitment in long-term marriage is constant, not driven by emotions which may change with events as Arthur illustrated, "A committed relationship doesn't stop tomorrow because you don't feel like it tomorrow." Additionally, commitment to the relationship must transcend seasons of satisfaction and dissatisfaction as was illustrated by Anna when she shared her experience during the years Arthur was obsessed with golf, "outside of that maybe a two year period, the golfing thing; that was the only time I was truly dissatisfied, but I never thought about divorce even at that time. I was just very unhappy." These findings were consistent with literature (Lauer & Lauer, 1986; Sporakowski & Hughston, 1978).

Additionally, faith in God, spiritual commitment, and strong moral values to which some of the couples in this study subscribed was consistent with Fenell (1993), Kaslow and Robison (1996) and Sporakowski and Hughston (1978), as were similar religious views (Myers, 2006) and the recognition of marriage as a sacred institution (Lauer et al., 1990). Arthur stated, "We have a commonality in our faith, and that's not to be taken lightly, because what happens is, that foundation we share permeates how we act."

Attitude of Respect

The participants in this study made many references to the attitude of respect for the institution of marriage and for one another as they spoke of admiration, value, esteem, and consideration for the other as factors contributing to marriage longevity. Doris shared, "We think alike. Our values are the same, and we stand by each other. I would

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stand up for him. He would stand up for me. I respect him, and he respects me." These findings were consistent with those of Appleton and Bohm (2001).

Arthur's respect for Anna grew out of her exemplary care for a very ill child, overseeing the purchase of a home, the honor she conveyed to him, and her appreciation for the things he did for her. Charles's respect for Carlotta grew out of her ability to successfully manage a household of four young children while managing household finances as he shared, "I have fantastic respect for her, even though sometimes we differ in perspective on the way we want to approach things." The appreciation and pride in their wives that these participants expressed was consistent with Kaslow and Robison (1996).

Lastly, Eddie expressed the importance of respect even in the presence of arguments and disagreements. With respect came the responsibility to work through issues in a timely manner, "We respected each other. . . Everybody has arguments, but we respected each other all our lives. I respected her wishes, and she respected mine." These findings were consistent with Gottman (2006) and Gottman and Silver (2000), who assert the importance of respect and acceptance in the development of a satisfying long-term marriage.

Attitude of Humor

Humor was demonstrated by all participants. In many cases humor was displayed during the initial introductions, shared with one another, shared with the interviewers, and exhibited throughout the interview process. These couples recognized the

significance of humor, laughter, and fun as factors contributing to marriage longevity. It was evidenced by Charles, who shared:

> We certainly laugh together. We play practical jokes on one another all the time
> . . . You've got to be able to joke. You've got to have a sense of humor. . . A
> sense of humor is very, very important.

These findings were consistent with Wallerstein and Blakeslee's (1995) oral history study that identifies humor and laughter as essential elements in long-term marriage, Roberts (1979-1980) who includes humor as an element of caring, Appleton and Bohm (2001) who consider humor an important element of companionship, and Gottman (1994) and Gottman et al. (2006) who advise of the importance of humor, laughter, and fun.

The Act of Communicating

This study identified communication as an instrumental factor in long-term marriage. The use of communication is a means of support and encouragement in building the foundation of a lasting marriage relationship. It is this type of communication that Bill has developed as he converses with Barbara, "I've been very, very honest. We talked about that when we were young. Just be truthful. I don't care if you think it's going to hurt me, or if I think I'm going to hurt you. I want honesty." This is consistent with the effective communication that Burns (1989) describes as the open and honest expression of one's thoughts and feelings while earnestly attempting to understand the thoughts and feelings of the other. It was also consistent with Wallerstein and Blakeslee (1995) who share that the creation of a safe environment in which to discuss thoughts and feelings leads to satisfaction and longevity in marriage.

Communication also involves discerning when to speak, when to listen, and how to politely and properly share a perspective. Barbara, Doris, and Eva talked about "Speaking the truth without being rude," "[Closing] my mouth when it needs to be shut," and "[Getting] it off your chest. Just talk about it." Conflict and stress escalated to the point of separation for Eddie and Eva. Whereas this couple struggled with communication early in their relationship, as a result of the separation, guidance, and awareness of improper and proper communication techniques, this couple reconciled and even strengthened their marriage relationship. This was consistent with literature (Gottman et al., 2006; Harley, 1994; Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Powell, 1969).

