

Spousal Assessment of Marital Satisfaction on Multiphasic
Internal Aspects of the Marital Relationship

by

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ABSTRACT

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Spousal Assessment of Marital Satisfaction on Multiphasic

Internal Aspects of the Marital Relationship

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The purpose of this study was to identify aspects of a marital relationship as they effect marital satisfaction. Eight aspects were identified in the literature as contributing to marital satisfaction. Three of these eight were used in this study and in the design of the survey instrument entitled the Multiphasic Assessment of Spousal Satisfaction (MASS). The questionnaire was developed to collect information regarding couples' attitudes toward the three variables under study and measures of how satisfied each individual was in his/her marital relationship.

The MASS instrument was distributed by a systematic random sampling method utilizing a mail out pencil and paper type test. Further subjects were selected using both snowball sampling and nonrandom sampling techniques. Forty-one subjects were obtained using these three sampling techniques. Data were computer analyzed with statistical procedures including Pearson

correlations, Levene's test for equality of variances, t-tests for equality of means, and descriptive statistics.

The study was designed to assess couples' overall marital satisfaction on the particular variables of friendship, level of involvement, and sexual fulfillment. The results indicated that couples were most satisfied with their marriage when there were more feelings of attachment than independence between the couple and a greater sense of friendship between each individual within the couple. Friendship also had a positive relationship to the level of sexual fulfillment each individual had within the couple.

The results were also analyzed to assess the influence of gender, age, number of years married, employment status, and education level on marital satisfaction and on each of the six derived scales. The results indicate that an individual's education level seems to influence how willing one is to compromise with one's partner. All other demographic information showed no other differences between groups. The results of this study will help to further the scientific understanding of the successful marriage and the aspects that are included within the marital relationship. In addition, this knowledge may aid in a re-education of future generations as to what individuals can expect within a working marriage. Further research should be undertaken in order to determine the significance of the other five variables suggested within this study, as they pertain to marital satisfaction.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Social scientific study often seems to possess a flawed view of how to approach its subject. Social scientists seem to focus all their attention on the abnormal without even addressing the normal. Most of the “hard” sciences seem to have avoided this flawed starting point. From the very beginning of biological study, scientists examined normal human bodies in order to gain an understanding of how the body was supposed to work properly. Only after this understanding began to evolve did an understanding of the abnormal (i.e. the diseased body) begin. This study of the normal as a starting point reflects in the other “hard” sciences as well. Why then, when studying the human condition, do we as scientists start with the abnormal without first, considering the normal?

When studying marriage, a universal similarity within the human condition, researchers have predominantly focused on divorce, the diseased marriage, without looking first to the successful marriage. The study of marriage and marital relationships has previously been seen as a two-sided coin. It is very difficult to study marriage without, also, discussing divorce. As is the contrary, only, it seems as though the divorce side of the coin gets carefully studied, and dissected while the opposite side, marriage, is merely glanced at. In the mountain of research on marriage and marital relationships, the divorce side of the coin gleams and glitters in the sun while the marriage half fades into scholarly obscurity. Because of this obscurity the essence of this thesis has tended to be

toward the divorce side but it should be noted that this thesis is about the successful marriage and not about divorce.

As with most of life, marriage is not a dichotomous reality. There is gray area within the study of marriage. The author wishes to propose new ideas to the scientific community. Marriage should first be studied from the vantage point of normalcy and success before any study can be done about how to curb divorce. In other words we must find out how marriage works before we try to find out how to restore a broken one. The second idea is that divorce tends to be one side of a continuum with perfection (i.e. the perfect marriage) on the other end. Most if not every marriage would be placed along this continuum somewhere below perfection, and move up or down as the relationship between the couple grows or suffers.

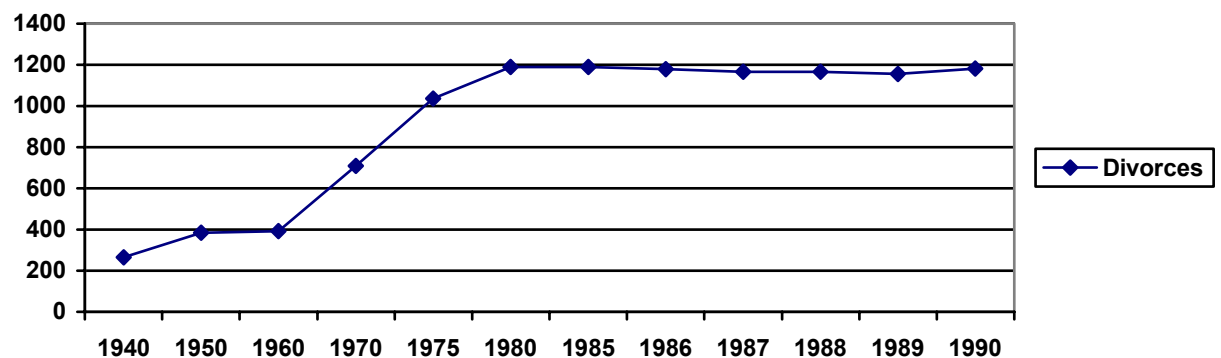
As reasoning individuals we want so much out of life. We want success in our endeavors; our happy, joyous times to outnumber our sad, depressing times; someone to share those happy, joyous times with; plus any number of individualistic wants and needs we may feel appropriate. Marriage is one of, if not the most, sought after experiences in human life. In fact, nearly 90% of all adults marry at least once (Talbot, 1997; Schoen & Weinick, 1993), and of those whose marriages end in divorce, more than 80% remarry (Schoen & Weinick, 1993). It is only natural to strive to become as one with another individual, to feel the sense of wholeness that only comes with the uniting of two loving people. Why then, at least in this culture, do so many previously loving couples call their marriages off to entertain the ever-present phenomenon of divorce? Perhaps the scholarly

preoccupation with divorce is a reflection of the pervasiveness of divorce in the lives of a significant proportion of the population.

Alarming, divorce has increased steadily since 1857 when the Ecclesiastical courts were abolished in Great Britain and absolute divorce was instituted (Preston & McDonald, 1979). In more recent years, divorce rates in the United States have grown to frighteningly high numbers. The divorce rate as a percentage of married women over the age of 15 has doubled from 1960 until about 1979, when it plateaued (<http://www.divorceinfo.com>). This plateau effect can be seen in the number of divorces and annulments from 1940 to 1990, as represented by Figure I.

Figure I

Plateau effect of the number (in thousands) of divorces and annulments between 1940 and 1990.



Since 1980 the average divorce rate in the United States has remained at constant rate although this rate is a good deal higher than divorce rates just 50 years ago. Researchers, although, are in disagreement as to how high the divorce

numbers should be. In a 1989 analysis by Castro, Bumpass, & Bumpass approximately two-thirds of all recent first marriages were seen as likely to end in separation or divorce within 40 years of marriage. The authors also suggest that this figure represents a plateau in the number of divorces. This extreme percentage of the number of divorces added to a startling 19-22% underreporting rate, suggested in the same article, on the 1970 census suggest a divorce rate upwards from 80%. This 80% failure rate only includes first marriages. The Castro study, though, seems to place the divorce rate at a much higher level than most other studies of the same nature.

According to the National Vital Statistics Report of births, marriages, divorces, and deaths: provisional data for 1998, an average of 90,000 divorces occur every month in the United States, and these numbers show very few signs of changing. It is risky to generalize as to what kinds of marriages will succeed or fail in the long run, and future researchers should continue to take care as to remember this. It has been shown elsewhere that first marriages are more likely to end in death than divorce; whereas subsequent remarriages are less likely to succeed (<http://www.divorceinfo.com>). Moreover, an “examination of divorce probabilities by marital duration shows that the probability of divorce is highest during the earliest years of marriage and declines sharply and steadily with marital duration” (Thornton & Rogers, 1987 p. 2). It may go without saying but as a study by White, Lynn, & Booth (1991) demonstrates, there is a “strong negative relationship between marital happiness and divorce” (p. 11). Surprisingly though, “almost three-fourths of Americans (still) believe that marriage is a lifelong

commitment that should not be ended except under extreme circumstances” (Talbot, 1997, p. 31).

Regardless of what the “divorce rate” is it should be duly noted that a subject of this nature (i.e. divorce) is extremely difficult to quantify. Many questions surface as to how data of divorces are collected and counted. Does one count people who are divorced a number of times more than once? Does one count two people that are divorced for every one couple that is divorced? What happens to the people who never remarry?

This author wishes to place emphasis on the reasons for divorce (i.e. non-satisfaction of the marriage) rather than the numbers or percentages of divorces. This stance generates questions of its own. Are the same people getting divorced a number of times for the same reasons? How have these reasons changed or been eliminated in a subsequent successful marriage? Why are people who have chosen not to remarry not taking a second chance at the privilege of this institution?