The Act of Compromise

The participants in this study expressed that conflict is inevitable in the marriage relationship; however, if the marriage is going to last, work and effort must be exerted, issues must be discussed, and compromise must be reached. Eddie shared, "Everybody has arguments, but we respected each other. . . She tries to do what I want to do, and I try to do things that she wants to do." Eddie's illustration was representative of the participants in this study and was consistent with the literature which stresses the importance of compromise, of giving in when required, and handling conflict in a positive and gentle manner (Gottman, 1996; Gottman et al., 2006; Levinger, 1965).

The Act of Support

The participants in this study described support as actions that displayed understanding, empathy, kindness, nurturance, and encouragement. Anna shared a

representative account of mutual support when she said, "We both take care of each other, even in simple things. . . Treat [your spouse] as you would like to be treated." Likewise, Bill shared, "When I came home there was at least one person who loved me." This is consistent with Dehle et al. (2001) who suggest that marriage offers a built-in support system.

The account of the couple whose relationship survived the violation of a child was consistent with Waite and Gallagher (2000). It also demonstrated the importance of making joint decisions on significant issues and the value of implementing empathy and support (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995).

Supportive care requires work and effort as illustrated by Bill who said, "It's surprising what a little 'Atta boy!' can do." Likewise, Donald shared the importance of providing not only financial support, but emotional support as an empathic listener and provider of moral support to his wife and children when he answered what it meant to him to be a husband. This was consistent with Roberts (1989-1990), Gottman (2006), Waite and Gallagher (2000), and Fields (1983).

Sense of Security - A Fiber Throughout

These participants conveyed a deep sense of security in their marriage relationship and in one another. Security was a fiber woven throughout the descriptions of satisfaction and the identified factors contributing to marriage longevity. For Bill, security was communicated and understood from the beginning of his relationship with Barbara.

She told me that she loved me, and I always knew that she did. . . I knew that

there was always at least one person [Laughter] that I could come home to no

matter how hard the day might have been.

Eva summarized security very well, in response to the member-checking letter, when she

responded, "A sense of security is like a big hug, warm fuzzies, and living happily-ever-

after all rolled into one." These findings were consistent with Appleton and Bohm

(2001).

Many of the findings in this study pertaining to marriage satisfaction and marriage

longevity are consistent with literature. In the table on the following page, the far-left

column is broken into two areas which include: 1) Prior Research Concerning

Satisfaction in Marriage, and 2) Prior Research Concerning Contributing Factors in

Long-Term Marriage. The participants in this study can be identified by using the key

found below the table. The asterisks in the columns below the research participants'

names represent the factors pertaining to marriage satisfaction and contributing factors in

long-term marriage that were identified and described by the participants.

Portraits of Participants

Table 1: Prior Research Verses Current Research

Prior Research Concerning Satisfaction in Marriage	A^1	A^2	B^1	B^2	C^1	C^2	D^1	D^2	E^1	E^2
1. Togetherness	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
2. Children/Grandchildren	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*
Prior Research Concerning Contributing Factors in Long-term Marriage										
3. Commitment	*	*	*	*		*	*	*		*
4. Respect	*	*		*	*		*	*	*	*
5. Humor	*	*			*	*	*	*	*	*
6. Communication	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
7. Compromise	*	*			*		*		*	*
8. Support	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		*
9. Sense of Security	*		*	*		*		*		*

Key:

A^1 = Arthur, A^2 = Anna, B^1 = Bill, B^2 = Barbara, C^1 = Charles, C^2 = Carlotta, D^1 = Donald, D^2 = Doris, E^1 = Eddie, E^2 = Eva

Note. 1. (Popenoe, 1993; Shiota & Levenson, 2007); 2. (Angeles, 2009); 3. (Fenell 1993; Gottman, 1994; Harley, 1994; Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Lauer et al., 1990; Roberts, 1978-1980; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999); 4. (Appleton & Bohm, 2001; Canary, Stafford, & Semic, 2002; Fenell, 1993; Gottman, 2006; Gottman & Silver, 2000; Kaslow & Robison, 1996); 5. (Gottman, 1994; Gottman et al., 2006; Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Lauer et al., 1990; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995); 6. (Gottman, 1994; Gottman, et al., 2006; Shiota & Levenson, 2007); 7. (Gottman, 1994; Huyck & Gutmann, 1992; Kaslow & Robison, 1996; Sporakowski & Hughston, 1978); 8. (Bosworth et al., 2000; Coombs, 1991; Dehle et al., 2001; Waite & Gallagher, 2000); 9. (Appleton & Bohm, 2001; Shiota & Levenson, 2007)