When one looks at the incredibly high numbers and percentages of failed marriages in this country it is hard to see why such a high percentage of people, around 92% for both males and females between 1970-1988 according to a 1993 Schoen & Weinick study, choose to marry. Additionally, the average duration of a marriage between the years of 1970 and 1988 has averaged only 29 years for males and 25 years for females, an insignificant amount of time when compared to a complete lifespan, but the average duration of divorced individuals (i.e. number of years spent between marriages) is only 5.5 years for males and 11 years for females. Regardless of, it seems, the statistical significance of the failed

marriage, individuals still seem to see marriage as a positive situation worth getting involved in and seemingly re-involved in.

The impact of the rising number of divorces has dire effects for the couples involved, including poorer health and increases in accidents. There are strong negative consequences to separation and divorce on the mental and physical health of both spouses, including increased risk for psychopathology, increased rates of automobile accidents, and increased incidence of physical illness, suicide, violence, homicide, significant immunosuppression, and increased mortality from diseases (Gottman, 1998). Divorce not only involves the couple but most devastatingly, their children. “In children, marital distress, conflict, and disruption are associated with depression, withdrawal, poor social competence, health problems, poor academic performance, and a variety of conduct-related difficulties” (p. 169). “Divorce pushes many families into poverty...children of divorce are less likely to graduate from high school, and they are more likely to get pregnant as teenagers... They are more prone to depression and even joblessness” (Talbot, 1997, p. 32).

If divorce is so devastating for both the couple and others involved with them, and a basic human drive is to have a happy, successful marriage, why then has very little been done to curb the current trends of the dissolved marriage? There are two questions that need to be addressed when discussing the current divorce problem. What makes a successful marriage and what can be done to teach future couples how to succeed in their marriages? Unfortunately, marital research is only in its infancy. Only since the 1970's has this important topic been

investigated scientifically. “Psychology was a latecomer to the study of marriage, sociologists had been studying marriages for 35 years before psychologists became interested in the topic” (Gottman, 1998, p. 170). Marriage itself must first be dissected into its varying parts and fully understood before we can ever hope to teach the future generations of couples how to succeed in their marriages.

Healthy relationships, overall, tend to last longer, are generally happier, and tend to give each individual a meaningful, rich life that all tend to want. “Marriage is an intrinsic part of our contemporary conception of a meaningful, rich life” (Flowers, 1998, p. 531). “Marital happiness is still the largest contributor to overall happiness for married individuals and is strongly associated with physical and psychological well-being” (Reynolds, Remer, & Johnson, 1995, p. 156). The unhealthy relationships that either lack these aspects or possess deficits in certain parts are typically the ones that end in divorce because they don’t fulfill the happy, long lasting, meaningful criteria for a rich life.

It should not be inferred by these statements that healthy relationships last for a lifetime. This author realizes, as should the reader, that relationships, marital or otherwise, can end peaceably, and without the devastating consequences discussed here. These types of relationship breaks, unfortunately, seem to be more the exception than the rule.

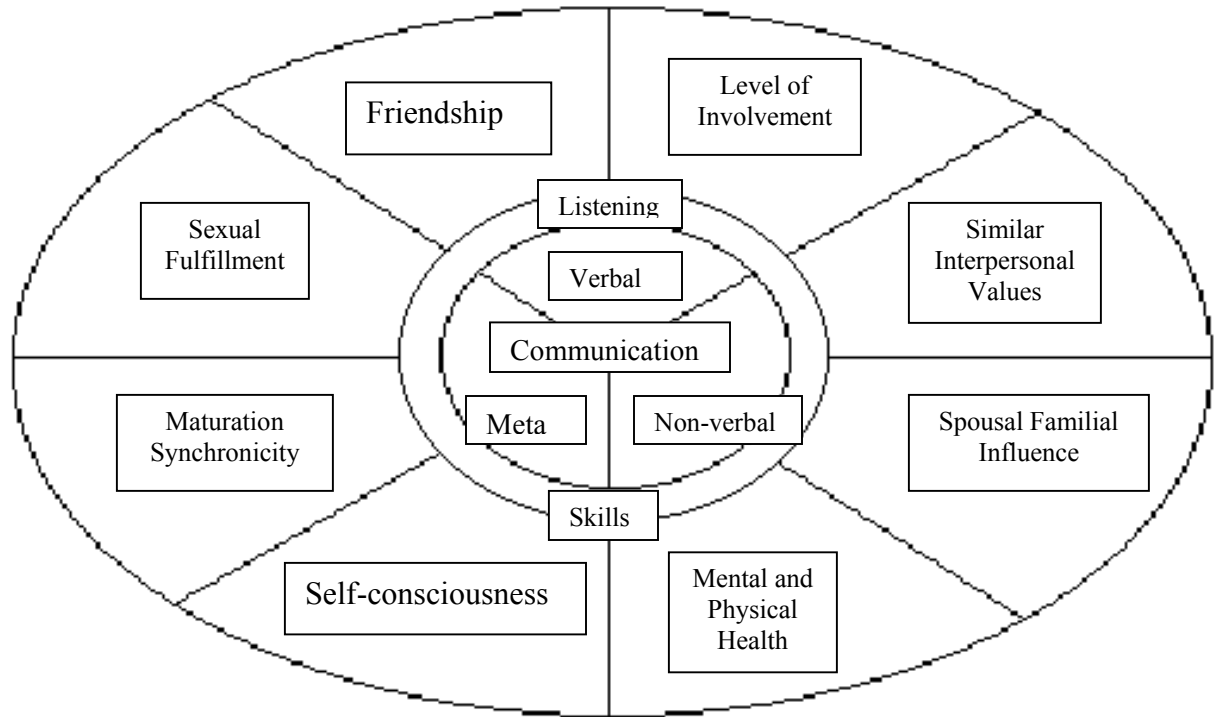
For older individuals happy marriages seem to be a defining point in their lives, even when it comes to keeping them alive. In the 1985 book Sacred social support network and care of the elderly, by Hess and Soldo, it was reported that, “lower mortality and morbidity rates for married over non-married persons,

especially for men, and; marital satisfaction of elderly couples was found to be an extremely strong predictor of an individual's happiness, general well-being, overall health, and longevity" (p. 155-156). The longevity of older couples that are happily married only emphasized the importance of keeping marriages healthy, happy, and strong.

Research has shown that healthy marital relationships possess an abundance of certain aspects that unhealthy relationships do not. Gottman (1998), Holman & Larson (1994), and Flowers (1998) have illustrated how important communication is to any successful relationship. It is well documented that strong verbal, nonverbal, and meta-communication skills, as well as listening skills, all have high predictive value when it comes to marital success. What is not well known is how other key aspects of a marital relationship influence the future of the marital bond? This author wishes to propose that there are eight dyadic dimensions of marriage that, in addition to the verbal elements, every good marital relationship should possess. These eight dimensions, each of which may or may not include verbal elements within themselves include: friendship (Flowers, 1998; Cooper, 1980; Chatterjee, 1999); similar interpersonal values (Flowers, 1998); maturation synchronicity (Flowers, 1998); a balance between involvement in and disengagement from the marriage (Eckstein & Axford, 1999; Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Gottman, 1998); self-consciousness (Flowers, 1998); sexual fulfillment (Flowers, 1998; Christopher & Sprecher, 2000; Edwards & Booth, 1994); spousal familial influence (Holman & Larson, 1994; Whyte, 1990); and mental/physical health (Reynolds, Remer, &

Johnson, 1995). In combination with a hub of communication, these dimensions form a diagram of the successful marriage, which can be seen in Figure II.

Figure II The successful marriage diagram



In order to limit this thesis, three of these eight elements: friendship, level of involvement, and sexual fulfillment, referred to as the intradyadic relationship triad; will be examined for both their value in the prediction of marital satisfaction and how they interact with each other.

Ever since the Reformation and the Industrial Revolution in the United States, marriage has been synonymous with the love and affection of two individuals. Unfortunately, science seems to be blinded to the love that is behind any union of this kind, possibly due to the tremendous difficulty of

conceptualizing love itself. When considering a study on an important topic such as marriage, we must not forget that in this day and age, marriage is synonymous with love. Therefore, what we are honestly trying to understand must not exclude the concept of love.

Statement of the Problem

There has been an overwhelming amount of literature pertaining to the importance of communication in marital relationships (Bradbury, Beach, Fincham, & Nelson, 1996; Bradbury, & Fincham, 1992; Eckstein & Axford, 1999; Flowers, 1998; Gottman, 1998 and 1994; Gottman, Notarius, Gonso, & Markman, 1979; Gottman & Silver, 1994; Larson & Holman, 1994; Johnson & Booth, 1998; Reynolds, Remer, & Johnson, 1995; Sternberg, 1988; Whyte, 1990).

There is however, a lack of studies looking at other realms of marital relationships. Moreover, there are only a few researchers advocating that certain aspects of marital relationships, if present, can be predictive of marital satisfaction and thus success. There is no doubt that communication is a very powerful predictor of marital success, but communication in itself does not form a complete relationship. Certain elements such as friendship, attachment to and independence from each other, and the sexual fulfillment of each individual in a marital dyad may also contribute to the relationship and help establish stability over time.

The purpose of this study therefore, is to discover whether the elements of friendship, involvement/disengagement, and sexual fulfillment, as three of eight elements of marital relationships, have both predictive relationships to marital satisfaction and/or interact with each other. The study was done by a mail out

questionnaire involving these elements, sent to married couple's homes listed as double occupancy in the city of Watertown, Wisconsin, and its surrounding areas, in the Fall of 2000. Additional sampling techniques were used because of low return rate. These techniques will be discussed in Chapter III.

Research Questions

There are five questions this research has addressed:

- To what extent does a couple's mutual friendship influence their marital satisfaction?
- To what extent does a couple's attachment to and independence from each other influence their marital satisfaction?
- To what extent does a couple's level of individual sexual fulfillment influence their marital satisfaction?
- To what degree do these (mutual friendship for each other; attachment to and independence from each other; and individual sexual fulfillment) together influence an individual's total level of marital satisfaction?
- How, and to what extent do these items correlate with each other?

Definition of Terms

For clarity of understanding, the following terms need to be defined:

Intradyadic relationship triad – The elements of friendship, level of involvement, and sexual satisfaction within the marital relationship, which are interconnected and would not exist outside the couple.

Marital quality - "A subjective evaluation of a couple's (marital) relationship" (Larson & Holman, 1994, p. 229).

Marital satisfaction - An individual's subjective evaluation of his/her satisfaction with the marital quality of one's marriage.

Marital stability - The status of a marriage as possessing both acceptable marital satisfaction for both individuals involved in the marriage and equally acceptable marital quality for the couple over time.

Marriage - Either a heterosexual couple, legally bound by the state of marriage as husband and wife, or the cohabitation of a homosexual couple married by pledge to each other.

Assumptions

There are several assumptions that are apparent in this research. First, scores on each individual instrument will be measures of marital satisfaction. High marital satisfaction is positively related to marital quality, thus leading to marital stability. Second, couples will be able to recall the whole of their marital relationship without editing either positively or negatively. Third, since data will be collected from human subjects on a self-report questionnaire, it is assumed that the items will be answered correctly and honestly. Fourth, since there were no validity or reliability measures calculated before surveying took place, it is assumed that the instrument used is both valid for content and reliable for what is being tested. Finally, couples will be willing to participate in the study by completing and returning the survey.

Limitations

Several limitations have been identified by the researcher, and these limitations should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results. First,

participants in this study may not be representative of couples both cross-regionally or cross-culturally due to geographic location, cultural bias, and/or other extraneous conditions. Second because of the time and monetary investment that accompanies a longitudinal study this study is cross-sectional in design and post hoc in nature, even though a longitudinal design would be more appropriate for this type of study. Third, maturation may have altered marital views, either positively or negatively. Fourth, there was minimal effort taken to validate the questionnaire before its application. The validation of the instrument was attempted after the data were collected. Finally, due to time and poor return rate, this study could only gather a small amount of participants, a factor that resulted in limited data available for analysis of the instrument's properties.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter the author reviewed the literature as it pertains to marriage and the intradyadic relationship triad. This review will address four key areas. First, what makes the study of marriage so important; second, why friendship should be studied as an aspect of high marital satisfaction; third, why the level of attachment to and/or independence from a partner should be studied as an aspect of high marital satisfaction; finally, why an individual's sexual fulfillment in a marital relationship should be studied as an aspect of high marital satisfaction.

Why Study Marriage?

In American society over the past one-hundred years, the institution of marriage has seen a dramatic and disturbing turnaround from the sacred 'till death do us part' into a cookie-cutter brand of throw-a-way relationship. "Marriage is an intrinsic part of our contemporary conception of a meaningful, rich life" (Flowers, 1998, p. 531). We all strive for our own brand of the "meaningful, rich life." How then has marriage continued to decay both in the startlingly high statistical numbers of divorces up until the present time, and the increasing ease at which a divorce can be obtained and yet, for most individuals, still remains one of life's all time goals?

Divorce and separation, in some cases, have come to symbolize the "escape hatch" that leads back to individual lives as if nothing ever happened.

Divorce devastates all who are involved including the divorcing couple, their children, parents, grandparents, friends, neighbors, and other relations. It is only logical to say, then, that the absence of marital quality affects everyone involved with the divorcing couple. Johnson and Booth in their 1998 study showed marital quality to have strong intra- and intergenerational effects. This indicates the importance of understanding the origins of marital quality.

It appears that in any divorce, whether simple or hard fought, the most harm inevitably falls on the children of the divorcing couple. “Adults (who have experienced divorce as children) report less satisfaction with family and friends, greater anxiety that bad things more frequently happen to them, and that they find it more difficult to cope with life’s stresses in general” (Gottman, 1998, p. 169). In addition, a 1996 study by Amato & Booth suggested that “divorce further eroded affection between fathers and children...(this) suggest(s) that the quality of the parents’ marriage has both direct and indirect long-term consequences for parent-child affection” (p. 356). The separating couple, as well, suffers from a sufficient amount of harm to both physical and mental health. Studies by Bloom, Asher, & White (1978); and Burman & Margolin (1992) state that:

We now know that separation and divorce have strong negative consequences for the mental and physical health of both spouses...including increased risk for psychopathology; increased rates of automobile accidents including fatalities; and increased risk of physical illness, suicide, violence, homicide, significant immunosuppression, and mortality from diseases. (p.877)

Psychological stressors only add to the hardships faced in the midst of divorce.

“It is well known that unhappily married people are more anxious, more distressed, less optimistic, and so on” (Gottman, 1998, p. 172).

Despite these physical, mental, and psychological stressors that weigh on couples during separation and divorce, the ever growing percentages of marital breakdowns, and the ripple effect divorce has on family and friends, successful marriage and high marital quality still seem to be the life long goal of most individuals. Marital quality has been shown to have important effects on two domains of life: divorce and life satisfaction. Research has also shown marital happiness to have an effect on global happiness (White & Booth, 1991) and subjective well being (Benin & Nienstedt, 1985). Low marital quality has been shown to have adverse effects on parent child relations both directly and through divorce (Amato & Booth, 1996). Marital satisfaction and high marital quality do not come easily; it takes work and considerable effort from both partners in order to be successful.

These skills cannot be successfully carried out in the absence of crucial character virtues such as self-restraint (maturation synchronicity), courage (self-consciousness), and friendship. Unmasking the reduction of the good in marriage to technical considerations shows that virtue (similar interpersonal values) is ... (a) central presupposition of these professionals' efforts. (Flowers, 1998, p. 516)

Communication is the hub of any relationship and especially a marital relationship. “There is a remarkable consensus among professionals and the

public that the key to marital stability is maintaining marital satisfaction, which is dependent on good communication” (Flowers, 1998, p.516). However, good communication between individuals, although essential in the marital dyad, is not the only thing that constitutes a meaningful satisfying relationship. Other dimensions like the friendship each spouse holds for the other, also contribute to the marital relationship and thus the overall satisfaction of the marriage.

This study therefore focuses on three distinct dimensions of the marital relationship that have had limited amount of study over the past twenty years. The aspects of friendship (Flowers, 1998; Cooper, 1980; Chatterjee, 1999); a balance between attachment and independence (Eckstein & Axford, 1999; Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Gottman, 1998); and individual sexual fulfillment (Flowers, 1998; Christopher & Sprecher, 2000; Edwards & Booth, 1994) are all seen as important in any marital relationship, but are yet unexamined as genuine aspects of high marital satisfaction.

Friendship

Friendship in any relationship is an essential part of the union of two people. It must be genuine, trustworthy, and reciprocal. “Marriage has a unique and powerful place in our society. It provides important experiences that are not available in other friendships because it is given a primacy in our lives that no other relationship has” (Flowers, 1998, p. 531). Without this deep friendship, the marital relationship is based solely on superficial conveniences, and each individual in the relationship will be doomed to either boredom with his/her partner or separation due to incompatibility or both.

The marital relationship still holds a high place above all other relationships in this society. “Marriage binds spouses together in a common life in a way unavailable in other relationships” (Flowers, 1998, p. 531). Even though marriage is still held in such high regard it is almost impossible to find anyone in this time that has not, at least somewhat, been touched by divorce. The ravages of divorce need not deter future successful marriages, but with such a history, individuals need to work harder on aspects like friendship in order to keep their vows sacred and secure for future hardships. A solid friendship with a partner, along with good communication skills, can get a couple through almost any difficulty.