Conclusions

The findings in this study are noticeably consistent with the findings in literature

and validate much of what has already been reported concerning marital satisfaction and

long-term marriage. According to the literature, the researcher might have anticipated finding togetherness, commitment, respect, communication, compromise, and support to surface as major themes in this study.

What is conclusive from this study is that for these participants, the two major themes of satisfaction were "Togetherness" and "Children/Grandchildren." Additionally, a positive attitude that includes: 1) a commitment to the relationship and to the other, 2) respect of one spouse for the other, and 3) the presence of humor, fun, and laughter combined with actions that include: 1) open and honest communication, 2) compromise, and 3) support of one spouse for the other helped foster long-term marriage for these participants. Furthermore, security was a fiber woven throughout the descriptions of satisfaction and the identified factors contributing to marriage longevity.

A unique finding of this study is the strong emphasis on togetherness as a significant element in the descriptions of marriage satisfaction by husbands as well as wives when describing early marriage. With the exception of Veroff et al. (2006), most literature addresses togetherness in middle marriage and late marriage.

Another unique finding of this study is the strong emphasis of children and grandchildren in regards to satisfaction. All literature, with the exception of Angeles (2009), accentuates the stress of childrearing and the negative effect of children on satisfaction. On the contrary, the participants in this study highlighted their children and grandchildren in their authentic descriptions of satisfaction.

Although according to the literature, the researcher might have expected to find humor to surface as a theme in regards to marriage longevity, distinctive to this study was the emphasis these participants placed on humor, fun, and laughter in their stories and

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descriptions of factors contributing to marriage longevity. With these participants there was a significant display of humor during the interview process and as they interacted with one another.

Limitations

Potential limitations to the study might be the size of the population and the limited geographical region from which the participants were chosen, which was Southeastern Michigan. Although separate face-to-face same-sex interviews might foster comfort and rapport leading to open and honest sharing of intimate marriage details, interviewing couples together might create situations in which the comments of one spouse might spark or "jog" memories in the other. Finally, potential participants may have either been positively or negatively influenced by the academic institution from which the study originated which is an evangelical Christian university.

Delimitations include operationalizing the sample population as couples married "forty to forty-nine years" rather than simply a "successful" or "long-term" marriage. The forty to forty-nine year span of marriage was determined in order to help lower the age of the participants and help guard against positive bias in answer recall, which Spaniol, Voss, and Grady (2008, p. 859) describe as "exhibiting superior memory for positive, as opposed to negative or neutral information." Same-sex interviewers might have fostered comfort and rapport leading to more open and honest sharing of marriage experiences. Also, interviewing the husband and wife separately guarded against one spouse monopolizing the answering of interview questions.

Implications

As with other qualitative studies, the generalization of the results from the current study to other marriage relationships is limited. However, in a world with diminishing marriage rates, we must continue to study and investigate what factors lead to marriage longevity. This qualitative study from a phenomenological perspective may have implications for premarital education, since premarital education is associated with higher marital satisfaction and commitment, lower levels of conflict, and reduced odds of divorce (Stanley et al., 2006). Additionally, it may have implications for clinicians treating young, struggling couples, and for clinicians treating couples who have reached marriage longevity and are committed, yet struggling. It also has implications for self help and personal growth.

Further Research

Suggestions for further research on marriage satisfaction and marriage longevity include more qualitative research, this due to the limited research conducted on these subjects using this approach and the limitations of this study. Furthermore, a phenomenological approach allows for the voice of the people experiencing satisfying long-term marriages to be heard by allowing them to share their stories and descriptions of their lived experiences.

Most previous research has dealt with variables that disrupt marriage. Perhaps future qualitative research should redirect the focus to variables that increase satisfaction

and longevity in marriage, since healthy, long-term marriages possess the potential for harvesting the factors contributing to satisfaction and longevity in marriage.