Continually expressing one’s friendship for his/her partner can be seen as the maintenance part of the marital friendship formula. In order for this bond to transcend into a marital friendship, it is best to establish a firm foundation before entering into a marital partnership. “The better acquainted the spouses in a couple are before marriage, the higher the marital quality” (Larson & Holman, 1994, p. 236). However, with the increased divorce rates, it is now next to impossible to find two people who have not been touched by divorce in some fashion. “There is evidence...that adults who experience divorce as a child...report less satisfaction with family and friends, greater anxiety that bad things more frequently happen to them, and that they find it more difficult to cope with life’s stresses in general”(Gottman, 1998, p. 169). The difficulties that adult-children of divorce face when it comes to satisfaction with friends only emphasizes the need for this firm friendship base to be solidified well before marriage.

Marital friendship has been studied very infrequently over the last twenty years. In fact, many of the researchers interested in friendship pay little if any attention to the friendship involved within a marriage. Friendship research seems to be more devoted to the relationship that comes out of the various dating rituals in society and other aspects of friendship before marriage than the marital relationship itself. Perhaps one reason for this is that friendship in itself contains numerous interconnected parts that are very near impossible to sort out into simple 'X' and 'Y' variables and yet keep the concept of friendship distinct. Add to this confusion the marital dyad with its own peculiar quirks and what is left is a virtual jigsaw puzzle of scientific jargon and quandaries that no mere mortal can possibly sort out.

Until now, no author has offered a working definition of what friendship is, even though they proceeded to study it. Previously, friendship had been defined by what was visually apparent or by what outcomes each individual received because of the friendship. These types of definitions, though valuable, still lack an individualistic interior dimension that must be addressed. Because of this dimensional lack this author feels that any previous definitions fall short of any real, complete definition of friendship. In the current study the author is only looking at a small subsection of friendship, namely marital friendship, but will nonetheless attempt a working definition of this previously indefinable phenomenon.

Friendship (if only for the purpose of this study) is defined as the mutual exchange of life energies in a sufficient enough amount for the recipients to want

to reengage with the sender in order for the energy exchange to continue. In a marital friendship this energy exchange continues to the extent that when the energy is removed, or no longer given, both individuals' definitions of self include: the self, the energy (as if present), and the other individual all combined. It is in the definition, and amount of the other absorbed that problems may arise.

When an individual absorbs too much of the other, enmeshment may occur. When too little of the other is absorbed, disengagement may occur. Enmeshment and disengagement can also occur if the definition of the other includes ideas of possession (i.e. the other is "something" to "possess"). If the other is something to possess and the individual feels s/he can possess the other then enmeshment can occur. If the individual feels s/he cannot possess the other while still believing that the other is something to be possessed, disengagement may occur due to the individual feeling that the other may be possessed by a third party at any given time. This type of disengagement is used as a defense mechanism against the loss that may occur.

Sexual satisfaction cannot be seen within this definition because sexual satisfaction is an individualistic quality within each of the individuals within the marital dyad. Nevertheless, it is included within the intradyadic relationship triad because of the type and amount of energies exchanged during sexual activity. The same energies that are exchanged within the friendship are exchanged in sexual activity, the difference being the amount of energy exchanged. The amount of energy exchanged during sexual activity is a substantial amount compared to the level of energy exchanged during a friendship type exchange.

Even though other authors have yet to offer a suitable definition for friendship many have attempted to explain friendship within different modalities of thought. Murstein, Cerreto, & MacDonald (1977) explain friendship within an Exchange- Orientation as being on a continuum:

At one end of the continuum is what will be called the high exchange-oriented (E) individual. (This individual) may see love as a series of reciprocal exchanges and would feel badly if a person whom he loved did less for him than he believed he did for his beloved... What is important is that every positive or negative action by one individual should be met by a similarly weighted action by the recipient (p.543).

Opposite to the high exchange-oriented person is the nonexchange-oriented (NE) person. "For a nonexchange-oriented person to love another is to forgive his transgressions and to accept him unconditionally" (p.544). Because an NE person does not require any type of exchange, an NE type person may be either unaware of anything he does for others or is internally rewarded for his doings. "Since his own rewards are not very dependent on what others do for him, he may not be very disturbed by inequities of exchange" (p.544).

In the Murstein et al. (1977) study, it was hypothesized that E-oriented couples will have more difficult marital relationships than NE-oriented couples:

If each individual scrupulously adheres to the concept of equity of exchange and does his part, one might think that harmony should prevail... however, equity of exchange generally is evaluated by each individual member of the couple and is therefore a subjective

evaluation... This is because most individuals are quite sensitive to what they do for others, but somewhat less aware of what others do for them.

(p.543)

The Exchange-Oriented explanation of different intensities and kinds of friendships within a marital relationship is still only a small part of the whole friendship. Even when combined with the familiarity the couple has with each other before a marriage takes place a total picture of the marital friendship is not being seen.

Friendship is a huge topic to take on, and up until now it has been tackled by explanations that leave certain aspects floating in ambiguity. The Exchange-Oriented model doesn't seem to explain where this mentality of exchange comes from. This author would have a hard time believing that parents of an infant or even a young child would feel badly if their child did less for them than they believed they did for their child. If so, how could a child live up to such expectations? This would suggest then that parents with a normal sense of raising children would always have a nonexchange-orientation with their child(ren). Since most of early learning comes from observations children make of their parents, where does the exchange orientation come from?

The other difficulty this author has with the exchange orientation explanation of friendship is in the realm of marital dissolution. It stands to reason that two individuals will take time to get to know each other before entering into a marriage. However limited this time of courting may be, it is a time to examine the other person and how comfortable it is to be with him/her. The exchange

orientation of each individual must be shown in this courtship otherwise a friendship may never occur. Why then would two people with differing orientations even entertain the thought of marriage? Alternatively, why would dissolution occur if each partner in a marriage has the same, or near same orientation. In this marriage each is gaining and receiving exactly what they want.

As in the definition given of friendship, marital friendship has only one element that other friendships do not, a redefining of the individual. Since the sample only includes married couples it is only marital friendship that is looked at, but friendship (according to the given definition) doesn't change with marriage only the definition of the 'self' changes. Friendship, especially a marital friendship is like a great work of art, it can be analyzed for its color or chemical content, and even broken down to each individual brush stroke. But, as like art, friendship must be seen as a whole in order to be seen at all.

Attachment vs. Independence

It is only natural for a young couple to appear as if they share one life. Within most Christian societies, marriage vows state that, "the two shall become as one". This kind of attachment, if carried out in the relationship for an extended amount of time, can become a strain on the individualistic characteristics of each partner. Eckstein & Axford (1999) noted that young children and adolescents need to learn a healthy balance between attachment and independence. They say that when couples feel both independent from and attached to their partner, they appear to be happiest.

Several theoretical bases have been used by numerous researchers to explain the concept of a balance between attachment and independence in the marital dyad. One of the most prominent of these theories is Bowlby's Attachment theory. Guided by Bowlby's attachment theory Ainsworth (1985) noted that:

Adults who possess a secure attachment style tend to develop mental models of themselves as being valued and worthy of others' concern, support, and affection. Significant others are described as being accessible, reliable, trustworthy and well intentioned. Secure individuals report that they develop closeness with others easily, feel comfortable depending on others and having others depend on them, and rarely are concerned about being abandoned or others becoming extremely close to them. Their romantic relationships, in turn, tend to be characterized by more frequent positive affect, by higher levels of trust, commitment, satisfaction and interdependence, and by happy, positive, and trusting styles of love. (p. 793)

According to Ainsworth, adults who hold an ambivalent or attached style, tend to possess mental models of themselves as misunderstood or under-appreciated. They report that others seem to be reluctant to get as close as they would prefer, frequently worry that their significant others do not truthfully love them or will abandon them the first chance they get. These beliefs along with others such as, that partners are undependable and are unwilling to commit, force

these adults to over-commit (i.e. become too attached) in order to counterbalance the views that are held of their partners.

Conversely, adults who hold an avoidant or detached style tend to possess mental models of themselves as being aloof, emotionally distant, and skeptical. They report that others seem to be overly eager to make long-term commitments to relationships and/or are just unreliable. The feelings of being uncomfortable when close and difficulty trusting and depending on others, forces these adults to push away and become disengaged from significant others in order to relieve the tensions of the uncomfortable feelings.

In essence:

Attachment can be adequately represented in terms of two underlying dimensions. These dimensions reflect the degree to which an individual feels uncomfortable in close romantic relationships (discomfort with closeness) and the degree to which he or she fears abandonment from romantic partners (anxiety over abandonment). High discomfort with closeness involves a belief that attachment figures are untrustworthy and cannot be relied upon to provide assistance in times of need. In contrast, high anxiety over abandonment involves a belief that one is 'unlovable' and unworthy of help from attachment figures in time of need. (Roberts & Nolles, 1998, p. 121)

This modality of thinking puts a lot of emphasis on how one thinks of his/her partner. Although there is some truth to the idea that humans must categorize entities outside of themselves in order to realize a consistency within

the world, nevertheless the way in which this organization occurs starts within the self. This is touched upon within Bowlby's theory, but is either not extended to its full length or not given the importance it so rightly deserves.