The findings of this study uncovered togetherness as a significant element in marriage satisfaction for husbands and wives in early marriage as well as middle marriage and late marriage. Most of the literature addresses togetherness in middle marriage and late marriage rather than early marriage. The exception is Veroff et al. (2006) who posited that companionship and shared leisure contributed to marital happiness for white wives and African American wives and husbands, but not for white husbands. Given this, there is a great need for further qualitative research in the area of togetherness and satisfaction for white husbands in early marriage.

The findings of this study also uncovered the strong emphasis of children and grandchildren in regards to satisfaction. Most of the literature accentuates the stress of childrearing and the negative effect of children on satisfaction, with the exception of one study (Angeles, 2009), who found a positive connection between children and life satisfaction. Given this, the positive effect of children on marital satisfaction warrants further qualitative research.

The findings of this study uncovered humor as a major factor contributing to long-term marriage. The participants in this study placed a greater emphasis on humor, fun, and laughter than does most previous research. Given the strong emphasis these participants placed on humor, the effect of humor on long-term marriage warrants more qualitative research.

Furthermore, future research might investigate a more diverse study population. Expanding the diversity of the study population would include, but is not limited to, other geographical locations, religious beliefs, and couples whose parents were divorced.

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PARTICIPATION LETTER

LIBERTY
UNIVERSITY
1971 University Blvd.
Lynchburg, VA 24502

January 6, 2011

«FirstName»,

My name is Mark Nimtz, and I am a Ph.D. candidate in Professional Counseling at Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA. As partial fulfillment of the program, I am completing a study of marriage longevity which involves interviewing couples who have been married forty or more years. I received your names from «Newspaper», announcing the 40th Anniversary of your «WeddingDate», wedding. Your address and phone number was found in the *Michigan White Pages*.

This research will assist professional counselors, educators, and individuals interested in maintaining a healthy marriage relationship. Your participation will include completing a 10-minute 32 question assessment on marriage satisfaction call the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, and dependent on the scores, a face-to-face audio recorded interview by my wife of twenty-one years and me. If the results of this study were to be used in written publication, no identifying information will be used without written consent.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations by federal law and University policies. If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me or my committee chairman at the addresses found below.

Mark Nimtz	Victor Hinson, Ed.D.
1127 Shadow Dr.	Dept. of Counseling
Troy, MI 48085	1971 University Dr., Lynchburg, VA 24502
248-224-1842	434-592-4046
nimtzm@liberty.edu	vdhinson@liberty.edu

The study will be limited to eight couples, and I sincerely hope you will be able to participate. Following your decision, please sign the enclosed Participation Response Form, and return it in the self-addressed stamped envelope.

Sincerely,

Mark A. Nimtz, MAT, MFT
Doctoral Candidate Student in Professional Counseling, Liberty University

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPATION RESPONSE FORM

Please make any necessary corrections to the information below and return this Participation Response Form in the self-addressed stamped envelope or contact me at 248-224-1842 by January 15, 2011, if you decide to participate. If you have any questions, please contact me at 248-224-1842. Thank you very much for your kind assistance. Mark A. Nimtz

Name: «FirstName» «LastName»

Address: «Address1»

City: «City»   State: «State»   Zip: «PostalCode»

Phone: «HomePhone»

☐   Yes, Mark, we have received and read your letter of invitation to participate in your marriage study, and we give you permission to contact us by telephone to discuss the details in setting up of a face-to-face audio recorded interview with questions related to our marriage for the purposes of your study.

☐   No, we am sorry that we cannot participate in your study at this time.

_____
Husband's Signature   Date

_____
Wife's Signature   Date

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION

This study is being conducted to further the understanding of the factors that lead to marriage satisfaction and longevity. Results of this study may provide information that can assist design, research, and implementation of interventions in premarital education, marital counseling, and personal growth. Performance of this study meets partial requirements for the researcher's Ph.D. in Professional Counseling at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia. This study is being conducted by Mark A. Nimtz, Doctoral Candidate.

Your voluntary participation in this study will provide important information in the area of marriage and family. You qualify for this study by having participated in a marriage consisting of one man and one woman united in a state licensed and recognized religious or civil ceremony forty or more years.