A belief that one is unlovable by others probably will result in abandonment issues for the individual, but what of the individual who has never learned how to be comfortable alone. This person probably will have abandonment issues also but, in this context, does not hold the negative self-view of 'I am unlovable'; this person would hold a view more closely to that of 'I am nothing if I am alone'. Each of these individuals will possibly be too attached to his/her partners, but it has little to do with how they categorize their partner and everything to do with what's going within themselves.

A 1999 study by Eckstein & Leventhal used the analogy of a 'three-legged sack race' to illustrate the importance of a balance in the level of attachment and independence in a marital relationship. Using theoretical bases of family systems they too state that there are two types of imbalances that can occur; "one is the concept of too much dependence (no individuation), the other extreme imbalance is independence (no contact)" (p. 400). Within the analogy a couple that maintains this balance has their inside legs inside the sack and their outside legs free. When there is no individuation then all four legs are inside the sack, and when there is far too much independence all four legs are out side the sack.

This analogy of the three-legged sack race was used to describe these theoretical concepts in laymen's terms for the Eckstein & Leventhal experiment. The author seeks to add to this already useful analogy and say that instead of

looking at three distinct levels of attachment, for the purposes of this study we will be looking at an attachment continuum that is curvilinear in nature. The three extremes of attachment, independence, and balanced would fall to the far right, left, and top respectfully.

Gottman, in a third theoretical basis, in his 1998 review of the Bank Account Model (BAM) which assessed the seven negative patterns in ailing marriages, suggests that “...the amount of cognitive room that couples allocate for the relationship and their spouse’s world,” soothes each individual and aids in problem resolution (p. 182). Problem resolution is one of many areas of a relationship that can be fixed in a less stressful state when a balance between attachment and independence is maintained within the relationship.

Levels of attachment in the marital dyad are extremely important areas of research because of the tendency for insecure attachments to lead to marital violence. “Discomfort with closeness is primarily associated with a lack of emotional involvement in relationships and a strong tendency to deny negative affect (Eckstein & Leventhal, 1999, p.408). Future research may be interested in looking at the trends of violence in marriage as it correlates with the levels of attachment between married individuals.

Sexual Fulfillment

Sexual fulfillment in the study of the marital dyad, seem to be the ‘lost child’ of the marital world, although, “the science of interpersonal relationships is one of the most rapidly growing areas in (the) behavioral sciences,” (Berscheid &

Reis, 1998 p.197). One of the reasons for the apparent neglect from scientists of the area of marital sexuality and sexual fulfillment is that:

The most socially approved context for sexual activity is the marital relationship. Because sex and marriage are legally and morally linked, marital sex is generally not viewed as a social problem or as a phenomenon likely to lead to negative outcomes. As a result marital sex has not been the central focus of much research in the past decade.

(Christopher & Sprecher, 2000, p.1000)

But, as stated before, a search for an understanding of the healthy must precede an understanding of the diseased.

Most research that has attempted to study this subject either end up glossing over the sexuality by relabeling it as intimacy, or these researchers just do not have a workable definition of the terms intimacy or sexuality. Intimacy, although it includes aspects of sexuality, includes other dimensions that should not be included in a discussion of sexual fulfillment. In this study these other dimensions of intimacy have been extracted and given the label of friendship, leaving sexual fulfillment as the individual's contentness with the amount of sexual energies given to them by their partner.

Flowers, in his 1998 paper, discussed marriage as a privileged relationship, which "provides important experiences that are not available in other friendships because it is given a primacy in our lives that no other relationship has," (p. 531). Moreover, "Sexuality... is sanctioned in marriage; it is often explored in dating; and it is an intricate part of (the) committed romantic

relationship,” (Christopher & Sprecher, 2000, p.1000). These important experiences, seemingly, can only be enjoyed when a couple has promised a bond of commitment to each other. Alternately, Eckstein and Axford in their 1999 study stated that an essential aspect of bonding with a partner is establishing a commitment with one another (p. 188). Truly, many theorists who focus on lifetime orientations and goals include intimacy as part of a meaningful and successful life.

When discussing a couple’s sexuality and individual sexual fulfillment, it is essential that a strong bond (sexually emotional bond) be formed between the couple in order that their relationship remain mutual in these regards. Sexual bonding in a marital relationship too often goes undiscussed. The realm of sexuality in marriage is thought to be mutually understood by both partners. Yet generally it remains as much a faux pas inside the relationship as it does in the society at large. Individuals are “torn between love as an expression of spontaneous inner freedom, a deeply personal, but necessary, somewhat arbitrary choice, and the image of love as a firmly planted, permanent commitment” (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985, p. 93).

Lowenthal and Haven in their 1968 study of interaction and adoption in later stages of life found that “the happiest and healthiest among them (older individuals) often seemed to be the people who were, or had been, involved in one or more close relationships” (p. 20). Indeed most “average men and women find energy and motivation to live autonomous, self-generating and satisfying lives only through the presence of one or more mutually supportive and intimate dyadic

relationships” (Schaefer & Olson, 1977, p. 6). It is the intimacy involved in these dyadic relationships which fuels each individual to strive for the life they seek.

In a meta-analysis/review concerning sexuality during the last decade, Christopher & Sprecher express many findings that have come out of the research of this topic. They state that although the literature finds 88% of married individuals are very physically pleased in their relationships, many couples that are or become sexually dissatisfied may not be involved in these studies due to early divorce. “Less consistent information is available on how sexual satisfaction might change with marital duration or age,” (Christopher & Sprecher, 2000, p.1007). The factor of age is considered in the present study, although the author looks at age in a cross sectional way rather than a longitudinal way which might be more revealing.

Surprisingly Christopher & Sprecher found a negative relationship to household income and sexual satisfaction for women, the speculation being that a higher income might represent a two party income (i.e. both husband and wife working outside the home). Christopher & Sprecher go on to say that after controlling for age there was no association between the wife working and sexual satisfaction. The current study has not taken socioeconomic status into consideration, but is looking at a broad view of employment.

Sexuality in a marriage is used, among other things, as a symbol of the commitment that each partner gives to each other with their vows. This commitment is the strengthening agent that holds the marriage together. “Without commitment, it would be pointless to get to know one another better or

communicate about relationship problems” (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985, p. 527).

Edwards and Booth in their 1994 study showed a negative relationship between divorce and sexual satisfaction. Greeley echoes this point in his book Faithful Attractions: Discovering intimacy, love, and fidelity in American marriage by stating that the more important predictor of marital satisfaction is sexual satisfaction or other feelings about sex. Communicating one’s wants to his/her partner can satisfy these other feelings. Sexual satisfaction starts by being open to these feelings then voicing what one wants as they pertain to the feelings, when done reciprocally between the couple, increased satisfaction will inevitably follow.

Good communication skills are a dynamic part of any relationship. Ever fluid and in need of constant maintenance, these skills are used in all aspects of a marriage. Communication between each individual about sexuality and the preferred level of sexual fulfillment each has in the relationship should be the cornerstone of any sexual relationship, marital or otherwise. Without the communication aspect not even a weak friendship can be maintained let alone a marital relationship. The sexual bond that is formed from a strong friendship and proper levels of involvement are all interconnected and the focus of this study.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter describes the subjects under study and how they were selected for inclusion in the study. In addition, the instrument being used to collect information will be discussed as to its content, validity, and reliability. Data collection and analysis procedures are then presented. The chapter concludes with some of the methodology limitations.

Description of Subjects

The subjects for this study were all heterosexual couples, legally bound by the state of marriage as husband and wife. No homosexual couples were included in the sample. Groups were defined by differences in demographics including: gender, age, number of years married, and employment.

Sample Selection

Four hundred thirteen couples were selected via a systematic random sampling method. All residents were selected as per their double occupancy listing in the 2000-2001 Ameritech phone book for Watertown and accompanying communities. Every 11th (K=11) listing of double occupancy was selected and mailed a survey. Any selected listing whose address could not be determined by the listing was rejected and replaced by the following listing. Addresses were verified and cross-referenced by using the Microsoft Expedia Streets & Trips 2000© software program. Twenty-five subjects were acquired in this manner.

Three couples were selected using a snowball sampling technique. This technique required lists of participants (five or more per list) gathered from local sources. Two such lists were received. The participants listed were then telephoned as inquiry to their willingness to participate in the study. Both spouses were asked about their willingness to participate. The willing participants were then asked to identify three to five more couples that might be willing participants. In this way randomization was sustained. Six subjects were acquired in this manner.

Twenty-one couples were selected via a nonrandom sampling technique, which was then used due to unsatisfactory subject pool size. Various subjects were chosen from the community of Menomonie with help from local sources. Ten subjects were acquired in this manner.