Participants in this study will complete a 10-minute 32 question assessment called the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) which measures relationship satisfaction. Dependent on individual scores of the participating couple, they may also be interviewed by the researcher for approximately one to one and one half hours. The interviews will be recorded and verbatim transcripts generated for analysis. The participant will receive a transcribed copy of the interview for their approval prior to data analysis. All participant information will be held in confidence and stored in a locked file cabinet that only this researcher has access to, unless otherwise requested and written consent received.

Risks and discomforts may be associated with persons participating in a research study. These may include: (1) emotional stress generated from the interview or

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assessment question content, (2) becoming fatigued during the interview and/or assessment process, and (3) discovery, or resurfacing of issues of thought to have been resolved. To minimize risk and protect the identity of the participants, random names and numbers will be assigned to each participant to identify their responses and assessment scores. Should you become fatigued during the interview process, a 10-15 minute break may be taken, with the interview to proceed following the break. Emotional issues or distress resulting from the interview process may be discussed by calling the researcher at 248-224-1842. Assistance will be made in finding appropriate support or counseling resources. If the participant chooses to speak with someone other than the researcher, they may contact licensed counselor Ronald R. Farah, MA, MFT at 248-642-3137.

Participation in this research study is strictly voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time. If the interview has already been completed, your responses may be withdrawn by contacting the researcher. Upon completion of this study, the researcher will contact you with the results of the study. Results of the study may be published in a professional journal.

Please direct questions regarding participation in this study, participants' rights, or questions related to the study to the researcher at manimtz@liberty.edu or by calling (248) 224-1842. The Liberty University Institutional Review Board may be contacted at IRB@liberty.edu or by writing the Institutional Review Board, Liberty University, 1971 University Blvd., Campus North, Suite 1582, Lynchburg, VA 24501.

Consent to participate in this study will be indicated by your signature on this informed consent forms, one of which will be kept by the participant for their records, and the second to be retained by the researcher for his records.

Printed Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Researcher Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Questions - Demographic Information

1.   For how many years have you been married?

2.   Is this present marriage your first marriage?

3.   How old were you when you married?

4.   How long did you know each other before you married?

5.   Did you cohabitate (live together) prior to marriage?

6.   What is the best way to describe your racial background?

7.   What is the highest level of education you have obtained?

8.   How would you describe your socio-economic status?

9.   Are you affiliated with a religion? If so, what is it and how long have you been

        involved?

10.   How many children did you raise? Biological? Adopted? Have you lost any

        children?

<u>Interview Questions - Relational Information</u>

1.   Tell me about yourself and your spouse.

- How you met
- Your Courtship
- How you decided to get married
- Your Wedding
- Expectations then and now

2.   Tell me about your marriage.

- Children
- Meaningful Events
- Good Times (High Points)
- Challenges (Low Points)
- Your Marriage Relationship
- Your Marital Roles

3.   Describe what it means to be a husband/wife. Has your understanding of this changed through the course of your marriage? If so, how; if not, why not?

4.   Describe some of the more serious stressors you experienced in your marriage (i.e. severe health issues, emotional issues, loss of a job or life-long dream, extramarital affair, etc.), and how did those stressors you described impact your marriage either positively or negatively?

5.   The Dyadic Adjustment Scale you completed describes your marriage as (Happy, Very Happy, Extremely Happy, or Perfect). Given this, how would you describe satisfaction in marriage and the most satisfying and fulfilling aspects of your marriage?

6.   What factors do you attribute to the longevity of your marriage?

7. Describe what it means to have a successful marriage, and do you think your marriage is successful? Why or why not?

8. What advice do you have for those couples who are planning to marry or are struggling in their marriage?

9. What else do you think would be significant to share?

MEMBER CHECKING LETTER

LIBERTY
UNIVERSITY
1971 University Blvd.
Lynchburg, VA 24502

March 31, 2011

«FirstName»,

Thank you again for your participation in the interview regarding my dissertation. Your contribution is very valuable and much appreciated.

I am nearing the completion of the data analysis process of the ten interviews I conducted. Two major themes have emerged regarding **Satisfaction**. These two themes are **1) Togetherness** and **2) Children/Grandchildren**.

Two major themes regarding factors contributing to **Marriage Longevity** also emerged. These two major themes are **1) Attitude**, referring to the mind-set individuals bring to the marriage relationship; and **2) Action** (Work), referring to the work and effort individuals invest in the marriage relationship.