Instrumentation

Since the instrument was designed specifically for this study, reliability measures could not be determined before testing. Because of poor return rate no measures of validity could be determined. Three independent variables (friendship, attachment/independence, and sexual fulfillment) were studied. The dependent variable is overall marital satisfaction. Questions about participants' gender, age, years married, employment status, nationality, and academic achievement were included. The question about one's nationality was answered predominantly "USA" and was thusly discarded from the analysis.

The instrument entitled the Multiphasic Assessment of Spousal Satisfaction (MASS) was designed after the Personal Assessment of Intimacy in

Relationships (PAIR) by Schaefer & Olson (1997). Although none of the questions used were directly from the PAIR, the wording of certain questions and the overall structures of both instruments are similar. The PAIR's focus is intimacy in the marital relationship, whereas the MASS separates this into two distinct categories: friendship and sexual fulfillment. The MASS also focuses on the levels of attachment and independence of each individual within the marital dyad. The MASS instrument can be seen in Figure III in the appendix on page 65.

Each selected couple would receive, by mail, a questionnaire packet. Each packet contained a cover letter, directions on how to fill out the questionnaire, and two copies of the MASS instrument. The cover letter explained the nature of the study, participants' rights, and contained explanatory statements of participants' confidentiality/anonymity. Each couple was directed to fill out half of the packet (i.e. one complete MASS instrument), stop when instructed, and then have their spouse complete the opposite half of the packet if s/he had not done so. After the packet was completed the couple was given the option to review their answers with their spouse, but were not to change any of the answers. The packet was then mailed back to this researcher. Each completed packet generated two subjects.

The MASS is separated into two parts; the first assesses the overall satisfaction of the marital relationship and the satisfaction of the intradyadic relationship triad (i.e. the couple's satisfaction with the levels of friendship, enmeshment/disengagement, and sexual fulfillment within their marriage). This first part represents the first five questions. The remainder of the questionnaire assesses the levels of each aspect of the intradyadic relationship triad. When

correlated the levels of friendship and sexual fulfillment should indicate the amount of marital satisfaction each individual has in a positive direction, the level of enmeshment/disengagement should indicate the amount of marital satisfaction each individual has in a curvilinear relationship.

Data Collection

Data were collected using a mail out questionnaire, a snowball sampling technique, and a nonrandom sampling technique. Written instructions as to how to fill out the questionnaire, as well as a cover letter containing information on informed consent, risks, and confidentiality, were supplied within the questionnaire. Responses were coded onto a spreadsheet using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows© 4.0. Item responses were either coded as reported by the respondent or reverse coded to account for negative response choices, based on the content of the items.

Data Analysis

The statistics used in analyzing the data involved correlations of each derived scale and means and standard deviation for each demographic item, as well as for each derived scale. Scales were derived by rationally combining same items based on face validity for initial exploratory analysis. Once the scales were derived, cross correlations were computed to examine the relationship between the scales. Additionally, a comparison of means across the scales was computed for gender, amount of time married, age of each subject, employment status, and academic achievement.

Seven new scales were derived from the collected data. Each of the three variables (i.e. friendship, level of involvement, and sexual fulfillment) under study is represented by two of the new derived scales. These variables accompanied by their respective derived scales are as followed:

- Friendship
 - Relationship scale
 - Compromise scale
- Level of involvement
 - Independence scale
 - Attachment scale
- Sexual fulfillment
 - Sexuality scale
 - Frequency of sexual activity

The final derived scale, the Satisfaction index, is calculated by summing up the answers to the first five questions from the questionnaire. The first four questions are a global assessment of each individual's satisfaction on all of the studied variables. The final question asks each individual about his or her total satisfaction of the marriage.

Differences between gender, age, amount of time married, and academic achievement were analyzed by individual t-tests. These tests were used as both an exploratory analysis and for error detection. It is assumed that there should be no difference in marital satisfaction between genders thus the t-test analysis can be used as an error detection in this way.

Limitations

The researcher has identified several methodological limitations, and these limitations should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results. First, validity on the instrument was not determined beyond face validity. Second, factor analysis was not possible because of the low number of subjects. Third, scales were derived by rationally combining same items based on face validity for initial exploratory analysis. Finally, because of the low number of questionnaires returned and the non-randomness of the sample psychometric properties (i.e. scale properties, underlying factor structure, etc.) cannot be identified or produced accurately. Further data needs to be collected to determine further usability of the MASS instrument.

CHAPTER IV

Results

Introduction

This chapter will present the results of the Multiphasic Assessment of Spousal Satisfaction (MASS). The demographic information and descriptive statistics will be reported first. Data collected on each of the research questions will then be given.

Multiphasic Assessment of Spousal Satisfaction

A total of 437 questionnaire packets were utilized for this study. A total of 413 questionnaire packets were mailed; 13 questionnaires packets were returned. The percentage of returns for this sampling technique was extremely low yielding a return rate of 3.1%. Of the 13 questionnaire packets returned one was filled out by only one spouse yielding one subject on this questionnaire. This sampling technique yielded an N=25¹.

Additional sampling techniques needed to be utilized because of this low return rate. A snowball sampling technique was then used. A total of three questionnaire packets were mailed to willing participants. All three questionnaire packets were returned. This sampling technique yielded an N=6.

Additional questionnaire packets were dispersed non-randomly. A total of 21 questionnaire packets were given to individuals in the Menomonie area; five questionnaire packets were returned. The percentage of returns for this sampling

¹ One questionnaire packet yields two subjects.

technique was good, yielding a return rate of 23.8%. This sampling technique yielded an N=10. All questionnaire packets that were returned were used in the analysis of data. Each questionnaire packet completely filled out would yield two subjects. The number of responses from couples by sampling techniques can be seen in Table I.

Table I. Number of responses from couples under study by sampling technique.

	Sent	Returned	Percentage
Mail out questionnaire packet	413	13	3.1%
Snowball technique	3	3	100%
Nonrandom sample	21	5	23.8%
Total	437	21	4.8%
Number of Subjects	874	41*	4.7%

* One questionnaire packet was filled out by only one spouse yielding one subject on this questionnaire.

Demographic Information

The demographic section was placed in the first part of the MASS instrument. These questions obtained personal information including: 1) gender 2) age 3) number of years married 4) employment status 5) nationality and 6) academic achievement. The question about one's nationality was answered predominantly "USA" and was thusly discarded from the analysis. The sample for this study consisted of 97.6% (N=40) 'traditional' couples (i.e. two gender

couples) and 2.4% (N=1) unknown couples (i.e. only half the questionnaire was complete). ‘Non-traditional’ couples (i.e. single gender couples) were not surveyed in this sample. These demographics are demonstrated as t-tests for equality of means and can be seen in Table II.

Table II. T-tests for equality of means

	Gender	Age	Years Married	Education
Satisfaction Index	r= .55 p= .58	r= .10 p= .92	r= .05 p= .96	r= -.07 p= .94
Relationship scale	r= -.57 p= .56	r= 1.2 p= .22	r= .42 p= .67	r= .81 p= .42
Compromise scale	r= -.61 p= .54	r= -.48 p= .63	r= .33 p= .74	r= -3.0** p= .005
Attachment scale	r= -.20 p= .84	r= .39 p= .69	r= 1.7 p= .09	r= .96 p= .34
Independence scale	r= -.17 p= .86	r= -.31 p= -.41	r= .12 p= .91	r= -.67 p= .51
Sexuality scale	r= -.66 p= .51	r= 3.5** p= .001	r= 1.3 p= .19	r= .82 p= .41
Frequency of Sex	r= 2.2* p= .03	r= 1.4 p= .17	r= .46 p= .64	r= -.86 p= .40

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Ages of the participants ranged from 25 to 77 years old with a mean age of 42 and standard deviation of 12.5. Descriptive statistics for age and number of years married can be seen in Table III.

Table III. Descriptive statistics for age and number of years married.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	41	25	77	41.8	12.6
Years married to current spouse	41	3	52	15.5	12.4

Ages of participants consisted of 22% (N=9) 25-31 years old, 39% (N=16) 32-41 years old, 24% (N=10) 42-51 years old, 15% (N=6) 52 years and over. These data can be seen in Table IV.

Table IV. Summary of survey sample by age.

Age	Number	Percent
25-31 years old	9	22%
32-41 years old	16	39%
42-51 years old	10	24%
52 years and over	6	15%
Total	41	100%

Number of years married ranged from 3 to 52 years with a mean of 15.5 years and standard deviation of 12 years. The number of years married consisted of 49% (N=20) 1-10 years, 24% (N=10) 11-20 years, 10% (N=4) 21-30 years, 10% (N=4) 31-40 years, 7% (N=3) 40 years and over. These data can be seen in Table V.

Table V. Summary of survey sample by years married.

Years married	Number	Percent
1-10 years	20	49%
11-20 years	10	24%
21-30 years	4	10%
31-40 years	4	10%
40 years and over	3	7%
Total	41	100%

Employment demographics for this study consisted of 85% (N=35) employed participants and 15% (N=6) unemployed participants. The levels of academic achievement included in this sample were; 39% (N=16) obtained a high school diploma, GED, or less; 15% (N=6) obtained technical (trade) school training, 34% (N=14) obtained a four year college (baccalaureate) diploma or certificate, 12% (n=5) obtained a graduate school degree or certificate, and no one in this sample received a Doctorial degree, or certificate. These data can be seen in Table VI.

Table VI. Summary of survey sample by academic achievement.

Academic Achievement	Number	Percent
High School diploma or GED	16	39%
Technical (trade) School	6	15%
Baccalaureate degree	14	34%
Graduate School degree	5	12%
Doctoral degree	0	0%
Total	41	100%

Research Question 1

Question 1: Does a couple's friendship for each other influence their marital satisfaction? The variable of Friendship was separated into two scales for analysis, these scales were renamed the Relationship scale and the Compromise scale. Table VII presents a correlation matrix demonstrating the relationship between the Relationship scale and the Compromise scale as they relate to the Satisfaction index.

As seen on the table, the correlation between an individual's satisfaction ratings of their marital relationship, as denoted by the Satisfaction index, and their score on the Relationship scale was +0.48 ($p < .01$). This relationship, though mild, is statistically significant. The correlation between an individual's ratings of their relationship, as denoted by the Satisfaction index, and their score on the Compromise scale was -0.23 ($p > .05$). There is a non-significant negative relationship between these two variables.

Table VII Correlations of the Relationship scale and the Compromise scale as they relate to the Satisfaction index

	Relationship Scale	Compromise Scale
Satisfaction Index	r= .483** p= .002	r= -.233 p= .147

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Research Question 2

Question 2: Does a couple's level of attachment for or independence from each other influence their marital satisfaction? The variables of Independence and Attachment were renamed the Independence scale and the Attachment scale respectively for this analysis. Table VIII presents a correlation matrix demonstrating the relationship between the Independence scale and the Attachment Compromise scale as they relate to the Satisfaction index.

As seen on the table, the correlation between an individual's satisfaction ratings of their marital relationship, as denoted by the Satisfaction index, and their score on the Independence scale was -0.20 ($p > .05$). There is a small negative relationship. The correlation between an individual's ratings of their relationship, as denoted by the Satisfaction index, and their score on the Attachment scale was +0.36 ($p < .05$). There is a mild positive relationship between these two variables.

Table VIII Correlations of the Independence scale and the Attachment scale as they relate to the Satisfaction index

	Independence Scale	Attachment Scale
Satisfaction Index	r= -.203 p= .209	r= .359* p= .023

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Research Question 3

Question 3: Does a couple's level of individual sexual fulfillment influence his/her marital satisfaction? The variable of Sexual Satisfaction was separated into two scales for analysis, these scales were renamed the Sexuality scale and the Frequency of Sex scale. Table IX presents a correlation matrix demonstrating the relationship between the Sexual Satisfaction scale and the Frequency of Sex scale as they relate to the Satisfaction index.

As seen on the table, the correlation between an individual's satisfaction ratings of their marital relationship, as denoted by the Satisfaction index, and their score on the Sexuality scale was +0.22 ($p > .05$). There is a small positive relationship between these two variables. The correlation between an individual's ratings of their relationship, as denoted by the Satisfaction index, and their score on the

Table IX Correlations of the Sexual Satisfaction scale and the Frequency of Sex scale as they relate to the Satisfaction index

	Sexual Satisfaction	Frequency of Sex
Satisfaction Index	r= .222 p= .180	r= .276 p= .064

Frequency of Sex scale was +0.28 ($p > .05$). The relationship between these two variables approaches significance in a positive direction.

Research Question 4

Question 4: To what degree do these items together influence marital satisfaction? Table X presents a correlation matrix demonstrating the relationship between the Satisfaction index and the other six derived scales.

Significant differences can be seen on the table between the Attachment scale, +0.36 ($p < .05$), and the Relationship scale, +0.48 ($p < .01$), both these have mild relationships to the Satisfaction index. All other correlations have little if any relationship between them ($p > .05$).

Research Question 5

Question 5: How do these items interact with each other? Table XI presents a correlation matrix demonstrating the relationships between the six derived scales. Significant differences can be seen on the table between the Relationship scale and the scales of Independence, -.54 ($p < .001$), which is a

Table X Correlation matrix demonstrating the relationship between the Satisfaction index and the other six derived scales

	Relationship Scale	Compromise Scale	Independence Scale	Attachment Scale
Satisfaction Index	$r = .483^{**}$ $p = .002$	$r = -.233$ $p = .147$	$r = -.203$ $p = .209$	$r = .359^{*}$ $p = .023$

	Sexuality Scale	Frequency of Sex Scale
Satisfaction Index	$r = .222$ $p = .180$	$r = .276$ $p = .094$

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

moderate negative relationship; Attachment, $+ .56$ ($p < .001$), which is moderate positive relationship; and Sexuality, $+ .51$ ($p < .001$), which is also a moderate positive relationship. Significant differences can also be seen between the Sexuality scale and the Compromise scale, $- .41$ ($p < .05$), this is a mild negative relationship. The final significant difference was used as an accuracy check for the scales. A significant difference was found between the Independence scale and the Attachment scale $- .56$ ($p < .001$), this is a moderate negative relationship as it should be. All other correlations have little if any relationship between them ($p > .05$).

Table XI Intercorrelations between the six derived scales.

Compromise	Independence	Attachment	Sexuality	Frequency of Sex	
r= -.236 p= .137	r= -.546** p= .000	r= .558** p= .000	r= .507** p= .001	r= .149 p= .366	Relationship
	r= .043 p= .791	r= -.154 p= .337	r= -.405* p= .010	r= -.100 p= .544	Compromise
		r= -.563** p= .000	r= -.196 p= .231	r= -.231 p= .157	Independence
			r= .113 p= .494	r= -.021 p= .900	Attachment
				r= .193 p= .251	Sexuality

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

CHAPTER V

Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter will include a discussion of the results of the study and conclusions. The discussion and conclusions of this study are presented according to the results found regarding the Satisfaction index, then concerning the seven derived scales, and finally about demographic findings. The chapter will conclude with some recommendations for further research.

Discussion & Conclusions

The results of this study indicated that couples were most satisfied with their marriage when there was a greater sense of friendship between each individual within the couple. This finding seems to be a very reasonable and sound idea. Every relationship whether marital or otherwise needs a firm foundation on which to build. This study seems to suggest that the foundation of a healthy, nourishing marital relationship is the friendship each spouse holds for the other. All non-significant trends may be due to the non-randomness of the sample and/or to the limited sample size.

The Relationship scale mildly correlated with the satisfaction index in a positive direction. This correlation seems reasonable and tends to suggest that a stronger relationship between individuals in the couple will increase marital satisfaction. The Compromise scale tended to negatively influence the satisfaction index, though not to a significant level. This negative trend may be due to the

non-randomness of the sample and/or to the limited sample size. However, the trend may demonstrate that satisfied couples have little need to compromise within their relationship because these couples are compromising less and collaborating with each other more.

The study also indicated that when couples have a higher sense of attachment for each other then their marriage was more satisfying. This is contrary to both this author's hypothesis of a curvilinear relationship between attachment and independence, as well as, Eckstein & Axford's (1999) view where couples appear to be happiest when they feel both independent from and attached to their partner. This study also suggested that there is a negative correlation between marital satisfaction and independence, but this correlation was not significant.

Independence and attachment within a marital relationship could be viewed as if on a continuum with totalities on either side. The negative relationship of independence when correlated to the satisfaction index may be due to skewness toward attachment when looking at a marital relationship. According to this and other researchers a balance between independence and attachment has been seen as optimum. According to these data, within a marital bond, a more attached relationship is more favorable. This negative trend may also be due to the non-randomness of the sample and/or to the limited sample size.

The couple's relationship seemed to suffer when there was more independence accepted within the marriage. This is seen with a significant correlation in the negative direction between the Independence and Relationship

scale. This seems very commonsensical in part. If there is far too much space allowed for married individuals (i.e. too much independence) a sense of togetherness (i.e. marriage relationship) is harder to sustain. However, the negative correlation was so high ($p < .0001$) that it raises a question of ratio between independence and attachment. Clearly it should not be a balance between these two. The amount of attachment one is most satisfied with as opposed to the amount of independence one is allotted may need further study. Validation of this scale to understand exactly what is being measured (i.e. compromise or something similar like collaboration) seems warranted due to the nature of these results.