Additionally, subthemes have emerged under each major theme. The subthemes emerging from **Attitude** include an **1) Attitude of Commitment**, **2) Attitude of Respect**, and **3) Attitude of Humor**. Subthemes emerging from **Action** (Work) include **1) Communication**, **2) Compromise**, and **3) Care**. A **Sense of Security** was a fiber that was woven throughout satisfaction and factors contributing to longevity. In my dissertation, these themes and subthemes will be explained and expounded upon.

While recognizing that I have gathered information from ten individuals comprising five couples, would you sense that I have captured the main essence of the phenomenon of satisfaction and marriage longevity concerning your marriage within these major themes and subthemes? I would covet any comment or insight you might be able to share concerning these findings. Comments may be jotted down on the enclosed sheet of paper and returned in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope at your earliest convenience.

Again, it was a pleasure meeting you, and thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Mark A. Nimtz, MAT, MFT
Doctoral Candidate Student in Professional Counseling, Liberty University

Directions: Please return this sheet with any comments concerning the preliminary finding in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided. Thank you.

Two major themes regarding Marital Satisfaction

    1) Togetherness

    2) Children/Grandchildren

Two major themes regarding Factors Contributing to Marriage Longevity

    1) Attitude, referring to the mind-set individuals bring to the marriage relationship

        A) Attitude of Commitment

        B) Attitude of Respect

        C) Attitude of Humor

    2) Action (Work), referring to the work and effort individuals invest in the marriage relationship.

        A) Communication

        B) Compromise

        C) Care

Additionally, a Sense of Security was a fiber that was interwoven throughout satisfaction and factors contributing to marriage longevity.

LETTER OF THANKS TO PARTICIPANTS

LIBERTY
UNIVERSITY
1971 University Blvd.
Lynchburg, VA 24502

May 30, 2011

«FirstName»,

Thank you again for your participation in my dissertation research study titled Satisfaction and Contributing Factors in Satisfying Long-Term Marriage: A Phenomenological Study.

The following are results of the analysis of the data received in the interviews earlier this year.

Sincerely,

Mark A. Nimtz, MAT, MFT
Doctoral Candidate Student in Professional Counseling
Liberty University

PARTICIPANT DYADIC ADJUSTMENT SCALE SCORE RANGES

Dyadic Adjustment Scale Scores Ranges and T-Score Ranges for Participants

	Dyadic Consensus	Dyadic Satisfaction	Affectional Expression	Dyadic Cohesion	Dyadic Adjustment
Wives' Scale Score Ranges	50-58	40-44	9-11	14-19	114-131
Wives' T-Score Ranges	48-57	49-55	50-59	51-63	50-59
Husbands' Scale Score Ranges	49-52	39-44	7-11	13-19	114-123
Husbands' T-Score Ranges	47-50	48-55	41-59	49-63	50-55

- "Dyadic Consensus assesses the extent of agreement between partners on matters important to the relationship, such as money, religion, recreation, friends, household tasks, and time spent together" (Spanier, 1989, 2001).
- "Dyadic Satisfaction measures the amount of tension in the relationship, as well as the extent to which the individual has considered ending the relationship. High scores on Dyadic Satisfaction indicate satisfaction with the present state of the relationship and commitment to its continuance" (Spanier, 1989, 2001).
- "Affectional Expression measures the individual's satisfaction with the expression of affection and sex in the relationship" (Spanier, 1989, 2001).
- "Dyadic Cohesion assesses the common interests and activities shared by the couple" (Spanier, 1989, 2001).

Note: In order to qualify for this study, participants needed to receive a T-score of 45 or higher on the DAS. T-scores within the range of 45-55 represent an average score and indicate no concern regarding dyadic adjustment to the marriage relationship. T-scores within the range of 56-60 are above average and considered slightly atypical regarding dyadic adjustment to the marriage relationship. T-scores within the range of 61-65 are considered mildly atypical regarding dyadic adjustment to the marriage relationship. T-scores within the range of 66-70 are considered moderately atypical regarding dyadic adjustment to the marriage relationship. T-scores above 70 are considered markedly atypical regarding dyadic adjustment to the marriage relationship (Spanier, 1989, 2001).