Attachment tended to be positively correlated with the Sexuality scale and independence was negatively correlated with both the Sexuality scale and the Frequency of Sex scales, though correlations were not significant. One could infer, by these data, that the closer partners feel toward each other within the relationship the more comfortable and satisfied they feel sexually toward each other. Both the Sexuality scale and the Frequency of Sex scale were positively correlated with the satisfaction index though not significant. Because these scales were both positively correlated, it may be suggested that sex within a marital relationship is seen as important though not one of the most important aspects in marriage. This may be why a decrease in sex and sexual activity are the first signs of marital discord.

The Sexuality scale was also highly positively correlated with the Relationship scale. This supports Christopher & Sprecher's view of sexuality when they state that, "Sexuality is an intricate part of (the) committed romantic

relationship,” (p.1000). Yet, the Sexuality scale was also negatively correlated with the Compromise scale. This correlation seems to coincide with this author’s hypothesis that generally this subject remains as much a faux pas inside the relationship as it does in the society at large. As Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton suggest, couples are “torn between love as an expression of spontaneous inner freedom, a deeply personal, but necessary, somewhat arbitrary choice, and the image of love as a firmly planted, permanent commitment” (p. 93). A second explanation for this negative trend may be that satisfied couples will not compromise their wants when it comes to sexual expression. If both individuals within a couple verbalize their sexual wants, then compromise may be unnecessary because one is getting what one wants or at least has a better understanding of what the other’s comfort level is.

The Frequency of Sex scale tended to be positively correlated to the Relationship scale though not to a significant level. From this it might stand to reason that if a couple has good relations with each other, then sexual expression and activity would be more frequent. However, frequency of sex does not necessarily reflect a more intimate relationship. For this, it would make sense to look at the quality of interaction as reflected in the sexuality subscale. Yet here, the Frequency of Sex scale again tended to be positively, yet non-significantly correlated with the Sexuality scale. This non-significant correlation may be due to the definitions of these two scales. Once again, the Frequency of Sex scale only addresses how often sexual activity occurs, whereas the Sexuality scale looked at how couples were intimate with each other and their comfort level with that

intimacy. Clearly, further study of these variables is needed as are further refinements in the scales used.

The Compromise scale tended to be negatively correlated with all of the other derived scales (all except the Independence scale), though only the Sexuality scale showed significance. The Compromise scale contained questions that asked individuals how much they agreed that give and take situations were permissible within their marriage. Within a compromise both individuals lose something in order to gain something. One explanation could be that this negative trend may reflect a no-lose mentality within this sample. In this view couples have tended toward collaboration as opposed to compromise or else individual gains come in such different forms and at such different times that it is not seen as compromise. This delayed gratification type of compromise and/or collaboration will need further study.

The Relationship scale of the friendship variable was highly correlated with all other scales except the Frequency of Sex scale and the Compromise scale. This outcome may suggest two things about these scales. Either the frequency of sexual activity and/or the compromising abilities of each spouse has little if anything to do with friendship in a marital relationship or that these are poor scales that need to be investigated further before making any assumptions based on them. The fact that the Relationship scale was so highly predictive of the other scales suggests that a couple's friendship plays a lot into other aspects within the marriage.

Most of the demographic information when examined with t-tests for equality of means according to the seven derived scores showed little if any significance or variation. This may be due to the non-randomness of the sample and/or to the limited sample size. However, in the few instances that statistical significance was found results could have some interesting interpretations.

A significant difference was found between male and female subjects as they pertain to the Frequency of Sex scale. Female subjects reported engaging in sexual activity more often than male subjects reported this. There may be several possibilities for this phenomenon. First, the scoring device for this scale may not have been clear enough for an accurate portrayal of how often sexual activity occurs. Second, females may have scored these questions differently than males because of societal pressures placed upon men about what a married man's sex lives should be. The lack of this pressure on females may have influenced this difference. Third, females may pay more attention to the frequency in which sexual activity occurs. Nevertheless since there seems to be a significant difference between these two groups further investigation may be warranted.

A t-test of the Compromising scale as it pertains to the education level of each individual showed a significant variation in overall mean scores. According to this data, an individual will be less likely to compromise with his/her spouse if s/he has a higher education level. This finding may be consistent with finding of the Compromise scale in other parts of this data analysis. This may mean that higher educated couples have an easier time collaborating with each other as

opposed to compromising their wants. These collaboration skills of higher educated couples will need further investigation.

Significant differences were found when looking at the age of each individual and the Sexuality scale. It seems that the older the individual the higher they scored on this scale. Older individuals may find it easier to be comfortable with their spouse when being sexual as opposed to younger individuals. Also, older individuals would probably have been married longer than younger individuals and have had more time to get comfortable with their spouse. When combined with the approaching significance the t-test between the number of years married, and the attachment scale shows this finding is understandable.

It seems that the longer a couple is married the more attached they seem to be with each other. A t-test looking at the number of years married and the attachment scale shows a correlation that approaches significance. This seems reasonable because if a couple didn't feel this attachment for each other there would be little reason to stay together. The reason this trend didn't reach a significant level may be due to the wide variability between the each couple. Using a larger sample size could easily compensate for this variability.

Males and females, according the Sexuality scale, were found to have no significant differences; in fact their mean scores were almost identical (male mean = 31.7, female mean = 31.0). This non-difference between males and females on this scale goes against a societal belief that males tend to be less sexually satisfied within a marital context than females tend to be. The results of this study clearly show that males and females have no difference in their sexual satisfaction within

a marriage. This study also shows that the couples in this sample were highly satisfied sexually (maximum score = 37).

Recommendations

Several suggestions are offered for further research on the variables of friendship, level of involvement, and sexual satisfaction. Other suggestions for research involving the other five dimensions of marriage are also discussed. These suggestions are both within and outside the scope of this researchers future study.

Replication of this study utilizing a larger sample could enhance the results for greater generalization. After validation of the instrument, same sex couples should be studied separately from opposite sex couples. A comparison between same sex couples and opposite sex couples could then be examined for their similarities and differences. Looking for these similarities and differences from same and opposite sex couples on the MASS instrument could shed some light on predominant therapeutic problems that these groups tend to have.

Further study could be done to find out what range of independence would be acceptable in a marriage before it would compromise the friendship of the couple. Independence still seems to be a part of the marital equation but just how much is still undecided. Stereotypes about male and female sexuality within a marital context also need further research. Although these stereotypes are not keeping people from marrying, they may create false concepts, which may undermine a marriage right from the beginning.

Each of the eight aspects of marriage suggested in this study could be looked at separately and then together. In this way factor analysis could be

performed. The three aspects of marriage chosen for this thesis need to be further researched to understand whether their predictive value is greater than other combinations or any one marital aspect alone. Of the eight aspects of marriage suggested in this study different combinations of the eight together could be looked at for higher predictability of marital satisfaction. Moreover, studies need to be made to see how the eight aspects of marriage, suggested in this study, (either alone or in combination with each other) effect biopsychosocial health.

Depression or other psychological disorders can be investigated pertaining to marital satisfaction, as well as the use of alcohol, other drugs of abuse, and other addictive behaviors as they pertain to satisfaction. Does marital satisfaction have any effect on the aging process or how we age? The type of religion or how religion effects marital satisfaction within individuals in the marriage could also be explored. Future research may also be interested in looking at trends in violence and how it correlates with levels of attachment between spouses.

The definition provided in this study for marital friendship, as well as definitions for the levels of attachment and sexual satisfaction, will need to be discussed and tested for plausibility. Divorce statistics, as well, need to be reviewed from a viewpoint of why people are divorcing and not merely how many divorces are occurring. Questions that need to be addressed from this standpoint could be:

- a) Are the same people getting divorced a number of times for the same reasons?

- b) How have these reasons changed or been eliminated in a subsequent successful marriage?
- c) Why are people who have chosen not to remarry not taking a second chance at the privilege of this institution?

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16) It is all right when my spouse wants to spend leisure time with his/her friends instead of me.	1-2-3-4-5
17) When my spouse and I engage in sexual activity I feel this is something I usually want to do anyway.	1-2-3-4-5
18) Of all the couples I have ever known, my spouse and I seem to be the most compatible.	1-2-3-4-5
19) When I am with my friends my spouse is always with us.	1-2-3-4-5
20) I sometimes feel uncomfortable lying next to my spouse.	1-2-3-4-5
21) I like it best when I can spend equal amounts of time with both my spouse and my friends.	1-2-3-4-5
22) When I do something nice for my spouse I find that this is something that I do in hopes that my spouse will do something for me in return.	1-2-3-4-5
23) I spend much more time in leisure activities with my spouse than with my friends.	1-2-3-4-5
24) My spouse and I engage in sexual activity several times a year but less than once a month.	1-2-3-4-5
25) I feel that I can tell my spouse very little if anything, no matter if it is positive or negative.	1-2-3-4-5
26) When I do something nice for my spouse I feel that this is something expected of me because married couples are supposed to do nice things for each other.	1-2-3-4-5
	END